

Evotional – 22 June 2014 – 1 Corinthians 12:12-31

Those who follow that boring game called football know that a common football chant is ‘who are ya?’ If we were asked that question as a church, Paul would give the striking answer ‘we are the body of Christ’ (v27). But what does he say that means?

1. We are one body

The word ‘one’ occurs 10+ times in the passage, but the Corinthians were not behaving like that. There were issues with selfishness (eg Lord’s Supper, ch11), disunity (ch1,3), individualistic obsessions with tongues (ch14), focusing on individual rights (ch6). So they were not a unit/team (v12-13) but a bunch of prima donnas.

Imagine Wayne Rooney (or some other football gent) stamping on your foot, or telling you that you have beautiful eyes; it would probably not just be your foot/eyes that react but your whole body – see v26.

Church is not about me and what I can get out of it; it’s not even mainly about my personal relationship with God; what songs I want to sing, what service time suits me, who I like to talk to. It is about us valuing and prioritising each other, however different or weak we are. (See v21-22, 24b-25.) It’s tempting as (say) a hand to focus my attention on other hands. It’s also tempting to avoid being seen as weak / needy, not allowing others to suffer with me.

2. We are many parts

George Best (whoever he is) said of David Beckham (he’s Victoria’s husband): ‘He cannot kick with his left foot, he cannot head a ball, he cannot tackle and he doesn’t score many goals’. Each person in a team plays their little but important part, and so it is in the church.

Read v18. This motley group of people was not a mistake – God arranged it that way! Imagine if everyone were like you (v17,19) – it would be ridiculous. But would anyone say ‘Because I am not [extrovert; clever; sure of my faith; healthy; Baptist ...] I do not belong to BGBC’?

This is significant when we come to v27-31 (and similar lists in the Bible) which are hard to interpret. Some of the words only come here in the Bible, and scholars are not even sure how to translate them, yet alone how we should apply them. I like to think that this is a good thing – we are not supposed to see this list as a formula for how to do church today – the point Paul is making is about diversity.

Some gifts appear very ‘ordinary’ and practical – but these are bad words to use because all gifts have been appointed by God; all are spiritual gifts. ‘Spiritual’ is about who they come from and how we receive them, not about how they make us feel or whether they impress others.

3. We are not perfect yet

But what about (for example) healings and miracles?

At BGBC we aim to be ‘living like Jesus and sharing him with others as we seek first the Kingdom of God’. The kingdom is (not only) ‘in here’ but (also) ‘out there’, in our workplaces, neighbourhoods, PODs, etc.

But also the kingdom is (not only) ‘now’ but (also) ‘not yet’; Jesus announced that it had come, but also told us to pray for it to come; it has started but not been completed; it is on its way. We have to try to hold these two truths in tension, even though that is difficult. If we don’t we can fall into one of two extremes:

- The Kingdom of God is just in the future. This life, and this present world, don’t really matter; we just need to cling on until Jesus comes again.
- The Kingdom of God is already here, so we can expect a heavenly experience now. This is what the Corinthians thought. As some football bloke once said ‘They think it’s all over’. So when Paul talks about the kingdom to the Corinthians (see particularly ch15) he mainly focuses on the future.

So ... we should expect to see miracles and healings (as well as medical and social advances) because these are signs of the kingdom. But ... we should not expect them to be as frequent as we would like them to be. For the time being we may sometimes be joyful and amazed, but sometimes frustrated and disappointed.

Questions:

- 1. What do you find easy or difficult about being part of the body of Christ?**
- 2. How can we make sure nobody ever says ‘Because I am not [...] I do not belong to BGBC’, but that it is only their relationship with Christ that matters?**
- 3. What do you think about healings and miracles?**
- 4. What does it mean for you to ‘seek first the kingdom of God’?**