

Many Members, One Spirit, One Body

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Elder Bob Vibe

Last week Elder Bill Rose in his message gave us two examples of miracles by the Apostle Peter recorded in Acts, chapter 9. The first was the healing of a cripple named Aeneas who had been paralyzed for 8 years when Peter said to him, “Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you, **rise up** and make your bed. The second was a godly woman named Tabitha or Dorcas who became ill and died. When Peter arrived, he simply said, “Tabitha, **arise.**” The result of these two miracles is that many in Lydda and Joppa believed in the Lord.

Sometimes we need someone to say to us, **ARISE!** A good example of someone encouraging members of his congregation to arise was Pastor Bob Davis. Since his passing, I have personally had conversations with church members that Bob encouraged to let their gifts arise for the good of the body. In one case, Pastor Bob encouraged a member to start a home bible study that possibly would become a new church plant. I know of another member who is already in ministry but was encouraged by Pastor Bob to take classes for their Master of Divinity. In talking to Rob Scanlon last week, he said he knows of many members that Pastor Bob encouraged to let their faith and gifts arise for service in the church. Those areas include working in the kitchen, opening or closing the church after service, teaching, serving as ushers and greeters, serving on the worship team, and the list goes on.

I was fortunate to have a pastor like Pastor Bob at the South Lake Tahoe Presbyterian Church, Pastor Steve Blocher. Pastor Steve encouraged me to become a Commissioned Lay Pastor so I could use my gifts in smaller Presbyterian churches in our area that couldn't afford a full-time pastor.

These are great examples for each of us to follow as stated in Hebrews 10:24 “to spur one another to love and to good works.” The purpose of this encouragement is for

individual members to develop and use their gifts for the good of the entire Body of Christ. There are many opportunities to serve in our church right now. If you are not currently serving, talk to an elder and let us help you get connected. The Apostle Paul was concerned about members serving and using their gifts for the good of the body. He discusses the topic of one body with many members in I Corinthians, chapter 12.

As we heard the reading of this Scripture earlier, beginning in verse 12, “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.”

The Apostle Paul said that the body is one unit or one body, made up of many parts. The estimated number of Christians is currently 2.2 billion people, or about one third of the world’s population. 2.2 billion people are a lot of parts. Most of those parts, we have never seen nor come in contact with. Yet, Paul says that we are **one body**. When I think about 2 billion parts or members of one body, it is hard for me to picture it using examples like feet, eyes, and hands. It gives me visions of some creature with millions of hands, feet, and eyes. So, I think of this body of Christ being made up of many parts by visualizing my body being made up of trillions of cells, all important to the proper function of my body. All our cells have different functions, supporting the many organs and body parts in each body, with the common goal of keeping our bodies running at peak efficiency. When all of these cells are functioning in my body, my body is alive, and it can accomplish many things. But when disease or lack of mobility causes my cells to die or become useless, my body fails to function as God created it.

Paul then gives us the common denominator that facilitates all these members working as one body...the Spirit of God. He said we were all baptized by **one spirit**, regardless of race, culture, or status. Paul is not talking about water baptism here, but a baptism or immersion of the Spirit which causes our dead spirit to receive life in Christ through our confession of Him as Savior and Lord. At that moment we are born again or

born of the Spirit of God. Paul goes on to talk about a few body parts to illustrate the point.

Let's begin by looking at verses 15 and 16. He says that if the foot says it is not a hand, or the ear says it is not an eye, and therefore not a part of the body, that is not a valid argument. Paul makes it clear that just because we are not a part of the body that we would like to be, it does not exempt us from doing our part in the body. Sometimes Christians fail to exercise their gifts or function in the body, because they don't like the part that God created them to be. Or they don't know what part or gift they are to be. Some might say I can't minister like the pastor does, or I can't teach like that teacher does, or I can't pray like an intercessor prays, so they lay down discovering their own gifts or function, because they can't function like someone else. As a church family, we should always encourage each other to use our gifts, regardless of what they are. Sometimes, our individual part may change, and we may find ourselves doing a part that is needed at that particular time. When we think of doing one part or one job, we have a tendency to think that we are to do the same part all the time. That is not the case in real life or God's Kingdom.

