**The Little Toe…**

The old joke goes something like this: “Do you know the purpose of the little toe? To make sure all the furniture in the house is in the right place!” If you don’t get it, you will… probably as you move through the darkness to the kitchen in the middle of the night!

In the illustration given by the Spirit through Paul to brethren at Corinth, the “little toe” is not included along with the other *“parts of the body”* like the *foot, hand, ear, eye* and their corollary functions, cf. 1Corinthians 12:14-21. **But it could be!**

You see, the main points being made to the Corinthians were that each and every *part of the body-* even those which they/we *“deem less honorable”* or *“weaker,”* are nonetheless: 1) *“part of the body,”* and, 2) *“necessary,”* cf. vv.22-24. It has been said many times in many ways that “the body of Christ has no vestigial parts!” (A “vestigial” member/organ is one that is still present, but no longer serves a discernable purpose or function.) **Each and every *member of Christ’s body* serves a purpose.**  Even members who because of spiritual immaturity or weakness, or physical age or infirmity, don’t regularly participate in worship or actively engage in the work of the church- and are thus deemed *“weaker”* or *“less honorable”* by others and give occasion for them to say *“we have no need of you,”* are, nonetheless, *“necessary,”* cf.vv.21-23. How so? Read on…

Those members whom the *more honorable* and *stronger* may deem *less honorable* and *weaker* are essential for two primary reasons:

1. They provide an opportunity for everyone else to *learn* and *practice* regarding *“one another as more important than self,”* Philippians 2:3. Or, as in the language of 1Corinthians 12:23,25, the opportunity to *“bestow more abundant honor”* and *“more abundant seemliness”* so that *“the members should have the same care for one another.”* Consider: When do you really think about your little toe? Probably not until it’s injured, right? But at least then, your attention is fully focused on that little toe! Surely we shouldn’t wait until that little toe is throbbing in pain to give it some loving care and appreciation, but at least when such occurs we’re not so consumed with “speck” that is in our *eye,* or the “hangnail” on the end of our *hand.* We need “little toe” members to move our attention and efforts to serve off of *self* and onto *others.*
2. They provide opportunities for us to *test* and *grow* “unity.” It’s relatively easy to be “united” or be “one” with those just like ourselves. We naturally seem to “click” with those most like us. But the real test and challenge of biblical *unity* is to truly *“associate”* with those unlike us (in Acts 9:26, the Greek word *kollao* means *to glue, join,* or *to firmly fasten to*). How can dissimilar people- the *weaker* and the *stronger,* as well as those deemed *less honorable* and those deemed *more honorable,* become truly united that *“there should be no divisions in the body”?* The Spirit provided the Corinthians (and us!) the formula: v.23, *“those members of the body, which we deem less honorable,* ***on these we bestow more abundant honor,*** *and our unseemly members come to have more abundant seemliness;”* and, vv.25-26, *“…the members should* ***have the same care for one another****. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.”* Until and unless we really “buy into” and practice this kind of unity- where the *eyes* “see” and the *hands* “care for” the “little toes,” we will never be spiritual mature and whole.

So, like its physical counterpart, even a “little toe”member(as seen by others) of the congregation is: *part of the congregation* (and should thus be treated as such), and is *necessary* to the proper growth and function of the *whole body*. (Philip C. Strong; Southport Church of Christ; 7202 Madison Ave, Indianapolis, IN 46227; online at southportcofc.org; email to mrpcstrong@hotmail.com)