

## I. Introduction

### A. Recall to your minds the events of **Luke 22**.

1. Jesus is preparing for His approaching death upon the cross.
    - a. We find Him in those final hours:
      - (1) Sitting in an upper room.
      - (2) Reclining at the table with His apostles.
      - (3) Observing the Passover Feast one final time.
    - b. In **Luke 22:19**, we are told that Jesus “took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’”
  2. Each and every first day of the week, we come together.
    - a. A part of what we do as we are gathered is to observe the Lord’s Supper.
    - b. We eat of the bread and drink of the cup in remembrance of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ upon the cross.
    - c. As we partake of the bread, Jesus says that we are to do this in memory of Him.
      - (1) Because, He says that the bread represents His body which was given for us.
      - (2) It is a memorial of His sacrifice upon the cross - the fact that Jesus Christ offered His physical body in exchange for our souls.
  3. A part of the message of the cross is the fact that Jesus Christ was willing to sacrifice His physical body upon the cross in order to exchange it for a new, spiritual body - which is the church.
- B. In **Ephesians 1:22-23**, the apostle, Paul, writes, “<sup>22</sup> And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, <sup>23</sup> which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”

1. Paul tells us that the church is the body of Jesus Christ.

2. It is this image of the church as the body of Christ that we want to focus upon this morning.
3. The source for our thoughts will be **Ephesians 4:15-16**.  
<sup>15</sup> but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head - Christ - <sup>16</sup> from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. (**Ephesians 4:15-16** NKJV)
  - a. Paul is again using the imagery of the church as the body of Christ.
  - b. In doing so, Paul makes three implications about what it means to be the body of Christ.

## II. The Body of Christ Implies a Head

- A. You can not have much of a body if you do not first have a head.
1. The head serves as the command center for the entire body.
    - a. It is the source of all of our thoughts.
    - b. It tells the rest of our body what to do.
    - c. It is our heads that tell us:
      - (1) What to feel.
      - (2) Where to go.
      - (3) How to act.
      - (4) What to say.
  2. Who we are and what we do as individuals begins with our heads!
  3. The head controls the entire body.
- B. Paul tells us that Jesus Christ is the head of the church.
1. *Scripture references:*
    - a. **Ephesians 1:22** - God “gave Him (meaning Jesus Christ) to be head over all things to the church.”
    - b. **Ephesians 4:15** - we are to “grow up in all things into Him who is the head - Christ.”

- c. **Colossians 1:18** - "And He is the head of the body, the church...that in all things He may have the preeminence."
- 2. Jesus Christ is the head of the body.
  - a. He does the thinking!
    - (1) He tells the body what to do.
    - (2) The body ought to respond to His commands and do it.
  - b. Consider for a moment what Paul writes in **Philippians 2:2**.
    - (1) Paul says, "...fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind."
      - (a) Paul is speaking of the importance of unity among Christians.
      - (b) It is Paul's desire that the church:
        - i) Be like-minded.
        - ii) Have the same love.
        - iii) Be of one accord.
        - iv) Be of one mind.
      - (c) Paul says, "I want you all to be unified in thought."
    - (2) How do we achieve this unity in thought and mind?
      - (a) **Philippians 2:5** - "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus..."
      - (b) Unity of thought comes when we let Christ do the thinking for us!
    - (3) Where we get into trouble is when we start trying to think for ourselves, instead of allowing Christ to do the thinking for us.
      - (a) **Philippians 2:3-4** - "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself."

- Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others."
- (b) Conflict arises in the church when we start thinking about ourselves and stop thinking like Jesus Christ.
  - (c) I had a friend in Kentucky who suffered from Parkinson's Disease.
    - i) He would sit in his chair and his feet would be in constant motion - constantly one crossing the other, back and forth.
    - ii) The problem was neurological.
      - a) It was a failure of the brain and nervous system.
      - b) His mind did not desire for his feet to move.
      - c) They moved automatically, because his nerves were not accurately interpreting the signals from his brain.
    - iii) As his condition grew worse, he began to fall more - because he could not make his feet do what he wanted them to do.
      - a) It led to him being homebound, because there was too much risk of him falling.
      - b) Eventually, it was one of the things that contributed to his death.
  - (d) The head regulates the body.
    - i) When the body stops listening to the brain, it ceases to function properly.
    - ii) That leads to problems.
- C. If we are going to function properly as the body of Christ, then we must listen to the head of the body, which is Jesus Christ.

### III. The Body of Christ Implies Function

- A. While it is the head that makes the decisions and sets the course, it is the body that is responsible for carrying out the head's commands.
1. In life, the head cannot achieve its purposes if it does not have a body to carry them out.
  2. Similarly, Jesus Christ relies upon His body, the church, to carry out His purposes upon this earth.
    - a. Brethren, we are the hands and feet of Jesus Christ upon this earth.
    - b. We have been given the charge of carrying out Jesus' mission here on earth - which is to seek and to save those who are lost. (Luke 19:10)
    - c. Consider the words of the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20, spoken just before Christ ascends into heaven:  
<sup>18</sup> And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. <sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen. (Matthew 28:18-20 NKJV)
      - (1) Jesus says, "All authority has been given to Me..." - meaning, Jesus is the head; He makes the decisions.
      - (2) "Go therefore and make disciples...."
        - (a) I am the head, the authority.
        - (b) You are charged with carrying out My purpose - making disciples of the nations.
3. As the body, we must carry out the functions of Jesus Christ.
- B. For the body to function properly, each member must fulfill its own task.