In real life, I am a husband, a father, a brother, a minister, a businessman, and even the laundry man at times. I am one person, but I do different parts depending on the relationship or the need. It is the same in the church. You may be comfortable with one role in the body, but there are times when God will ask us to step out of our comfort zone to do something else. He will enable us to serve by the power of His Spirit to meet a specific need. For whatever God calls us to, He will enable us to do it! We should never say, "I don't have a specific gift," because the Apostle Paul makes it clear in verse 11 that the Spirit is the gift giver, and He gives to each one severally, as He wills. The word severally comes from the Greek word *idios* and points to the gifts being given individually and not as a group.

Beginning in verse 17, Paul states, “If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? Paul then closes his argument that all the parts are necessary to the proper functioning of the body by saying this: “But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as He wanted them to be.” God is the One who has brought all of us to this church, at this appointed time to accomplish his call for this congregation. He is the one that gave us our gifts and our function in this body, so how can we do anything less than what He has designed us to do?

It seems from Scripture that in God’s Kingdom, God brings just the right mix of people and gifts together in a local church, a local community, or a nation to accomplish His specific purposes. For example, I believe that we have the financial resources, giftings, and necessary members or body parts to accomplish what God is asking us to do right here in this church. We don’t have a lack of the essential parts to do what needs to be done. Instead, we do have parts of the body that are not aware of their part, or they are not functioning as God made them and called them to function.

Paul is so emphatic that we understand the importance of knowing and using our gifts for the benefit of the entire body that he continues in verses 21-23 by saying that every part is indispensable: “The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I don’t need you!’ And the hand cannot say to the feet, ‘I don’t need you!’ On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment.”

Paul is making it very clear that the weaker parts and less honorable parts of the body are to be treated with special honor. Usually, the weaker and less honorable parts of the body are the parts doing the work behind the scenes. They are cutting the grass in summer, shoveling snow in winter, cleaning the church up after service, vacuuming and setting up rooms before every service, and washing the dishes after every meal served.

This gifting is generally called the gift of helps. Certainly, the parts who are shut-ins or disabled who are praying at home for our needs would be part of those whose part is not seen or honored. The list of less honorable or weaker but necessary body functions in any church is staggering. Yet, many of us fail to use our abilities and gifts in these areas of service because we feel less important or less appreciated. However, according to Paul in the next verse, God gives greater honor to these seemingly less important parts. He said, “God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other.” Take a moment to look at your neighbor and tell them, **I need you!**

Church family, we need all of us doing our part, using our gifts, whether prominent or hidden, so that God’s purposes can be fulfilled. Beyond that, we need to esteem one another, encourage one another, and praise one another for the part that each one does, especially if that part normally goes unnoticed. Paul continues in verse 26, “If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.” This is why we pray for the sick person to be well; why we give to the person in financial difficulty; why we take a meal to a shut-in; heal the broken-hearted one who has been wounded. We do these things because when one of us is suffering, we all suffer with them and God wants us to be whole, providing what one part needs from the other parts of the body. This is also why we rejoice when one in our midst rejoices. The rejoicing may be due to new members joining our body, new baptisms, or the healing of someone sick. It may be rejoicing over a new job that God has provided; it may be rejoicing over any number of needs met, but the rejoicing of one, brings rejoicing in us all!

Paul finishes this discourse on the importance of every part of the body doing its part in verse 27 by stating, “**Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.**” We all have a part in God’s divine plan to manifest Himself to the world and

to minister to the lost, the sick, the broken hearted, and the oppressed. We do this as God leads by His Spirit, because Jesus is the head. Ephesians 4:15-16 states: “Speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.” **As the head, Jesus is the one directing the body parts to fulfill His will.** It is also important to note that Paul said we will grow and be built up in love, only if each part does its work. God designed the body of Christ so that all of us have a critical role in its ability to function and fulfill God’s purposes. When we fail to do our God-given part, the body suffers and becomes handicapped in our ability to fulfill God’s will.

Our relationship in this body, and particularly in a smaller church body, is so vital that God said he has knit us together with one another so that we are a part of one another. Paul says it this way in Romans 12:5: **“So in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.”** There is only one other relationship in Scripture, that I am aware of, that uses similar language and that is the relationship between a husband and wife. The point of Paul’s teaching about the body is that we are to be in close relationship with one another, knit together, giving ourselves to one another so one part can supply what another part needs.

Church family, we are all members of one family and one body. It is a blessing we all do our part for the good of the family, for the good of the body, so that the body can fulfill God’s call in our individual lives and in the life of this church to spread the Gospel to Carson City and beyond. AMEN!