

## **“For As The Body Is One ...” #2**

“... and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ” (1 Corinthians 12:12).

Many are the figures the Holy Spirit used to describe the Church in its relationship to Christ: a flock (Acts 20:28); a bride (Eph. 5:34); an army, (2 Cor. 10:4f); a kingdom, (Mt. 16:18-20). Not all these figures emphasize as distinctly the actual relationship to Christ that individual Christians sustain as do some of the others. In a kingdom the church clearly is the kingdom, Christ the King, and Christians are citizens. That is apparent. It also is evident in a flock: the church is easily perceived as a flock with Christ the Good Shepherd and naturally seen are Christians as sheep over which the Good Shepherd bestows his concern, care and protection. These individual functions and the Christian also are seen in the figure of a body. The church may in the aggregate be a body with Christ obviously as the Head, but obvious are the members as each of them serve whatever function they are designed to perform. All this that the body may harmoniously work and act as each member functions.

There are other passages aside from this one that utilizes this figure of a body, Ephesians 4:16 for instance: “... from whom all the whole body fitly fame and knit together through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in due measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love.” See Romans 12:4-5; Ephesians 1:23; 2:16; Colossians 1:18; 2:17-19; 3:15 for other passages with the same figure.

Yet, while there are other passages which use this figure of Christians being members of the body, none others deal so extensively with the figure. Paul shows that each member is set in the body, designed by God for the specific function it performs (12:18). He shows that however inferior the foot may be to the hand, that lessens not one iota the fact that the foot is still as much part of the body as the hand and serves a function different from that which the hand serves (1 Cor. 12:15-17). He shows that however “superior” the eye may might feel itself to be over the hand, it needs that member (and other others) because it is dependent upon each member to function. When we apply these truths to the Christian which is a member of the body, many valuable and pointed lessons can be learned from this dissertation on the body and its members by the able apostle.

However, having said all this, the primary purpose of the illustration of a body with functioning members was not to show the ordinary

interdependence of each Christian to every other Christian (although we learn the significance of this from Paul's writings); the primary purpose of this illustration was to show how God designed that spiritual gifts should function in the first century Church. This is evident by the fact that vss. 1-12 deal with spiritual gifts and the verse of our study begins with the word "for"; an indication that what is to follow is simply an amplification and application of what had previously been written. The contrast between the hand and foot; the ear and eye came into focus as the evidence mounts that some in Corinth who exercised the "tongue gift" felt themselves superior to others. Furthermore, when the apostle speaks of the physical body he declares, "But now hath God set the members each one of them in the body, even as it pleased him" (12:18), he develops his point by saying, "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, divers kinds of tongues" (12:28). It is proper to use Paul's illustration of a body and its various members to demonstrate how that, as various, diverse members of the body we each can contribute something unique to building up the body, but we must keep in mind that uppermost in the apostle's mind in his illustration, is his teaching regarding spiritual gifts and how they were to be used in the first century.

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