

25 That there should be no schism in the body; but [that] the members should have the same care one for another.

A schism is a cleft, a rent, a division. This word is used for the old wine skins destroyed by putting new wine in them. As seen in earlier chapters, a condition that would lead to destructive division was developing among the believers at Corinth. Destructive because they were to be ONE. And the members were to have the same care for one another. This care was to be seen in loving concern being shown for both spiritual and physical needs. Whether sharing supper (ch. 11) or avoiding doing something that might stumble another (chs. 8-10). When using one's gift to edify or maintaining friendly relations with all in the local gathering, whether likable or not.

This unity among believers is like a person. *26a And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it.* If my thumb is injured my whole body is affected. I have to adjust my activities to avoid hurting the sore place. I have to adjust how I get things done so I can do them without using that thumb. I even avoid close contact with others to avoid accidentally exposing my thumb to more pain. More severe injuries place even greater restraint on a person's activities. So Christ suffers when one suffers.

26b ...or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it.

When I receive a compliment I feel good all over. If I get a raise at work I walk with a lighter step. When a fellow believer is used of the Lord some way for blessing to another don't we rejoice with him in it! Sometimes we have somehow developed a self focused, envious attitude toward our brothers and sisters in the Lord and refuse to glory in their glorifying the Lord. Paul's glory and boast was in those he had ministered to for their blessing and God's glory. Watch for these expressions in his epistles.

27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

We learn that the local assembly as a whole is considered the body of Christ in that place. It is not a group of individuals agreeing to get together for some worthy purpose, even if that purpose is to work for the Lord or to worship Him. If two or three believers get together for an evangelical work of some kind they are not the body of Christ. If two or three believers get together privately for prayer or to study the Bible they are not the body of Christ. They are indeed members of the body of Christ but unless they happen to be the only believers in that locale they do not comprise the body of Christ in that locale. The "Ye" in this statement is a plural pronoun, just as Paul tells the Corinthians "Ye are the temple of the Holy Spirit" in ch 3:16. They were that together. We each are personally the temple of the Holy Spirit as well, ch. 6:19. By one Spirit we have all been baptized into one body and each given to drink of Him., ch 12:13. Now the body of Christ includes all believers world wide, even those who are astronauts in outer space. But locally the

believers in that place are said to be "body of Christ" and are each members individually. Locally the believers are sufficiently gifted and otherwise equipped to function as one body there in that place. They are also authorized to make collective decisions in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, ch 5:3-5. There is no formal central or regional governing body organization envisioned in scripture. Decisions and actions do not have to be reviewed or ratified by anyone outside the local assembly. The principle of the unity of the body and respect for the Head calls for world wide acceptance and respect for decisions locally made in the name of Christ.

The principle of the unity of the Body also makes room for appeals by other assemblies if local actions seem to be unscriptural or do not seem to fit known facts. Utmost cooperation is called for in view of there being One Head. and One Body. An example of one such appeal and a united outcome is described in Acts 15. For any person or any other assembly to simply ignore or override a decision made locally is a denial of the basic principle: **There is one Body, Christ!** (Ch.12:12) We must recognize that Christ only directs **one** decision in a given matter. **He is not divided** no matter how much we may be. We must take care to seek His will together and do it.

The gifts are now enumerated again. This list seems to be in order of benefit to the body of Christ and glory to the Lord. The important fundamental is that **God has set** some in the Assembly. We don't set anyone in the Assembly, He does. There are three particularly important gifts first. Then he says "after that" etc. Those listed first are those that give us basics for life and walk. Apostles, prophets, teachers. Supporting gifts and sign gifts are then listed: miracles, then healings, helps, governments and diversities in languages. Then he stresses the fact that we aren't all each expected to have all of the gifts. He asks are all apostles? Etc. The obvious answer implied is NO! This is consistent with the diversity of the body described before. Don't let any one try to tell you that because you do not have a certain gift you are not Christ's, or don't have the Holy Spirit. Both are received by faith upon trusting upon the Lord as our Savior.

On the other hand they (the Assembly) are encouraged to covet the best gifts. These would come in new converts or migration from other assemblies. They would be a means of greater edification for the Lord's people. Yet gift is not the end in view. He has a **more excellent way** for us than simply receiving and displaying supernatural spiritual gifts. It is the very nature of God Himself. **Love!** Love that edifies.

By Ron Canner, September 24, 2003

Correction: The reference to John 1:11, in the middle of column 2, page 1 of the September 10, 2003 Dig Deeper, should be Matthew 3:11.