

**CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH**

Matthew 16:13-20

**Intro:** It was in the vicinity Caesarea Philippi that the Lord first spoke of *the church*. He was with His disciples, and he asked them the question, “Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?” As far as their answer was concerned, no one had understood that He was the Messiah, and that He was the Son of God. The answers which the disciples gave would have been very complimentary to you and to me, but it was apparent that no one that the disciples had talked to, or had heard talking about the Lord, knew Who He really was. The most prominent answers were John the Baptist raised from the dead, Elijah, the prophet, or Jeremiah the prophet, plus various other names which Matthew did not record. So evidently there was a wide range of answers, but none gave the right answer.

Then the Lord turned the question on the disciples themselves: “But Whom say ye that I am?” And here we have what is commonly known as:

**I. PETER’S GREAT CONFSSION (Matt. 16:16).**

Peter responded, but, in the light of what the Lord said in reply, it seems that he was answering for himself, but not for the other disciples. It seems very likely that they did not know. But Peter said, “Thou art the Christ [the Messiah], the Son of the living God.” Thus Peter believed that our Lord was the long-awaited Messiah, and that He was more than a mere man, such as John the Baptist, or Elijah, or Jeremiah, or some other prophet. *Peter believed that our Lord was indeed the Lord from heaven, One having the same nature as God.*

And then we have:

**II. THE LORD’S RESPONSE TO PETER (Matt. 16:17-19)**

How did he learn this when the others did not seem to know, and the masses of the people seemed to be in a state of ignorance? The Lord told him how he learned it. We read in Matt. 16:17 that the Lord said this:

Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

By this our Lord meant that nobody **had** told Peter this, nor had he **figured** it out by himself, but the Father in heaven had revealed this to Peter in a special way. Just when and where Peter came to this conviction, we do

not know, but it appears that he was the first one among all of the disciples to understand this. John the Baptist understood it, but shortly before his death he began to have doubts about the Lord, and so you will remember that he sent a couple of his disciples to the Lord to ask Him according to what we find in Matt. 11:3, “Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?”

It seems that the prevailing idea about the Messiah among the Jews in our Lord’s day, was that He would come, overthrow Rome, and set up His kingdom on earth. And so when He did not do that, and it did not appear that He had come to do that, many turned away from Him.

But with Peter it was different! Peter knew that the Lord was the Son of God, and he was convinced that the Lord was the Messiah. But even he had not yet come to an understanding of our Lord’s mission on earth. They all had been so occupied with the glorious reign of the Messiah that they had no place in their thinking for His humiliation and death. And you will notice in verse 21 of Matthew 16, immediately following the incident we are considering in our text, that

From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day (Matt. 16:21).

So the Lord explained to Peter that it was the Father Who had revealed this truth to him. In 1 Corinthians 12:3 the Apostle Paul said that “no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit.” So it is clear that the Father in heaven had singled Peter out for this special revelation.

And so this means that the only reason we believe that the Lord is the Messiah, and that He is the Lord, is because the Holy Spirit has made this known to us. No one really understands Who the Lord is except by revelation through the Word. The rest of the disciples were to learn this later, but Peter was the first according to what we are told in the Word. This was not anything for Peter to boast about, but he needed to glorify the Father in heaven that such a great and amazing truth had been made known to him.

But what else did the Lord say to Peter?

The Lord obviously had a very special place for Peter in His future plans for His people on earth. The name given to Peter at his birth was “Simon,

Barjona,” which simply means *Simon son of John*. But the Lord had given him the name *Cephas*, according to what we are told in John 1:42. Cephas is Aramaic for *a stone*, or *a Rock*. The Greek is Petros, from which we get Peter. But when the Lord said, “Upon this rock I will build my Church,”  
— here He used the word *petra* for “rock.”

The change in words would indicate that the Lord was not saying that He would build His church on Peter, but that He would build His church upon the rock-like confession which Peter had just made. *Petra* means a rocky cliff or ledge. The foundation stone upon which the Lord said that He would build His church was Peter’s confession, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

So the Catholics are very mistaken when they try to prove that Peter was appointed by the Lord as the first Pope, and that he and the following Pope’s would exercise absolute authority over the church. The foundation of the church is not Peter, but Christ, and Paul told the Corinthians in 1 Cor. 3:11 that there can be no other foundation but Jesus Christ.

This is the first mention of the church in Scripture. The Lord Jesus was preparing to do something new. Peter was not a Pope over the church, but  
— he was to have a major role in establishing the church. And he did as we will see in a later message when we come to the book of Acts.

But notice that the Lord said that He, not Peter, “will build my church.” The Apostle Peter might be a key instrument in the building of the Lord’s church, but the Lord was and is the Builder.

Now notice two things here.

First, we have the word “church.” It is a word formed from the verb *kaleo* with the preposition *ek* in front of it. And this means, *a called out group*.

It will help us to remember what the Lord said in His high priestly prayer when speaking about His people. He said, for example, in John 17:6 when praying to the Father,

I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.

— And we know that everyone who belongs to the Lord has been called out of the world. We have been delivered from this present evil world, and from the corruption that is in the world through lust. And so the word

church indicates that we are called out from the world, to be separated in our living from the world, and to seek the holiness of God for which we have been saved. The church is to be decidedly different from those who are in the world. We are still in the world, but we are no longer of the world, a part of the world. God has chosen us out of the world.

