

1 Corinthians: The Body of Christ vs. A Body in Crisis

New Pilgrim Baptist Church Bible Study

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8/14/24

Unity over the Gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor 12-14)

“One Body, One Spirit, but Many Gifts” Part 1 (1 Cor 12:12-31)

1. We are the body of Christ, many and one at the same time. (vv. 12-13)

Paul wanted to make it very clear that the church was a diverse group of people with varying backgrounds. There were Jews, Gentiles, rich, poor, slave, and free people. Regardless of one’s background and social status, the church is the church. All are on equal footing in value to Christ. All have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, all have evidence of God’s presence.

2. The Church is the body of Jesus Christ it must work as a body under its head. (vv. 14-27)

Within the Greco-Roman world, it was understood that “body” signified a political entity which could make decisions for the good of the community. The people of God understood that they were called out by God to represent the ruler of the world, Jesus Christ. They are his body chosen to rectify the wrongs of the world through their obedience to the Lord Jesus. But they must work together under their head to accomplish his purposes. The body of Christ has different activities but each part has value. This is why the parts of the body cannot be in competition with the other. All are important to the work of the church, to carry out the mission of the head, Jesus Christ. This is also why the body of Christ must exist in a state of love.

3. The Church is composed of offices ordained by God and empowered by God to make his body function properly. (v. 28)

Apostles (first), Prophets (second), Teachers/Pastors (third), then the gifts of power, healing, helpers, administrators/disseminators, and those who speak in tongues. This list is not exhaustive but demonstrates the ordering of a functioning body. The Preaching and Teaching offices of the church take precedence over all other functions of the church. The reason is because they communicate the will of the head. This is why these offices merit obedience because they are anointed to hear the voice of God and communicate the will of the Master of the body. Without knowledge of the will of God, the body becomes useless.

4. But everyone does not occupy the same position, submission to one another is necessary for the body to carry out the various functions (vv. 29-31)

One of the struggles of the church is the recognition that not everyone can lead in the same way. Someone has to submit to someone else. God has ordained it this way.