

OUR LIFE TOGETHER

No Life Outside of The Body

INTRODUCTION:

- I. In our study entitled "Our Life Together" we've been looking at the subject of fellowship in the Lord's church – the family of God.
 - A. We've seen that fellowship in the church is BOTH "VERTICAL" AND "HORIZONTAL."
 1. We have "VERTICAL" FELLOWSHIP in the sense that we have a relationship with GOD as our Father in heaven and with JESUS CHRIST our Lord and Savior.
 2. We also have "HORIZONTAL" FELLOWSHIP in the sense that we have a relationship with FELLOW CHRISTIANS – our BROTHERS AND SISTERS in Christ.
 - B. We ALSO noticed that the fellowship in the Lord's church SHOULD BE the same CLOSENESS AND INTIMACY we would see in a LOVING, NURTURING FAMILY.
 1. This is true because the Scriptures frequently speak of the LORD'S CHURCH as the "FAMILY OF GOD."

- II. However, IN THIS LESSON and in the lesson to follow, we want to consider HOW fellowship in the Lord's church is best expressed as a "BODY" where Jesus Christ is the HEAD, and where we are all MEMBERS of that body, completely dependent upon the head and upon one another.
 - A. When we think of the Lord's church as a BODY, with Christ as the head, and think of the church as a body, with each of us as members of that body, there's only ONE CONCLUSION we can come to when we consider OUR LIFE TOGETHER.
 - 1. And that is the simple fact that there is "NO LIFE OUTSIDE OF THE BODY"!
 - B. So, let's begin by noticing some things about the Lord's church being the "BODY OF CHRIST" and attempt to understand WHY being a member of that body is CRITICAL to being able to enter heaven.

BODY:

- I. It's interesting to note that the Lord's church is described as the BODY OF CHRIST in ONLY THE INSPIRED WRITINGS of the apostle PAUL. None of the other writers of the New Testament speak of the church in this way.
 - A. There are THREE notable instances when Paul spoke of the church as the body of Christ, and described us as members of that body.
 - 1. Speaking of Jesus Christ, Paul wrote:

- a. **Colossians 1:18** – *“And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.”*
 - b. **Ephesians 1:22-23** – *“And He [referring to God the Father] put all things under His feet [under the authority of His Son, Jesus Christ], and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, (23) which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”*
2. Then, in describing the Lord’s church as the body of Christ, and each of us as members of that body, Paul wrote:
- a. **1 Corinthians 12:12-14** – *“For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body — whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free — and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. 14 For in fact the body is not one member but many.”*
- B. But, in describing US as MEMBERS of the body of Christ, the apostle Paul ALSO describes what Jesus Christ DOES for each of us as members of His body. Let’s take a close look at what Paul tells us in **Ephesians chapter 5**.
1. For example, Paul tells us we – the body of Christ – are SAVED by Jesus Christ.

- a. Using the relationship between Christ and the church to describe how the relationship between husbands and wives should be, Paul wrote:
 - (1). **Ephesians 5:23** – *“For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is HEAD of the church; and He is the SAVIOR of the body.”*
 - b. Paul also explains that the Lord saved us out of love, and by giving Himself for us.
 - (1). **Ephesians 5:25** – *“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also LOVED the church and GAVE Himself for her.”*
 - c. And Paul explains that the Lord did all this so that He might make us a "glorious" church – "holy and without blemish."
 - (1). **Ephesians 5:26-27** – *“ That He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, (27) that He might present her to Himself a GLORIOUS church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be HOLY AND WITHOUT BLEMISH.”*
2. Not only are we SAVED by Jesus Christ, the apostle Paul tells us that we are also "NOURISHED" and "CHERISHED" by Christ.
 - a. Again, using the relationship between Christ and the church to describe the kind of relationship husbands and wives should have, Paul wrote:

(1). **Ephesians 5:28-29** – *“So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but NOURISHES and CHERISHES it, just as the Lord does the church.*

- b. This suggests that the work of Christ on behalf of His church EXTENDED BEYOND just dying on the cross for our sins.
- c. The Lord CONTINUES TO NOURISH or NURTURE us – a word that means "to nourish up to maturity" (Robertson's Word Pictures in the New Testament).
- d. And, the Lord CONTINUES TO CHERISH us – a word that means "to warm... to foster with tender care" (Robertson's Word Pictures in the New Testament), and is often used to describe how a mother hen gathers her chicks under her wings to warm and protect them.

