

Rediscovering God's Church

Message No:4 and Picture #2

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In the last three sermons, I shared with the God's Vision for the Church. I believe that God is concerned with the restoration of two people group to whom He is related by a unbreakable Covenant. The first, historically is ISRAEL and the second is the CHURCH.

First we looked at God's intention to provide for His Son a perfect companion for all eternity. As such, Church is the object of God's affection-the future bride of His beloved Son. An essential requirement in the process of attaining that great status and title, the Church must have a direct, personal relationship with God.

As redeemed people, the Church must become His own possession (Exodus 19:3-5). This is far above the level of what we could imagine or think for ourselves. Deuteronomy 32:9 says "For the Lord's portion is His people".

Secondly, we looked and studied that in order for God to make the Church into the kind of people He intends to become, there must be a process of transformation. When we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior(as per Rom10:9-10) and are redeemed, we are only beginning the journey towards all we ought to be and that God intends us to be.

Today, I would like to start digging deep into the Word of God. We are going to look at the nature of the Church by looking at the various pictures of the Church in the Paul's letter to Ephesians. The first picture is titled as THE ASSEMBLY.

The Greek word translated "**Church**" in Ephesians 1:22 is ECCLESIA. The noun ecclesia is derived from a verb that means "to call out". The concept is a group of people that is formed by being called out from a larger group of people. It is also a group called out for a special purpose, that applies to the church. So, we are called out of the world through faith in Jesus Christ for a special purpose of God.

Today, building on the image of the Church as God's governmental assembly of believers, the second picture is that of His body- the body of Christ.

We relate to the world we live in through our bodies. It is in the body that we get things done in a world of time and space. Similarly, Christ relates to the world through us-His body. We are the instruments by which, He works out His plans plan's and redemptive purposes in the world.

In Hebrews 10:5-7(NIV) we read: Therefore, when Christ came into the world, He said "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for Me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. Then I said, 'Here I am-it is written about Me in the scroll-I have come to do your will, O God.'"

This passage pictures Jesus coming to the earth not to introduce the Law (which had already been introduces by Moses), but to save us by being the sacrifice for our sins. In order to do that, He had to have a body with which to provide a sacrifice.

When we put together parts of verses 5 " a body you prepared for me" and "to do your will O God" in7- we find that the function of the body is to be the instrument used to accomplish God's will. Now this displays the twofold aspect of Christ's body: First, the physical body of Jesus became the sacrifice for our sins on the cross; and second, the body of God's collective people continues and completes His ministry on the earth.

The New Testament presents several pictures of believers as the body of Christ. Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 12:4-5(NIV) ***“Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.”***

This body is not a group of separated, isolated individuals. We belong to one another. Again in his first letter to the church of Corinthians Paul amplified this picture of the body of Christ in chapter 12:12-13. It reads ***“The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.”***(NIV)

The word emphasized in the above passage is **one**: “They form **one** body... We were all baptized by **one** Spirit into **one** body... We were all given the **one** spirit to drink.” The emphasis throughout is the **unity** of the body. We see a further details argument by Paul in verses 14-21 in the same chapter.

In our relationships towards one another, the word best applies is **interdependent**.

The essence of Paul’s teaching is that every member needs all the other members. None of us is independent; we can not do without one another (in our homes as well as in the Kingdom of God). Therefore, one believer cannot say to another believer, “I can get along without you—I am all right. That kind of attitude is neither permissible nor correct because God has sovereign control over the body.

The eye, though it is a wonderful, refined, delicate member with more than 2Million moving and working parts cannot say to the rather prosaic member—the hand, “I don’t need you.” 85% of knowledge we obtain over lifetime is through the eye.

Even more remarkably, the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you.” The head is right at the top, the feet are down at the bottom and the whole length of the body separates them. Yet they clearly need each other in order for the body to operate with optimum efficiency.

The weakest members are actually the most important. No outward part of the body is more frail and sensitive than the eye—yet perhaps none is more important. Notice how carefully God has protected the eye. It gets all that protection and honor, not because it is strong, but because it is weak/small. Here is the way that the body has been knit together. The strong has to protect the weak. We cannot ignore or despise any member of the body of Christ. This a vital lesson.

In Ephesians 4:16 we read ***“From{Christ}the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.”***(NIV) This verse pictures the finished product. Though there are many joints and ligaments that hold us firmly intact, all of us together are united in Christ as one body. As we are held together in this single, organic unity, the body builds itself up. BUT to build itself up, the body depends on each part to do its work. One unhealthy part affects the health of the rest of the body.

What is required to keep all the parts healthy in our relationship with Christ? The words like *Obedience, submission, willingness* etc comes to mind, but the word I choose is **availability**. The members must be available to the Head. No matter how strong and useful my arm is, its no good to the head unless it is available to do what the head wants. The same goes for every other part of my body. There is a saying that the only kind of ability God looks for in a person is availability.

In Colossians 2:19, we read that ***“Holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God.”*** The *joints* are the interrelationships between the various members of the body, through which God’s supply comes. My relationship with you is my *joint* with you. It is crucial to understand that our needs are supplied through the joints or relationships within the body.

Ligaments are needed to keep the joints together. A ligament is committed, like a covenant love—love that is committed to another person., like a man to his wife(for better, for worse, in sickness and in health). We do not get our needs met through the Head alone, but through the network of joints and ligaments throughout the body. Which are all linked in various ways to the Head.

The Head may have made full provision for every need of every member, but the members will not have their needs supplied unless they are rightly related to the other members through the Head.

Discovering Our Place

It is important to discover our real place in the body. The most practical pattern for discovering one’s place is found in Romans 12:1-2 It reads ***“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”***

Let us examine the four steps laid out in these verses.

1. **Present your body:** The call to be a living sacrifice raises a deep and far-reaching question that we must each resolve. Who owns my body? I must settle the question of my body’s ownership. If I own it then the Lord does not. If the Lord owns it then I do not. Have we ever really presented our bodies to the Lord and renounced our claim of ownership over it? If not, the time has come.
2. **Renew your mind:** The second phase of discovering our place in Christ’s body occurs when we begin to think differently. Un-regenerated person is self-centered. We cannot find God’s will until our entire way of thinking has been changed. Scripture says that a Carnal mind is at enmity with God (Rom 8:7-8).And God does not reveal His will to His enemies but only to His children.
3. **Discover the will of God:** As our mind is renewed, we start to discover the will of God for our life. In fact, the further we go in the will of God, the better it gets. As we read, it is first *good*-some thing that we can intellectually accept as positive. In next stage it becomes *acceptable*- now we really settle in and embrace the will of God. Finally, it becomes *perfect*- now we cannot imagine any thing more fitting or pleasing for ourselves. It is only the renewed mind that find the will of God Unfortunately, many Christians stumble in/through life, never really finding God’s will.
4. **Put away independence:** The Holy Spirit desires that believers must put away their aggressive individualism and negative, incorrect attitudes towards fellow believers. God’s purpose will not be complete, until the body is complete—until all the members are united, with every member/part doing its job and the body is growing together in health and glorifying Him.

Let us find our place in the body of Christ and nurture close friendship with the Head as well as other members of the body. May God bless our efforts in this regard.....Amen.