

“THE BODY OF CHRIST”

“Everybody is Somebody in His Body”

Scripture Reading – I Corinthians, 12:12-27

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptised by one Spirit into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free – and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body”, it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body”, it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body.

If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honourable we treat with special honour. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment.

But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honour to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

“Speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.”

Ephesians, 4:15-16, NIV

This sermon is the first in a series based upon ‘THE BODY OF CHRIST’.

The Bible gives us a number of different pictures concerning the Church. All of these pictures seem to emphasise the same spiritual truth – the Church of God is a community of people. Jesus Christ and the Church are inseparable. Jesus loves the Church as a bridegroom loves his bride – and he calls each of us to love each other as he himself loves us.

THE ARMY OF CHRIST who fight under orders from Christ, our Captain.

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Church Life\Everybody Is Somebody In His Body

THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

Jesus is the Bridegroom who will suddenly return and claim us, taking us to the place he has prepared for us.

THE BUILDING OF CHRIST

and each person is a living stone, shaped as the builder sees fit and cemented together with other living stones to form one structure.

THE FLOCK OF CHRIST

and each person is one sheep of many who are feasting on his pasture, enjoying the protection and provision of the Good Shepherd.

THE BODY OF CHRIST

Jesus is the head and we are the parts (the members).

“The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ.”

I Corinthians, 12:12, NIV

This is one of the most famous pictures of the unity of the Church ever written.

Men have always been fascinated by the way in which the different parts of the body co-operate. Long ago Plato had drawn a famous picture in which he had said that the head was the citadel; the neck, the isthmus (the peninsula) between the head and the body; the heart, the fountain of the body; the pores, the lanes of the body; the veins, the canals of the body.

‘So Paul drew his picture of the Church as a body. A body consists of many parts but there is in it an essential unity. Plato pointed out that we do not say, “MY FINGER HAS A PAIN”, we usually say, “I HAVE A PAIN”. There is an “I”, a personality, which gives unity to the many and varying parts of the body. What the “I” is to the body, Christ is to the Church. It is in him that all the diverse parts find their unity.’

“THE DAILY STUDY BIBLE”, William Barclay

Paul compares the Body of Christ to a human body.

Each part has a specific function that is necessary to the body as a whole. The parts are different for a purpose, and in their differences they must work together. Christians must avoid two common errors: (1) being proud of their abilities, or (2) thinking they have nothing to give to the body of believers. Instead of comparing ourselves to one another, we should use our different gifts, together, to spread the Good News of the Gospel of salvation.

“EVERYBODY IS SOMEBODY IN HIS BODY”

One AMERICAN IDOL finalist, Diana DeGarmo, came from a small town called Snellville. On the water tower of the town is the slogan: “SNELLVILLE: WHERE EVERYBODY IS SOMEBODY”.

In Jesus Christ – “EVERYBODY IS SOMEBODY IN HIS BODY”...

1. THE BODY EXISTS TO MANIFEST A PERSON

“The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ... Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.”

1 Corinthians, 12:12, 27, NIV

Think about it, everything that you know about me is because of my body.

You know certain things about me because of the way I look...

but you should remember that appearances can sometimes be deceptive! You know certain things about me because of the way I speak... it gives away from which part of the country I came from, and the words I use may give you a clue to the level of my education.

You know certain things about me because I may have told you something about my past...

but my speech comes from a part of my body. Those who take my sermon notes home will know something about me because of what I write, and how I write it... but that is the work of my body, soul, and spirit (and is hopefully inspired by God's Holy Spirit).

Of course, you may claim to know some other things about me.

Because I am a Salvation Army Officer, there are certain assumptions that you will have made about me... but be careful, for what I really am and really do may surprise you! Perhaps you have heard a rumour about me, or a tasty bit of gossip about me... but by their nature, such things may well not be true!

What about THE BODY OF CHRIST?

The Body of Christ exists to manifest the person and work of Jesus Christ. It is the task of the Church to be Jesus Christ in the world and to make him known in the community where we are. Seeking to manifest Jesus in the world today is a great privilege, but with it, there comes a great responsibility as to how Christian people must act.