This is the first thing to get clearly fixed in our minds.

Secondly, I would call your attention to the word “build” – “I will build My church.” This is a word which would be used if a person were speaking of building some kind of a structure from the foundation up.

Now if the church is a building, who is going to inhabit it? And our answer is given to us by the Apostle Paul when he wrote to the Ephesian church in Eph. 2:19-22:

19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:

22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

When the children of Israel were told to build a tabernacle, the purpose of that tabernacle was that it would be a place for God to dwell among His people. Now in our text the Lord Jesus was indicating that the people of God, the church, made up of all believers when He began to build it, would be the dwelling place of God on the earth. Can you and I begin to comprehend how glorious this is, and what it should mean to all of us.

As we get into this doctrine, we are going to find that the NT speaks not only of a church, but of churches. And the churches are local parts of the larger church. We will see that there are other titles for it. But just to recognize this truth now is what we need to be concerned about. The Lord said He would build His church (future), and that it would be a building, a place which would be “an habitation of God through the Spirit.” (Explain.)

And the gates of Hades, not Hell – but death and the grave. Like Sheol in the OT. Saints would come and go. And we will feel that the church cannot survive without this one or that one. But here is our Lord’s prom-

ise that death which often changes and sometimes puts an end to things and the works of men, will not be able to destroy the church, and the reason is that there is an ever-living Savior who is building this Church. It was not dependent upon Peter, or John, or Augustine, or Calvin, or Luther, or Spurgeon, or any other servant of the Lord. It all rests upon our sovereign and eternal Lord Jesus Christ.

Peter had a unique place in the beginning of the church. In Acts 2 with the Jews, and in Acts 10 with the Gentiles. The kingdom of heaven here is used as a synonym for salvation. The key is the Gospel.

On binding and loosing, cf. John 20:19-23. And see how Peter understood the remission of sins by his words in Acts 2:37-40.

**Concl:** The Catholics have tried to exalt Peter from these passages, but it is Christ Who is exalted, along with the Gospel which is the only message of eternal life. It is in the church that people can hear how they can be loosed from their sins, or why they will remain bound to their sins for time and for eternity.

## THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

1 Corinthians 12:13

**Intro:** Last Sunday we examined that great passage in Matthew 16, beginning with verse 13 and going down through verse 20 in which we have Peter's famous declaration concerning Christ, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." This was not a truth which he discovered by himself, but it was revealed to him by, as the Lord said, "My Father which is in heaven." And at that point in the earthly life of our Lord, Peter seems to have been the only one among the disciples who understood Who the Lord was. We will see in just a moment that there was another who understood this great truth even before Peter did. But, from what the Lord went on to say, it was clear that God had a special place for the Apostle Peter in the work that was yet to be done. And that work had to do with what our Lord called "My church."

We have a play on words by our Lord as He used Peter's name, Πέτρος, and πέτρα. Both mean *a rock*, but one was Peter's name, and the other was a word which spoke of a rocky cliff, or any massive rock. Since a rock is that which is often used as a foundation. When the Lord spoke of the man who built his house upon a rock, He used this word πέτρα. And it represented one who obeyed the sayings of the Lord.. So this was a fitting word for the Lord to use with reference to the declaration of truth that Peter had just made. The church was to be built upon this rock-like, unchangeable truth, that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God. In other words, anyone who does not believe what Peter said about our Lord, cannot be in the church.

We know from the history of what took place after our Lord ascended back to the Father, that Peter was not the first Pope, although he was greatly involved in the establishing of the church. The Lord is the One Who is building His own church, and the gates of Hades will not "prevail against it." To "prevail" means *to overcome*, or *to be stronger than* the Church.

Furthermore we learned that the word "church" means *a called out group*. And from all of our Lord's teaching about the world, and His reference to the world in His High Priestly Prayer in John 17, the church was to be made up of people called to Christ out of the world. And we all should know that this mean people who have been saved. None of us came to Christ because we sought Him. We came to Christ because He called us, and He called us because He had chosen us for salvation before the world

was. Obviously the Lord had a special work that He was about to do, and Peter was to have a major role in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's be sure that we keep in mind that the Lord said, "I will build my church." We might get the impression from some of our megachurch leaders today that they have been called to build the church. But that is the Lord's work, and He has never given that task to anyone else.

Now I want to take you to an expression that was first used by John the Baptist. And it is found right here in the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 3, and verse 11.

I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire:

The Apostle John, in the Gospel bearing his name, tells us of what John the Baptist said following the time when he baptized our Lord with water. His word are found in John 1:32-34.

32 And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.

33 And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.

34 And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.

But here is that expression again about our Lord baptizing with the Holy Spirit.

Then we come upon it again in the first chapter of the book of Acts, verses 4 and 5. Luke was speaking of our Lord when he wrote,

4 And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.

5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

Then as we go on to Acts 2, we find these words at the beginning: Acts 2:

1 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Before I go any farther, I want to take you back to John 14 where the Lord spoke of the relationship that His disciples would have with the Holy Spirit in the future which they had not had in the past. Most of you will remember these words of our Lord found in John 14:16-17:

16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

17 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

Now we have three doctrines of the Spirit that we need to be concerned with when we get to Acts 2:

1) The baptism of the Spirit which the Lord said would take place “not many days hence, evidently referring to the Day of Pentecost.

