

1 Corinthians 12:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And if they were all one member, where were the body?

Analysis

And if they were all one member, where were the body?—Paul's climactic rhetorical question: if uniformity prevailed, the body itself would cease to exist. A body requires multiplicity—many members with diverse functions. En melos ("one member") is a contradiction in terms; melos (member) implies belonging to something larger. A solitary organ isn't a body but a fragment.

The question's force: Corinthian insistence on gift-uniformity (everyone should speak in tongues) would destroy the church. Unity doesn't mean uniformity; it means diverse members functioning in coordinated harmony under the head's direction. A room full of eyeballs isn't a body; it's a horror. A church full of only teachers or only prophets isn't a body; it's a monstrosity. God's design requires administrators and mercy-givers, encouragers and discerners, givers and servers—all working in complementary symphony.

Historical Context

Corinth's factional divisions (1 Cor 1:12—"I am of Paul," "I am of Apollos") reflected their failure to grasp body-unity. Each faction wanted uniformity around their preferred leader/gift. Paul insists diversity under Christ's headship, not uniformity under human leadership, constitutes the body.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does gift-diversity create genuine unity rather than threaten it?
2. What would be missing from your church if everyone had the same gift you have?
3. How can churches pursue unity without imposing uniformity in gifts, methods, or personalities?

Interlinear Text

εἰ	δὲ	ἦν	τὰ	πάντα	ἐν	μέλος	ποῦ	τὸ
if	And	they were	G3588	all	one	member	where	G3588
G1487	G1161	G2258		G3956	G1520	G3196	G4226	
σῶμα								
were the body								
G4983								

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