'A business man from North Yorkshire decided to travel in to Humberside to go hunting. He shot and dropped a bird, but it fell into a farmer's field on the other side of the fence. As he climbed over the fence, the farmer drove up on his tractor and asked what was going on. The hunter said, "I shot a bird and I am going to retrieve it". The old farmer replied, "This is my property and you're not coming over here!" This just made the hunter mad so he threatened, "If you do not let me come over the fence I will call my lawyer and I will sue you". The farmer smiled and said, "Apparently you don't know how we do things around here. We settle disagreements with the Humberside three-kick rule (haven't you heard of it?) ... I'll kick you three times, and then you kick me three times, and so on, back and forth, until someone gives up".

'The business man liked this challenge because he thought he could easily take the old farmer. The wily old farmer climbed down from his tractor and planted the steel toecap of his heavy work boot into the other man's shin. The man fell swiftly to his knees. The farmer's second kick went directly to the stomach, knocking the wind out of him. The farmer then landed his third kick to the side of the hunter's head. Eventually, the disoriented man slowly got up and said, "Okay, you old codger, now it's my turn!" To which the farmer responded, "Nah, I give up. You can have the pheasant".'

Many of us battle over the strangest of things as well.

Sometimes Christians fight because of a lack of information and other times we kick people simply because we feel like it. But what does the world think when it sees similar behaviour from those who claim to be Christians? What dreadful picture do people get if they see the body of Christ behave in such a manner? We must never forget that the world is watching us. Therefore, we must not live and act in a way that defames the name of Jesus and the character of the Christ.

Nowadays, people wear bands around their wrists to pose a question: 'WWJD?'

'WHAT WOULD JESUS DO?'

I guess that such wrist bands are an aid to help the wearer consider Jesus Christ in every situation. The problem is that sometimes we are just guessing at what Jesus would do. When you read the Gospels, you quickly learn that what Jesus often did was a complete surprise to those who thought they knew him best. Also, if you would presume to know precisely what Jesus would do, can you actually do it? Can you perform the miracles that he did?

Perhaps the best solution is to allow Jesus Christ to work in and through you!

2. THE BODY SERVES TO MINISTER HIS PURPOSE

'Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And in the church God has appointed...'

1 Corinthians, 12:27-28a, NIV

The purpose of my body is to serve me.

My body has no plans of its own. The parts of my body work under the direction of my conscious and subconscious brain. When I want to wave my hand, a message goes from my brain down to my hand, and it obeys – but imagine how difficult it would be to wave your hand if your hand had a mind of its own. Imagine what conflict would be caused within the body by a hand that wanted to go off and do its own thing!

'Lucy demanded that Linus change the channel on the television, threatening him if he did not comply. "What makes you think you can walk in here and take over?" asks Linus. "These five fingers", replied Lucy, "Individually they are nothing, but when I curl them together like this into a single unit, they form a fist – a weapon that is terrible to behold". "Which channel would you like to watch?", asks a shaken and scared Linus. Turning away he looks down at his own fingers and asks, "Why can't you guys get organised like that?".'

"PEANUTS", Charles Schultz

The Bible tells us that God has organised his body to work together.

'I know that all of you were saddened to learn this week of the sudden death of one of our church's most valuable members – Someone Else. Someone's passing created a vacancy that will be difficult to fill. Else has been with us for many years, and for every one of those years, Someone Else did far more than the normal person's share of the work. Whenever leadership was mentioned, this wonderful person was looked to for inspiration as well as results. "Ask Someone Else", we frequently heard. Whenever there was a job to do,

a class to teach, or a meeting to lead, one name was on everyone's lips, "Let Someone Else do it". It was common knowledge that Someone Else was among the largest givers in the church. Whenever there was a financial need, everyone just assumed that Someone Else would make up the difference.

'Someone Else was a wonderful person, sometimes appearing super-human, but a person can only do so much. Were the truth known, everyone expected too much of Someone Else. Now Someone Else is gone. We wonder what we are going to do. Someone Else left a wonderful example to follow, but who is going to follow it? Who is going to do the things Someone Else did? Remember, we cannot depend on Someone Else anymore.'