2) Luke, the writer of the book of Acts tells us that “they were all filled with the Holy Spirit” in Acts 2:4.

3) And in John 16 we read that the Lord said that He would pray to the Father to send them the Holy Spirit.

So the three doctrines that we are concerned about are:

1) The baptism of the Spirit.

2) The filling of the Spirit

3) The permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

And I believe that we have all three right here in the opening verses of Acts 2. The Lord said in Acts 1 that they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit. And Luke said in Acts 2 that they were filled with the Spirit. And the Lord had promised to send the Holy Spirit to abide in them forever.

Now it is the interpretation of many that since the Lord predicted in Acts 1 that they would be baptized with the Spirit, and then we read in chapter 2 that they were filled with the Spirit, therefore they are one and the same. But are they?

To answer that question we need to go to the passages that teach about the filling of the Spirit, and the Baptism of the Spirit. And now I will ask you to turn to our text in 1 Corinthians, chapter 12, verse 13. And this is what



we read:

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.

This is where we learn what the baptism of the Spirit is. It is that work of the Spirit by which we are placed into the body of Christ. And we learned last week from the last two verses of Ephesians 1 that the body of Christ is the Church!

Now I don't know of any passage that tells us that we are to seek to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. But we are specifically told to "be filled with the Spirit." And you will find that in Eph. 5:18. And even that passage says nothing about speaking in tongues. Tongues were a temporary gift of the Spirit, and we are not to be concerned with that today since the Word of God has been completed, and the church established.

What about the indwelling of the Spirit? Are you and I who know the Lord to seek for the Holy Spirit to come and dwell in us? Let me give you two passages of Scripture which I think will answer that question. The first is in Rom. 8:9. There the Apostle Paul said this:

But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

The other verses are in 1 Cor. 6:19-20. Here the Apostle Paul said,

19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

These verses show that every believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and 1 Cor. 12:13 indicates that we have all been baptized with the Spirit. But the filling of the Spirit is a matter of our daily relationship with the Lord. We are exhorted to keep on being filled with the Spirit, and so that is a personal matter each one of us needs to give attention to every day.

I hope these distinctions are clear to all of you. As a young Christian I had a lot of difficulty distinguishing especially between the baptism of the Spirit and the filling of the Spirit, and there was a time when I wasn't sure that I had the Holy Spirit because I was reading men who taught that you don't have the Holy Spirit until you pray for Him to come. But the Scrip-

tures are very clear, and I hope that you can distinguish between these three works of the Spirit. He comes to indwell us when we are saved. Ever since that Day of Pentecost believers have been baptized into the body of Christ when they are saved. Whether or not we are filled with the Holy Spirit is a matter of our personal relationship to Him each day, and whether or not we are living in obedience to the Word of God. To be filled with the Spirit is to be controlled by the Spirit.

Now for the final moments of my message, let us look at 1 Cor. 12:13.

Notice the three times the Holy Spirit led Paul to use the word “one” – “one Spirit . . . one body,” and at the end of the verse “one Spirit” again.

Notice there is only “one Spirit,” *one Holy Spirit*, and there is only “one body.” This is a living organism, a spiritual relationship that we have to Christ and to one another. He is the Head, and we are the members of His body. So Paul was not talking about churches (plural), but the Church, the body of Christ.

Now the meaning of baptism, the verb is βαπτίζω, means *to immerse*, or *to submerge*. And so the idea here is that we are placed into the body of Christ to become an eternal part of that body. And to be put into Christ’s body means that we have a very close and intimate, a living relationship, with Him. It is very similar to what the Lord said about Himself as the Vine, and that we are the branches. We have been baptized into Christ.

Paul was not talking about water baptism; this is Spirit baptism. And you will notice that we have not only been placed in the body of Christ, but we “have all been made to drink into one Spirit.” Does this not mean that when we are baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ, the Holy Spirit comes to indwell us permanently? And thus in the body of Christ we have access to the power of the Holy Spirit, the teaching of the Holy Spirit, the guidance and control of the Holy Spirit. This is most amazing truth, and it applies to all believers irrespective of our racial differences, or our social differences, or our sexual differences, or our age differences – “Jews or Gentiles . . . bond or free.” And in those days there was a wide difference between Jews and Gentiles, as well as between bond and free, slave and master.

**Concl:** So far we have been speaking about the church, the body of Christ. And I don’t believe it is Scriptural accurate to speak of a local church, such as Trinity Bible Church, as the body of Christ. We are

a part of the body of Christ, but not the whole body. The body is made up of all who have been baptized by the Spirit. It is possible to be a member of a local church without being saved. But it is only possible for those who are saved to be in the body of Christ.

Think about these truths. Meditate on them frequently. It will help us to understand our relationship to Christ, our relationship to the Holy Spirit, our relationship to all other believers, and our ministry to the world around us. And ultimately this includes also our relationship to God. This is what our Lord is doing today, building His church, not only adding to the Church those who are being saved, but building each one of us up and so increasing the strength and influence of the body of Christ. How thankful we ought to be that we are saved, and that we are members of Christ's body and members of each other!