1. Let us look back at our text, Ephesians 4:16, "from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share..."
  - a. Within the body, each individual member has its own special function.
  - b. Every other member relies upon it to carry out that function.
  - c. It is only by working together that the body can function as it should.
2. When one member fails to function properly, then the whole body suffers.
  - a. There is an old fable told of a body who grew frustrated with its stomach.
    - (1) The various parts of the body felt like they did all of the work, while the stomach sat back and received all of the rewards.
      - (a) The feet felt like they carried the load of the body.
      - (b) The hands felt like they toiled to provide food and drink.
      - (c) The stomach just sat their and received the food that they had worked so hard to provide.
    - (2) So, they decided that they were going to teach the stomach a lesson.
      - (a) They decided that they were going to refuse to feed the stomach any more.
      - (b) For a while, the stomach merely grumbled, because it had no food - the other parts of the body laughed, because they knew that they were teaching the stomach an important lesson about the value of hard work.

- (c) After a while, the head began to grow dizzy, while the hands and feet began to grow weak.
- (3) It was only then that they learned that the stomach was using the food that they supplied to give strength to the whole body.
- b. In 1 Corinthians 12:14, Paul says, "For in fact the body is not one member but many."
  - (1) He goes on to say in 1 Corinthians 12:19-22:  
<sup>19</sup> And if they were all one member, where would the body be? <sup>20</sup> But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. <sup>21</sup> And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." <sup>22</sup> No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.
  - (2) Just because a part of the body appears to be small or perhaps less glamorous does not mean that it is not important to the body.
    - (a) The eye is such a small member of the body, but ask anyone who is blind whether or not it is important!
    - (b) The feet seem to be so unattractive, but ask anyone who has lost one or both legs about how important they are.
  - (3) I am reminded of the tonsils and the appendix.
    - (a) For years, it was assumed that they served no useful purpose.
    - (b) They were small, had no known use, and were prone to infection.
    - (c) Doctors routinely cut them out with little provocation.
    - (d) It was only later that they learned that the tonsils and appendix both play an important role in helping the body to fight off infection.

- (e) Now, doctors only remove them when there is great need - because they have learned that even though they are small members, they still play an important role in the functioning of the body.
- C. Every member of the body of Christ serves its own special purpose.
  - 1. We cannot all be elders, deacons, or preachers.
  - 2. That does not mean that we do not have a valuable role to play within the Lord's church!
  - 3. Every member is a vital part of this congregation and has a role to play in its mission as the body of Christ.
    - a. We need teachers.
    - b. We need people who are willing to invite friends to worship, to study, and to various events.
    - c. We need people who are willing to call, visit, or send cards to our sick, shut-ins, and those in the nursing homes.
    - d. We need people who are willing to go on trips to help some of our missionaries like Martin Klamm in Bonaire.
    - e. We need people to participate in various activities like:
      - (1) Serving meals a few weeks ago for the Coon Hunt.
      - (2) Helping with the worship services at the nursing home this month.
      - (3) Hosting teens for the VBS at the end of the month.
    - f. This list could go on and on of things that we need our members to be involved in.
  - 4. Whether you recognize it or not, you are an important part of this congregation.
- D. We need all of our members to contribute to work of this congregation!

#### IV. **The Body of Christ Implies Growth**

- A. Just like our bodies, the church is a living organism.
  - 1. The church is not:
    - a. This building.
    - b. Some place we go.
  - 2. It is a living organism that is made up of its individual members.
  - 3. We are the church of Christ; we are the body of Christ.
- B. As a living body, God is looking for us to grow.
  - 1. Paul says, "from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love."  
(Ephesians 4:16)
  - 2. If each and every member of this congregation does his/her share of doing the work of the church, striving to edify and uplift the congregation, and building up the congregation in love, then we will grow as a body.
    - a. A healthy body is one where each part is functioning properly.
    - b. In the same way, a healthy church is one where every member is doing his/her part to contribute to the overall wellness of the congregation.
    - c. If each one of you will work to serve this congregation in love, then we will grow as the body of Christ - we will grow in faith; we will grow in number.
  - 3. If, on the other hand, we stop working, then this congregation will wither up and eventually die.
    - a. The growth and success of this congregation depends upon you!
    - b. Your faith and your involvement will determine whether or not this congregation will grow or die.

- c. The more active you are in doing the work of the Lord, the healthier this body of Christ will be!

#### V. **Conclusion**

- A. This morning, are you a part of the body of Christ?
- B. If you are, have you been contributing to its growth through faithful living?