

THE BODY OF CHRIST

Scripture Reading: Read 1 Corinthians 12

One of Paul's favorite descriptions for the church is "the body of Christ." Three times in today's chapter reading alone (verses 12-13, 27), Paul refers to the church as a body of believers. *"The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ." For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free--and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.* "Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it." The word picture of a body provided a wonderful analogy for Paul to use to help believers see the interconnectedness we have with each other and with Christ. Based on what Paul has to say in 1 Cor 12-14, it was clearly something the church needed to hear. The believers in Corinth, apparently, had become enamored with speaking in tongues and the other so-called "spectacular" gifts. The result was that those who couldn't or didn't exercise the spectacular gifts felt inferior, while those who could or did felt superior.

Paul's response in 12:14-26 is a masterful argument to address those in both groups. First, to those with inferiority complexes, Paul stresses the amazing diversity in both the human body and the body of Christ. There isn't just an eye or an ear or a leg in the natural body. There aren't just one or two spiritual gifts in the body of Christ. No, as Paul notes, *"the body is not made up of one part but of many."* God, in his infinite wisdom, has distributed gifts to the body so that each member has the gift he wanted them to have. No one is "gift-less" in the kingdom of God. The Spirit of God made sure of that. So, how can there be any inferiority? God's diversity of gifts frees us from our inferiority complexes. In fact, to persist with an attitude of inferiority is to fail to see the vital role God has given you to play in the body of Christ, as well as to rob the church of what God has to offer through you. You have just the right gift(s) that God wanted you to have.

On the other hand, for those who suffer from superiority complexes, Paul reminds them that no one human body part can do it all. Each physical body part needs all the other body parts to function at optimum health. So, also, in the body of Christ, each member needs every other member of the church for the body to be healthy. All the parts are important and all the parts are interconnected. This interdependence removes the ground of superiority. Therefore, for those with superiority complexes, to continue to look down on those who can't do what they can do is foolishness. To diminish others is, actually, harming yourself since those other members are connected to you!

By supplying diversity and necessitating mutuality, God has connected the body in such a way that by working together, we grow towards maturity in Christ (cf. Eph 4:16). No wonder Paul liked the image of the church as a body. It drives the truth home.

Action Step & Prayer Focus: So, what part or role has the Spirit of God given you to play in the body of Christ? There are no spectator parts in the kingdom. All are gifted. All are essential. All are interconnected and interdependent. Pray that the Father shows you your spot in the body this week.

Take-a-way: *Diversity* + *Mutuality* = *Maturity*
(of Gifts) *(of Members)* *(in the Body)!*