**THE CHURCH: ONE BODY, MANY MEMBERS**

1 Corinthians 12:12-27

**Intro:** The Spirit of God has, in many passages, likened the Church to a human body. Our bodies are made up of various members, but we only have one head. This is the case with the Church. Christ is the Head, and we are all members of Christ. And as the members of our human bodies all have different or similar functions, this is the case with the Church which is the body of Christ. When I say “similar functions,” I mean that we have two eyes, and two ears, and two hands and arms, and two feet and legs, but none of us would want to be without either eye, or either ear, or either arm, or either leg. God made us with all of the parts of our bodies that we have, and every part is vitally important to us. And all of our parts receive their instructions from our heads. Each of us has only one head.

And so the Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Rome,

4 For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:

5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another (Rom. 12:4-5).

In Eph. 1:22-23 we find the same truth. Paul, speaking of God and what He had done for Christ, said,

22 And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,

23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

In his letter to the church at Colosse, Paul made the same point. He called Christ, “the head of the body, the church” (Col. 1:18), and then he added at the end of that same verse, “that in all things He [Christ] might have the preeminence.”

But it is in Paul’s first letter to the church at Corinth that we have the most extensive treatment of this great subject. And we find it in chapter 12, that is where I would like for us to focus our attention in this service. Let me read it first.

(Read 1 Cor. 12:12-27.)

Now we need to keep in mind what I have mentioned before, and that is that we are now dealing with the subject of the Church, the body of Christ, which is made up of all believers in this present age. In it are Jews and Gentiles, men and women, and children – everyone who is truly born

again.

But there is another phase of this doctrine which has to do with *local churches*. We will come to that aspect of this truth in later messages, but for now we need to see the big picture, so to speak. And, as I mentioned before, I don't believe that the word "body" belongs to the local church, such as Trinity Bible Church. We are a part of the body, and to say that is correct, but we are not the whole body. But we need to understand what Paul taught about "the body" in order to appreciate what our place is as a local church.

But let me say just a word about the local church at Corinth for just a moment.

You will probably remember that it was a divided church. It was divided over its leadership. Some were saying, "I am of Paul." Others were saying, "I am of Cephas," or Peter. Still others were saying, "I am of Apollos." And then there was a fourth group saying, "I am of Christ." Paul wrote about this in chapters 1 and 3.

The fourth group who said, "I am of Christ," were right, and they were wrong. They were indeed "of Christ," but I am afraid that what they meant was, "We are of Christ, but you others aren't." And likewise the others were wrong in what they were saying because in effect they were saying at least that we are the most important, but you are not as important as we are.

Right at the very beginning of this epistle Paul had rebuked them because of their divisions. And so we read this in 1 Cor. 1:10-13,

10 Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

11 For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.

12 Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.

13 Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?

And then he charged them because of their attitudes toward each other as

being carnal. I don't agree with those who say that there is no such thing as a carnal Christian, when Paul in 1 Corinthians said that they had a bunch of them in Corinth. In fact, he was charging all of them as being carnal. Listen to 1 Corinthians 3:1-4:

1 And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.

2 I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.

3 For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?

4 For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?

It is very evident that they did not understand the truth of the body of Christ. The truth was that they were all "of Christ," and each one was a member of His body. But, if they had known that (and I can't imagine that Paul had not taught them this wonderful truth), they had lost sight of it in their failure to grow in their understanding of the truth, and then to apply that truth in their relationship with each other. Those who had taken Paul's name felt that they were a little bit better than those in Peter's group, or those in Apollos' group. And those who had taken Christ's Name probably felt that they were better than all of the rest of them put together.

So you can see that our understanding of this truth has a great effect upon our fellowship with each other. Divisions like this often exist in a local church, and we certainly see divisions among churches today. Just because a person goes to a Baptist church, or to a Presbyterian church, or to a Bible church, or to any other church where the word of God is taught and Christ is exalted, does not mean that we are carnal *unless we begin to think that we are superior, and that all of the others are lesser members of the body of Christ.*

I was associated with a Baptist group down south a good many years ago who had a tract in their churches, and its title was, "If a Christian, why not a Baptist?" I never liked that track even though I believed most of the things that Baptists historically believe because I felt it was divisive. Some day we are all going to have our doctrinal beliefs straightened out. In the meantime, we must, as the Apostle Paul said we must all do, "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). As I said this morning, there is never any reason to compromise with the truth, but we are all under an obligation place upon us by God to "speak the

truth in love” (Eph. 4:15).

So when you realize the trouble that the Corinthian church was in, their divisions which were evidence of their carnality, you can see what Paul said what he did in chapter 12.

Now let us look at our text.

In the first part of verse 12 Paul was talking about:

### **I. THE HUMAN BODY (1 Cor. 12:12a).**

He started with a fact which we all know to be true. We have one body, but this body has many members. And yet all the members of our bodies, even though they are different, and perform different functions, are still just one body.

That is a truth which no one with any intelligence can dispute. God made each one of us this way. We are one body, and we have many members, but we are still just one body.

At the end of verse 12 he applied this to Christ.

### **II. CHRIST HAS JUST ONE BODY (1 Cor. 12:12b-14).**

“So also is Christ.” That is, He just has one body, not two, or three, or a hundred – He just has one body which is the church, a group of people found all through the world who are trusting Christ, and who have been baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ. We may belong to different local churches, but if we are truly saved, we have been baptized by the Spirit into this one body, the Church. It is sometimes called, *the universal church*, but why not call it what the apostles called it, “the body of Christ.”

Now the very fact that our bodies are an illustration of Christ’s body, we ought to be able to understand that as members of Christ’s body we are going to be different and have different gifts and functions.

