

The Body of Christ

1 Corinthians 12:12-27

As the apostles went forth into the world they preached the gospel, those who believed and were baptized were added to the church and direction was given as to how members of the church were to function in a local setting (1 Tim. 3:15). And so, as the word of God was being revealed the church was being built up by the word “*to the fullness of Christ*” (Eph. 4:11-16) Putting this principal into illustration Paul describes the church as a body of which Christ is the head and the saints are individual members (1 Cor. 12:27; Col. 1:18). It is upon this principal that this lesson is established. When we understand the nature of the body that is being build up we will also be able to see how all the members are to work in unity as one body and how that body is to respond when foreign elements (error) attempt to creep their way into the church.

What Is The Body of Christ?

In Ephesians 4:15 Paul clearly states that Christ is the head of the church. In 1 Corinthians 2:16 we find in plain words that we have the mind of Christ. He is the head and He gives us direction as our minds do within our own bodies. In 1 Corinthians 12:12-26 Paul illustrates how the Lord’s church is to work together in unity as one body acting upon the direction of its head. In the denominational world many have twisted this section of scripture to say that “each member of the body is a different denomination therefore all churches are ok for they are all just individual members of the body of Christ.” In short, this type of teaching is heresy for it contradicts the very things Paul is teaching in his letter to the Corinthians. It seeks to justify the sin of carnal-mindedness that Christ came to destroy (1 John 3:8).

To help us understand what Paul is referring to as the body of Christ let us look at the context. 1. In concluding his discourse on the body of Christ Paul refers to individual gifts and responsibilities as being individual members. This indicates that each person (not each denomination) is an individual member of the body. 2. In 1 Corinthians chapters 1-3 Paul condemned the practice of calling one’s self after another name besides that of Christ. The principal of denominationalism seeks to overthrow that doctrine. 3. Paul said in verse 13 that we were all baptized into one body indicating that each member of the church is a member of that body. Each one has a function, has its own abilities and is expected to use them in cooperation with the other members as Christ gives direction through His word. Therefore the body of Christ is not a collective of different denominations, rather it is a collective of saints who have been baptized into Christ and become children of God.

Unity of the Body - Fellowship

A word that is used in the scriptures which is defined by this type of cooperation is “Fellowship.” Fellowship, as it is used of Christians, is “**an active sharing or responsibilities and working together for a common goal.**” In the case of the church that goal is the will of God which is truth. In Gal. 2:9 Peter and the others extended to Paul “*the right hand of fellowship*” in that they accepted him into the work that they were doing of preaching the gospel to the world. In 2 Cor. 8:4 Paul also wrote of “*fellowship of the ministering to the saints.*” That is, the churches of

Macedonia had fellowship with Paul and his companions because they were working with him by means of support and financial needs for the purpose of ministering to the saints.

We see an illustration of this fellowship every day of our lives in our own bodies. Paul brings it out in Eph. 4:15 where he says that the body, *“Speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head -- Christ -- from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”* The members of our bodies have fellowship when the hands work with the feet and arms and legs to accomplish the tasks set forth by our head. When we eat the hands bring the food to our mouths, the mouths chew the food, the digestive system takes care of the food according to its function. Our members are fellow workers working in unity with one another according to the direction of the head whereby they have fellowship. Even so, within Christ’s body our fellowship is built upon this same basis of our working together to accomplish the tasks set forth by the head, even Christ.

Now applying this to our discussion on the one true church, we must consider, what happens when part of the body or even the whole body does not work according to the direction of the head? When the whole body is dysfunctional in such a way we may think of a quadriplegic or a person with a disease in which they have no control over their body. When one or two members of the body are dysfunctional we can compare it to a stroke victim whose left side may be paralyzed or a person with a withered hand or broken arm. But what if these types of illnesses exist in the body of Christ? They may be manifested in several different ways. 1. Error being taught (Titus 1:10, 11; 2 Tim. 2:17). 2. One or more members walking disorderly or contrary to the direction of the Lord (1 Cor. 5:1-5; 2 Thess. 3:11). 3. The whole body is so dysfunctional that it does not even look like it belongs to the head.

Foreign Elements Within The Body of Christ

Since just about every church has its imperfections, some more than others, how do we decide one is the true church, if all are not? The answer to this is simply, If Christ did not establish it is not His. Jesus stated in Matt. 15:13, *“Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted.”* After the first century many who were in the church went into apostasy and through the centuries many churches have sprouted from that apostasy. Therefore many of the churches we see today are not from Christ, but are false churches that have parted from other false church and started their own version of apostasy. They are not the Lord’s church, they are worse than the paraplegic because they don’t even represent the body of Christ.

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