

You are the body of Christ

by Hendrik Joubert

If we are not careful powerful statements become empty clichés – the Scriptures is indeed a marvelous source of continuous truth and wisdom. Striking illustrations may be missed if we allow ourselves to become seekers of shallow personal gratification. (**2Timothy 4:3-4**) Consider how the close and intimate marriage relationship in **Ephesians 5** is used to teach us concerning the relationship between Christ and the church. ***This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.*** (**Ephesians 5:32 NKJV**)

Once you grasp this amazing relationship with Christ, the application serves to go the other way also; ***Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her...*** (**Ephesians 5:25-26 NKJV**) This sacrificial love of Christ is also expressed through the apostle when he addresses the elders of the Lord's church in Ephesus: ***Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.*** (**Act 20:28 NKJV**)

It is not only the elders who are to take their duties seriously. In **1Corinthians 12** God, through the inspired writer, teaches us more specifically concerning the spiritual gifts, but at the same time supplies us with another vivid illustration to help us understand some general principles concerning the body of Christ and the importance of our individual roles. The statement ***Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually*** (**1Corinthians 12:27 NKJV**) may serve to introduce the subject, or to sum up the awesome responsibility of one who desires to be a member of the body of Christ.

The apostle uses the human body to illustrate the interdependency of the members of the body of Christ. He is obviously not referring to an *invisible body in heaven* made up of *who knows who*; the church(es) of Christ refers (also) to the local congregation(s) here and now. (**Romans 16:16**) Human perceptions and desires to make "improvements" are obscuring the simple truths of the Bible – this body of Christ cannot be divided among men. ***Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ."*** (**1Corinthians 1:12 NKJV**)

In our day and age the names of institutions serve to obscure this simple truth that you cannot divide the body of Christ into denominations, or pieces. (**1Corinthians 1:10-13**) The implication is obvious; you become part of whom you identify with – with Christ or with men. Since Christ was crucified for us and we are to be baptized for the remission of our sins into this one body (**Acts 2:38; 1Corinthians 12:13**) by His authority we cannot divide the church to identify with a man or an organization. (**1Corinthians 1:13**)

If I am going to become a member of a church and do church stuff, why not do what God says so He will add me to Jesus' church? (**Matthew 16:18; Romans 16:16; Acts 2:38; 2:47**) I may demonstrate my loyalty to Christ and not reduce the church to a cultural organization where men make the rules. (**Matthew 15:9; 2John 9**)

The body needs every part to fulfill its duty in order for it to properly function. When ***one member suffers, all the members suffer with it*** (**1Corinthians 12:26**) is a positive suggestion of sympathy; however the specific problems discussed in this letter suggests also that a member may be sick with sin. (**1Corinthians 5:1-2; Romans 2:24**) I may contribute towards the health and growth of His church, or I may cause it to suffer dishonor.

Growth is not equal to numbers. When one considers the bare truth concerning numbers revealed in the Bible the picture becomes scary – the road that leads to life is narrow and ***few*** will ***find*** it. (**Matthew 7:13-14**) ***God*** is the one who ***adds to the church those who are saved.*** (**Acts 2:47**) It is therefore important that we establish His will by searching the Scriptures daily. (**Acts 17:11**)

Through James we receive the warning that teachers will ***receive a stricter judgment*** (**James 3:1**) because they take on the responsibility of teaching others how to be the church, or called of God. Through Peter all who speak for God are exhorted to ***speak as the oracles of God.*** (**1Peter 4:11**) In his first letter God had the apostle write to the Corinthians we learn that ***Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.*** (**1Corinthians 3:13 KJV**) In the Bible we have the perfect and complete instruction manual on how to be ***the church of God***, the blood-bought body of Christ. (**2Timothy 3:16-4:3; 1Corinthians 1:2; Acts 20:28**)