Now in applying this truth, Paul went back to speak of the human body to deal with the feeling which some Christians have that they are not really a member of the body of Christ. We all need to be more humble than we are, but we must not feel excluded from the body because we are not like

others. Notice how Paul developed this.

### **III. EVERY MEMBER OF THE BODY IS IMPORTANT (1 Cor. 12:15-25).**

#### **A. Some feel that they are not important (vv. 15-17).**

Some feel that they are not important because they do not have the place that someone else has.

Look at what the foot might say in v. 15.

Look at what the ear might say in v. 16.

What would you have if the whole body were an eye, or if the whole body were an ear? You would not have a body; you would have a monstrosity. And just think: What part of your body would you be willing to give up because it is not important?

But then Paul went on to remind us of the one who made us.

#### **B. God has made each member what it is and where it is (vv. 18-21).**

Paul is talking again about our bodies. Who gave us eyes and ears and all of the other parts of our bodies. The Lord did. And who placed them where they are in our bodies. Again, the Lord did. If all were the same member, it would not be a body. But being many they are members of each other, and all are necessary.

And so you can't have the situation that would be the opposite of what was expressed in verses 15 and 16. The eye can't say to the hand, "I don't need you." Nor will the head say to the feet, "I don't need you."

And then Paul went on to point how we treat those members of our bodies which seem to be "more feeble."

#### **C. The parts of our bodies which seem to be "less honorable" are given special honor (vv. 22-25).**

There are parts of our bodies that we cover with clothes, and there are other parts of our bodies which are never seen, such as the heart, the lungs,



and all that keeps life functioning in our bodies.

And again we see that God has had a hand in all of this. See verse 24. We are “fearfully and wonderfully made.” Cf. all of Psalm 139, but especially verse 14. In many respects, the human body is God’s masterpiece, and we are made in the image and likeness of God Himself.

And so there is to be no schism in the body.

#### **IV. OUR MUTUAL CONCERN FOR EACH OTHER (1 Cor. 12: 27-26).**

So instead of being in competition with each other, and being dissatisfied with the place that the Lord has given to each of us, let us see from what we know about our bodies that no one is unimportant. We are all necessary to the functioning of the body as a whole. This is not a cause for pride, but for great humility before God that He has not only saved us, but has made us members of Christ, and members of each other as well. I need you, and you need me, and we all need Christ.

**Concl:** Let me close by reading what the Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus about this marvelous truth. His words are found in Eph. 3:1-13 and is followed by one of those great prayers of the Apostle.

So let this great relationship that we have with Christ and with each other, be that which will influence our relationship with each other, as well as with all other people who truly know our Lord Jesus Christ in salvation.

Blest be the tie that binds Our hearts in Christian love;  
The fellowship of kindred minds Is like to that above.

Before our Father’s throne We pour our ardent prayers;  
Our fears, our hopes, our aims, are one,  
Our comforts and our cares.

We share our mutual woes, Our mutual burdens bear,  
And often for each other flows The sympathizing tear.

When we asunder part, It gives us inward pain;  
But we shall still be joined in heart,  
And hope to meet again.

**THE GROWING Church**

Acts 2:37-47

— **Intro:** Let me review for just a moment the ground which we have covered since beginning this series on the Church.

The Lord Jesus was the first One to mention the Church, and we find that reference in Matthew 16:18 where the Lord called it His Church, saying that He would build it, and that the gates of hades would not prevail against it. By this latter statement He meant that leaders in the Church would come, and then go to heaven, but the death of none would put an end to the Church. And the reason: Because He is the One Who is building His Church.

The we learned that it is by the baptism of the Holy Spirit that the Church began, and that the first instance of the baptism of the Spirit was on the Day of Pentecost following the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. In Scripture, this is in Acts 2.

— The we saw that the Church, which means *a called-out* group of people, is also called *a body* which is likened to our physical bodies. That is, the Church has a Head, Who is Christ. And all of us who are members of Christ's body are many members even though we are different members with different functions in the body

Now tonight I want to speak about *the growth of the Church*.

First, I want you to see that there was great numerical growth.

**I. THE NUMERICAL GROWTH OF THE CHURCH.**

In Acts 1 while the disciples were waiting for the coming of the Holy Spirit, as the Lord had directed them to do, we are told that the number of disciples who had gathered in an upper room in Jerusalem numbered 120. Cf. Acts 1:15.

— This certainly was not all who had been saved during the ministry of our Lord on earth because we are told that after our Lord was raised from the dead, He was seen by more than five hundred brethren at one time. Where that was, and who they were, we are not told, but this is the largest group of believers mentioned as being saved while our Lord was here on earth.

But following Peter's message on the day of Pentecost we are told in Acts 2:41 that "there were added unto them about three thousand souls. But more than that, we are told in the last verse of Acts 2, verse 47, that the Lord was added daily to the church those who were being saved. The words "to the church" are not actually found in the Greek text, but it is clear that Luke in writing the account was speaking of the church.

So we are not given a specific number, but it is clear that people were being saved every day, and that they were being made a part of the Church, the body of Christ.

In Acts 4:4 we are told that "many of them which heard the Word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand. Some believe that this was 5,000 in addition to the 120 and the 3,000 mentioned before, but it seems more likely that Luke was referring to the total number of men. Even at that, if women and children were to be added, that would amount to a very large group of people who made up the first church.

