

The church, a functioning body by Hendrik Joubert

In the New Testament the word *church* is formed by combining two words; *out* and *call*, and constitutes a vivid description of the simple way in which the church came into being as well as how it grows. The church of Christ is made up of pardoned sinners who have responded to God's call which rings out through the gospel. (**2 Thessalonians 2:14**) The gospel contains the instructions by which sinners may become righteous in the sight of God, and through Paul the Lord tells us that it is His power unto salvation. (**Romans 1:16-17**)

It is again through Paul that God warns us that He will ***deal out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.*** **2 Thessalonians 1:8** Those who answer the call by becoming *obedient to the truth have purified their souls.* (**1 Peter 1:22**) Through Paul the Lord describes the cleansing process this way: ***Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.*** **1 Corinthians 6:11.**

Every sinner who are baptized for the remission of sins (**Acts 2:38**) by making an appeal to God for the blood of Christ through baptism (**1 Peter 3:21**) is washed, is sanctified as Paul described. To be sanctified is to be set aside for special use. The Lord adds to the number of called (the church) daily those who are being saved. (**Acts 2:47**)

This body of Christ is not a passive listing of forgiven sinners; it is actively organized on local level (**Romans 16:16**) to fulfill specific responsibilities. Each local congregation is autonomous, directed in its activities by the Scriptures. Elders are men who have the qualifications listed in the Scriptures (**1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9**) to guard the flock over which they are appointed. (**Acts 20:28**)

The called of God are to assemble to worship and praise Him: ***...to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever.*** Amen. **Ephesians 3:21.** For this reason saints should not *forsake their own assembling together as is the habit of some.* (**Hebrews 10:25**) God becomes the focus of their lives, (**Matthew 6:33**) everything else is less important and are potential hindrances.

The Lord's church has an *inward* responsibility as it acts as a support group for pardoned sinners who are to ***encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.*** **1 Thessalonians 5:11** They are to ***confess their sins to one another, and pray for one another so that they may be healed.*** **James 5:16**

The church of God has an *outward* responsibility to make known His manifold wisdom to the world. (**Ephesians 3:10**) The ***household of God, which is the church of the living God,*** is to be the pillar and support of the truth known His manifold wisdom to the world. (is to be ***the pillar and support of the truth.*** (**1 Timothy 3:15**) This is an awesome responsibility under the direction of Jesus Christ, which is the Head. (**Ephesians 1:22-23**)

Every member in this body has a role to play and a contribution to make: ***...from whom*** (the Head) ***the whole body, being fitted and heldtogether by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.*** **Ephesians 4:16.** A dear old friend focused my attention of the fact that a joint is not a member, but where two members work together.

From this passage it is obvious that the body is dependent on the proper functioning of each individual part, as directed by the Head. In **1 Corinthians 12** God teaches us about the gifts of the Spirit, but here we also learn more about the working together of the parts of the body of Christ. Just as the human body needs each and every part to fulfill its duty, the Lord's body needs each individual part to make a contribution. Each has abilities which compliment those of another, making them dependent on one another. When one part fails, the whole body suffers. It is each part's duty to find what it is needful and what he or she may do under the directorship of the Head, Jesus Christ the Lord. ***As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*** **1 Peter 4:10**