"IT'S NOT ABOUT THE HAND", Judah Thomas

The Body of Christ is here to serve Jesus Christ.

This flies in the face of the many and frequent surveys that are taken within the Church itself. Far too often, the members of the church want the church to serve them. They are selfish – and a cancer to the body of Christ. Think about it, in a human body, when one cell takes without giving that is cancerous and is a serious and real danger to the body as a whole.

Win Arn, surveyed members of over 1,000 churches asking, **"Why does the Church exist?"**

89% said, "The Church's purpose is to take care of my needs and the needs of my family".

11% said, "The Church's purpose is to win the world for Jesus Christ".

HE HAS NO HANDS, BUT OUR HANDS

'During the second world war, a cathedral was destroyed in Central Europe. Some American soldiers decided to rebuild the cathedral and after months of hard work, they succeeded. In the cathedral was a once magnificent statue of Jesus Christ with his arms outstretched and underneath was the scripture: "COME UNTO ME ALL YE WHO LABOUR AND ARE HEAVY LADEN AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST". The statue had been broken into many pieces and after laboriously searching through the rubble, the soldiers found some pieces and assembled them back together. But when it came to the hands, they just could not find them. They did not know what to do until someone had an idea and he wrote below the statue with those arms without hands stretched forth: "HE HAS NO HANDS, BUT OUR HANDS".

*Christ has no hands but our hands to do his work today,
He has no feet but our feet to lead men in his way;
He has no tongues but our tongues to tell men how he died,
He has no help but our help to bring men to his side.*

*We are the only Bible the careless world will read,
We are the sinner's gospel, we are the scoffers' creed;
We are the Lord's last message given in deed and word,
What if the type is crooked? What if the print is blurred?*

*What if our hands are busy with other things than his?
What if our feet are walking where sin's allurements is?
What if our tongues are speaking of things his life would spurn,*

How can we hope to help him and welcome his return?

"THE WORLD'S BIBLE", Annie Johnson Flint

'There is a tremendous thought here. Christ is no longer in this world in the body; therefore if he wants a task done within the world he has to find someone to do it. If he wants a child taught, he has to find a teacher to teach him; if he wants a sick person cured, he has to find a physician or surgeon to do his work; if he wants his story told, he has to find a man to tell it. Literally, we have to be the body of Christ, hands to do his work, feet to run upon his errands, a voice to speak for him.'

"THE DAILY STUDY BIBLE", William Barclay

*We are the hands of Christ; he uses us each day
To show his love to everyone in every kind of way.*

*We are the feet of Christ; his errands we must run
To fetch, to carry and to help in every way we can.*

*We are the eyes of Christ; all beauty we must share,
And hope one day to bring to you all those who do not care.*

*We are the lips of Christ; he speaks through us to men,
To cheer, to comfort and to tell of his great love for them.*

David Fraser, SASB 851:1-4

If Christ is the head, then we should be following his agenda.

Far too often, we want the Body of Christ to follow our own agenda. Am I wrong? I do not think so! Just consider how people react when they do not get their own way. They stamp their feet, they turn away and stay away. Whose agenda are they following then? Certainly not Christ's!

3. THE BODY CONSISTS OF MANY PARTS

'Now the body is not made up of one part but of many... But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.'

I Corinthians, 12:14, 18-20, NIV

RYK Fung commenting on these verses writes: *'having a multiplicity of members and functions is necessary for the body as a whole and for the members individually, all of whom are involved in a solidarity of experience or unity of destiny. So resentment born of a feeling of inferiority or arrogance arising from a sense of superiority are both out of place'*



In other words, because God has arranged the parts of the body, we should feel neither puffed up if we are considered an important member, nor dragged down if we are considered a weaker or not-so-important member of the Body of Christ.

'General Eisenhower once rebuked one of his fellow Generals for referring to a soldier as "Just a Private". Eisenhower reminded him that the Army could function better without all its

generals than it could function without its foot soldiers. "If this war is won", he said, "it will be won by the Privates".'

We have just gone through a period when there were no members of parliament sitting in the Palace of Westminster, but still the country continued to run just as it does when they are in place. But imagine what would happen in the United Kingdom if all the undertakers went away for a couple of months for their holidays! There would be utter chaos and disease would run rampant as the dead were left unattended in the streets.