C. So, what does all this tell us about there being "No Life Outside of The Body"?

1. It simply means this.

- a. If the Lord is the “SAVIOR of the body” (**Ephesians 5:23**),
- b. And if He loved us SO much that He GAVE HIMSELF for us as the body of Christ (**Ephesians 5:25**),
- c. And if the Lord continues, even today, to NOURISH AND CHERISH us as His body, the church (**Ephesians 5:28-29**) – to spiritually nourish and nurture, and warm and protect us, then;

- d. There can be NO SALVATION OUTSIDE of the Lord's church, NOR is there any spiritual LIFE-GIVING and LIFE-SUSTAINING NOURISHMENT or WARMTH outside of the Lord's church – His body.

D. But all this raises an important question.

- 1. HOW does the Lord provide LIFE to those of us who are in the body?

II. The answer is simply that the Lord provides spiritual nourishment or warmth to us BOTH DIRECTLY AND INDIRECTLY.

A. For example, we receive LIFE-GIVING and LIFE-SUSTAINING spiritual nourishment and warmth DIRECTLY through the Spirit-given WORDS of Jesus, and through the Spirit-given WRITINGS and TEACHINGS of the apostles. Let's take a look at some things the Lord said **the gospel of John**.

- 1. Jesus said:

- a. **John 6:63** – *“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.”*
- b. **John 15:5-8** – *“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. 7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. 8 By*

this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”

2. However, since Jesus could not remain with His disciples forever, He promised the apostles He would send them the Holy Spirit to guide them into ALL truth.

a. **John 16:12-14** – *“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. 13 However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. 14 He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.”*

3. Is it any wonder that the apostle Paul would describe the SPIRIT-GIVEN GOSPEL OF CHRIST as the WORD OF LIFE?

a. **Philippians 2:14-16** – *“Do all things without complaining and disputing, 15 that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, 16 holding fast the word of life...”*

B. But then, we ALSO receive LIFE-GIVING and LIFE-SUSTAINING spiritual nourishment and warmth INDIRECTLY through OTHER members of the body of Christ – through our BROTHERS and SISTERS in Christ.

1. In the **12th chapter of Romans** the apostle Paul tells us that by the grace of God each of us have been given gifts – talents and abilities – that the Lord intends for us to use to benefit our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.
 - a. **Romans 12:4-8** – *For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. 6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; 7 or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; 8 he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.*
 - b. The body of Christ has been blessed with those who can SPEAK FORTH the Word of God, with those who are genuine SERVANTS, and those who are capable of TEACHING the gospel of Christ either one-on-one or in a Bible class, as well as those who have a knack for providing COMFORT, CONSOLATION, and SOLACE to those who need it most, and with those who have been blessed with material WEALTH, as well as those who have the ability to be true spiritual LEADERS, and those who are COMPASSIONATE toward those who need compassion.

2. But simply because we may not have the same talents and abilities as OTHERS doesn't mean OUR unique gift isn't needed in the body. In the **12th chapter of 1st Corinthians**, the apostle Paul dealt with a similar problem when trying to urge the Corinthians to recognize the value of THEIR unique spiritual gifts.
 - a. **1 Corinthians 12:14-26** – *“For in fact the body is not one member but many. 15 If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? 16 And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? 18 But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. 19 And if they were all one member, where would the body be? 20 But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. 21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” 22 No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. 23 And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, 24 but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, 25 that there should be*

no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. 26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.”

