

a sermon from ROMANS 12:5

CHRIST IS THE HEAD, WE ARE HIS BODY, OF THE CHURCH

Robert Baral
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I. AN OPENING PRAYER

“The Church’s one foundation Is JESUS CHRIST her Lord;
She is His new creation, By water and The Word;
From Heav’n He came and sought her To be His holy Bride;
With His own Blood He bought her, And for her life He died!”¹

Yet she on earth hath union With GOD, The Three in One,
And mystic sweet communion With those whose rest is won;
O happy ones and holy! Lord, give us Grace that we,
Like them, the meek and lowly, On High may dwell with Thee!”² AMEN.

II. A SCRIPTURE – ROMANS 12:5 – THE CHURCH AS THE BODY OF CHRIST

“So we, being many, are one Body in CHRIST, and every one members one of another.”³

III. A PROPOSITION

In The Church, JESUS CHRIST is our Head and we His Body. As we are all in CHRIST, we are also members one of another in The Church. And our Lord has a place for each member of His Body to serve in The Church!

IV. INTRODUCTION

The early Church Father Origen speaks this of The Church: “We say that The Holy Scriptures declare The Body of CHRIST, animated by The Son of GOD, to be The whole Church of GOD. The members of This Body – considered as a whole – consist of those who are believers... The Word [of GOD], arousing and moving The whole Body, The Church to fitting action, awakens each individual member belonging to The Church. Thereby, they do nothing apart from The Word” Incarnate – our Lord JESUS CHRIST – The living and exalted Head of we His Body The Church!⁴

¹ 1, Hymns For The Living Church, 200, “The Church’s One Foundation,” Samuel J. Stone. 1868 and Samuel S. Wesley, 1864. Stanza 1.

² 1, Ibid., Stanza 4.

³ 2, KJV, ROMANS 12:5.

⁴ 3, Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs, “Church, The,” 12th entry, p 149. “Origen, (c. 245, W), 4.595.”

On this joyous day on which we receive these Christian believers as new members into The Church, we sing out with them in gladness before GOD! Today we share with our new fellow members of this Church three very remarkable things: First, that The Church – in a great mystical and eternal sense – is The living Body of our Saviour JESUS CHRIST. Second, that as we are all members of The Lord’s Body, that is The Church, we are also then members one of another. Third, that each of us in The Body of CHRIST is called to a particular place to serve.

V. CHRIST THE HEAD, WE HIS BODY, OF THE CHURCH

First, that The Church – in a great mystical and eternal sense – is The living Body of our Saviour JESUS CHRIST. Saint Paul declares in EPHESIANS 5:23-25, “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as CHRIST is The Head of The Church: and He is The Saviour of The Body. Therefore as The Church is subject unto CHRIST, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as CHRIST also loved The Church, and gave Himself for it.”⁵

We will begin at a most curious place, that of the marriage covenant between a husband and wife, as an analogy for the bond between CHRIST and The Church. To those who have never heard this language before, let me assure you it is strictly Biblical, the Book, chapter and verses of which I have carefully noted for you. The picture of CHRIST and we His Church is painted by The Spirit of GOD in These Words of Saint Paul, who begins this portrait with the husband as the head of his spouse, that is his wife, loving her so much that he would gladly give all that he has and is for her sake!

Husbands, how much do you love your wives? Would you give all that you have for her sake? Would you suffer for her? Would you even die in her place, that she might live? Would you die an unspeakably horrible death for her sake? Now if CHRIST is The Bridegroom and we The Church are His Bride, this is exactly what The Saviour did for us! CHRIST loves His Church beyond what we can speak! He gave all that He is for our sake, His Body! He died willingly in our places, that we might live in Him! And of His

⁵ 2, KJV, EPHESIANS 5:23-25.

passion and death, we know that The Lord Himself died an unspeakably horrible death on The Cross for us! Therefore, we the saints of GOD in CHRIST, are most precious in His sight!

John Wesley observes that, as the husband is the “governor, guide and guardian of the wife,” so “CHRIST is Head of The Church.” The husband is called to be the saviour of his wife, [she being] joined as one to himself as one body. So The Lord is The Saviour of The Church, offering Himself up to save her “from all sin and misery.”⁶ How much should a husband then love his wife? Look to The Cross and see where our Redeemer was nailed to its cruel beams and upon which He was pierced! Such is the depth and “kind of affection, with this degree of it, and to this end, ...[that] husbands [should] love their wives!”⁷ For this is the earthly shadow of how eternally The Son of GOD loves us His Body The Church!

VI. WE ARE MEMBERS ONE OF ANOTHER IN CHRIST

Second, that as we are all members of The Lord’s Body, that is The Church, we are also then members one of another. Saint Paul declares in ROMANS 12:4-5, “For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one Body in CHRIST, and every one members one of another.”⁸ B. W. Johnson observes, “The Church is likened to the human body in which the various organs each have its own office [or purpose]; so... in The Church, we being many, are one Body in CHRIST, and all related to each other as the organs of the [human] body are related” one to another.⁹

Saint Paul gives us the analogy of the different parts of the human body as all interdependent upon one another, and only together are one, so no part of the body can by itself survive separated from the body. Nor does any one Christian man or woman, even if he or she dreams it to be so, constitute The Body of CHRIST alone. CHRIST calls us

⁶ 4, Wesley’s Bible Notes, EPHESIANS 5:22-23.

⁷ 4, Ibid., EPHESIANS 5:25.