If the mayors of Malton and Norton on Derwent were to go away for the next three months, I guess we would not notice too much, but we would surely notice if the bin men (or refuse collectors) went on strike for the next three months. Imagine the terrible stench throughout the area as rubbish was left to rot in the streets. Undoubtedly, the rat population would thrive whilst we began to catch all manner of diseases.

 **Never, never, overestimate your service in the Body of Christ.**
 **Never, never, underestimate your service in the Body of Christ.**

'One day it occurred to the members of the body that they were doing all the work and that the belly was having all the food. So they held a meeting (presumably without inviting the belly) and after a long discussion decided to strike work until the belly consented to take its proper share of the work. So for a day or two the hands refused to take the food, the mouth refused to receive it and the teeth had no work to do.

'But after a day or two members began to find that they themselves were not in very active condition. The hands could hardly move, the mouth was all parched and dry, while the legs were unable to support the rest. Thus they found that even the belly in its dull quiet way was doing necessary work for the body and that all must work together or the body would go to pieces.'

Aesop

'Speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.'
Ephesians, 4:15-16, NIV

'Imagine the Master Carpenter's tools holding a conference: Brother Hammer presides, but several suggest he leaves the meeting because he is too noisy. Brother Hammer insists, "If I have to leave this shop, Brother Screw must go also. You have to turn him around again and again to get him to accomplish anything". Brother Screw speaks up. "If you wish, I'll leave. But Brother Plane must leave, also. All his work is on the surface. His work have no real depth". To this, Brother Plane responds, "Brother Ruler will also have to withdraw, for he is always measuring folks as though he were the only one who is right". Brother Ruler then complains about Brother Sandpaper: "He ought to leave, too, because he's rough and always rubbing people the wrong way. And so goes the discord.

'In the midst of all this discussion, in walks the Master Carpenter, Jesus of Nazareth. He has arrived to start his day's work. Putting on his apron, he goes to the bench to make a pulpit from which to proclaim the gospel. He uses Brothers Hammer, Screw, Plane, Ruler, Sandpaper, and all the other tools inside his workshop. After the day's work, when the pulpit is finished, Brother Saw arises and remarks, "Brothers, I observe that all of us are workers together with the Lord".'

4. THE BODY REQUIRES A MOTIVATING POWER

'For we were all baptised by one Spirit into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free – and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.'
I Corinthians, 12:13, NIV

We would never think twice about caring for our physical body.

Just as we need proper food for our physical bodies, we need to take in scriptural food for our spiritual bodies. The same rules apply to both our physical and spiritual sustenance.

'The church is composed of many types of people from a variety of backgrounds with a multitude of gifts and abilities. It is easy for these differences to divide people, as was the case in Corinth. But despite the differences, all believers have one thing in common – faith in Christ. On this essential truth the church finds unity. All believers are baptized by one Holy Spirit into one body of believers, the church. We don't lose our individual identities, but we have an overriding oneness in Christ. When we become a Christian, the Holy Spirit takes up residence in us, and we are born into God's family. "WE HAVE ALL RECEIVED THE SAME SPIRIT" means that each of us has received the same Holy Spirit. As members of God's family, we may have different interests and gifts, but we are united by the Spirit into one spiritual body.'




"LIFE APPLICATION BIBLE", Study Notes

My body is alive and moves because of human spirit.

However, there is more at work than that. The Bible tells us that when Adam was created there was no life until the Spirit of God breathed into his nostrils and he became a living soul. In Ezekiel's vision of The Valley of Dry Bones the bones came together and flesh grew but there was no life until the Holy Spirit breathed into them and they arose – a vast and mighty army.

*Breathe on me, Breath of God, fill me with life anew,
That I may love what thou dost love, and do what thou wouldst do.*
Edwin Hatch, SASB 189:1

There are certain things that should exist in the Body of Christ.

-  We ought to realise that we need each other.
-  We ought to respect each other.
-  We ought to sympathize with each other.

IN THE BODY OF CHRIST, WE SHARE ONE LIFE... ONE LOVE... ONE LOYALTY!