

One Jesus – One Church 1 Corinthians 12 & 13

There is only one Jesus Christ.

And according to the New Testament, He has only one Church. We look and see many varied denominations, congregations and fellowships, Roman Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist, Pentecostal, Orthodox, Coptic ... the list seems endless.

When God the Son looks from heaven at the world He helped create, He sees only one Church – His – the One for which He bled and died, the One on which He pours the Holy Spirit. One Jesus – one Church, made up of all those people worldwide and in heaven who trust and follow Him and have the Holy Spirit living in our hearts.

The Apostle Paul likens us to a body, made up of many different parts, different in size, appearance, function and ability. Ears don't do what elbows do, they're not supposed to! And both are limited by range without feet and legs AND heart and lungs to take them to new locations. When all the bits, guided by the Head, do as they're designed to, together, it's really quite fantastic. A work of genius, no less. The Bible speaks of how God 'knits us together in our mother's womb', that we are 'fearfully and wonderfully made'. (Ps 139)

Paul says Jesus' followers are like a body with Jesus as our Head and His Spirit as our life and soul. He says we are *Christ's* body, united with Him. This means some great encouragements but also some important responsibilities.

Jesus promised He wouldn't leave us alone. He comes and lives with us through the presence of the Holy Spirit but more, He makes us part of this 'Body', members of His Church. We're not alone. We have our Lord and we're given each other as brothers and sisters, fellow members. We belong together, He has made it so by giving us the same Spirit.

So we have the privilege of belonging and we also have specific parts to play! We are to be as Jesus' hands and feet and voice to those around us. Church, like the body, is a brilliant idea because it means we have a wide range of people, resources and abilities and if everyone does what they're good at in harmony with everyone else we get lots of good things done really well.

Not everyone can preach like Peter. Not everyone can sing like Pavarotti. But this is ok. My wife is a gifted secretary for which I am very glad because I'm

hopeless with paperwork! We each do what we're good at for the same cause and make a great team.

No one is good at everything but everyone can do something. Do what you can with all your heart for Jesus and His Church. The Holy Spirit will help you, enhance your gifts and your service will prove fruitful for God's Kingdom!

Now Paul wrote these things to a group of Christians in Corinth where things were NOT in fact going smoothly. Yes they had put their trust in Jesus and yes the Spirit had given various gifts to use in service but it wasn't going well.

Some members were proud of their abilities and inferred other members who didn't share these particular gifts were somehow inferior Christians. Apparently some in this fellowship were very eloquent, gifted speakers. This made others feel insecure and jealous. This congregation was in danger of splitting. Paul tells them in earlier chapters of his letter that despite their faith and obvious gifts they are actually behaving in a way that is 'immature'.

They may be 'born again' of the Spirit but they need to 'grow up' spiritually. They need to become more like Jesus in character, showing patience, respect and consideration for each other. So Paul goes on to speak in this famous ch 13 about the first and greatest 'fruit' that grows in us when we stay humbly surrendered to the Holy Spirit. He talks about *love*.

For a body to be effective all the parts need one Head to be in charge and one Heart motivating all to co-operate and work together for the common good. For the Church, the Body of Christ to live and worship and witness effectively we need to be united and motivated by the love of Jesus, in us, between us, among us, binding us together, making us one with Him and each other.

We don't need jealousy or pride. Rather we are to practise qualities like patience, kindness, forgiveness, delighting in the gifts God has given each other and that together we can serve Him with powerful impact in our communities.

It is the Lord's will not just that we should know Him as individuals, but that we should trust and serve Him together as one 'body'. United in Him we have one purpose, one cause, one calling – to glorify Him, to make Him known, to persuade others and make disciples of all nations.

To this end we are given the same Holy Spirit that we might know the same uniting power – the power of Christ's redeeming love!