

The Church – Christ's Body On Earth

Text : **I Cor. 12: 12-27**

INTRODUCTION :

A. The congregation at Corinth was established by Apostle Paul.

1. Stayed there 1 ½ yrs during his second missionary journey. **Acts 18**
2. He met Aquila and Priscilla there. (*Made tents together and preached*)
3. After a while Silas and Timothy joined him in Corinth. (*Preached full time*)
4. A powerful preacher, Apollos came to Corinth after Paul had left. (**Acts 19: 1**)

B. Studying about the church at Corinth should be very encouraging to us.

1. They had more problems than any other congregation mentioned in the N.T.
 - a. They quarreled over many things. (*Even suing each other in civil court*)
 - b. They had extreme immorality in the congregation. (**5-Father's wife, 6-harlots**)
2. Having problems is not always a bad thing.
 - a. Problems may result from activity.
 - b. Problems are often an indication that growth is occurring. (*Not born mature*)
3. The brethren were in competition with each other. (*focus on self – not loving*)

C. Our text is part of Paul's instruction for them to work together as a unit.

1. The church has a function to accomplish on the earth.
 - a. It is the agency through which God calls people out of the world to be reconciled.
* *He does not call people miraculously like He did the apostle Paul.*
 - b. It's the agency through which God matures & maintains those called out to serve.
2. When the church functions properly, it glorifies God on the earth.
3. Disunity prevents proper function.

D. From our text we will observe several lessons :

1. Vs. **12-13** All members unite into a single body.
2. Vs. **14-20** Many different kinds of members are required.
3. Vs. **21-24** The body needs all of the parts so all are important.
4. Vs. **25-26** The body can only function properly if all of its parts function together.

We must ask, “Are we functioning as Christ functioned on the earth.”

I. Vs. 12-13 All of the called out people, i.e., saved people, are placed into one body.

A. The modern attitude about “church” is not found in scripture.

1. There are not many bodies (many churches) attached to one head.
 - a. **Error** : “We all worship the same God.”
 - b. **Error** : “We’re going to the same place just taking different roads to get there.”
2. Fact :
 - a. **Matt. 7: 13-14** “Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. **14** “For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.
 - b. **Eph.: 4-6** There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; **5** one Lord, one faith, one baptism, **6** one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.
3. The very word “denomination” defies biblical teaching.
 - a. Definition of “denomination” : one of the grades or degrees in a series of designations of quantity, value, measure, weight, etc.: *He paid \$500 in bills of small denomination.*
 - b. **I Cor. 1: 10** – Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, ...

B. One is either in that one body or he is lost ... outside Christ.

1. One gets into that one body by being baptized into it.

I Cor. 1: 13a – For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, ...
2. People of faith get into Christ by being baptized into Him.
 - a. **Gal. 3: 26-27** For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. **27** For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.
 - b. **Rom. 6: 2b-3** ... How shall we who died to sin still live in it? **3** Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?
3. When baptized, all saved people are added to the body of believers, the church.

Acts 2: 41 – So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.

47 – And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

C. Once in the church all of those who are added must function as parts of one unit.

1. Common errors :
 - a. *"I believe in Christ, but organized religion is not for me."*
 - b. *"IF I go to church while traveling, I just go to whatever church is convenient."*
 - c. *"To avoid embarrassment, when visiting, I attend church with my hosts."*
2. You wouldn't attach your arm to your host's body. Why do it with Christ's arm ?
3. A popular TV preacher used to advocate, *"Attend the church of your choice."*
 * *Imagine attaching your arm to just any body that was convenient at the moment ?*

D. No parts of the body of Christ can function outside the body.

1. All saved people are added to the body. **Jesus is the Savior of the body / church.**
Eph. 5: 23b – Christ also is the head of the church,
He Himself being the Savior of the body. (Not being in body = not saved)
 2. We should love the church the way Jesus loved the church.
Eph. 5: 25 – Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also
loved the church and gave Himself up for her,
 3. No part of the body survives outside the body.
ILL – The more logs one throws on a fire, the hotter it burns,
but pull a log out of the fire and the log no longer blazes.
- * *Jesus designed the Christian to function within a body of called out people.*

II. Vs. 14-20 Many different kinds of members are required to make the one body.

A. The human body is made up of so many parts scientists can't agree how many.

1. There are above 6000 individual parts.
2. Those parts are divided into 16 major systems.
3. E.g., in the circulatory system there are more than 2 billion capillaries. (**5 mil hairs**)
4. Each part has a specific purpose which it must accomplish to make the body healthy.

B. Just as the body of Christ that carried His cross was formed of many differing parts, so His body, the church, is composed of many differing parts.

1. Every part in the body is there for a reason.
 - a. In 1890 medical scientist categorized 180 organs as "vestigial", but by 1999 that number had dropped to zero.
They learned their purpose.
 - b. For example , it used to be that tonsils were routinely removed, but they learned that they functioned to fight against infections.

