

One body in Christ – Sunday 15th February, 2015

“For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function,⁵ so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.” (Romans 12:4-5).

Beloved in The Lord,

Last Sunday we considered the truth that no man is an island. We saw that our life is not meant to be lived in isolation, apart from other people. We are created to live in fellowship, in friendship with other people. We saw that our work is corporate, and I encouraged you to strengthen my hands by your prayers and to also strengthen one another in prayer. Today I continue our reflections about our congregational life and our mission and hopefully we will see that we are one body in Christ. Each one of us are individual members, but together we form one body in Christ.

The Congregation or the Church is so much more than the pastor and the office bearers. The Congregation is all of us together as one body in Christ. Each one of us belongs, each one has a place and each one has a God ordained function within the body. Not all of us have the same role to play, but each one does have a role.

The Apostle Paul puts it in an easy to understand manner in his letter written to the Corinthian Church. He uses the human body as an illustration of the Church. The body has many different parts, and each part has a role to play, and it is only when each part is functioning properly that the body is healthy and able to function normally.

We read:

“¹² For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. ¹³ For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

¹⁴ For the body is not one member, but many. ¹⁵ If the foot says, “Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body,” it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear says, “Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body,” it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸ But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. ¹⁹ If they were all one member, where would the body be? ²⁰ But now there are many members, but one body. ²¹ And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; or again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” ²² On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; ²³ and those members of the body which we deem less honourable, on these we bestow more abundant honour, and our less presentable members become much more presentable, ²⁴ whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honour to that member which lacked, ²⁵ so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶ And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

27 Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it. (1.Cor.12:12-27)

I have quoted this rather long passage, because Paul makes it so simple and so clear. The truths that are spelt out here are easy to comprehend, yet many do not observe them.

Verse 18 contains the key for healthy relationships within a Church and for fruitful service. Paul writes: **"But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired."**

If all members of the Church and all who serve would absorb this simple truth, then so many Churches would be in a much healthier state. Paul reminds us that the truth of the matter is that the Church belongs to God. He is the one who decides who does what, and what goes where. He is the one who calls and ordains for service. It is God who created you, it is God who has wired you a certain way and given you certain interests, passions and gifts. That is why it is of vital importance to seek God's will in all matters. It is vital to ask Him what we are to do and how. The preceding verses to our foundation text today from Romans 12 are familiar to us but we need to read them again in this context.

"Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."
(Romans 12:1-2)

In order to even know what God's will for us is, we need to take the first step, and that is to offer ourselves to God completely, without reservation. We are to offer ourselves as a living and holy sacrifice, pleasing to Him. It is only when we have done this and continue to daily do so, that we begin to understand His will for our lives. Then we can fulfill the purpose that He has ordained for us. Then He is glorified in and through us.

If we do not surrender ourselves to God, and try to serve on our own strength, then we open the door to problems, because our service will be performed with the wrong motives. Where we serve to receive glory and honor for ourselves, there God's blessing will not reside. Where we serve for our own reasons there disputes and strife are never far away. Divisions occur.

This is what Paul is referring to when he writes about the members in the body thinking wrongly, and saying things like: "Because I am not a hand or a leg, I don't belong", or one part saying it doesn't need other parts of the body to get along.

When every member surrenders to God, then every member will be satisfied, will be content in the service that God has called them to do, because they understand that they are serving Him and not themselves. When we learn to thank God for all that He has given us, and when we learn to serve with gratefulness toward Him, then we serve with a joyful spirit, and we joyfully serve alongside others.

Writing to the Christians in Colossae Paul wrote:

“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷ Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.” (Col.3:15-17).

This text emphasises thanksgiving, being thankful. We are to serve God with a thankful heart. Whatever each one of us does, we should do so as if we are serving The Lord Himself (because we are). We should serve Him thankfully.

We need to understand that every service is important. Last Sunday I taught you that one way we can all serve is by praying for one another. When we pray we should start with thanksgiving. When we are thankful to God, then that brings great blessing. When we serve in the congregation, we should do so with thanksgiving. If you mow the lawns, do it with a cheerful and thankful heart. If you are baking in the kitchen, bake with a cheerful and thankful heart. If you are serving coffee after the service do it with a cheerful and thankful heart. If you stand at the door and greet people and hand out the service sheets do it with a cheerful and thankful heart. If you are playing the organ do it with a cheerful and thankful heart. If you are sitting in the office counting money and writing receipts do it with a cheerful and thankful heart. If you are doing the book keeping do it with a cheerful and thankful heart. If you visit the sick and the elderly visit with a cheerful and thankful heart.

When each one of us serves with a cheerful and thankful heart, then corporately our light shines nice and bright, and our witness is good. When strangers visit our Church, then they will feel and see that we are one body in Christ, they will feel the peace, they will know that God’s Spirit dwells here.

I thank God for you, for our congregation, because I believe that we are on the right track, heading in the right direction. We are by no means perfect, but we are travelling in the right direction.

I encourage you and myself, to broaden our thinking, to widen our view, and to see each other. To see how vital it is that we support and encourage one another. May we always encourage one another, and grow in our love toward God and our fellow man. May we always understand that the Church is not an institution, or a place that we frequent as observers, but it is Christ’s body, and each of us are members.

May we strengthen one another, may we love one another. May we encourage each other to love more and to serve more.

May we always remind ourselves that we are one body in Christ.
Amen.

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.