

Many Members But One Body

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Almost everyone speaks of members of the church. But when the term "member" is used in the Bible it is used with the term "body." The world is noted for having many religious bodies. But the word of the Lord recognizes only one body. The body is the church (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22,23). It is Christ's body. Just as the physical body has many members, so Christ's spiritual body has many members; not many bodies but many members. Notice these particular features:

"For the body is not one member, but many." (1 Cor. 12:14).

"But now hath God set the members each one of them in the body, even as it pleased him." (1 Cor. 12:18).

"And if they were all one member, where were the body?" (1 Cor. 12:19).

"But now they are many members, but one body." (1 Cor. 12:20).

"Now ye are the body of Christ, and severally members thereof." (1 Cor. 12:27).

Some preachers, a few years ago, introduced the idea that whatever one Christian did as spiritual duty the church was doing; that if there was only one Christian at a given place that was the church. This was their argument in attempting to prove that the church could engage in any practice which the person could do. Specifically, they argued that if a Christian could support a school then the church could do so; or if a Christian could build and support an orphan home, the church could do so. Their premise, however, was false. The above citations show that the body is the church; and that it is not one member but many. They contradict a specific statement of Scripture by their premise.

The Bible speaks of many things which are duties of people who are members, but they are not duties of the church. Fathers are to nurture their children in the chastening and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4) but this is not the duty of the church. Children are to obey their parents, but the church is not to do so. Some believers who have widows in

need of relief, are to relieve them so that the church not be burdened (1 Tim. 5:16).

Not all members have the same capability, the same degree of efficiency and the same sensibilities. This makes for the different functions for the complete body. One may be more adept than others in preaching, giving, ministering to the needy, visiting the sick, or encouraging the fainthearted. All these are useful. No member is to despise another because he can do something which the other cannot do. Even the "feeble" members are "necessary" (1 Cor. 12:22). And the less honorable parts are to have more abundant honor by the rest of the members (v.23) because this is the way God has put the body of Christ together (v.24). Unless we recognize this, we will in our pride and arrogancy bring discord and strife to the body (v.25). And if we have the proper attitude toward the members we will have empathy, we will suffer when the other member suffers, and rejoice when he rejoices (v. 26). We are "severally members one of another" (Rom. 12:5). We like to have the notion that in an incidental way he is a member of the church, but we must have the proper view that the other member though weak or negligent is a part of me.

Each Christian is a part of the body. But some members feel that they are just detachable segments. They attend only as they please, work only when they feel like it, want all others to please them, but never feel that they have a responsibility at all. Does the hand have no responsibility to the body? Of course it does. And that negligent, complaining member has responsibility to the body, the church. Some need to wake up here before it is too late in the judgment.

Unity in diversity as some are now teaching is not taught in this passage. Their doctrine is that members who disagree in faith and practice can be united. This is nowhere taught in the Bible. The passage speaks of members who have different authorized functions, not about opposing faith and function.

