

(The Names of Jesus) 9. Christ Our Head

by A.B. Simpson

Transcript

“And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.” (Col. 1: 18, 19.) The human body is the paragon and crown of the material universe. It was the last thing that God ever created, and so satisfied was He with His glorious work that He chose this wondrous and beautiful temple for His own abode, and has made the form of man forevermore the embodiment of His own eternal Son. The fact that Jesus Christ is incarnate in a body like our own has placed humanity on the pinnacle of creation and the throne of God. Forever and forever a wondering universe will come to behold their God and will see Him in a form like yours and mine. It is little wonder, therefore, that this exquisite workmanship of God should be worthy of the honor and dignity conferred upon it, and should show in all its structures the works of infinite wisdom, power and love. Even David, long before the study of physiology had revealed the wonders of the human frame, could say, “I will praise You; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.” How much more profound the wonder and praise that should fill our hearts as the progress of human knowledge enables us to understand better the exquisite and infinite skill displayed in the creation of a single member of our body!

Perhaps the most striking evidence of Christianity ever presented in Christian literature was the Bridgewater treatise on the human hand, showing the delicate mechanism of the numerous bones, nerves, vessels, and the varied and perfect functions of the various parts of even that little member. How much more delicate and perfect the structure of the human brain and the relation of the head to all the physical organism of the vital functions! This is the figure which the apostle uses to express the relation of Jesus Christ to His people and their mutual relationship to Him as the body of Christ. May His Spirit enable us to apply the beautiful figure in such a way that we shall be drawn closer to our living Head and to one another in Him!

The Head

1. In the human body the head is the seat of will and authority, and the body is obedient to its volitions, and these commands are so simple and so instructive that the body obeys without an effort. It is perfectly natural to follow the wishes of the head; so the Lord Jesus Christ our living Head is the true Lord and sovereign of His people’s lives, and it is the place of their bodies to be instinctively obedient to His every wish. If He is indeed our Head, it will be our second nature to do His bidding. Indeed, no other part of the body has any power to will, and none of Christ’s children should have any will apart from their Master’s. There is a great difference between being guided by your own head or somebody

elseâ€™s. If Christ is not your living Head, you will not want His authority and government. Before, therefore, we can truly obey Him, we must fully receive Him and be so united with Him that His interests are ours and His will is just the expression of our inmost being.

2. In the human body the head is the source and seat of life, and so the Lord Jesus is the source of His peopleâ€™s life. There is no life apart from the head, and we have none apart from Him. Our regeneration comes through the quickening power of His life; our sanctification is His indwelling in us. Our physical life may be made manifest in the flesh. We are dependent upon Him for our fruit, for our joy, for our love, for all our spiritual grace and experiences, and He loves to impart His life to us and fill us more abundantly if we will but receive it. We are not held responsible for our own life. We are not expected to manufacture either faith or love, but to receive from Him life and love and the grace that He is ever longing to impart.

3. The head is the source of sensation. All feeling comes from the brain and resides in it. When you hurt your hand it is not your hand that feels, but your head, although it seems to be in your members. Beautiful parable of the sympathy of our living Head! Every sorrow and pain we feel is instinctively telegraphed to Him and touches His living heart to the quick. â€œFor we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.â€ When Paul was outraging the saints of God and compelling them to blaspheme the name of Jesus under penalty of death, the voice of the Master called to him from heaven, â€œSaul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?â€ He was hurting, not others, but the Masterâ€™s heart. The heavenly Head was suffering for the earthly members. The hurt hand was communicating its pain to the Head in heaven. How quickly the head sends relief to the suffering hand or foot! Have you ever noticed when you receive a blow or are pierced with a thorn, how quickly all the blood in the body rushes to the injured place, and it flushes with a crimson tide? It simply means that the brain has become concerned for the suffering member and has ordered all the resources of the system on duty, and every drop of blood in the body is coursing to the sore place to give it a touch of relief. What you call an inflammation is just the effort of nature through increased circulation to wash away the intruding pain and stimulate and quicken the system to throw it off.

So Christ is ever nearest the sad heart, the tempted child, the wandering one, and all the resources of His grace are at our service in every time of need.

