

For The Body Does Not Consist Of One Member, But Of Many

Title Text: I Cor. 12:14...*For the body does not consist of one member but of many.*

Introduction: I came up with this sermon when I read somewhere on FB a person saying that the spirit of individualism is killing the church, or something to that effect. That got my attention and wandering in thought over the next couple weeks it brought me to this you are about to hear tonight. I want to thank you in advance for listening and searching the Scriptures I will be referencing to see if these things are not so. First of all let us read the immediate context...

I Cor. 12:14-26...*For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body, that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body, that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you, nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do*

not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

I think we are urged by the Holy Spirit to regard this on three levels...and which level are you and I currently on?

1. The theoretical level...this level understands what the Spirit of God through the apostle Paul is saying. He is likening the body of Christ, the Lord's church, to a physical body in a few ways to illustrate and teach. Do we understand that the body of Christ purposely has a variety of members , with various gifts, talents, opportunities, and abilities, etc.? And this is on purpose, intended of God and thus we ought to appreciate it as a fact and accept it as truth...and if necessary we tolerate it when not to our personal liking or fancy. God did not make your physical body all one kind of member and neither does he His church. Cloning members is not in the Lord's book and it is best not to be in ours either. We must get on God's page, not vice versa. And so, summing up this first level. Do you accept this as truth and fact?

2. The heart development level...this level will make this subject more than in mind alone, and seek to implement it in practical ways and words. I will **care** about making changes to behave like God does in this. This is repenting. Repenting is not just something we do before we are baptized, nor just something we do after we are stung in conscience by the sin we have committed, but is also the reformation of life to fit closer the teachings of Jesus on any subject, anytime. In this case it is regarding the Lord's church not being one member, all look-alike members, but differing

members, differing in levels of faith, spiritual gifts, talents, etc. And if I have arisen to this level, I cannot only truthfully say with my lips that the body is not one member, but of many...but I also practice what I preach. I act like it. I behave and talk like I believe this and make adjustments to make it so in word and deed. Now, this is a more intense level than the first. This is requiring I stop just putting up with members unlike me, or not to my liking, or who just done seem to be as useful to God's kingdom, as me...but it stimulates me to embrace others in full acceptance of fellowship. I actually begin to love the variety. Variety is the spice of life, you know. But, you know what else? It is the spice of the church of Jesus Christ also.

3. The challenge level...to actually view those who appear or seem to be less honorable or presentable...to see them **as necessary**. They actually play a God given role..and if God given, then it is an important role. They may even be critical to the body's operation and serve a most profitable function. See verse 22 again...*On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable.* — What?! You heard right. They are indispensable. They are necessary. They are critically important. I told you this is the challenge level. Whew! Is this going to be tough. Ok, lets get on with it and stop describing how tough it is.

Illustration: Do you remember what brought down with a huge explosion, right after take off, the space shuttle Challenger in January of 1986? A relatively cheap little O ring, but which was so critical to the safe voyage.

And just so it may be within a church body...there are members that appear humanly to not be that important, they are relatively expendable, and we could probably get along just as well, if not better, without them, as with them. And this is just showing how much on the first or second level we are

and how much we are yet to make it to challenging level three. These members are necessary! Yes they certainly are. For God says so.

God promotes fellowship as something good for us...for each and every one of us...each of us individuals. Though something we have to strive for, still it is good for us...something we selfishly probably don't like, but is good for us. The spirit of individualism and its resulting problems for a church is not good for us. It is killing us, both individually and possibly collectively...the more like you there are. We must try our hardest to root it out.

The thinking of many in the church today is what **I** want...what **I** need...what **I** like. And that goes counter to what the Lord is accomplishing in this thing called church. He is seeking to develop a godly minded person who can think more about what will benefit the whole body...than what benefits him...he is looking at what is a risk to the whole body...not just what rubs him the wrong way. There is a much bigger picture than me personally that I need to see.

The spirit of me-me-me is alive and thriving in churches and this is sad. The more people can pull together as a team...the more people can join in deeds of one another reciprocation, the better. The more people can say it is about the body of Christ, not about me...not preeminent me, the better.

Ok, let us go back over the text once more and shave a little deeper.

I Cor. 12:14-20...*For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body, that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body, that*

would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

This first section of the text addresses insecurities...the feelings of insignificance, the feeling of not being able to favorably compare to others that affects some. And this can change though life, with its ebb and flow...as we grow and decline. It is easy for us to get down on ourselves and entertain quitting the Lord and His church, because we feel we aren't that important...especially by comparison to others we see. But, God asks rhetorically, does this feeling you have make it true? NO! Does it make it so that you are not in God's body just because you feel or say it. NO! And then Paul goes bold and says if we were all just one member we wouldn't even have a body! A body is multiple types of members, serving various roles and purposes as God has designed it to be...if you have a body you have multiple types of members. So stop acting stupid. Some may be one talent, some may be two, and some maybe five, but they each contribute something... they each bring something to the table. Some may bear 30 fold, some 60 and some 100, but they are all blessed by the good seed and they are good ground. And so stop whining and ante up...pitch in...start exercising whatever it is you can bring to the fellowship.

I Cor. 12:21-26...*The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you, nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unrepresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our*

more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

This second section deals with the arrogant headedness some can develop in the church that view themselves greater than they humbly ought. And they view others as disposable...can get along better without them, etc. They are indispensable...others are dispensable. I keep hearing in my ears Jesus saying to some high minded Jews, "Stop bragging, 'we have Abraham as our father'...the Lord of heaven can raise up seed to Abraham from these rocks."

In this section of the discussion, God is speaking of the second level of heart felt changes to our behavior from this we are learning and then even touching on the challenge. More on that last, but first notice the changed behavior...i am charged with bestowing honor and modesty upon those members that might seem to be lacking along these lines. I am being moved by the Lord to cover for them...shield them...hide them...keep them away from the evil one...prop them up...give **them** some props...make them feel needed and wanted. Do it, Whit. Do it! These are members of your body...try to make them feel good just as you do every member of your earthly body.

And lastly, the challenge level...He also says He wants no schism or divisions in the body...and He wants when one member hurts, we all do...and when one is glad, we all are...and this is for our good...each one's good. It isn't because God simply doesn't want his children to be fighting because he hates to see it, but it is for our betterment...we are improved in our inner

being...in our soul...in our spirit when we can grow in this way. We are becoming more like God...we are putting on His divine nature.

Almighty God is huge on unity...huge on all being one, even as the Godhead are one. We are installed in a fellowship of saints in a local church for each one's individual good. A big big part of my spiritual development and growth is how I get along with others. When people walk away, when they quit the church, when they leave fellowship, they are leaving God. Oh, they may still claim I believe in God. Or I pray every day. Or I read the bible. Or whatever they want. But, GOD says, if you love God, you must love your brother also. We are not speaking truth when we say we love God, who we have not even seen, but we do not love the brethren who we do see.

Conclusion: 12:27...*Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.*

My dear brothers and sisters, please think on these things. And may God richly bless you with wisdom and strength to follow through in this His will.

Amen.