- b. The bottom line is simply that WE ALL need one another. Why? Because when it comes to doing certain things that benefit the body of Christ, YOU are better than ME at doing these things. YOU have talents and abilities I don't have.
3. This is why the apostle Peter says we need to USE our talents and abilities.
 - a. **1 Peter 4:10** – *“As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”*
 - b. We are expected to *“minister it [use OUR unique God-given gift] to one another”* i.e., use OUR gift to benefit, and to minister to and serve the needs of others.
4. In **Ephesians chapter 4**, the apostle Paul said this is why God gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some as evangelists and others as pastors and teachers. He said the purpose of these spiritual leaders are:
 - a. **Ephesians 4:12-16** – *“... for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, (13) till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;*

(14) that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, (15) but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ—(16) from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. “

- b. Paul said MY responsibility, as a gospel preacher and teacher, TO YOU, as a member of the body of Christ, is to equip you with the things you need to do the work of ministering to others so that the body of Christ HERE can be edified – built up and strengthened spiritually.
 - (1). In other words, MY responsibility is to help YOU find YOUR unique gift and encourage you to use it.
- c. This is the reason Paul said the only way the body of Christ can grow spiritually and edify itself in love is by *“the effective working by which every part does its share.”*
- d. And that is just as true HERE in THIS CHURCH as it was in the church at Ephesus.
- e. The only way we are going to grow spiritually and edify ourselves is when every one of us is doing our share.

- C. So, when it comes to receiving LIFE-GIVING and LIFE-SUSTAINING spiritual nourishment and warmth we receive it two ways.
1. DIRECTLY through the Spirit-given WORDS of Jesus, and through the Spirit-given WRITINGS and TEACHINGS of the apostles and prophets.
 2. And INDIRECTLY through OTHER members of the body of Christ who use their God-given talents and abilities to benefit us all.
 3. A great example of this is seen in Paul's opening remarks in his **2nd letter to the church at Corinth** when he spoke about HOW we receive comfort and consolation during times of TRIALS AND TRIBULATION.
 - a. **2 Corinthians 1:3-4a** – *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, (4) who comforts us in all our tribulation...”* – in other words, God and our Lord Jesus Christ DIRECTLY comfort us in all our tribulations.
 - b. **2 Corinthians 1:4b** – *“... that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God”* – or to put it another way, God and our Lord Jesus Christ DIRECTLY comfort us in all our tribulations so that we can INDIRECTLY provide comfort to others with the same comfort we received from God.
- III. To sum up all we've learned here, we need to remember TWO VERY IMPORTANT TRUTHS.

- A. First, we need to remember that the church is the BODY of Christ, and each of us are MEMBERS of that body.
1. That means we are INTER-DEPENDENT.
 - a. We are dependent on Christ to give us spiritual nourishment and warmth, and we are also dependent on our brothers and sisters in Christ for the spiritual nourishment and warmth that comes through our ministering to one another.
 2. Therefore, no one can say "I am not needed," or "I won't be missed," or "There's nothing that I can do that's important."
 - a. When there is even ONE INACTIVE MEMBER, the whole body suffers – the whole body fails to function as the Lord intended.
 - b. In such cases, the body (church) becomes "HANDICAPPED"!
 - c. The church is not able to work at its full potential.
 - d. And this is simply because the only way the church can work to its full potential is through *"the effective working by which EVERY PART does it share."* (**Ephesians 4:16**)
 4. When the body (church) is "HANDICAPPED" in this manner, then...
 - a. Christ is unable to provide the full extent of His life and nourishment, and...
 - b. The end result is that *"growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love"* simply does not occur!

5. This causes me to wonder how long will Christ endure members who do not perform their function?" Let's go back to **John chapter 15** and take a close look at what the Lord told His disciples there.
 - a. **John 15:2** – *“Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away...”*
 - b. NON-PRODUCTIVE branches are always PRUNED from the vine so that the nutrients flowing through the vine will go ONLY to those branches that produce. Otherwise, the non-productive branch will ROB the productive branches of nourishment and keep them from producing to their fullest potential.
 - c. The reason CHURCHES DIE is simply because NON-PRODUCTIVE members of the body ROB PRODUCTIVE MEMBERS of the joy and blessings of being in a flourishing and nourishing fellowship.
 - d. NONE of us want to see ANY brother or sister in the body drift away and ultimately be lost. And we should make EVERY EFFORT to ENCOURAGE and LIFT UP a brother or sister who is showing signs of drifting.
 - e. But as sad as it is to say this, after every REASONABLE EFFORT has been made to bring them back, SOMETIMES the local church is better off to simply LET THEM GO, and PLACE THEM IN THE LORD'S HANDS, rather than be dragged down by their continual indifference and unfaithfulness.

