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# Announcing A Series of GOSPEL SERMONS

SPEAKER

Scott Smelser

FEBRUARY 20, 21, 22

Night Services at 7:30 P.M.

Sunday Morning 9:45 and 10:45 A. M.

## Fultondale Church of Christ

2005 Elkwood Drive  
Fultondale, Alabama

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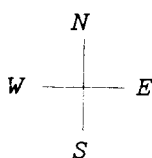
Fultondale  
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Elkwood Drive is about .8 mile west of I-65

# 1 Corinthians 12:1-31: What Does it Teach?

Richard Boone

There is much discussion in religious circles about the meaning and application of 1 Cor. 12:1-31. Many assert that this passage teaches that there are many bodies (denominations) of Christ with Christ Himself being the exclusive Head. One Bible that I have has this section of verses entitled "Unity in Diversity", in reference to the many-denominations viewpoint. With this viewpoint, one quite frequently hears "Go join the church of your choice" which many folks do. We need to carefully analyze and understand this passage so as to teach what the passage teaches, and be able to refute any false doctrine dealing with this passage. Let us consider 1) to whom the Apostle wrote, 2) **what** he wrote, and 3) disprove any false teachings that may be faced in dealing with this passage.

First, let us note to whom Paul is writing. In 1 Cor. 1:2, Paul writes, "unto the church of God which is at Corinth." The statement here, as well as what is in Acts 18:1-7, show that there was a body of saints at Corinth. In 7:1, Paul writes, "Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me." It is evident that Paul penned, through inspiration, (1 Cor. 2:9-13; 2 Tim. 3:16,17), this letter to settle several problems and questions at Corinth. One of these questions is found in chapter 12 where he says in verse 1, "Now concerning spiritual gifts brethren I would not have you ignorant". There were problems with those in Corinth who had spiritual gifts and Paul uses this chapter to show the proper relation of one's gift to that of another. Now that we understand to whom Paul wrote and somewhat about what he wrote, let us notice what he wrote and taught.

The following could be considered a simplified outline of 1 Corinthians 12: vv. 1-11) the variety of spiritual gifts, and vv. 12-31) the unity of various gifts. In verses 8-10, Paul lists nine spiritual gifts which could cause chaos and strife between brethren if used improperly. Paul reminds

Corinth that the Holy Spirit was the giver of these gifts and hence, no one had the right to think that his gift was better than another's (see also verse 4). In verses 12-31, Paul compares the church to the human body to illustrate how the various parts work together for the good of the whole body. Five parts of the human body (foot, hand, ear, eye, and nose) illustrate that each member has a function toward the good and completion of the whole. The variety of the gifts (vv. 1-11) can work together in harmony for the good of the entire body (vv. 12-31). Another interesting observation is that Paul makes specific application to the Corinthians. In verse 27, he writes "Now ye (the Corinthians -- RB) are the body of Christ and members in particular." He goes on to show that God has established certain functions (vv. 28-30) in the church so that it can be complete, just as each limb and organ complete the human anatomy. Each member has to fulfill his role/function so that there be no schism in the body (v. 25) and to insure that the body will not suffer as a result of one not fulfilling his function (v. 26).

Finally, we should examine false teachings that use this passage as the basis for their teaching. The most prevalent though is "There are many denominations with one Head, Christ". There are problems that ultimately must be dealt with if this is true. One is that it is in direct contradiction with what Paul taught in 1 Corinthians 12. Paul wrote that the hand, foot, eye, ear, and nose work together in harmony for the whole. This cannot exist under the "many bodies" teaching. The Head (Christ) gives instructions to the members. You then have Christ in total confusion if the 'many bodies - one Head' teaching is true. "Why?", you may ask. If there are many bodies, then you have Presbyterians (hand) teaching one thing, Catholics (foot) teaching another, and Baptists (eye) something else, and on you go. The body

## Schedule of Services

### Sundays:

Bible Classes . . . .9:45 a.m.

Worship . . . . . 10:45 a.m.

Worship . . . . . 6:00 p.m.

### Wednesdays:

Bible Class . . . . 10:00 a.m.

Bible Classes . . . .7:30 p.m.

