

# Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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## One Body – Many Members

(Jerry Fite)

Paul connects with the church in terms of “*we who are many, are one body in Christ, and severally members one of another*” (Romans 12:5). To the Corinthians, he writes, “*For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ*” (I Corinthians 12:12). The analogy of the human body is helpful in understanding the function of members in Christ’s spiritual body, the church (Ephesians 1:23). The foot, hand, ear, eye, and nose are part of a body; but they have distinctive functions in contributing to the well-being of the whole. The same is true with members of the church. Each member is necessary as each one contributes to the whole with distinctive gifts.

Paul’s discussion regarding the one body and many members is offered in the context of members being exhorted to use their miraculous gifts, and even their non-miraculous gifts to benefit the one body. “*And having gifts differing according to the grace that was given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of our faith; or ministry, let us give our-*

*selves to our ministry; or he that teacheth, to his teaching, or he that exhorteth, to his exhorting: he that giveth, let him do it with liberality; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness*” (Romans 12:6-8). From miraculous prophesying to the non-miraculous cheerful mercy, the many members are functioning to the benefit of the one body.

One member should not think, “I am not needed, because I do not have the gifts that others have”; nor should one member disregard other members who do not have the same gift as they (I Corinthians 12:15-21). Channeling the miraculous gifts through the avenue of love was essential in Corinth. Love seeks the well-being of others, and an edified body is the goal of the exercise of all gifts (I Corinthians 13-14).

The one body – many members truth has been used in Christendom to promote error. Various religious bodies see the one church comprised of many denominations. But Paul is not referring to the inclusion of distinctive denominations in the one church. He is including both *Jews* and *Greeks* and both *bond* and *free* as being the many distinctive

members united together in one body through baptism (I Corinthians 12:13). Distinctive religious spiritual bodies, teaching different doctrines in one body is not the Holy Spirit’s “one body – many members” concept. Individuals entering the one body through the one baptism is the Holy Spirit’s application (*cf. Ephesians 4:4-5*).

To many today, the many parts in the one body are distinctive groups: “*Children’s workers, youth workers, 20-somethings, life groups, compassion and outreach ministries, support groups, senior care, greeters, security, global ministries. So many distinct interests and roles... One church, many parts*” (Marshall Shelley – *Leadership Journal; Fall 2014; page 8*).

Each individual in the body has the responsibility to work in saving the lost (Col. 4:2-6). Young and old should interact in the church (I Peter 5:5). Each member should manifest compassion to those in need and greet visitors in our midst (Lk. 10:25-37, Heb. 13:2). Each Christian should support the weak (I Thess. 5:14), not leave it to a group to meet the need. The many can be overly organized to a fault!