B. And all this should ALSO help us remember ONE OTHER IMPORTANT FACT.

There is simply NO LIFE OUTSIDE THE BODY OF CHRIST.

1. After Jesus told His disciples that God removes branches that fail to bear fruit, He went on to show why it's so important for us to REMAIN FIRMLY CONNECTED to Him as the Vine.

a. **John 15:2-5** – *“...every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. 3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. 5 I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.”*

b. WITHOUT CHRIST, and WITHOUT a close and intimate relationship with Him, we will simply wither and die spiritually.

c. But, by constantly being nourished by a close and intimate relationship WITH HIM, we will flourish and bear much fruit in the form of the qualities and characteristics of godliness and holiness in our own lives – all to the glory of God.

2. Have you ever looked at all the passages of scripture that speak of the BLESSINGS WE RECEIVE by being IN CHRIST? There is no way we could read them all in the time we have remaining. But allow me to mention just a few. We have...

- a. Dead to sin in Christ (Rom 3:11)
- b. Redemption in Christ (Rom 3:24)
- c. Eternal life in Christ (Rom 6:23)
- d. The love of God in Christ (Rom 8:39)
- e. Sanctification in Christ (1 Cor 1:2)
- f. Hope in Christ (1 Cor 15:19)
- g. Triumph in Christ (2 Cor 2:14)
- h. Liberty in Christ (Gal 2:4)
- i. Justification in Christ (Gal 2:16)
- j. All spiritual blessings in Christ (Eph 1:3)
- k. Consolation in Christ (Phil 2:1)
- l. Perfection in Christ (Col 1:28)
- m. The steadfastness of our faith in Christ (Col 2:5)
- n. Faith and love in Christ (1 Tim 1:14)
- o. Truth in Christ (1 Tim 2:7)
- p. Great boldness in the faith in Christ (1 Tim 3:13)
- q. The promise of life in Christ (2 Tim 1:1)
- r. Grace in Christ (2 Tim 2:1)
- s. Salvation in Christ (2 Tim 3:15)

CONCLUSION:

- I. Now do you understand why we can say, "THERE IS NO LIFE OUTSIDE THE BODY OF CHRIST?"
 - A. And now do you see why it's SO IMPORTANT for you to be IN CHRIST – to be IN the Lord's CHURCH which is the BODY OF CHRIST?
 1. You can't receive spiritual nourishment apart from the body of Christ.
 2. And the reason is simply because every spiritual blessing, including salvation and eternal life, are found ONLY in Christ.
 - B. If you're not IN CHRIST at this very moment – IN His BODY THE CHURCH – then you can be before you leave here this morning.
 1. The apostle Paul offers the simple solution.
 - a. **Romans 6:1-4** – *“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? 3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”*
 2. If you will simply COME to Christ in faith, repenting of your past sins, you can be baptized INTO CHRIST this very morning – freed from the guilt of every sin you've ever committed – and be raised to walk in a newness of life.

C. But for those of you who ARE IN CHRIST, but realize you haven't been productive in serving Him or in serving your brothers and sisters in Christ – then you can START ALL OVER with a WHOLE NEW BEGINNING before YOU leave here this morning.

1. James, the Lord's brother, offers this simple solution.

a. **James 5:16** – *“Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed.”*

2. And the apostle John added:

a. **1 John 1:9** – *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*

D. Let me leave you with this ONE FINAL THOUGHT.

1. Aside from all the spiritual blessings we receive NOW from being IN CHRIST, there is ONE OTHER BLESSING that is reserved ONLY for those who are IN CHRIST at the time of His second coming.

2. The apostle Paul tells us what we can expect at the end of time when the Lord returns.

a. **1 Thessalonians 4:16-18** – *“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the*

clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.”

3. Is there ANYONE HERE this morning who wants to MISS OUT ON THIS SPIRITUAL BLESSING?