⁸ 2, KJV, ROMANS 12:4-5.

⁹ 5, Johnson’s Peoples’ New Testament Commentary, ROMANS 12:5-6.

to salvation within community, covenanted to Him and to one another at The Cross. So Paul declares in I CORINTHIANS 12:12-13, “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is CHRIST. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into One Body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.”¹⁰

Think how absurd a picture Paul brings to our attention in I CORINTHIANS 12:15-20, “If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath GOD set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body.”¹¹

So also in The Church. We as GOD’s people are all members one of another and exist in The Faith as part of His Body, The very Kingdom of GOD. Now Paul speaks of The Church, declaring that ”...GOD hath tempered The Body [of CHRIST] together... That there should be no schism in The Body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are The Body of CHRIST, and members in particular” one with another!¹²

VII. OUR LORD HAS A PLACE FOR EACH MEMBER IN HIS BODY

Third, that each of us in The Body of CHRIST is called to a particular place to serve. Saint Paul declares in ROMANS 12:6-8, “Having then gifts differing according to The Grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on

¹⁰ 2, KJV, I CORINTHIANS 12:12-13.

¹¹ 2, KJV, I CORINTHIANS 12:15-20.

¹² 2, KJV, I CORINTHIANS 12:24-27.

teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.”¹³

See all the gifts which GOD equips His saints with to serve within His Body The Church: Prophecy, which must be done in Faith. Ministry, which must be done with compassion. Teaching, which must be done in truth. Exhortation, which must be done with care. Giving to the poor and needy, which must be done with joyous generosity. Ruling, which must be done with due diligence. Mercy, which must be the rule of all gifts in the joy of The LORD. Now this is not a comprehensive list of tasks, but different ways that GOD equips us according to the need He sees in each local Church. John Gill observes that all these gifts, which equip the saints to serve in The Church, “flow from The Grace of GOD, Who dispenses them when, where, and to whom He pleases in a free and sovereign manner; and therefore [are] to be used... to His glory, and for the good of His Church and people!”¹⁴

Marvin Vincent makes these observations: With prophecy, “...the prominent idea is... the inspired delivery of warning, exhortation, instruction, judging, and making manifest the secrets of the heart...” to GOD’s people, opening the way for The HOLY SPIRIT to convict us of our sins and call us to repentance.¹⁵ Ministry, whatever its service to GOD’s people – whether ministering The Word of The LORD from behind a pulpit or in ministering everyday practical care of body, mind or spirit to those in need - is always to be done in accord with “The Word” of GOD and in “The Spirit” of GOD. Teaching is always to edify men’s “understanding” of GOD’s Word and His will for us as His children.¹⁶ As John Wesley offers, one may minister as a Deacon. One may teach in Catechism classes. One may exort “to urge Christians to duty, and to comfort them in trials.”¹⁷

¹³ 2. KJV, ROMANS 12:6-8.

¹⁴ 6, Gill’s Commentary on The Bible, ROMANS 12:6.

¹⁵ 7. Vincent’s Word Studies in The New Testament, Volume 3, ROMANS 12:6.

¹⁶ 7, Ibid., ROMANS 12:7.

¹⁷ 4, Wesley’s Bible Notes, ROMANS 12:7.

Vincent says further: Exhortation calls “the heart and will” to keep to The Narrow Way of The Gospel. Mercy in giving is a calling for those who have “earthly possessions” to share their blessings with those who have little or nothing in “singleness” of Christian purpose. Service in Church offices of government must be done with “earnest care.” And however we may have the privilege of serving in The Church, all must be done with the cheerfulness of those redeemed in The Lord, having “joyful eagerness [and] the amiable Grace” of thankful and faithful servants of The Cross. For then all our Christian service one to another may be used by The Almighty as “a sunbeam penetrating into the sick-chamber” of the suffering “and a light of peace uplifting “the heart of the afflicted!”¹⁸

VIII. IN CONCLUSION

It is for all these joyous reasons that we end with This PSALM of Praise to The LORD from PSALM 100:4-5, “Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise: be thankful unto Him, and bless His Name. For The LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting; and His truth endureth to all generations!”¹⁹ Why should the people of GOD, we who are saved at The Cross of CHRIST, “join joyfully in His public worship” with thanksgiving and praise as we enter His gates and courts? The reason, as Robert Jamieson offers, is “GOD’s eternal mercy and truth” poured out upon us!²⁰

So we have seen why the early Church Father Origen speaks the way he does of The Church! For in The Church, JESUS CHRIST is our Head and we His Body. As we are all in CHRIST, we are also members one of another in The Church. And our Lord has a place for each member of His Body to serve in The Church! Therefore we give thanks to The Almighty for all these great blessings He has showered upon us in His Church.

¹⁸ 7, Vincent’s Word Studies in The New Testament, Volume 3, ROMANS 12:8.

¹⁹ 2, KJV, PSALM 100:4-5.

²⁰ 8, Jamieson’s Commentary Critical and Explanatory on The Whole Bible, PSALM 100:4-5.

As Paul writes in ROMANS 12:5, "So we, being many, are one Body in CHRIST, and every one members one of another."²¹ So we give Him thanks today for these Christian believers joining this Church! O let us then enter into The Church on earth with gladness, thanksgiving and praise to The LORD, that we may bless His Name forever in The Church in Heaven Above! In The Name of GOD The Father, The Son and The Holy Ghost. AMEN!

²¹ 2, KJV, ROMANS 12:5.

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