

Life in the Body
A Command, Challenge and Comfort
1 Corinthians 12:12-26

Review

Paul has differentiated between spiritual gifts and the non-Christian phenomena in the pagan world (12:1-3). He also has shown a unified origin of widely varying spiritual gifts (12:4-11). The Apostle now shifts the focus to the singularity of the organism through which spiritual gifts are to be manifested. He accomplishes this by use of the grand metaphor- the human body.

A. The Declaration of the Unity of the Body 1 Cor. 12:12-13

1. The Many-Membered and Multifaceted Body of Christ 12:12

The purpose of verse 12 is to illustrate the way a group of such varied individuals (12:4-11) can constitute one organic whole. Though the body is one organic whole, its various parts perform widely differing functions, and therefore no two parts are exactly the same.

Notice the threefold occurrence of the word “body,” which generates a keen interest in this idea of an organism. It is this organism, whether visible as a physical body or invisible as the body of Christ, that demonstrates effectively that “oneness” does not necessarily exclude multiplicity, nor does the “many” rule out the “one.” A unified spiritual company characterized by a variety of gifts in individual parts is a valid possibility. Christians can be gifted diversely and yet be part of the organic whole without losing their diversification.

It appears as though Paul’s point is this: whatever affects one member of the spiritual body actually affects Christ because Christ himself lives in and through his body. Therefore, when a spiritual gift operates through any member of the body, it is actually a manifestation of the life of Christ at work, indwelling the collective body through the person of the Holy Spirit.

2. The Method of Joining the Members of the Body 12:13

a. Formation of the Body - “By one Spirit we were all baptized into one body”

(1) This is the action whereby all Christians are placed into the body of Christ.

(2) This is not water baptism, but spiritual baptism, known both in the Old and New Testament (Num. 11:29; Isa. 32:15; 44:3; Joel 2:28, 29; Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; 7:39).

(3) The agent of baptism is the Spirit, however, from another perspective, Christ himself is the baptizer (Matt. 3:11; Mark

1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33). The Father also should not be omitted, as he is ultimately involved as an agent (Acts 2:33; 1 Cor. 12:18). This has been hinted at by Paul as noted in verses 4-6. Hence, Christ is a baptizer in a remote sense, and the Spirit is the agent of baptism in a more immediate sense. The context of verses 8-9 and 11 establish his agency.

It's important to notice that this was not a one-time act at Pentecost. It occurred with Samaritans (Acts 8:16), the house of Cornelius (Acts 10:44-45; 11:15-16), as well as the disciples of John in Ephesus (Acts 19:6). Hence, the spiritual baptism is repeated each time a person converts to Christ. It is at that moment that the new Christian takes up his new position in the body of Christ and receives spiritual gifts that are natural for this new position.

Another important point is that baptism by the Holy Spirit does not occur at some time subsequent to conversion.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is not synonymous with the filling of the Spirit (Eph. 5:18, Controversial). The Spirit's filling speaks of his control over the Christian life, and comes about as those who yield themselves to walk with God (Gal. 5). The Spirit baptism is common to all Christians, and is in this respect distinct from the issue of whether a Christian is under the Spirit's control at any given moment.

Spirit baptism also did not necessarily include speaking in tongues. It is true that speaking in tongues occasionally accompanied Spirit baptism (Acts 2:17-18, 33; 10:44-45; 11:15-16; 19:6). This occurred in the days immediately after the initial outpouring, but that was not the norm for first century Christianity, nor even in the book of Acts, and certainly not in the centuries that followed right up to today. It seems that being baptized in the Spirit does not essentially require a validation or verification by speaking in tongues. However, many in Pentecostal assemblies believe that this is the evidence of being born again.

b. Foundation of the Body of Christ

This idea of Christ through his Spirit taking up residence in His people is anticipated in the book of Acts (Acts 2:33 the promise of the Holy Spirit; Acts 2:38 the gift of the Holy Spirit; Acts 10:47-19:2 receiving the Holy Spirit). This was part of what was promised in Joel 2:28, and Christ extended this to include the church. This is where Christ, through the Spirit, takes up permanent abode with his people. The Apostle Paul also amplifies the indwelling ministry of the Spirit (Rom. 8:9,15; 1 Cor. 2:12; Gal. 3:2 1 Cor. 6:19). This new relationship begins with Spirit baptism and develops through obedience and abiding to the Spirit.

Summary: Through the third person of the holy trinity, the second person, the Son, lives His life in the various members, the visible evidences of that life being its manifestation through the use of spiritual gifts. It is then because of one body with one personality that the Scripture declares in 1 Corinthian 12:12-13 a unity underlying the function of spiritual gifts.

B. The Demonstration of Unity in the Body 1 Cor. 12:14-26

1. The Problem of the “Inferiority Concept/Complex” 12:14-20
 - a. The Rational :15-16

 - b. The Reality :17-20

2. The Problem of the “Superiority Concept/Complex” 12:21-24a
 - a. The Rational :21

 - b. The Reality :22
Weaker-

Less Honor-

Unseemly-

3. The Power of the Sovereignty Concept 12:24b-26
 - a. The Principle of Divine Equalization :24b

 - b. The Purpose of Divine Equalization :25-26

How Should We then Live....Love?

How do you see the Body? It is the corporation of Christ

How do you see yourself? You are a member of Christ’s Body

How do you see others in the body? They are related to you and there is no room for pride or arrogance but only mutual love and concern for the family.