

August 20, 2023 am

## **CLOSER TO GOD (51)**

### **Disciples of Jesus – 8**

### **A Part of His Body - 2**

We have been studying what it means to be a disciple of Jesus as part of our 2022-23 theme, “Closer to God”. The past few lessons we have noted how a Christian/disciple is compared to various aspects of life such as an athlete, a soldier, clay in the hands of a potter. Last week we began a discussion of how we are part of a body.

We emphasized that we are part of the body of Christ, which is His church. We defined the church, both in its universal and its local sense, noting how both are part of His eternal plan (Ephesians 3:10-11). I also addressed my conviction that He desires we join ourselves to a local body to work with them.

But our primary focus was to address how we as disciples are like a body. A body is a collective of parts that is working and functioning together.

Paul illustrated this in 1 Corinthians 12:12-27. We began studying that text by noting: 1) We are a spiritual body joined to Christ through baptism. Christ is the head which means He has authority to direct what we do and how we do it. 2) We are all one body and our differences should not matter – see Galatians 3:26-28. 3) We all follow the same source – His Spirit. 4) We addressed how we need to realize that each part is important and needed (1 Cor. 12: 14-16). Because we are not something other than what we are we should NOT think that we are not needed or are not part of His body. 5) Vs. 17, I need to be me – every part is different with unique functions. I need to be the best me I can be. 6) Vs. 18-20 – we are exactly where God wants us to be! God KNOWS what He is doing by giving me the abilities I have (whether inherited or developed). We concluded by noting that we need to conduct ourselves as an orchestra – with every part doing its work when and where it is supposed to. That is how beautiful music is made. We continue with vs. 21.

#### **I. Functioning as part of His body**

- a. Vs. 21- *we need to humbly appreciate each other.* After again emphasizing we are one body with many members, he notes that you cannot disregard the other parts. He notes that an eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you...” Instead, I need to APPRECIATE what the function of others is.
  - i. While vs. 15-16 could describe the bitter and discouraged because they feel inferior, here we find the antithesis – the arrogant and prideful one.
  - ii. Clearly, we need humility as we deal with others. See Romans 12:3, Philippians 2:3-5, 1 Peter 5:5-6, etc.
  - iii. We need to be careful when we avoid one another because of our differences. That was a BIG issue among the Corinthians, and others. They were not worshipping properly together (abuses of the Lord’s supper), boasting about their abilities, acting without any thought of how it might affect their brethren (liberties), taking each other to court, and just splintering into cliques. That was NOT healthy for them, and it is NOT healthy for us.
  - iv. Consider vs. 19 again, *“If they were all one member, where would the body be?”* Paul told the Galatians, *For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!* (Galatians 5:13-15) Consider this: If a body keeps splintering over every idiosyncrasy, how long will it be before there will be NO body?
  - v. I am convinced this is why division is so strongly condemned (1 Corinthians 1:10-13) and unity is so often emphasized in the NT. Consider Ephesians 4:1-3. This text reminds us that unity is something we need to be working at.

