

36 - How Christ's Body Functions

by Ben Torrey

Every member of the church has a ministry to do, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit are tools for building up the church to do its work.

Duration: 8:42

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:4

Topics: "Body Of Christ"

Description

In this sermon, Ben Tory discusses the concept of body ministry, which is the idea that every member of the church has a ministry and is called to serve one another. He references a passage from Paul's first letter to the Corinthian Church, emphasizing the importance of love, humility, and obedience in exercising our spiritual gifts. Tory explains that body ministry is not limited to those with public or exciting ministries, but includes everyone in the church, including children, the aged, the sick, and shut-ins. He concludes by highlighting that the Holy Spirit wants to equip us with tools and empower us to use them effectively for the benefit of others.

Transcript

Good evening, this is Ben Torrey with you once again, continuing this series on what God requires of us. I've spoken in the past about the importance of the unity of His body, the Church. Tonight I would like to talk about how His body is supposed to function, at least according to what the Bible tells us.

We are to practice something that we call body ministry, the ministry of each member of the body. Let's look at a passage in Paul's first letter to the Corinthian church. But before we do, just a word about Corinth.

Corinth was a major international seaport at the time. It was at the head of a canal that cut through the isthmus between the Greek Peloponnesian peninsula and Attica, where Athens is. This was a very busy sea route.

As a result, Corinth was full of sailors from all over the world and was known for its vigorous nightlife. Sailors have been from time immemorial notoriously superstitious, or if you want to use the term, religious. Corinth was a hodgepodge of different religions.

There was a strong element of emotionalism and incredulity in the worship of these religions. Like major cosmopolitan cities through the ages, Corinth tended to excess. This is why Paul's letter to the church at Corinth was so full of practical teaching about problems of the flesh and the soul.

On the other hand, the Corinthian church, with all its problems, was a big church full of life and enthusiasm. I think for all its success, the Lord had a special love for the church there and made sure Paul did a good job of giving them the practical teaching that they needed. In any case, we have in chapters 12, 13, and 14 a wonderful textbook on how a Holy Spirit-empowered church is supposed to operate.

I will not discuss all three chapters, but I encourage all of you to go and read them carefully, thinking of what they mean for your own church. Also, please don't get hung up on the discussion of specific gifts of the Holy Spirit, especially tongues, as so many do. I believe that all the gifts mentioned here, as well as in such passages as Ephesians 4 and Romans 12, not to mention what we see in the book of Acts, are all available to the church today.

However, I do not believe that they are necessarily either a proof of the quality of our relationship to the Lord, nor that everyone must have any particular gift. They are first and foremost tools for the building up of the church to do the work to which God has called it. If we keep in mind that they are tools and only tools, we should be able to stay on track.

But this talk tonight is not about these gifts of the Holy Spirit as important as they are. Perhaps another time, I want to focus on verses 4 through 7 and 12 through 21. Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit with all.

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 bound or free, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many.

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 one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee, nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

The major point that I want to draw your attention to here is that everyone, every last person from top to bottom, has a ministry to do, because he or she is a member of the body of Christ. Every single person is to be a functioning part that contributes to the work of the whole through the gifts that the Holy Spirit has given to them. Too many people think that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are a blessing that we receive to give us a more wonderful experience in God and to draw us more closely to Him.

That's not what the Bible teaches. It teaches in no uncertain words that we are given gifts to bless not ourselves, but others. The gifts are, let me say it one more time, the gifts are tools that we are to use with

skill and discretion to build up the body to do its work.

Many people think that the pastor and other ordained clergy are the ministers of the Church. Most would add to this all the deacons and deaconesses as well. People think that these are the ones who are responsible for doing the work of the Church, not according to the Bible.

Let's look at Ephesians 4 verses 11 through 13. And he gave some apostles and some prophets and some evangelists and some pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints for the work of ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. The ordained clergy are given by God to the Church to equip everyone else to do the work of ministry.

Each of you is a minister. If you are not actively involved in the ministry of the Church, then you are not fulfilling God's purposes for you. There are many ministries and many gifts to enable those ministries, and we need them all.

We cannot say that one ministry is more important than another. We cannot say that the senior pastor is more important than the janitor who keeps the church building clean, nor more important than the member who takes the poor into his home to wash, feed, and care for them. This is the whole point of the passage that I just read from 1 Corinthians 12.

There is nothing wrong with desiring different gifts, but we are to rejoice in what we have been given and exercise it as a holy trust from God. There are several things that this requires of us. The first is love, as Paul so emphatically points out in chapter 13.

The others are humility and obedience. We must do everything in obedience to the Holy Spirit, and we must do it in humility, not making more of the gift that we have than we should, and joyfully accepting what we have been given. Above all, our motivation must be love for the brethren so that we exercise our gifts not to please ourselves or stimulate ourselves emotionally, but to bless our brothers and sisters in the church, and through the church bless the world where Christ has placed us.

This is what we call body ministry. Every person in the church, including children, the aged, the sick, and shut-ins, is a minister. Some ministries are very public and exciting, while others are quiet or even hidden.

The point is we need each other's gifts and ministries. The Holy Spirit wants to give us tools to use along with the power, knowledge, and wisdom to use them well. Please give serious thought to what God is giving you to use for others and how he wants you to carry out your particular ministry.

You might spend some time this evening talking to him about this. Good night.

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