When Margaret Wilson was standing tied to a stake on Solway Beach, waiting for the tide to come in and take her martyred life, her persecutors placed an older saint farther down the beach that little Margaret might see the saintly woman die before her turn should come, and thus be dissuaded by terror from her bold testimony to Jesus. But as the cruel waves leaped on Margaret McLaughlin and trampled out her life, and the rough soldier by Margaret Wilsonâ€™s side asked, hoping to turn her back from her purpose even at the last, â€œWhat do you think of that?â€ she meekly answered, â€œI think I see Christ in one of His members suffering there.â€ How beautiful! How true!

When the pressure seems intolerable, when sorrow gnaws the heart, when Satan hurls his arrows of flame into our quivering spirit, when the world opposes us as it once did Him, and flesh and heart are ready to faint and fail, it is just Christ in one of His members suffering there, and the living Head will not fail nor forget to help the suffering member.

All sensation must come from the brain, and so all spiritual feeling must come from Christ. Let us not, therefore, try to work up our feelings, but keep close to Him, and the tides of His love will flow into our consciousness and spiritual sensibilities. The secrets of joy and love simply lie in nearness to Jesus, and

His joy and love will spring within us from the Head. The most artless and spontaneous life will ever be the best. Oftentimes He may wish us to be quiescent. Let us be acquiescent in this, and when He rests in His love, let us rest with Him, and when He rejoices over us with singing, let us swell the chorus in glad response, our hearts keeping time to His, as the sand upon the ocean shore is wet or dry as the ocean tide rises and falls in the sea below.

4. The head is the seat of power, and so Christ is His people's power. We are not strong in ourselves, but He is our strength. "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth . . . and, see! I am with you always." We shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon us. This, therefore, is the secret of effective service. You shall always feel your own lack of power; but as you go forth obedient to the orders of the Head, the Head will follow up your obedient steps and render effectual your service. Christ never sends His people on any ministry without equipping them, sustaining them, and rendering their work effectual. Your usefulness does not depend upon natural gifts or conditions, but upon your closeness to your Head.

A very humble Christian ever filled with Jesus will so speak, so look, so grasp your hand, so do the commonest things of life, that strange and everlasting forces will spring from the act and touch hearts on every side. A very small wire filled with electricity will make everybody conscious of strange power.

It is a glorious and mighty thing to stand among men and be conscious that you have the authority and power of the Almighty, and that He is charging your message with a weight and responsibility which will meet those men in the judgment and which will move and influence their whole earthly life whether they hear or whether they forbear.

5. The head is the seat of thought, intelligence, judgment, direction, knowledge. So Christ is our wisdom, our guide, our mind. We need not think so much, or rather He will think His thoughts in us if we suspend our judgment and draw upon His glorious mind for our knowledge, our light, our views, our opinions and plans. It is not the business of the hand to be planning and thinking, but simply to go forward at the bidding of the brain. So He has said to us, "Take no thought for your life. . . . Your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things." "Casting all your care upon him; for he cares for you."

6. The head is the seat of honor, glory, and beauty. It supports the lovely face; it crowns the glorious temple. It is borne aloft in dignity and majesty, and in all things has the preeminence. It wears the crown of royalty, or the wreath of beauty, and is the expression and embodiment of dignity and preeminence. So Jesus Christ is the glory of His people, the crowned Head of His church to whom alone belong all dominion, praise and love forever and ever. To Him, not to us, belongs the honor. He is our Head and our glory, and He forever shall receive the many crowns of all His dear ones whose joy it shall be to lay them at His feet or heap them upon His head. All His richest blessings must lead us from them to Him. All His dearest children must be but links and channels to lift our hearts to Him from whom comes all love and all loveliness in earth or heaven.

The Body

The body is as necessary as the head. A bodiless head would be as abnormal as a headless body, and so our blessed Lord needs us as much as we need Him. He has separated Himself from His old place of absolute Deity and chosen for His inheritance His people, and without them His life is incomplete. All the gifts that He has received from the Father need an outlet, and we are the channels through whom they find expression and development. His love to men, His purpose to redeem them, His grace and power can

only reach them through our intervention. When we are not at His bidding and open to His influence, He is paralyzed in His purpose and baffled in His designs, like a man whose brain is full of magnificent energy and purpose, whose heart is throbbing with boundless love, but whose limbs are paralyzed, and whose hands are limp and dead, his body refusing to perform the wishes of his brain and clogging and depressing him with its helplessness, his love all vain because of the want of harmony and the lack of correspondence between the body and the head.

