

"The Supply of Each Member"
(Ephesians 4:16)

Introduction: The human body is a marvelously complex and efficient organism. Every part has its function even though scientists haven't figured them all out. And every part is necessary for the well-being, though not necessarily the survival of the whole. The body of Christ is the same. Each part has a function and each is necessary for the growth and well-being of the whole.

Each member of the body of Christ is uniquely gifted and fitted into the body so as to build up the whole.

I. There Are Many Gifts With Many Applications.

A. We Have Seen Some of the Gifts (v. 11).

1. Apostle.
 - a. The apostles laid the foundation.
 - b. Apostles were personally commissioned by Christ.
 - c. They are witnesses of His resurrection.
 - d. Teachers with infallible authority.
 - e. Supreme power as rulers in His Church.

2. Prophet.
 - a. The prophets were recipients of occasional inspiration.
 - b. They also gave revelation and explained the truth.

3. Evangelist.
 - a. They were vicars of the apostles.
 - (i) Who were temporarily clothed with special powers, such as to ordain, install, and depose (presbyterial power).
 - (ii) Who could preach, baptize, ordain elders, and exercise discipline.

 - b. Or if they were itinerant preachers.
 - (i) They were missionaries.
 - (ii) In this sense, it means one who preaches the gospel.

 - c. These were the foundational gifts.

4. Pastor.
 - a. He teaches, preaches and administers the sacraments.
 - b. He also is commanded by Christ to visit the sheep, to know them, and to shepherd them.

5. Teacher.
 - a. He is uniquely gifted to open up the Word in a very clear manner.
 - b. He may minister in a church if there is a pastor.
 - c. Usually he is in the colleges and seminaries.

B. *But There Are Other Gifts as Well (Rom. 12:6-8).*

1. Prophecy.
 - a. This has been taken two ways.
 - (i) The same as above.
 - (ii) Or the continuing gift of proclamation.
 - b. It would include the right understanding of Scripture and the peculiar faculty for explaining it [Calvin 460).
 - c. This would make all these gifts ordinary and continuing (Calvin 460).
 - d. He was to prophesy according to the proportion of his faith, i. e., not to go beyond what God had given him.
 - (i) It means that it must be agreeable to the rule or standard of the faith.
 - (ii) The faith is that which has been given by God and attested by Him by miracles.
 - (iii) That is, that which God has born testimony to by signs and wonders and miracles (Hodge 390).
2. Service.
 - a. This may have reference to the ministry of the Word.
 - (i) The word has reference to the apostolic ministry of the Word [Acts 6:4; 20:24).
 - (ii) Also its order in the text: Prophets, ministry, teaching.
 - (iii) If an order is implied, this is probably what it refers to.
 - b. It may also refer to the diaconate.
 - (i) This term is also used of ministry of mercy.
 - (ii) It is not clear that there is an order of rank in this passage.
 - (iii) The noun is used to describe deacons, and the verb in describing their work.
 - (iv) It is a ministry to the poor and infirmed (Murray 124-25).
3. Teaching.
 - a. The teacher expounds the word of God.
 - (i) He has the gift to understand the Word.
 - (ii) And to teach it clearly.
 - b. But he is not an organ of revelation [Murray 125)
4. Exhortation.
 - a. Teaching is directed to the understanding.
 - b. Exhortation is directed to the heart, conscience, and will.
 - c. They are sometimes combined in the ministry of the same person (cf. 1 Tim. 4:13; Murray 125).

5. Giving.
 - a. Some have the gift of acquiring possessions.
 - b. And God has given them a generous spirit.
 - c. They are to give either in liberality.
 - d. Or the word may mean simplicity:
 - single-mindedness of heart, motive, and purpose.
 - (i) It is from private means, not church funds.
 - (ii) Since it is the giving of private funds, the sincerity of motive and purpose is pertinent.
 - (iii) ***Giving must not be with the ulterior motives of securing influence and advantage for oneself, a vice too frequently indulged by the affluent in their donations to the treasury of the church and to which those responsible for the direction of the affairs of the church are too liable to succumb*** (Murray 126).

6. Leading.
 - a. It is the ability to manage and mobilize.
 - b. Its primary reference is to the elders who exercise oversight in the church.
 - c. In 1 Cor. 12:28 it is called governments.
 - d. They are called to diligence, that is to the vigilance they need to observe.
 - (i) They are to shepherd and take heed to the flock which the Holy Spirit has made them the overseers (Acts 20:28).
 - (ii) They are to watch for the souls under their care (Heb. 13:17).
 - (iii) Every infraction or neglect of government directly prejudices the witness to the truth of which the church is the pillar (1 Tim. 3: 15; Murray 126-27).
 - (iv) "The government of the church, in correcting abuses, preventing disorders, and in the administration of discipline, calls for constant vigilance and fidelity.

7. Mercy.
 - a. This is related to the gift of giving.
 - b. But it emphasizes the more direct, personal ministry to those in need.
 - (i) Giving has to do with the poor.
 - (ii) Mercy has to do with the sick and afflicted (Hodge 393).
 - c. It is to be performed in cheerfulness.
 - (i) Sometimes the work is disagreeable.
 - (ii) It is liable to be done grudgingly.
 - (iii) To do so would make those ministered to feel despised.
 - (iv) But to do so cheerfully gives them comfort.

8. These gifts exist in both officers and non-officers.
 - a. The elder must exhibit all of the above, with strengths in teaching, exhortation, and leading.

- (i) The teaching elder must have the well developed gifts of prophesying, teaching, and exhortation.
 - (ii) The ruling elder in leading.
- b. The deacon must have most of the above, with strengths in service, mercy, giving.
 - c. These gifts are also distributed among all the people of God.

