



The Tri-Cities Edifier

Volume 10

May 5, 2024

No. 18

Until We Have Ears

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Men seldom see things alike. It's not that reality wears so many faces; it's just that men choose to look at things differently. Some people in Jesus' day were sure that He was the Son of God, but they were in the minority. Many very religious people thought He kept the wrong company—prostitutes, well-known extortionists, notorious people. And, after all, "a man is known by the company he keeps." He said He spent His time with sinners because they needed Him ([Luke 5:31](#)).

But most people thought that was a likely story. Some thought they had never heard a man speak with the wisdom and clarity that Jesus did ([John 7:45](#)). Others laughed at the idea that a man of such little learning and background—a nobody—could be thought wise, except perhaps by the ignorant and irreligious ([Mark 6:3](#); [John 7:47-49](#)). Jesus said that His teaching came from God and that those who wanted to do God's will would be able to recognize that ([John 7:15-17](#)). Many, however, still complained that His teaching was vague ([John 10:24](#)) and often preposterous ([John 6:42](#), [52](#)).

Jesus did not come to a very good end. It is said that men die as they have lived—and Jesus' death was scandalous. He was charged with high crimes by the rulers of His people and executed in the company of two notorious thieves. Many thought it absolutely ludicrous that such a weak, pathetic figure should claim to be the Son of God, the King of kings, and they said so ([Matthew 27:39-44](#)). The truth is that even His disciples who had believed in Him were deeply shaken by the cross ([Matthew 26:56](#)). Jesus said He had to die to save others from their sins ([Matthew 26:28](#)). Still, the most learned Jews likely continued to repeat what the law clearly said, that a man hanged on a tree was accursed of God ([Deuteronomy 21:22-23](#)).

From every worldly-wise and fleshly point of view Jesus of Nazareth could not have been the Christ of God ([1 Corinthians 1:23](#)). That was how most folk felt about it. Which is not surprising since most folk have usually been worldly-wise and practical-minded. In [2 Corinthians 5:16](#) Paul says that he at one time saw Jesus just this way—"after the flesh"—a man who got just what was coming to Him. This is not really so remarkable. Isaiah had long before announced that God's Servant would be "despised and rejected of men," and they would "esteem him smitten of God" because of His own great wickedness ([Isaiah 53:3-4](#)). He had earlier described Him as "a stone of stumbling and . . . a rock of offense" ([Isaiah 8:14](#)). But Paul did not go on looking at Jesus in this hard-headed, practical-minded, worldly-wise, "common sense" sort of way ([2 Corinthians 5:16](#)). He came to understand that not just the Gentiles but the Jews as well, all men, were hopelessly ensnared by sin ([Romans 3:23](#)). He saw why Jesus had to come into the world ([1 Timothy 1:15](#)) and why He had to die in our stead ([Galatians 1:4](#)). He became a new man in Christ with a new set of values and a new way of looking at things ([2 Corinthians 5:17](#)). He learned to walk by faith in God rather than by human wisdom ([2 Corinthians 5:7](#)).

The gospel does not deny that Jesus' death was shameful. Apostolic preachers did not reject the Old Testament edict that a man hanged on a tree was accursed of God. They swallowed whole the disgrace and shame of the cross ([Galatians 3:13b](#)) and moved to the more critical question of "Why?" Why was the Christ of God brought to such degradation? Why was He made to suffer such contempt? And then they gave the answer that we all so dread to hear. It was not for His own sins but for ours that He was accursed ([Galatians 3:13a](#)). "God laid upon him the iniquity of us all" ([Isaiah 53:6](#)). "He who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf . . . that we might become the righteousness of God in him" ([2 Corinthians 5:21](#)).

We, too, may first look at the cross and imagine that we are seeing a scandalous man dying a scandalous death—but if we look long enough, and honestly enough, we will finally realize that the scandal is that of our own sinfulness and the glory is that of His great love. Whether that happens to us or not depends on the kind of spirit we bring to the cross. A proud man will find it incomprehensible and unacceptable. The humble man will find it altogether believable and desirable. As Jesus Himself said, no one can hear the message until he has ears to hear it ([Luke 8:8](#)). The choice between pride and humility is clearly ours.

Responsibility to the Body

Noah Diestelkamp

Often, dissimilarity between people makes it difficult to interact without it feeling awkward and forced. When we interact with other Christians, we know that we have the most important thing in common – we are a part of the same body in Christ. But that is the “gimme” answer – simply knowing this does not make our relationships automatically natural or enjoyable. Having Jesus in common doesn’t make us similar to one another! After all, how similar is your eye to your foot? Your kidneys to your brain? Our relationships with one another are not based on us being *like* each other; they are based on us being a part of the *same body*.

In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul uses this illustration to help us understand our relationships in Christ: “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ” (1 Cor. 12:12). In this context, Paul teaches several important principles. Everyone has their place in the body (v.15). God designed and arranged the body parts (v.18). We should appreciate what others bring to the body (v.21). On these principles, he builds what I believe to be his main point in this section: SAME BODY = RESPONSIBILITY. We are to *care* for one another and fulfill our “bodily role” in *love*.

God “so composed the body” that—instead of being divided—we members of the body would care for one another, suffering and rejoicing together (v.24-26). Our concern for each other should be as strong as our concern for ourselves because we are of the same body! We won’t all look or sound the same, nor will we all fill the same function. Nonetheless, we are of the same body.

Paul then points out that, because we all fulfill different roles in the body of Christ, we ought to be less concerned with *what* role we “get” and be more concerned with *how* we fulfill that role – namely that we fulfill our God-given roles in love. This is the “more excellent way” of verse 31. Do all have the same gifts? NO. Do all have the same responsibility to one another? YES. Our responsibility is to build up the body of Christ in love – with whatever skills, circumstances, and opportunities God has given us! Regardless of how skillful we are, we “gain nothing” if we do not have love (13:1-3).

This is not an optional part of following Christ. If we are in the body of Christ, no matter our personalities, skillsets, or positions in life, we have a responsibility in the process of “building up.” This is accomplished through Jesus-centered relationships as we each take however much or little God has entrusted us with and use it to care for one another in love. *Think on These Things* 3/14/24