Christ has been hindered by the paralyzed, disjointed, diseased condition of many members of His body, and the work accomplished by the church has been limited by the fact that the body has been diseased and enfeebled in many of its parts. Oh, what might not be realized in a few days for the accomplishment of redemption if the entire body of Christ, without an exception, were open to the love of the Head and obedient to all His wishes and will. Pentecost would be repeated with a multiplication as vast as the difference between the one hundred and twenty millions of Christians today and the one hundred and twenty brethren in the upper room. There are millions of times as many members in the body today as there were then, but the very number restrains the body all the more when they are not perfectly adjustable and responsive to the Head. Will you remember, beloved, that Jesus needs you, and that even if you be the weakest and smallest member, you have the power by becoming diseased and inflamed to spread disease through the whole body, even as the smallest finger on your hand can paralyze your hand by simply getting sick and sore?

Three things especially are emphasized by the apostle in his beautiful teaching about the body of Christ.

1. Its variety. "We have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: so we, being many, are one body in Christ." In your body there are thousands of constituent elements. Every one is necessary. The very diversity of those members is your strength. Members of the church of Christ are not all alike. The greater the diversity, the more their power. Each of us has our natural individuality, and this is the element through which God molds our spiritual life and our life plans. He has made each of us for a certain place and service, and the very things that constitute our personal identity are the things He wants to use in us.

Sometimes our very eccentricities are elements of force when consecrated to God and baptized with the Holy Ghost. Sometimes the very facts of your previous history, even your sins and errors, become features which God can utilize for His kingdom. Do not, therefore, criticize your peculiarities. They are the very things God wants, if they be not defects. Your very littleness may just fit you for the place He wants you to fill. In making up a body He sometimes wants a finger only or a single hair. Now if you were a thumb, or a glowing eye, you would be needless, because, you see, there are enough of these already, and you are just required to fit into your place and functions. Do not criticize in others their idiosyncrasies, as you are pleased to call them, for in the body there are some curious members, and the apostle says that those that have least honor, to them God has given more abundant honor, and the time often comes when those obscure and uncongenial persons become, perhaps, the greatest blessings of your life, and draw you to them as the Lord Himself.

2. Its unity. These diversities may all be blended and kept by a common band of love and life in Jesus. If completely united, the very diversity adds greatly to the scope and influence of the church of Christ. On the field of Gettysburg a little pool of blood was found, into which flowed five tiny streams, and when the men from whose wounds the life tides were issuing were found, they proved to be the sons of different races, so that in that little crimson pool the heart of a German, a Frenchman, an Irishman, a Negro and an

American were all blending; and it had but one color and one meaning, the love of country that was not afraid to die. If Christ's love is in our hearts, all differences become small. A creed will not unite us; a work will not unite us; a love, and a love only, can unite us. Closeness to Jesus brings closeness to each other. The little birdlings that are always nestling against the mother's bosom are always pushing against each other, and if you and I are determined to be nearer to Jesus, we shall never be far apart. A lack of unity in the body is fatal to health and power. An obstructive joint will bring rheumatism and paralysis. The reason today that the power of the Holy Ghost is so limited is because the inflow and the outflow of the life of Christ are hindered by the divisions of Christianity, and still more by the lack of heart-oneness to Him.

3. Its relationship. We owe to each other certain mutual obligations expressed by the phrase, "œfitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplies." While every member of the body sustains a relationship in some sense to every other, yet some are closer than others, and in those intimate relationships there must be perfect freedom, fellowship and holy activity. The joint and the socket must move together without friction. The least friction will produce inflammation, irritation, pain, disease, paralysis. God adjusts us to each other by His Providence and Spirit, and He will enable us to recognize our relationships, to meet them, and to fulfill them perfectly with holy wisdom and love. Each of us sustains many relationships, but the Holy Spirit in us will adjust us to each with a perfect freedom and delicacy, so that we shall love one another in Christ in the places where we belong with a heart as free as heaven and as pure as Christ Himself. You shall have a boundless love for each of God's children, each in his place. You will love your family, your children, your friends, your brother in Christ, each in his or her place with perfect simplicity of heart, and yet without a jar in the various relationships. For if Christ is abiding in us He will adjust to every relationship even as He Himself meets each of us His members with the fullness of His heart, and yet the special adaptation of each one is what their situation requires.

