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LIFE-STUDY OF FIRST CORINTHIANS MESSAGE FIFTY-EIGHT

III. ONE BODY WITH MANY MEMBERS

In dealing with the gifts, Paul's third emphasis is the Body. In 12:12-22 he speaks of the Body again and again. Today there is a neglect of the Body among many Pentecostal people. They may seek the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit without realizing that the gifts of the Spirit are altogether for the Body. The gifts are of the members, but they are not for the members. Rather, the gifts are of the members and for the Body.

We may use the members of our physical body as an illustration of how the gifts are for the Body. My hand has a particular gift and is able to do certain things. But the gift and the functions of the hand are not for the hand itself, but for the body. Likewise, the feet have the ability to walk. We may say that they have the gift of walking. But this ability, this gift, is for the body; it is not only for the feet. In the same principle, our mouth eats for the body, and our eyes see for the body. Would it not be a terrible thing if the mouth ate only for itself and not for the body? If such were the case, the food would remain in the mouth and not be supplied to the body. It would also be dreadful if the eyes functioned only for themselves and did not see for the body. The eyes have a function, the ability to see. This seeing gift, however, though it belongs to the eyes, is not for the eyes; it is for the body. The nose also functions for the body. If the nose could be selfish and keep all the air for itself, the body would not receive air. The nose breathes air for the body. All these illustrations show that the gift that belongs to each member is for the whole body.

We need to be impressed with the fact that immediately after emphasizing the Spirit, Paul turns to the Body and places a great emphasis on it. In 12:1-3 Paul stresses speaking, and in verses 4 through 11 his emphasis is on the Spirit. In these verses the word Spirit is used seven times. But in verses 12 through 22 the crucial word is the Body.

A. The Constitution of the Body

Verse 12 says, "For even as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of the body being many are one body, so also is Christ." "For" indicates that verse 12 is an explanation of verse 11. Verse 11

says that one Spirit operates all the various aspects of His manifestation, distributing them to many believers individually. This is just like our physical body being one and having many members.

In Greek Christ in verse 12 is "the Christ," referring to the corporate Christ, composed of Christ Himself as the Head and the church as His Body with all the believers as its members. All the believers of Christ are organically united with Him and constituted of His life and element to become His Body, an organism, to express Him. Hence, He is not only the Head, but also the Body. As our physical body has many members yet is one, so is this Christ.

In verse 13 Paul continues, "For also in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and were all given to drink one Spirit." As the Spirit is the sphere and element of our spiritual baptism and in such a Spirit we were all baptized into one organic entity, the Body of Christ, so we should all, regardless of our races, nationalities, and social ranks, be this one Body. Christ is the life and constituent of this Body, and the Spirit is the reality of Christ. It is in this one Spirit that we were all baptized into this one living Body to express Christ.

The believers of Christ are baptized through water and in the Spirit into Christ, the death of Christ (Rom. 6:3), the name—the Person—of the Triune God (Matt. 28:19), and the Body of Christ. Baptism ushers the believers into an organic union with Christ and the Triune God, making them living members of the Body of Christ. All the gifts, as the manifestation of the Spirit distributed to the individual believers by the Spirit, are for the profit, the building up, of this Body. The apostle is very conscious of this. He is very Body-conscious, Body-centered, unlike the Corinthians and so many other believers through the centuries who have been very much self-centered concerning spiritual gifts. Hence, following this verse, Paul gives us a long discourse concerning the Body. His intention is to rescue the Corinthian believers from self-seeking back to a concern for the Body so that they may be no longer for their individual profit, but for the building up of the Body.

In verse 13 Paul speaks of Jews and Greeks and of slaves and free. Jews and Greeks refer to races and nationalities, and slaves and free refer to social ranks.

To be baptized in the Spirit is to get into the Spirit and be lost in Him. To drink the Spirit is to take the Spirit in and have our being saturated with Him. By these two procedures we are mingled with the Spirit. To be baptized in the Spirit is the initiation of the mingling and is once for all. To drink the Spirit is the continuation and accomplishment of the mingling and is perpetual, forever.

Today Pentecostal people talk a great deal about the baptism in the Spirit, but not nearly as much about being baptized into the Body. The baptism of the Spirit is not for individuals; it is for the Body. In verse 13 Paul clearly says, "In one Spirit we were all baptized into one body." This Body is an organic entity. We know from Matthew 28:19 and Galatians 3:27 that we have been baptized into the Triune God and into Christ. The Triune God and Christ are organic and living. From Romans 6:3 we know that we have been baptized not only into Christ but also into His death. Positively, we have been baptized into the Triune God and into Christ; negatively, we have been baptized into the death of Christ. This negative aspect of baptism clears away such negative things as sin, the flesh, the self, and the old creation. The ultimate issue of baptism is that we are put into the Body. Hallelujah, we are in the Body!

If we would have a proper appreciation of the spiritual gifts, we need to see the three important matters of speaking, the Spirit, and the Body. Spiritual gifts are a matter of speaking, by the Spirit, and for the Body. Whenever you use a spiritual gift for yourself and not for the Body, you annul your gift. To repeat, the gift is not for the member itself; it is for the body. If the feet used their gift of walking for themselves and not for the body, they would nullify their gift. Many are seeking the spiritual gifts and some seemingly have received the gifts. But in many cases they have received these gifts in vain because they use them for themselves and not for the Body. Many of today's Christians have no thought of the Body. Actually, we do not need to seek the gifts so much. Instead, we should simply learn to be for the Body. If we are for the Body, we shall have an abundance of gifts. Furthermore, being for the Body will enrich, uplift, strengthen, and even multiply our gifts.

In dealing with the gifts, Paul was very Body-conscious, very church conscious. His concern was the building up of the church. The gifts are not for self-edification; they are for the building up of the Body.

I wish to testify by the Lord's mercy that throughout the years I have always been concerned for the Body. The reason I have a strong gift of speaking is that I

have never had the thought to use this gift for myself. My burden, concern, and intention have been and still are for the churches. I have no desire to be a popular speaker. My burden is for the Body and for all the churches. The more I speak for the churches and to the churches, the more I have to minister.

I appreciate Paul's word in 12:13: "In one Spirit we were all baptized into one body...and were all given to drink one Spirit." Where can we drink one Spirit? We drink the Spirit in the Body. If we were not in the Body, there would not be any flow. There would be nothing to drink. The flow is in the Body. According to the book of Revelation, in eternity the flow will be in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 22:1-2). Today, the flow, the river, is in the Body. In one Spirit we have all been baptized into one Body to drink one Spirit.

Burdens for Church Prayers

- Pray for the blending and one accord among the saints.
- May the Lord raise up many brothers to bear the testimony together.
- Pray for the burden to raise up next generation for building up of the body of Christ.
- Pray for YP that they will be companions with one another to pursue the Lord together.
- Pray for the English-speaking testimony and gospel preaching on West Valley College campus.
- For GOW training: Vital groups be raised up, attending prayer meeting, prophesying on Lord's day by daily enjoying His word and pursue the truth.

Announcement

- Morning Revival: ITERO Message 6.
- GOWT 6/16 Sat. 8:45AM at SC meeting hall, follow dress code, exercise our spirit and receive the training of grace.
- Tuesday prayer meeting in Campbell meeting hall.
- GOW 6th term training registration: register with the brothers in small group to be trained by His grace and practice steadfastly unto Zion/overcomers.
- Bible Camp 6/18~22, SST for YP 7/22~27, please sanctify these times.
- Chinese scholar training in NJ, 7/27-8/3. Continuing training in Fremont 8/2-8/5.