2. By design, many different kinds of people are called to be part of the body of Christ.
 - a. Different races (Jews, Gentiles, Greeks, Romans)
 - b. Both sexes
3. The church needs people who are different.
 - a. Different personalities
 - b. Different abilities (*Imagine a baseball team composed of all pitchers.*)

C. You may not yet know what is your purpose in the church, but God does.

1. God has a specific use for every member in His body.

I Cor. 12: 18 – But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired.

 - b. Don't be a rebel, function; you are what you are because God wants you that way.
 - c. Note : *This is not to say we should not correct our character flaws or seek to improve our abilities to serve God.*

I Cor. 12: 31a – But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way.
2. No congregation could function if all of its members were just the same ?
 - a. **I Cor. 12: 17 – If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?**
 - b. Imagine what a congregation would be like if all of its members were shy or all ...

III. Vs. 21-24 The body needs all of the parts so all are important.

A. Just because you don't feel important doesn't mean you are unimportant.

1. Many don't function because they think others won't miss their contribution.
 - a. Imagine if one's lungs quit working because the mouth got all the attention.
 - b. Imagine if one's face was hidden and his lungs exposed.
2. You may feel small and insignificant, but small things are often vital.
 - a. The pituitary gland is the size of a pea and weighs only about .5 of a gram, but is a gatekeeper gland for many other glands in endocrine system.
 - b. The three smallest bones in our body are in our ear and we can't hear w/o them.
3. These small parts of the human body illustrate how important unseen things can be.

B. The body of Christ can never be strong if all of the members do not function.

1. A body may survive if some members don't function, but it won't be healthy/strong.
 - a. When we lose an arm or leg we adjust and go on, but we don't function normally.

- b. The loss of any part of one's body handicaps him and limits functionality.

** Did you ever drive a 8 cylinder car that only fired on 7 cylinders ?*

- 2. The body of Christ is only strong when every member functions as God intended.

Eph. 4: 15-16 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, **16** from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

- 3. There is NO Christian who has nothing to contribute.

- a. God gives everyone some ability ... everyone chooses whether or not to serve.
- b. God judges hearts ... effort rather than results.

** Remember, the one talent man (Matt. 25:15ff) was condemned for not trying.*

- 4. You don't always know the good results of your efforts.

- a. Your word of encouragement may be all it takes to keep a brother from giving up.
- b. **ILL** - Man was won to Christ by seeing his neighbor walk to church every Sunday.

IV. Vs. 25-26 The body can only function if all of its parts function together.

A. When you run or even walk fast your arms swing in timing with your feet.

- 1. Runners know if your arms don't swing in step your feet won't go at full speed.
- 2. If your mind isn't set on running you won't gain full speed.
- 3. The only way you can run efficiently is for your whole body to coordinate.

B. The church has ONE primary objective to accomplish on the earth.

- 1. The church exists to facilitate God's redemption of mankind.
 - a. We must call people out of the world by the proclamation of the gospel.
 - b. We must mature and train those who respond to the gospel to call others.
 - c. We must maintain each other's faith so as to keep all of God's called calling.
- 2. Virtually everything we do relates in some way to accomplishing God's goal.
- 3. Our success depends upon our developing the ability to function as a unit.
 - a. The success of any endeavor depends upon man's working together.
 - b. God confounded man's language because they were doing evil together. (**Gen. 11**)
 - c. *This is why I encouraged my children to play a team sport.*
- 4. We're called out of the world as individuals, but thru surrender become one body.

CONCLUSION :

A. Vs. 27 We are Christ's body on the earth.

1. Christians (**you**) are the only physical presence of Jesus on the earth.
2. As His body, we must function corporately doing what He did while on the earth.

B. Referring to us as a "body" is a perfect metaphor for what God requires of us.

1. Vs. 12-13 We are all baptized into a single body.
2. Vs. 14-20 God calls many different kinds of members because He needs diversity.
3. Vs. 21-24 Though the parts function differently all are needed & all are important.
4. Vs. 25-26 The body can only function properly if all of its parts function together.

C. We'll only accomplish God's goal (*His assignment to us*) if we function as a body.

INVITATION :

Before you can function as a part of the body, you must be baptized into the body.

Faith

Commitment

Lesson Text :

I Corinthians 12: 12-27

12 For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. **13** For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

14 For the body is not one member, but many. **15** If the foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a *part* of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a *part* of the body. **16** And if the ear says, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a *part* of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a *part* of the body. **17** If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? **18** But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. **19** If they were all one member, where would the body be? **20** But now there are many members, but one body. **21** And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." **22** On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; **23** and those *members* of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable, **24** whereas our more presentable members have no need of *it*. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that *member* which lacked, **25** so that there may be no division in the body, but *that* the members may have the same care for one another. **26** And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if *one* member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

27 Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.