

1 Cor. 12:12-26 "Body Parts"

For the Children: Some children's toys involve strange-looking creatures – for example, a giant eye. We are used to man and animals having many body-parts, not just one! Such monsters often look quite ridiculous, or even quite scary! The Lord has made His church so that we are not all the same. Our gifts are not all the same. Like a human body, the different parts have to work together for the good of the body as a whole. As with a human body, we also have to look after any part that has been hurt – just as you use your good hand to put a band-aid on a hand that has been cut. **Questions:** How can a church made up of so many different members with different gifts actually work together as one? What happens if we don't want to be very involved in the church? How can we encourage unity in the church?

Introduction:

First Point: The Lord Jesus Christ and the Members of His Body

- 1) **Members of Christ's Body:** God's people are members of Christ and His Body, the Church. This already implies unity in diversity and diversity in unity (vss. 12, 20). V. 13 explains how we become members of Christ: by being "baptized" and "drinking" of the Holy Spirit. Water baptism marks the entrance into the church, but only the Spirit can grant us the new birth and the faith that joins us to Christ. Through Him, we are joined to each other in a spiritual way.
- 2) **Unity from Several Angles:** As Eph. 4:3-6 points out, we therefore have unity for several reasons. The one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father ensures that the Body/Church is one.
- 3) **Distancing from the Lord and His Body:** If a member distances himself from the church, he distances himself from Christ and His Spirit. Loving the Lord Jesus and loving His Body/Bride/Church are tied together.
- 4) **Rejecting Gifts:** Christ (Eph. 4:7ff) and His Spirit give each member at least one gift for the common good. Ignoring our gift(s) due to laziness or disinterest we are effectively throwing the gift(s) back at Christ and His Spirit.
- 5) **No One is Useless:** No one in the church should feel that they are useless – or superior. Vss. 15-19 show that all members of the church are needed, just as all parts of the human body are important. The "foot" shouldn't worry that it is not a "hand," or the hand feel superior to the foot. Feeling useless can also lead to neglect of the gifts that Christ and His Spirit have given us.

Second Point: The Church as a Body with Its Members

- 1) **One in Practice:** Since the church is one in Christ and His Spirit, we should strive to express that unity in practice. Even the "polar opposites" of Jew/Gentile, slave/free, are one in Him. See also Gal. 3:29. There is to be no division in the Body (v. 25). This is, of course, speaking about those who are truly united in Christ. It does not mean we should ignore error. But minor differences should not be allowed to overshadow, as it were, the work of Christ and His Spirit.
- 2) **We Need Each Other:** The Lord has deliberately designed the church to have unity in diversity (v. 18). That way, we need to work together, or the Body can't function effectively as a whole. If, for example, the whole Corinthian church was comprised on tongue-speakers, where would they be – without teachers, helpers, etc?
- 3) **The Less Honourable Parts:** So much is this so, that even those we might deem to be weaker, more vulnerable, less useful, or less important, actually need *more* support and care! (vss. 22-25).
- 4) **Rejoicing and Weeping:** A further reason for this mutual care is that we are commanded to "rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep" (v. 25 with Rom. 12:15). By doing so, we are honouring the Lord who gives cause for joy and encouraging each other to keep honouring Him in difficult circumstances.

Conclusion:

