

The essential attitude

Today we are going to pause our series on spiritual gifts.

Man looks at the externals, but God looks at the heart.

If your heart isn't right, if you have the wrong attitude, if you have wrong motivation, if your thinking is wrong, that has to be fixed first.

/Paul knew that the hearts of the proud Corinthians were not right. \

So he interrupted his teaching on spiritual gifts to address the problem.

1 Cor 13:1-3

13 If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.

3 And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.

I love the humility and grace of Paul here. When he admonishes, when he speaks of something that needs to be corrected, he says it in terms of himself.

He wasn't the problem. And everyone knew that. But he didn't want to hit them over the head – at least here!

He's saying, look, you guys love the subject of spiritual gifts, you probably couldn't wait for me to teach on it, you probably were frustrated that I held off for 11 chapters,.... And you are just itching to have me speak on the subject of tongues.

/But I can't. Not yet. There's something wrong with your thinking, and I need to address that first.\

You have to get your head on straight. You need to have the right focus.

/In other words, you have to have the right attitude. \

So do we.

Without it, we cannot preserve the unity of the body.

It can be expressed in two little words. Are you ready?

/NOT I.\

Not I.

The attitude of humility.

/Humility is the necessary virtue for preserving the unity of the body of Christ.\

You may recall – we saw this when we were in Ephesians 4 recently:

Eph 4:1-3

4 Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, 3 being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

So now we're going to work this out together.

Just keep saying those two little words. What are they?

NOT I!

Good!

Now we know that everything good we have come from God. Everything starts and ends with Christ.

We are told to have the same attitude in us which was in Christ Jesus.

/Paul taught the Corinthians what real love is all about. \

1 Cor 13:4-7

4 Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, 5 does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, 6 does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

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Now just replace the word “love” with the word “Christ”.

/This is the mind or thinking of Christ. Not I but you. \

Love is humble. Christ is humble of heart.

John 10:14-18

14 "I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, 15 even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. 16 "I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd. 17 "For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again.

18 "No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father."

/Jesus didn't seek His own glory. \He didn't seek comfort. He didn't seek anything for Himself.

He was the perfect embodiment of "Not I".

/Not I but the will of My Father.\

/Not I but the welfare of My sheep.\

Phil 2:1-8

2 Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, 2 make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. 3 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves;

4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. 5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus NASB

5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

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This is the mind of Christ! Christ never sought His own interests. /He never insisted on His rights in a matter.\ And He was the Son of God, He was the Messiah.

Instead, He took the form of a slave.

He was made sin so that we could become the righteousness of God in Him.

/He died for us, the just for the unjust.\

There is no greater love than that.

/Not I but you.\

And He says to us, as I have done this for you, you lay down your life for the brethren.

1 John 3:16

16 We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

/If you want to know what NOT I looks like, simply look to Jesus.\

/And this is the one essential attitude that preserves the unity of the body.\

/There are three “NOT I”s for our spiritual life.\

And the first one may sound a little strange to you.

It's the one that's probably talked about the least.

But it's absolutely vital.

Please turn to Romans 7, starting in verse 13.

Rom 7:13-25

13 Therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for me? May it never be! Rather it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good, so that through the commandment sin would become utterly sinful.

14 For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin.

15 For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate.

16 But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good. 17 So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.

No longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.

/Not I but sin.\

18 For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. 19 For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. 20 But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.

I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. There it is again.

When they first hear it, most people say that this just doesn't seem right.

I practice evil, but I am not the one doing it? HUH? Sounds like the twisted ploy of a desperate defense attorney.

/But actually, this turns out to be a declaration of freedom. Christ set us free!\

*21 I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good.
22 For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, 23 but I see a different
law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and
making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. 24 Wretched man
that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? 25 Thanks be to God
through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am
serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.*

Christ has set us free from the body of this death.

/He has set us free from our slavery to sin.\

If you're a believer in Christ, you've died to sin!

1 Peter 2:21-24

21 For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, 22 WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; 23 and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; 24 and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.