All of this was in the city of Jerusalem, although it certainly seems that some of these people, although they were in Jerusalem at the time, actually lives in other places as we are told in Acts 2 9-11. This is when tongues became a great instrument for the preaching of the Gospel. It is very evident that a great work was going on.

But now I want you to see that there was also a great geographical growth which is described in the book of Acts.

## II. THE GEOGRAPHICAL GROWTH OF THE CHURCH.

When we get to Acts 8 and verse 1, Stephen, one of the original deacons, had just been stoned. One of those who was in agreement with Stephen's death was Saul of Tarsus. And at this point we come to a new expression in our study of the Church, and this is "the church which was at Jerusalem." So here we have a suggestion that the Church was not confined to Jerusalem alone, but that it had already started to spread to other places. So we have reason to speak of a local group of believers who were in the body of Christ. And this has given rise to the statement, *a local church*.

Acts 8:1 also tells us that following Stephen's death "a great persecution" broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and that believers "were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles."

Saul seems to have led in the persecution, going from house to house, arresting all the believers he could find. And this seems to have led to a greater exodus from Jerusalem unless Acts 4:4 is simply another statement of what was described in verse 1. But the point is that the people went everywhere preaching the Gospel, and if they were preaching the Gospel, it is certain that many others were being saved. And so we have the geographical spread of the Church. Local churches began to appear in many different places throughout the Empire.

After Saul of Tarsus was saved on his way to arrest believers in Damascus (meaning that there was a church in Damascus at that time), then we are told a very interesting thing in Acts 9:31. With Saul of Tarsus numbered among those who believed savingly in the Lord Jesus Christ, this is what Luke recorded in Acts 9:31:

Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.

Luke did not say here that believers were multiplied (although that was certainly true), but he specifically said that “the churches . . . were multiplied.”

Remember: There is only one body of Christ, one universal Church, but it is to be found in local churches wherever people were brought to Christ.

When Paul and Barnabas set out on their first missionary journey, the sending church was “the church that was at Antioch” (Acts 13:1). This was Antioch in Syria.

Then as the Gospel was taken to Lystra and Iconium and Antioch in Pisidia, we are told in Acts 14:23,

And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

So the churches began to appear everywhere the Gospel went.

In Acts 16:40 and 41 we are told that when Paul and Barnabas had trouble over John Mark, Paul took Silas and “went through Syria and Cilicia confirming the churches.”

In Acts 16:5 we are told about Timothy joining Paul also, and as they went to Lystra and Iconium, as well as other cities, this report was given:

And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in

number daily.

So not only were more and more churches coming into existence, but each church was increasing in number.

Now I think there is no need to go further in the book of Acts, but just from the books of the New Testament we learn that there was:

- 1) A church in Rome.
- 2) A church in Corinth.
- 3) Many churches in Galatia.
- 4) A church in Ephesus.
- 5) A church in Philippi.
- 6) A church in Colosse.
- 7) A church in Thessalonica..
- 8) And then from the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ,
  - a) The church at Ephesus is mentioned again.
  - b) A church in Smyrna
  - c) A church in Pergamos.
  - d) A church in Thyatira.
  - e) A church in Sardis.
  - f) A church in Philadelphia.
  - g) A church in Laodicea.

The Gospel would go to a certain place, people would be saved, and then a church would be established. And that has continued down to the present day. There have been false churches established too. But the body of Christ is made up of believers in every generation from Pentecost on who in their cities are gathered together in local churches – no one is the body of Christ, but they are each a part of the body of Christ, the Church which the Lord Jesus Christ continues to build.

This is a point well established from the Scriptures, and from Church History down to this day in which we live.

So the church continues to grow numerically, both in numbers of churches and in the members in each church, and it continues to grow geographically. But there is one other very important way that the church continues to grow, and must continue to grow.

### **III. THE GROWTH OF THE CHURCH SPIRITUALLY.**

In the early Church as the Gospel spread, and the local churches began to multiply, there was always a special emphasis upon what was taking place

in the lives of the people in the churches. I am going to spend more time on this in coming Sundays, but I just want to point this out from the book of Acts tonight. One verse I have already read to you, emphasizes the growth of believers in the local church spiritually. It is found in Acts 9:31 and tells what happened after Saul of Tarsus was saved:

Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.

My whole message tonight is summed up in this one verse. There were local church in Judea and Galilee and Samaria, they were edified, and their numbers were increased and evidently more churches were established.

But I want to take you to the text I announced for an emphasis on this last point because it is so extremely important.

The local churches were established for two reasons, and this is very clear from the book of Acts:

- 1) For the edification of individual believers, and
- 2) For the spread of the Gospel among people in their local areas, as well as to the regions beyond their own borders.

To see how this began in the first church in Jerusalem, please turn with me to Acts 2, beginning with verse 37, and we will read on to the end of the chapter.

Verse 42 is the verse I want to call to your attention.

They did four things in the church at Jerusalem:

- A. They continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine.**
- B. They continued stedfastly in fellowship.**
- C. They continued stedfastly in breaking of bread.**
- D. They continued stedfastly in prayers.**

“They continued stedfastly” is the only verb and adverb in the sentence, so we must take it as applying to all four things that are mentioned here.

And it is certain than in all of these there was the singing of “psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs,” as the people would sing and make melody in

their hearts to the Lord.

