



October 30, 2024

MESSENGER

QUOTE FOR TODAY

“Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.”
2 Corinthians 13:11

INFO

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THE BAFFLING BODY

In the prayer circle just before last Sunday's Morning Worship Service, Praise Team Leader Mike O'Neal-Petterson said in his opening remarks:

“I've always been baffled by the Doctrine of the Trinity, but I'm even more baffled by the way God works in the Body of Believers in Christ.”

That really stuck in my head. Some Christian doctrine may be pretty hard to fathom, but Christian fellowship has the potential to be even more mind-blowing.

About two hours later, after a hearty potluck meal, members of the ABC family gathered for our Quarterly Congregational Business Meeting. I remember an old pastor commenting to the younger version of me, “In my career as a pastor, I've seen some of the *most wonderful* things happen in Baptist Church congregational meetings -- and also some of the *most awful!*” Well, by God's grace, we didn't experience anything nearly that bad on Sunday, but there were some ups and downs, some ruffled feathers and misunderstandings. Just as with our own family members, we don't always say the right thing and we talk more than we listen. But that's part of being the Body of Christ.

Paul wrote one of his earliest letters, First Corinthians, when that Church had been in existence for only about twenty years. In that Book, he talks more about what it means to be the Body of Christ than in any of his other Letters. In the very first chapter he confronts the “divisions” (verse 10) and “quarrels” (verse 11) among them caused by loyalty to various leaders:

What I mean is that each of you says, “I belong to Paul,” or “I belong to Apollos,” or “I belong to Cephas,” or “I belong to Christ.” Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? . . . Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel—and not with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power.
(verses 12-13, 17)

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In the next few chapters, after dealing with some issues about how a Christian should live in a society whose standards and values are so different from their Christian life, he returns to the subject of the Church as the Body of Christ. He indicates that our living connection with others in the Body is God's way of keeping us from going astray. In Chapter 12 he tells us that we should see the Church Body as a living thing, in which individual believers act as interdependent limbs and organs coordinated into action together:

There are varieties of gifts but the same Spirit, and there are varieties of services but the same Lord, and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of powerful deeds, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses. . . .

If the foot would say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear would say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God

arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect, whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it. (12:4-11, 15-26).

Chapter 12 ends with this line:
*I will show you a **still more excellent way.***
(verse 31)

That "more excellent way" is found in Chapter 13, the **Great Love Chapter!**

Pastor George Van Alstine