C. *And Different Administrations of those Gifts (1 Cor. 12:4-7).*

- 1. There are a variety of gifts.
 - a. There are allotments of spiritual gifts [BAG 182; apportionment, division).
 - b. We have seen the various gifts.
- 2. There are a variety of ministries.
 - a. There is a distribution of services [TDNT 27-28)
 - b. There are many uses to which to put these gifts.
 - (i) Some are in official capacity.
 - (ii) Some non-official but very important.
- 3. There are a variety of effects.
 - a. A distribution of activities [BAG 265).
 - b. God by the Spirit is the One who energizes, who is at work (TDNT 254).
- 4. But each is for the common good.
 - a. No one is given all the gifts, lest he despise his brethren (Calvin 19:459).
 - b. No one is not to use the gift for their own advantage.
 - c. Nor is it to be used alone.
 - d. But it is to be exercised for the good of God's people.

II. *And the Proper Administration of Each Gift is Necessary for the Well-Being of the Whole (Eph. 4:16).*

A. *Christ is the Source of Growth.*

- 1. It is Christ who gives the gifts by His Spirit.
- 2. Christ is the Head, the source of the church's life.
 - a. It is only in Christ that one is raised to life.
 - b. It is only in Him that one enters the body.
 - c. And it is only in Him that that life is sustained.
 - d. And it is through Him that the growth comes.

B. *Christ Gave the Gifts that the Whole Body Might Be Built Up.*

- 1. The body is fitted together and united.
- 2. By every ligament of the provision of Christ.
- 3. According to the working of each individual part in its measure.
 - a. Each part has its role to play.
 - b. The working of each is necessary for the well-being not the being of the body.

C. *The Unifying Principle is Love.*

1. The gifts are to be exercised for the mutual benefit.
2. Where they are exercised for self the body is out of proportion.
3. And where there is no love, the body is not built up and unified, but torn apart and scattered.

Application:

1. Are you a part of the body?
 - a. Are you in vital union with Him?
 - b. Have you come to Him in faith and repentance?
 - c. Are you trusting in His righteousness alone for right standing before God?

2. Do you know what your gifts are?
 - a. Have you taken spiritual inventory?
 - b. Have you identified your gifts.
 - c. Each of you has a gift which is necessary for the well-being of the body.

3. Are you being faithful to use them in the service of the Lord?
 - a. Having identified them, are you using them?
 - (i) Of serving?
 - (a) Do you look for ways to be a servant?
 - (b) Maybe you won't serve in an official capacity, but you may still be a servant.
 - (c) If others are already filling certain needs, do you look for other needs to meet?
 - (ii) Of exhortation?
 - (a) Are you gifted with a gently way of exhorting and encouraging individuals?
 - (b) How many have you exhorted lately?
 - (c) None of us are perfect; all of us need exhorted from time to time.
 - (iii) Giving.
 - (a) Has the Lord blessed you with a giving heart?
 - (b) Has He blessed you with the resources?
 - (c) When the church has made known special needs, do you respond?
 - (d) Have you been giving out of simplicity, not seeking your own benefit, but that of others?
 - (iv) Mercy.
 - (a) Has God given you a tender heart to bind up the wounds of others?
 - (b) When such opportunities arise, are you watching and desiring to be used?
 - (v) Leading.
 - (a) Has God given you the ability to administer?
 - (b) Have you thought about whether you have the other gifts requisite for eldership?
 - (c) If He has placed you in an area of responsibility, are you discharging that duty

with diligence?

- (vi) Teaching.
 - (a) Has the Lord gifted you to teach?
 - (b) Have you exercised those gifts in the church?
 - (c) How do you respond when called upon to fill a teaching role?
 - (vii) No one of you can do everything.
 - (a) You are not expected to.
 - (b) Each of us only has so much time.
 - (c) But are you making the best use of your gifts, given your time and opportunity?
 - b. Maybe others have the same gifts and are using them in areas you would like to.
 - c. But have you considered alternate areas where the same gift is needed?
4. Though the church will continue without the exercise of your particular gift, the local church of which you are a member will be hindered.
 - a. As we have said, the church will exist if you don't exercise your gifts.
 - b. But as a body without sight, without hearing, or without the ability to walk.
 - c. It will exist, but it will be handicapped.
 5. And be careful as well not to minister outside of the area of your gift.
 - a. When you begin to do work you are not gifted for, you hinder the body's progress.
 - b. When one occupies an office he is not gifted for, he damages the body.
 - c. Be sure that you have the gift not only in your own eyes, but in the eyes of others as well.
 - d. God has sovereignly distributed the gifts.
 - (i) To operate within them is to give glory to Him.
 - (ii) To seek to usurp another's area is rebellion.
 - (iii) You must seek to minister your own gift without impeding others (Calvin 19:459).
 6. And remember, if not exercised in love, then your gift will not only not profit, it will scatter.
 7. The Lord has given us these gifts that we may use them.
 - a. Remember the parable of the talents.
 - b. Each was given a talent according to his abilities.
 - c. Each was commanded to trade with them and make an increase for their master.
 - d. Each was called into account at the end and rewarded or punished accordingly.
 - e. You are stewards of the gifts of Christ.
 - f. God expects you to use them for His profit.
 - g. Don't hide them, or refuse to use them for this reveals that you have a rebellious heart.

- h. And if you continue in that rebellion, you may prove that you don't even know Christ.
8. Identify your gifts, and use them for the glory of the Master who gave them. Be profitable servants for His glory! Amen.