— This is what the apostles and early believers did, and continued to do, in the first local church ever to be established. Each of these can be enlarged upon, but there is nothing in the New Testament that would indicate that these four things were ever changed. And we must never get away from these. The first church, the gathering of the Lord's people, started this with the people who had just been saved, but this applied to all, apostles and people, who had been saved before.

— There is nothing here about entertainment. There is nothing here about sports. There is nothing here about workshops or small groups with particular problems. What they needed, and what they wanted, was teaching, and fellowship, and remembering the Lord, and prayers. And I am sure that one reason that many church people are not satisfied with what they did in the early church, and want more and different things, is because what happened to those Jewish people on the Day of Pentecost hasn't happened to a lot of church people today. If a person is really saved, he is going to want Bible teaching, he is going to want fellowship with the Lord's people. He is going to be thankful for every opportunity that he has to remember what the Lord did to save him. And he is going to want to pray – to pray individually, to pray as a family, and to pray as a church.

**Concl:** Now the important thing for us is to take what we have learned from the Word tonight, and see if this agrees with our ideas of what we think a church should be, and what it should be doing. If it doesn't, then who is wrong? And if we want to see blessing, the kind of blessing that causes people to grow in the Lord, and then to lead others to the Lord, then we need to get back to the basics. And the basics is where we stay.

The local church today has moved far from these points that were so vitally important in the early church. And we are not seeing the blessing that they saw either. Let's take these truths to heart, and know for sure that we cannot improve on what was done in the early church. They had their problems, too, when they got away from the foundational life of believers as they met with other believers.

— May the Lord keep us true to the Word, not only in our preaching and teaching, but also in walking in the Lord's ways for us His people in these days in which we live.

## THE CHURCH'S PRIMARY MINISTRY

! Timothy 2:1-8

Intro: Last week I traced the spread of the early church throughout the Roman Empire as it is recorded for us in the early chapters of the book of Acts. First we just read about "the church." And then it is "the church in Jerusalem." And we also read of "churches" (plural), then of "the church at Antioch" followed by the word "church" used in connection with other cities. And so this brings us from thinking only of the church as the body of Christ to local churches which were established wherever there were people who were saved.

We also noted that there was great significance attached to what was taking place in the church in Jerusalem. We read in Acts 2:42 that after 3,000 people came to the Lord following Peter's message on the Day of Pentecost that four things occupied the attention of this new believers. This is what we read in that verse:

And they continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. All of these were important or we would not read that this is what they did, and they did it continuing steadfastly (the two words being the translation of one verb which means that they gave constant attention to these four things. This is what church life in the early church amounted to.

At this point in the history of the church it seems that "going to church" as we would state it, was not just something that they did on Sunday, or Sunday and Tuesday, or Sunday and Tuesday and Wednesday, but this was what they did every day. Obviously there was great joy in the hearts of the people because of their new-found faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Luke did not say what "the apostles' doctrine was, but that is explained for us as we go on in Acts, but especially in the epistles of the NT. It is probably accurate to say that the main teaching with regard to the church is found in the Pastoral Epistles, but every epistle has some significant contribution to make.

It was in looking at the epistles which Paul wrote to Timothy and Titus that I discovered an expression which I previously had not paid a great deal of attention to. I am referring now to 1 Timothy 2:1. And the expression (which is also the translation of just one word in the Greek) was this: "first of all."

It is the translation of the Greek word, proton. It means that which is first in any succession of things. The Apostle



used it in 1 Tim. 1:16, and again in 2L13, All four of the activities mentioned in Acts 2:42 were important. None was to be ignored. But there always has to be some starting place, and Paul told Timothy that the place to start was with prayer.

- It has always been of interest to me that when the church appointed what we believe were the first deacons, that the apostles said what they did about prayer in Acts 6:1-4. (Read.)

You can see that they put prayer first, and then mentioned the ministry of the Word.

I am sure that they were not minimizing the ministry of the Word. But they were certainly emphasizing the importance of prayer. And as I have said numerous times, the standards had to be held high for the elders because they were setting the example for the people of God to follow. And I am equally sure that prayer was to be #1 for the deacons as well.

- I have read in one sermon by Charles Spurgeon that it bothered him tremendously when any of his people would say about a prayer meeting, "Oh, it's only a prayer meeting," as though a prayer meeting were not as important as some other meeting. The prayer meeting was of primary importance to the apostles, and to the Apostle Paul who joined them later. We are not told to be studying the Word continuously, nor to be preaching continuously, but we are told to "pray without ceasing," and to continue "instant in prayer" (1 Thess. 5:17; Rom. 12:12). It is not that we would be in prayer meetings all of the time, but if there is a prayer meeting, we will give it the greatest priority among all of the other things that we have to do. And in our daily schedule we will make sure that prayer comes first.

I hope that if you don't remember anything else that I have said tonight, that those words, "first of all," followed by "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks" will be stamped so indelibly upon all of our hearts, that we will never be able to forget them. And this is what we need to teach our children as well. And one of the ways we do that is by setting the example.

- Paul was giving this instruction to his young son in the faith, his son in the ministry. And you can see from the epistles of Paul that prayer had a major part in his life. I would love to have known Paul so I could have learned more about his prayer life than I do know. How different everything would be for all of us if we were to give prayer the first place in our lives!