### I Corinthians 12 (Cont'd)

is in confusion, one hand fighting against another and the Head is made the author of confusion. 1 Cor. 14:33 says, "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace." Which is true? That which Paul teaches or that which is popular with man's thinking? I'll take Paul, thank you. Another verse used in conjunction with this teaching is John 15:5, "I am the vine and ye are the branches." Here it is asserted that Christ

is the vine and the branches are denominations. The text of John 15 shows Christ speaking to and of his disciples, not bodies. There are more difficulties. If this is taught with John 15:5, the Christ bears as fruit Lutherans, Methodists, Episcopalians, Jehovah's Witnesses, Pentecostal Holinesses and more. His fruit constantly differs; it is NEVER the same. When you plant corn seed, you get corn. When you plant grapes, you get grapes, each seed bearing its own kind. Christ said "Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles" (Matt. 7:16). Certainly not!! Likewise Christ does not "bear" many denominations. This line of thought then must be rejected as false and exposed in every way.

Please consider carefully all things said on these passages for our teaching and application on such will play a part in determining our eternal destiny.

## Is Sincerity Enough?

*Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.*

There can be little doubt that sincerity is essential to pleasing God. Jesus reserved the most scathing rebukes of his earthly ministry for hypocrites. (Matt. 23). He said the first and great commandment is to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." (Matt. 22:37). Religious words and services that are not from the heart is useless. (Matt. 15:8; 1 Cor 13:1-3). A pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith are essential to pleasing God. (1 Tim. 1:5)

I am convinced that only conscientious, sincere and devout people will go to heaven. I don't believe there will be any hypocrites and pretenders there. But, is sincerity and devotion enough to save one? Is it possible for two people to be equally sincere, devout and conscientious in their worship and service toward God and one be saved and the other lost? Does the fact that one is sincerely doing what he thinks is right toward God make him right? Is it not possible that one might be sincere and devout and, at the same time, be ignorant and/or deceived as to what God requires of one to be saved? Once we see that one

is sincere and devout in his religious service, should we leave him undisturbed to do what he believes to be right?

It is possible for one to even kill the Lord's servants thinking he offers God service. (John 16:2). "Oh, but killing the Lord's servants could never be right", one may say. If sincerely thinking a thing is right before God makes it right for that person, then such killing would be right for such persons. Obviously, there must be some standard by which to measure right and wrong before God other than one's sincerity and devotion toward the Lord. In the final judgment, what one sincerely believes to be right or wrong is not going to be the standard of judgment. The word of God will judge us. (John 12:48). It must be preached. (2 Tim. 4:2). It must be obeyed. (1 Pet. 1:22). One is born again by

### SISTER THELMA KNOX

Sister Thelma Knox, a long-time member of this congregation, passed away recently. We extend our sympathy to her loved ones.

it. (1 Pet. 1:23). It lives and abides forever. (1 Pet. 1:23-25). Peter then shows that the word of God is not some inner voice, but "the word which by the gospel was preached to you" (1 Pet. 1:25b). Regardless to how devout and sincere one is, he still must conform to the objective standard of the word that the apostles preached -- the New Testament revelation.

In Acts, chapter 2, Peter tells an audience of "devout men" (v.5) that they had crucified the Christ (v.36). They were told to "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized ... for the remission of sins" (v. 38). If being devout was enough, why must they repent? Why must they be baptized "for the remission of sins"? Evidently, being devout is not enough.

In Acts, chapter 9, Saul of Tarsus was converted. What kind of person was Saul? "A wicked persecutor of Christians", you answer. That's right, but that is not all. He was a honest, devoted, sincere persecutor of Christians. He was doing what he conscientiously thought to be right toward God. He later said, "I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day" (Acts 23:1) and "Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them." (Acts 26:9,10). Paul always did what he thought was right and what he sincerely believed God wanted him to

do. Evidently, such sincerity was not enough. He later said he was chief of sinners. (1 Tim. 1:15).

In Acts, chapter 10, Cornelius was "a devout man and one who feared God with all his household. who gave alms generously to the people. who prayed to God always." (ch. 10:2). He heard words of which [he] and all [his] household will be saved". (ch. 11:14). If he was yet to be save, then he was presently lost. Here is a devout, God-fearing, alms-giving and constantly praying man who was lost! He still had to hear the gospel, believe it and be baptized to be saved. (vv. 34-48). Again, God must require more of us than sincere, conscientious, heart felt devotion. It is possible for one to have a zeal of God and it not be according to knowledge (Rom. 10:1).

One must devoutly, sincerely, and conscientiously learn, accept and obey the truth to be saved -- to become a Christian. (1 Pet. 1:22-25). As a Christian, one must devoutly, sincerely and conscientiously walk according to the truth of the Gospel. (cf. Gal. 2:14ff; 5:7). All spiritual truth is found in the word of the gospel which the apostles preached. (John 16:13; Gal. 1:8-10).

"Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God." (2 John 9). It does not say "whoever (unless he is devout, sincere, and conscientious) transgresses ...", but "whoever" -- sincere or not.

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