The recognizing of our oneness with Christ will make us considerate of one another and will give to our duty to each other a higher sacredness, inasmuch as it affects the whole body and the Head Himself. When you hinder or hurt a single brother, you hurt the whole body just the same as in your physical body a jar in one part will hinder. And not only so, you will come to recognize the necessity of being right with God, for otherwise you may hinder the entire work of Christ. It is not necessary for a man to be sick all over to be helpless; a single organ will render him helpless.

And so, if you choose, you can, by becoming an irritation and an offense, arrest and obstruct all God's work to a certain extent. Of course, there is provision in the human body for getting rid of such a member, and sometimes the only thing is to cut it off. God has the same provision for His church, and He will separate you from His people if you are not willing to work with them in harmony and holiness. And yet excision always leaves a scar and often a lack. The law of love and the desire of the Master is that we should be so true to Him and to each other that He can accomplish in us and through us His highest purposes of love and blessing. It will help us infinitely in our relationship with people to recognize them in Christ and not in themselves. Then our love to them may not be personal and selfish, but will be heavenly and holy. Then also we shall be enabled to love what naturally we could not even tolerate.

Oh, we little know the depths and heights of joy and power that lie hidden in recognizing the mystery of the body of Christ, and Christ Himself in all His members! Then our service will be all unto Him, and a cup of cold water given to a disciple for Jesus' sake will bring a great reward, and some day the Master will say, "œYou did it unto me." Then also it will be found that the simplest and humblest services have been of the greatest value, even as the poor old widow in ancient Constantinople who could only sprinkle

the grass upon the rough stones as they dragged them to the temple, is represented in the old legend as having her name inscribed on the front of the Cathedral in letters of gold traced by an angel's hand, "This house the widow Eudoxia built for God."

Then also will we know the exceeding joy of doing much of our work through others, and doing the rest almost unconsciously and impersonally until the day comes when He will trace each constituent, and give to each his proportionate reward. I am so glad to feel that in that day most of my work for the Lord will be rewarded to others who have helped me oftentimes by sprinkling grass for the rough stones and making it easier where it would have been so hard, but for the love and prayers of God's dear children. God is preparing His church for the most glorious spectacle the universe has ever beheld, in that crowning day when the whole of creation will be summoned to gaze upon the face of the bride, the Lamb's wife, and as they gaze they will see not only the face of the Bride in all the beauty of her myriad-fold individuality, but as the unity and light of all the phases of the Lamb Himself reflected in them all, and, while it will be a picture of glorified humanity, it will be still more a picture of the Son of Man.

A dear friend has given me this beautiful illustration suggested by a single painting. Here is a woman's face. It is loveliness itself as its features are traced upon the canvas in the soft, vivid light of Italian art. There is the perfect form, the warm color, the modest yet noble brow, the rich tresses of hair, the expression of loveliness, the repose and strength of character, all seeming to speak with the light of life itself. Such is the picture as you see it at a distance, but when you come a little closer a strange transformation takes place. Making up that one face you see a hundred other faces and objects, and you find that it is a composite painting made up of many minutiae, so shaded and compounded that at a distance the combined effect was that of a single face, but at closer inspection it is a cluster of many objects. There, forming the rich color of the lips, are exquisitely shaded flowers; the hair is formed of trailing vines and grasses; little faces of beautiful children fit into the countenance; rich clusters of fruit the eye; and all blended together in infinite diversity and yet perfect unison.

Such will be the face that this universe will yet behold "Jesus, shining in all, all in all. Your face will be there, in perfect identity, and yet blended in the soft light of His countenance and reflecting the radiance of His smile. So let us abide in Him and grow up together into Him, until we shall see the fullness of the stature of Christ Jesus.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/ab-simpson/the-names-of-jesus-9-christ-our-head/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net