

The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians

A Unity that Requires Diversity

1 Corinthians 12:12-14

1. The Analogy of the Body (v.12)

The body of Christ is one of the many rich analogies that God has given to us in order to help us understand our relationship to one another and to Himself (Eph. 4:12; 5:23ff; Col. 1:24; 3:15). Paul has already used analogy in describing the reality of what occurs when they eat the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 10:16-17). Now Paul uses this analogy as the basic presupposition of His argument for the unity that is required in the fellowship (1 Cor. 12:12, 27).

2. The Reality of Diversity (v.13)

The various differences between individuals and groups of people can make close relationships between them virtually impossible prior to being bound together by a common faith and salvation (cf. Matt 10:2-4). The Lord has consistently welcomed anyone who would believe in Him (Rom. 10:12) regardless of nationality (Ex. 23:23; 2 Sam. 11:3; Col. 3:11), social or economic status (1 Cor. 26-28; cf. Lev. 1:3, 10, 14, et al.), gender (1 Sam. 1:9ff; Prov. 31:30; Gal. 3:28), or geo-political complications (2 Ki. 5:17-18; Jonah 4:11; Luke 7:9; Acts 10:1-2).

3. The Necessity of Unity (v.14)

The Corinthian church had many problems. Many of these problems were caused by an unwillingness to make divisions where God had instructed them to do so (cf. 1 Cor. 5:1ff) and by their proclivity for divisiveness for reasons which, while appropriate for the larger culture, were sinful (1 Cor. 1:11-12; 3:18-20; 11:18-22). A prideful attitude, whether it is expressed by self-centered despondency (1 Cor. 12:15-16) or by self-centered exaltation (1 Cor. 12:21), is incompatible with a healthy and unified body.