This in no way is minimize the importance of teaching, and when we talk about teaching, we mean doctrinal teaching, teaching that will be translated into holy living. But it is in prayer that we are prepared to receive the Word. And it is in prayer that we are prepared to preach the Word, and to receive the Word. In fact, we won't be praying as we are supposed to pray unless we study the Word. So prayer makes it necessary for us to go to the Word. There is a lot of praying that would be much better if the one praying had a greater understanding of the Word of God. I think that you will find that those who have been greatly blessed in the ministry of the Word have been people who spent much time in prayer.

The importance of prayer could not find a greater illustration than in the life of our Lord Himself. He spent whole nights in prayer. The writer of the book of Hebrews (Heb. 5:7) mentioned that our Lord, "in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared; Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered, And being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him (Heb. 5:7-9).

And wouldn't you say that praying was something very unusual in His life when as He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane He sweat great drops of blood. No one ever prayed like our Lord did.

And Heb. 7:25 tells us about our Lord's present ministry in heaven, and the part that it has in our salvation. "Wherefore He is able to save <sup>them</sup> to the uttermost . . ."

All of this points to the supreme importance of prayer. This is a word which we all need.

I can tell you that it is much easier to spend four or five hours studying the Word than to spend only a fraction of that in prayer. And when the pressure is on us, what is the easiest part of our lives to omit? Prayer.

When a church is looking for a pastor, it is important to know about his prayer life, and the place that he gives to prayer in the life of a church, and its people. That is important for elders and deacons, too. And for SS teachers. It is absolutely essential for parents. We have done a great favor to our children if we have taught them to pray. I wish I had spent more time with my own children teaching them to pray when they were young. Prayer needs to have a greater place in our own ministry here.

We can't measure the place that prayer has in our lives in terms of minutes or hours, but I feel sure that most of us spend more time reading our Bibles than we do in prayer. This does not mean that we should read our Bibles less than we do; we ought to increase that too. But it certainly means that we need to pray more than we do. So often I have read in the biographies of men and women of God, that when it comes time to die they say that they wish that they had prayed more than they did.

But Paul did not just say that Timothy should pray, and that we should pray, but he told Timothy the kinds of prayer he should pray, and those for whom he should pray, and why. And then he concluded this passage with an appeal for all men who know the Lord, to pray.

Let's look at:

## ~~1. THE KINDS OF PRAYER~~ The kinds of prayer

### A. Supplications.

The word that Paul used here has to do primarily with petitioning God for our own personal needs. If we are to be effective in prayer, it is certain that we must be in good fellowship with the Lord, and that we come in prayer to tell God about the needs we have, asking Him to help us, and to meet our needs.

### B. Prayers.

The emphasis here is upon prayer expressed to God, but there is also loving devotion to God, coming to Him as our heavenly Father, believing that He is concerned about our needs, and that He knows what they are far better than we do. This is what we have reference to when we speak of having a devotional time, a time of loving fellowship with God through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

### C. Intercessions.

Instead of being intercession as we think of it, but it is a drawing near to God, and coming to Him in what Thayer called, a child-like confidence.

### D. Giving of thanks.

This is the recognition of the blessings that God has been pleased to give us, and thanking Him for what He has done. The more we take notice of His blessings, the longer the list grows -- salvation, the Word, health, food, our homes, safety, etc.

## II. ~~FOR WHOM ARE WE TO PRAY?~~ For whom are we to pray?

"For all men," meaning all kinds of men, women, young people, and children.

"And for kings" -- Governmental leaders hold great power over us, but all of the kings and presidents of the earth are as nothing in comparison with God. We can pray for God's blessing upon them, and we can pray for God's restraining hand to be against them.

We, of course, can't pray for everyone, but we are to pay particular attention to the people that the Lord brings into our lives. We don't have to know people to pray for them. We don't have to know their needs. The Lord is acquainted with everyone and their needs.

But now, what should be the burden of our prayers beyond that which is involved in the kinds of prayer we pray?

## III. ~~OUR PURPOSES IN PRAYER~~ Our purposes in prayer.

A. "That we may lead a quiet and peace life in all godliness and honesty." "Honesty" is not the best translation of the word which Paul used, although we need to be honest. But the word means gravity, somewhat like sober. We are to take life seriously and to make every day count for the glory of the Lord.

But a second reason has to do with:

B. The salvation of sinners, and for those who minister to sinners.

There is not much said in Scripture about prayer for those who do not know the Lord, but is certainly one of them, as was Paul's statement in Rom. 9:1-3 and 10:1.

Verse 7 seems to be one of the many places in Paul's letters where he requested prayer for himself.

Our text concludes with:

## IV. ~~THE REASON WHY WE SHOULD PRAY FOR MEN~~ Paul's appeal for men to pray (v. 8)

This is not because he did not value the prayers of women, but probably because women are more inclined to pray than men are. Paul may have been saying that in public prayer men should do the praying. But he wanted them to see the importance of coming to the Lord with the right attitude: The best meaning of the last words seems to be "without wrath and without wrong attitudes."

Concl: Now the important part for all of us is how we respond to what the Apostle has said here. We are thinking in terms of prayer in the church, but if it is to be in our churches, it has to be the main emphasis in all of our lives from day to day. Then we will cherish, we will look forward eagerly to those times when we can pray together, looking to God alone for the blessing that we need, and for the blessing of the Lord upon the work that we do together.