/There's a permanent separation between you and sin. \

Rom 6:6-11

6 knowing this, that our old self[man] was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; 7 for he who has died is freed from sin.

8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. 10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. 11 Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Next time, we will continue with the second “NOT I”

/NOT I BUT CHRIST\

Rom 15:1-7

15 Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves. 2 Each of us is to please his neighbor for his good, to

his edification. 3 For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "THE REPROACHES OF THOSE WHO REPROACHED YOU FELL ON ME." 4 For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. 5 Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, 6 so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

7 Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.
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Luke 22:39-43

39 And He came out and proceeded as was His custom to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples also followed Him. 40 When He arrived at the place, He said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation." 41 And He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and began to pray, 42 saying, "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done."

2 Cor 5:14-15

14 For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; 15 and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.

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This morning, we are going to see a remarkable way in which God the Father has gone about answering this prayer of His Son.

We pick things up where we left off last Sunday – in 1 Corinthians 12.

We have studied the one body of Christ, and seen that it is made up of all believers in Christ since He ascended into heaven.

Last week, we saw further that Paul used the human body as an analogy to the spiritual body, the body of Christ.

/Paul gives his fullest treatment of this analogy of the body in 1 Corinthians 12.\

1 Cor 12:1

12 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware.

/Chapters 12-14 are about one subject: spiritual gifts. \

This is no accident, as well shall see. There is an intimate connection between spiritual gifts and the unity of the body.

Look at 1 Corinthians chapter 12 verse 4.

1 Cor 12:4-7

4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. 6 There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. 7 But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

/Each of us receives a manifestation of the Spirit – better known as a spiritual gift.\

There are a variety of gifts. Yet the one Spirit distributes many varieties.

There are varieties of ministries.

/A ministry is a setting for believers to use their spiritual gift to benefit of particular members of the body. \

No two ministries are exactly the same. Yet the same Lord gives each believer the opportunity to serve. He is the Head of the body.

He directs the great varieties of ministries with one mind and for one purpose: that we may be perfected in unity.

Three are varieties of effects. /We can think of these as the results, the production, of our ministries.\ God the Father decided what those will be.

Eph 2:10

10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

In other words, the results are not up to us. We leave all that in God's hands.

When it comes to the spiritual gifts, all three members of the Trinity work as a team from start to finish.

/The Spirit distributes these divine gifts. \

/The Lord Jesus establishes the opportunities to serve others with our gifts.\

/ And the Father produces the supernatural results. \

They all provide the miraculous power and ability to operate in our gifts.

So the spiritual gifts are :

/

- a. Divine in origin (same Spirit)
- b. Miraculous in manifestation (same Lord)
- c. Supernatural in operation (same God and Father)\

1 Cor 12:7 But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

In verse seven, the spiritual gift is called a manifestation of the Spirit. Each of us has received a unique manifestation of the Spirit.

Let me explain what this really means. It's a supernatural thing.

/The Greek word for “manifestation” is *phanerosis*. It means a visual display, an exhibition, an appearance.\

When believers operate in their spiritual gifts to serve the body of Christ according to the workings of God, the Holy Spirit makes an appearance.

/Our spiritual gift is a channel that the Spirit of God uses to minister to the body. \

Each spiritual gift is given to the church, not to the individual.

We are all members of one another.

/Each of us gets a gift that everyone else needs. I need yours, and you need mine.\

All for one, and one for all.

The human body works the same way. Each member has something vital to contribute to the overall health of the body. At the same time, each member of the human body depends on other members of the body to function properly.

1 Peter 4:10-11

10 As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

We are to be good stewards of the many-faceted grace of God.

/Grace is unmerited blessing from God.\

Grace is God acting freely, according to His own nature as Love; with no promises or obligations to fulfill, and acting of course righteously, in view of the cross.

Grace is uncaused in the recipient; its cause lies wholly in the giver, who is God.

It can, and often does, bestow the highest favors on those most undeserving of them!

Grace is free, limitless, unmerited blessing to helpless, undeserving people from the loving God who is completely satisfied by the Person and Work of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

When Paul wrote “there are varieties of gifts”, he used the Greek word *charisma*. It stems from the root word *charis*, which means “grace”.

/charisma means “the result of grace”. A gracious gift.\

Our spiritual gift is just that - a gift. Spiritual gifts come from the Holy Spirit.

/ It’s a miraculous endowment. Its power and operation come from God alone.\

1 Peter 4:11

11 Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

The ultimate purpose of spiritual gifts is that God may be glorified through the Lord Jesus Christ.

/So here are nine facts about spiritual gifts:

1. All three members of Trinity are involved.
2. They are marked by great variety.
3. Their source is the Holy Spirit.
4. They are a gift of God's grace.
5. They are given for the purpose of providing service to the church.
6. They are energized by God for action in the believer's life. They run on divine power.
7. Each believer gets one.
8. They are designed to build bonds of unity and love in the church, especially the local congregation. [immediate purpose]
9. God gets the glory through our Lord Jesus Christ. [Ultimate purpose]\

And as we shall see, most if not all of the spiritual gifts in effect now are heightened abilities for actions that all Christians are called to perform.

For example, all Christians are called to give financially, but some have the spiritual gift of giving, which is an unusual capacity for that work.

We are all called to give reasons for the hope that is within us, and we are all called to teach and admonish one another (Colossians 3:16), but some receive the gift of teaching and others have been given to the church as pastor-teachers.

/Paul talks about the unity of the body of Christ in Romans 12, in 1 Corinthians 12, and in Ephesians 4. In each place, he also teaches about the spiritual gifts.\

This is no accident.

Jesus prayed to His Father that believers may be perfected in unity.

God answered His son's prayer from John 17:23 in a remarkable, supernatural way.

He gave each member of the body of Christ an extraordinary spiritual gift.

The Lord provides spiritual gifts in order to preserve the unity of the body.

/We preserve our unity when we operate in our particular gifts; when we use it, put it into service, for the benefit of other believers.\

Rom 12:4-8

4 For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. 6 Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; 7 if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; 8 or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

/The gifts are only supernatural when they are put into action:
Serving, teaching, exhorting, giving, leading, showing mercy.\

The Lord gave you a spiritual gift to serve the common good.

/He wants you to use that gift to meet the needs of the saints in the congregation.\

We have received a special gift – a manifestation of the Spirit in fact - for one purpose - to serve one another.

/Jesus prayed to His Father that we may be perfected in unity. When we use our gifts to serve one another, we contribute to this work.\

1 Peter 4:10-11

As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 11 Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Whoever speaks. Whoever serves.

/So whatever gift you have, it's either a speaking gift or a serving gift.\
And we need them all to be functioning.

Let's next head to the book of Romans chapter 12 verses 4-8,

Rom 12:4-8

4 For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. 6 Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace

given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; 7 if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; 8 or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

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OK so there you have it. Paul lists seven gifts here. /Three are speaking gifts:

Prophecy (Preaching). Teaching. Exhortation.\

/Four are serving gifts: Service. Giving, Leadership. Showing mercy .\

Many gifts – one body. Many gifts, one purpose.

And that purpose, recall? For the common good. To meet the needs of the saints. To serve one another.

From time to time we need to give ourselves a reality check.

I'll leave you with one challenge today. It's in the area of service.

/Service. This is taking the initiative and responsibility to meet a need in the congregation on an ongoing basis.\

Here's a test: we all see things that we wish were handled better or handled at all!
But we need people who rather than judge instead say, I'll take care of that!

Perhaps next time that person will be you.

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You know the 80/20 rule? 80% of the work is done by 20% of the people.

News flash – That's NOT God's design for the congregation! It's more like 400/100.

BTW How did I get the 400? If 80% of the work is getting done with 20% of the members, then if all 100% did the work we could get 5 times as much done!

OK I think that's enough of a grilling for one session!

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Paul started with the unity of the body.

Next, he'll describe its diversity. We'll see this next Sunday starting in verse 14.

Let's pick things up now in verse 14.

1 Cor 12:14-26

For the body is not one member, but many. 15 If the foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. 16 And if the ear says, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?

The body has many members. And they display remarkable variety.

At first glance, a thumb appears to have nothing in common with an eye. One is at the end of an arm. The other is in the center of the head.

One has a mechanical function. It has two joints. It works together with the other fingers.

The other gives sight to the body. It is intricate yet delicate.

Paul does something very interesting here. He personifies the body parts. He lets them speak.

This tells us that he is not simply talking about body parts after all. He's talking about people! Later on, in verses 25 and 26, he will say that the members have the same care for one another, and that they rejoice.

Here he has woven together the human body and the body of Christ. We are to understand what he says about the human body also applies to the body of Christ

Next week we will learn more about the body of Christ, starting in verse 18.

18 But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. 19 If they were all one member, where would the body be? 20 But now there are many members, but one body. 21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." 22 On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be

weaker are necessary; 23 and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable, 24 whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, 25 so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. 26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

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/Out of the many, one.\

E pluribus unum. (Marcus Tullius Cicero, 44 BC. “When each person loves the other as much as himself, it makes one out of many”)

And He places us in the body just as He wills.

With that, let's now head to Ephesians 4.

That's impossible:

Only the Lord has the blueprint! Our unity is supernatural!

When we examine the epistles, here's what we find:

/We are not called to create the unity of the Body of Christ, the church. But we ARE called to PRESERVE the unity of the body.\

Here is where our decisions and actions matter.

We are called to take actions to nurture the unity, guard the unity.

We are also warned not to do anything that could disrupt or undermine that unity.

/This morning, we are going to examine what the epistles have to say about what the Lord has done to establish our unity.\

Later on, we will learn how to preserve that unity. The epistles address both the positive and the negative commands that the Lord has given the church.

So we pick things up today in the book of Ephesians, chapter 4, verse 1.

Eph 4:1-3

Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with

patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, 3 being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Notice in verse 3 that we are instructed to be diligent to preserve the unity. You can only preserve something that has already been created and established.

/Who established it? Verse 3 tells us: the Spirit. It's His unity.\

Let's take a look at the nature of this unity that God the Holy Spirit created for us.

/In verses 4-6, Paul identifies the seven essential elements of this unity. \

Eph 4:4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

Paul's description highlights the supernatural character of our unity.

A brief scan of these seven elements reveals that this unity is supernatural in character.

/In fact, three of the seven elements are the three persons of the Godhead!!\

Read verses 4-6 again. One Spirit. One Lord. One Father.

/Then there are two elements that are linked with the Spirit. They are the one body, and the one hope of our calling.\

/Finally, two elements are linked with the Lord Jesus Christ: one faith, and one baptism.\

Now at this point you might find it odd that no other elements are linked with the Father. But there is a good reason for this.

/The Father is over all. He is sovereign over all things. \
He sent Jesus. Jesus submitted to the will of the Father.
/In this way, the Father is over the Lord Jesus Christ.\

And one day, after the Father has put all things in subjection under Christ's feet, the Son will be subjected to the Father – the One who subjected all things to Him. *1 Cor 15:22-28*

/The Father is also over the Holy Spirit\ . The Father sent the Lord Jesus Christ on a mission to redeem lost sinners. And then the Lord Jesus Christ sent the Spirit with the mission to establish the body of Christ.

/The Father is also through all. He operates through the Spirit who carries out His will on earth.\

/The Father is also in all. He is in Christ, and Christ is in us. \

Eph 1:22-23

22 And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Let's continue with the two elements of our unity that are associated with the Spirit.

