

Text: 1 Corinthians 12:12-31, Part 1

Title: One Body, Many Members, Different Gifts

Truth: God has carefully composed the church to carry out His work.

Date/Location: Sunday December 13, 2020 at FBC

Introduction

I am thinking that God would give Fellowship Bible Church a bit of a critique along this line: Many of FBC's church members *know* in their heads that they are members of one body and therefore members of one another. Some do not know that and need to learn it. But even those who know have a knowledge that is somewhat shallow and has not come to the point of *realizing* that they are members of one body with every other person in this church. The church members largely live as independent units, holding other church members at arm's length. It has not *dawned on* everyone in the church how this one-body-many-members truth should guide our conduct and emotions and attitudes. It causes us to think differently about one another and how to live together.

Let us see if we can grasp the idea in a better way and become a more healthy and strong church for God's honor.

I. Summary of Truths Found in This Bible Passage

1. The body of Christ is one. It is united and part of Him.
2. The body of Christ has many members. *Members* mean *parts*.
3. The body of Christ was brought together by means of Holy Spirit baptism.
4. Every member has been made to drink into one Spirit. So not only are we one together in Christ, but also one Spirit dwells in each of the members.
5. Each part of the body is essential to its proper function.
6. Without some parts, the body loses functions that are important.
7. God has placed members just where He wants them.
8. If all the members were the same part, there would be no body. At least if you have many different parts, but are missing a few, you have a body, though hobbled by an "amputation" effect. But with only one part, or a bunch of that same part, you have nothing.
9. Members of the body cannot despise other members. That is now how a body works!

10. God gives greater honor to parts that naturally would lack it.
11. Weaker parts of the body are just as necessary, in fact, maybe *more* necessary than others.
12. Less honorable parts of the body are given greater honor.
13. Unpresentable parts are given greater modesty.
14. God does not intend the body to have any schism. Therefore, He has designed it in such a way that parts which lack in some ways are honored more greatly in other ways.
15. The members should have a uniform care for one another.
16. Suffering in one part results in suffering in all the parts.
17. Rejoicing in one part results in rejoicing in all the parts.
18. There are certain gifts that are/were given greater prominence to accomplish God's purposes. These include apostle, prophet, teacher, miracles, healings, helps, administrations, tongues.
19. Not all the members have all the gifts.
20. There are some gifts that are "better" than others.
21. There is a better way to exercise the spiritual gifts in the context of the body of Christ which will be the subject matter of chapter 13.

II. The Formation of One Body Through Spirit Baptism, 12:12-13

- A. God likens the church to a body of which Christ is the head (Eph. 4:15, 5:23). This explains how there can be unity and diversity in the church at the same time. How can millions of Christian people make up "one body," that is, the universal church? How can one hundred Christians make up one local church body? We will focus our attention on the local assembly of God's people.
 1. What happens to one part of the body affects the other parts, just like when your own human body is impacted by something.
 2. The church together is a "living thing," not a mere list of names. It is a living dwelling-place for God through His Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16; 1 Peter 2:5; Rev. 21:3). It is not inanimate but animate!
- B. The "mechanism" to get into the body is that the Holy Spirit "immerses" or "identifies" you with the body. Whatever else the Spirit does in His

ministry to the believer,¹ He attaches the person to the body of Christ. The Spirit baptism is not an event that brings another level of spiritual power. It is how many are combined into one body.

C. See the handout entitled “Spirit Baptism” for details.

D. The baptizing ministry of the Spirit happens to all Christians, no matter what ethnic or socio-economic background. This does not say that those distinctions magically disappear in the church. They are still realities. But they are inconsequential when it comes to the composition of the church. It is *giftedness* which determines what role a person will have in God’s household—and spiritual commitment, I think. If a slave, a poor person, a slaveholder, and a free person were in the Corinthian church, the slave could be the pastor, and the free person a deacon, and the slaveholder could serve in some other capacity in the church. Of course, there could be all kinds of combinations of arrangements, but God sets those in the church where and when He wills.

E. To “drink” into the Spirit is the experiential side of the Spirit’s ministry in the life of the believer. He takes up ministerial residence in us, so that He guides and convicts and so forth. This is not to be thought of in merely or even primarily spatial or geographical terms. The Spirit is everywhere present, so that His indwelling is not extra omnipresence inside the physical location of the believer’s body. Rather, indwelling is His powerful ministry to the inner person (John 7:37-39).

III. The Illustration of the Church Body Using a Human Body, 12:14-20

A. Paul emphasizes the one-many idea with God and His gifts at the center of it all. Presumably, though we have not read ahead, the Corinthians were not seeing God’s church nor His gifts this way and were somehow misusing them. 1 Corinthians 13 and 14 will show us that this is indeed the case. A self-centered mindset ruled in that church, rather than an others-centered loving mindset. They were dull to the idea that the church does not revolve around their own selfish desires.

B. What does a “weaker” body part correspond to? What does a less honorable or less presentable body part correspond to? In other words, what is the meaning of the metaphor?

1. Some of the external parts of our own bodies are more or less honorable or presentable. We cover them or not accordingly.

¹ Regenerating, indwelling, sealing, teaching, illuminating, convicting, etc.

2. But we should think of parts of the body not just as external appendages. They include all the internal organs as well. The brain, for example, is a relatively weak organ in terms of its ability to sustain a hit, unlike the abdominal muscles, for example. But the brain has a very important function! Yet it is hidden away behind the armor of the skull and insulated with the hair.

C. Paul is dealing with two bad attitudes in the church.

1. To deal with these attitudes, Paul teaches in verses 14-19 that there are **many members**. In verses 20-26 he emphasizes that there is **one body**. This may seem repetitive but stand by.
2. Back to verses 14-19, some were discontent with what God had given them. “Because I am a seemingly less significant part, I am not of the body.” That negative attitude is dispatched. Drop it. Each part is a part, and no part is not a part. God has placed each member in the body as He pleased. That is, God has sovereignly assigned you a place. Whether you possess the correct attitude and are fulfilling your function is an open question. But without you and everyone like you, there would be no body, because a body needs **many members**.
3. In verses 20-26 again, others were puffed up about their own place in the church and were despising others. This sounds familiar (remember chapter 11 about the Lord’s Table?). Some were thinking, “I don’t need this or that person in the church; I’ve got the superior gift.” They were looking down their noses at those whom God had given less “showy” gifts. Nope, Paul says, again, God has composed the body with parts of greater or lesser honor, some more or less presentable, some with greater or lesser strength. Who are *you*, O man, to criticize God’s design? And who are you to not care about all the parts of the body. Each part serves a purpose—in fact, some parts you may need to be educated about! They are all part of the **one body**.
4. This dispatches the inferiority complex of some and the superiority complex of others. Those complexes are simply self-centeredness.
5. Paul now moves to remind the Corinthians of the need of care and unity for everyone. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep!

To be continued...

MAP