

MEMBERS OF ONE ANOTHER

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by A.T. Jones

We have often noticed those Scriptures which set forth the church as the body of Christ, and the members of the church as members of the body of Christ, and therefore members one of another, as they by "joints and bonds" are "knit together in love." As the members of the church are members of the body of Christ, and also members one of another, how can it be but that there shall be unity in the church. If I am a member of the body of Christ, and you are a member of the body of Christ, then if we have any respect for Christ how can it be that we shall have any disrespect for one another? If we love Christ how can we have anything but love for one another? But more than this, we are also members one of another, and as "no man has ever yet hated his own flesh," how then can it ever be that we should not love one another.

This is the very test of our love for Christ: "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (1 John 4:20) No man can appreciate the love of Christ while he is cross and spiteful and cruel to his brother, for whom Christ died. Church members cannot expect to honor Christ while they dishonor one another. In dishonoring one another they do dishonor Christ, because "we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." But when each one sees in his brother one for whom the

Saviour died, and one who is a member of the body of Christ, then each one will treat his brother tenderly, lovingly, as the Saviour is tender and loving. When each one sees in his brother a soul so precious as that Christ died for him, he is not going to treat him slightly, nor needlessly cause him pain. To cause a brother pain cannot be without causing Christ pain, for we are members of His body, and He is the Head of the body, and it is the head always which is really conscious of any pain in the body. The Scripture would have us realize the closeness, the intricacy, of the relationship between Christ and the church, and between the members one with another in the church.

Paul sets this forth as follows:--

"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. 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; it is 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. 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. Nay, much more those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary; and those members of the body, which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need; but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked; 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 honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." (1 Cor. 12:12-27)

In this it is shown that in the church--the body--of Christ, the members make up the body, as in the human body the eyes, the hands, the feet, etc., form the body. As in the human body the different members are joined one to another, each in its proper place, to form the perfect body, so also is the body of Christ. And God hath "set the members every one in the body as it hath pleased Him." And as in the human body one dislocated member disconcerts and deforms the whole body, so also is it in the body of Christ. As in the human body, each member can properly fulfill its function only by working in the place in which it belongs, so also is it in the body of Christ. For each member to know his place, and keep it, in the church, is just as essential to the efficient working of the church as that each member of the human body shall properly be set in its

proper place, in order to the easy, comfortable working of the human body. But "all members have not the same office:" all cannot be hands, all cannot be eyes, all cannot be feet.

Let the eye and the hand change places, and the good of both would be destroyed, and each would be an evil to the whole body. Let the hands and the feet change places, and the efficiency of all would be destroyed. But with all the members--eyes, hands, and feet--in their proper places, each can be efficient in its own place, and all working together can do that which the hand finds to do. The eye sees that which is to be done, the feet carry us within reach, and the hands perform the task, and each is essential to the working of the other. Except they all work together no task can be efficiently executed. "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. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary." To no part of the body can any other part of the body say, "I have no need of you."

Thus it is with the human body, as everybody knows; and thus it is with the body of Christ--the church--as everybody ought to know. Each member of the church, in his place, is necessary to every other member of the church. Yea, even "those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary," and those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, upon these we should bestow more abundant honor. Christ has honored them with a place in the church, shall we despise them? "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 honored, all the members rejoice with it." Or as it is said in another place: "Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body." (Heb. 13:3) "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." And, oh, that everyone who is a member of the church would realize how sacred is the relationship into which he has entered! Then, indeed, would the disciples of Christ be one, and the world would believe that God sent Him.

For the edifying--the building up--of the church, the Lord has placed certain gifts in the church. "When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." "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 the 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." (Eph. 4:8,11-13) In another place it is written of these gifts, "God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, government, diversities of tongues." (1 Cor. 12:28) Thus we see that the gift of teaching the Word of God is only third in importance of the gifts of the Spirit of God to members of the church. It is second only to the gift of prophecy, and is before miracles, or gifts of healings, or diversities of tongues.

Paul expressed the matter thus: "I thank my God, I speak with

tongues more than ye all; yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue." (1 Cor. 14:18,19)

But though all could speak with the tongues of men and of angels, if they have not charity--the love of God--they are but as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. Though all had the gift of prophecy, and the gift of wisdom to the understanding of all mysteries and all knowledge; and though all had faith that could remove mountains, if they have not charity they are nothing. And though all were so benevolent as that they would bestow all their goods to feed the poor; and though they were all so perfectly assured of what they believe that they would die at the stake as witnesses to it, if they have not charity it will profit nothing. Charity is love. It is the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost. It is that love which keeps the commandments of God, "for this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments;" and "love is the fulfilling of the law." Therefore, though all have all these wondrous powers, and have not the keeping of the commandments of God, they are nothing. "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

But if there be in the church the love of God, keeping the commandments of God, then all these gifts, working together with charity, build up the body of Christ, make increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love, and increase it with the increase of God.

How long shall it be ere the church of the living God comes up to the fullness of its high privilege?