One body:

/The one body is the body of Christ. \

Rom 12:4-5

4 For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

/We saw in Ephesians 1:23 that the church is His body.\

/That unity of the one body is forged by baptism – the baptism by the Spirit. Each and every believer in Christ is baptized – placed into and permanently identified with – into Christ by means of the Holy Spirit.\ Look at 1 Corinthians 12:12-13:

1 Cor 12:12-13

12 For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are 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 we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

/We have all been baptized into the one body of Christ – the church.\

I hope you are starting to see the tremendous interlinking between these different elements of our unity. For example, there is one body. It is the body of Christ. That body is formed by the baptism of the Spirit. We'll see more of this as we go along.

One hope of our calling:

/The one hope of our calling is the resurrection of the body to life eternal when Christ appears for us. This is the hope of our inheritance laid up in heaven for us. \

As we close, let me show this to you in the epistles:

We begin in chapter 1 of Ephesians.

Eph 1:18

18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

Of course it's no accident that we find Paul introducing these subjects - the body of Christ and the hope of our calling, in the first chapter of the book of Ephesians.

Rom 8:23-25

23 And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. 24 For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.

/Paul speaks of our hope, and identifies it as our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.\

1 Thess 4:13-18

13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. 15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Unlike the unbeliever, we have great hope.

/ At the coming of the Lord, when He descends from heaven with a shout, the dead in Christ shall rise. This is the resurrection of the body. \

Then we who are alive will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

/Our bodies will be transformed into bodies like His.\

John speaks of this hope too, in his first epistle:

1 John 3:1-3

See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. 2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. 3 And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

Thus we end today where we began, with the writings of John.

Next Sunday, we will examine the two elements of our unity which Paul associates here with the Lord Jesus Christ: one faith, and one baptism.

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/The nature of our union with Christ is that of mutual indwelling, John 17:21-23.\

We are in Christ, and Christ is in us.

/We are in Christ:\

1 Cor 1:30-31

30 But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, 31 so that, just as it is written, "LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD."

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Gal 3:27-28

*27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.
28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

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/And Christ is in us:\

Col 1:25-27

25 Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, so that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God, 26 that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints, 27 to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

/And, as we saw in John 17:21-23, the purpose of this unity is to reveal the glory of Christ and the love of God to the world.\

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The church has a mission. It's given a calling and a purpose by God. The mission reflects that calling, that purpose. How do we fulfill our mission?

/We fulfill our mission being perfected in unity. This is our **corporate witness** to this lost and dying world. We are one body in Christ.\

/Glory is the demonstration of who God is. We reveal to the world what God is like by preserving the unity that He has established for us.\

The world will see our unity and know that God sent Jesus. They will observe our love for one another, and can learn about the love of God for them.

This is exactly what we find in Paul's admonition to the church in Rome:

Rom 15:5-9

5 Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, 6 so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

7 Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God. 8 For I say that Christ has become a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers, 9 and for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy; as it is written,

*"THEREFORE I WILL GIVE PRAISE TO YOU AMONG THE GENTILES,
AND I WILL SING TO YOUR NAME."*

That leads to the next question, which is this:

/How do we preserve the unity of the body of Christ? Negatively, what things disrupt or undermine the unity of the brethren?\

Today I will sketch this out in broad terms. The epistles go into great detail.

/We begin with the negative. The deeds of the flesh create discord in the body.\

In Paul's day, the church at Corinth was nearly destroyed by this.

1 Cor 1:10-12

10 Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment. 11 For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you. 12 Now I

mean this, that each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ."

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And again:

1 Cor 3:2-4

2 I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it.

Indeed, even now you are not yet able,

3 for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? 4 For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not mere men?

Now for the positive.

/First, this unity is preserved by being of one mind , holding to the “one faith” – the word of God, the mind of Christ.\

Phil 1:27

27 Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;

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/Second, the exercise of spiritual gifts strengthens the unity of the body.\

1 Cor 12:4-7

4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. 6 There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. 7 But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

All the three members of Trinity contribute to the fruitful exercise of our gifts.

/Third, the lifeblood, the bond of our unity is the love of God, John 17:23.\

Col 3:12-14

12 So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. 14 Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.

/Fourth, the Lord's Supper is designed to express the unity of the body.\
Let's get ready now to celebrate the Lord's Supper.