- b. Vs. 22-24 – *members we deem less honorable* - upholding the weak
  - i. Which parts of the body are more important - The appendages or the internal organs? You can live without an arm or leg, or without sight or hearing (and maybe even lose more than one of these), but try living without your lungs or your heart or your brain, etc.
  - ii. Workers behind the scenes – if you have ever gone to a concert or sporting event, you likely have not seen all the workers behind the scene. Without them you would have no show!!! The performer who takes for granted his support crew is a fool.
  - iii. There are members whom we PERCEIVE are incapable of doing much, but the truth is you never know. They may be doing things regularly that you never notice, UNTIL they are not there. Who cleans the building, the baptistery, prepares the emblems, manages our sound system, etc.? Who takes care of repairs when they are discovered, often without you even noticing? These are tasks that make our worship services more pleasant, appealing and running smoothly.
  - iv. The point is, DO NOT assume you know what everyone is doing “behind the scenes”.
  - v. How often does scripture emphasize humility and service over self-seeking praise? Matthew 23:11-12 – He who is greatest among you, let him be your slave... Luke 18:14 – whose prayer did God hear, when the Pharisee and tax collector went to the temple to pray.
- c. Vs. 25-26 – *that there be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another*.
  - i. We have seen in this text that Paul clearly wants them to be unified and to treat each other with proper dignity.
  - ii. Schism means a tearing (cf. Matthew 9:16) describing a tear in a garment. Bodily, consider a tendon or muscle tearing. It means something is wrong. When a body part is wounded or sick, it affects the rest of the body.
  - iii. The same is true spiritually. That is why the NT deals so much with unity and bearing with one another, especially our differences. See Romans 14, 1 Corinthians 8:1-13, 10:23-24 - *All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify. Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being*. etc.
  - iv. How do we prevent schism? We HAVE to care! Remember our definition of Christian love (agape) – *Caring enough to sacrifice for what it best*. It is about caring as we should. We prevent schism by ALL of us trying to be the body God intends of us. Just think about how after this, Paul will lead into 1 Corinthians 13 and describe this love (1 Corinthians 13:1-8).
  - v. Vs. 26 – *if one member suffers...* - this is the interdependence we have been describing. Consider Galatians 6:2, Romans 12:15 – we bear each other's burdens, rejoice and cry together, etc. Cf. 1 Corinthians 5:1-2 – they ought to have been mourning because one of their members had gone astray.
- d. Vs. 27 – *now you are the body of Christ, and members individually*. In this text, Paul summarizes his description. The idea of the “body of Christ” is a reference to the church.
  - i. Contextually, he is appealing to “the church of God at Corinth” (1 Cor. 1:2), a local congregation. Time will not permit developing how each local church is autonomous and independent of others and exists “as if” it were the only one.
  - ii. The point being, EACH local church answers directly to Christ, and must let Him as the HEAD govern how we conduct ourselves.
  - iii. As a local church we need to ACT LIKE Christ is ruling over ALL of us. We are ALL His disciples joined together and working together, trying to function just like a healthy body does.

## II. Other Passages:

- a. Ephesians 4:11-16 – a passage that more succinctly reminds us that if we are to grow, every part must do its share. The body of Christ ought to be a place where we grow. A body is not going to properly grow if certain parts are failing.

- b. Colossians 3:14-15 - And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. The body of Christ ought to be a place where we find genuine peace – with one another and within ourselves, as we help each cope and overcome struggles.
- c. Ephesians 2:14-16 – the body of Christ ought to be a place of reconciliation, based on reconciliation with God through the blood of Jesus.
- d. 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 – the body ought to be a place of genuine fellowship. Describing how the Lord’s supper is an act of fellowship with Christ, it is also noted as an act of fellowship with each other.

**III. Summarizing Disciples as the body of Christ**

- a. We seek dependence, not independence – Ephesians 2:19 – we are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens and members of the household of God (His body). Remember, we just noted prior to this, Jesus is our peace reconciling us into one body. WE NEED each other!
- b. We see equality, not superiority – Romans 12:3 – we do not think more highly of ourselves. Even leaders understand they SERVE – 1 Peter 5:2-4, 1 Timothy 4:12 – 16, etc.
- c. We seek harmony, not hostility – John 17:20-21, 13:34-35 – a new commandment, love one another
- d. We are diverse, but still united!
- e. ALL of these points are emphasized in our text – 1 Corinthians 12:12-27.

And thus, we can see how as disciples we are all parts of the body of Christ (universally – because we are saved, and locally as part of a local church). If we want to get to heaven, WE NEED EACH OTHER, and we need to act like it, by doing our part to ensure HIS body is functioning at its fullest capacity. What about you? Are you doing your part to help this spiritual body grow? Think about it!