

06 - True Unity in the Body of Christ

by Ben Torrey

The Church is the body of Christ, and unity in the Church is essential for its function and mission.

Duration: 8:56

Scripture: Ephesians 1:22

Topics: "True Unity"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of unity within the body of Christ. Drawing from passages in the Bible such as 1 Corinthians 12, 13, 14, Romans 12, and Ephesians 4, the speaker highlights the idea that believers are all connected to one another in a tight, organic bond, just like the members of a body. The speaker emphasizes that every separation and division within the church has caused deep and painful wounds in the body of Jesus Christ. The sermon calls for a deep reflection on the significance of unity and urges believers to seek greater unity in humility and love, working towards the restoration of relationships and reconciliation among the different parts of the broken and wounded body of Christ.

Transcript

Good evening, this is Ben Torrey. It is good to be back with all of you again. It is now February and we are well into the year 2007, a year that holds so much hope for so many of us.

Last month we remembered the 100th anniversary of the Great Pyongyang Revival and thought especially about North Korea. And last week I left you with some thoughts on the importance of unity within the body of Christ, especially since this is God's heart's desire. We also thought about how important unity is for the mission of the Church in general and specifically the mission to North Korea.

This month I would like to explore this idea of unity within the Church a little more deeply, what it means and what we can do about it. Bringing true unity in the face of our many divisions and long painful history of separation is no easy task. It has daunted generations of well-meaning brothers and sisters.

Unfortunately, I have no new magic formula. All I can do is share a few thoughts from Scripture that may point a way for us. Even as I talk about these things, I want to encourage you to pray for the unity of His body.

The only place to begin is with prayer and humble hearts. Then we must establish what it is that we mean by the Church. If we're going to talk about unity within the Church, then we need to be agreed on what it is that we're talking about.

The simple word Church has a rather ordinary meaning. The Greek word used throughout the New Testament is ekklesia, which simply means the called out ones or assembly, those who come together for a special purpose, in this case responding to God's call. Yet Scripture shows us that this simple word has deep meaning.

It is God's people who are the ones called out, called to be holy. The Church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints. That is 1 Corinthians 2.12. It is those who are called out of this world to be sojourners, strangers or pilgrims.

As Peter puts it in his first letter, chapter 2, verses 9 to 11, but you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. For you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God. You had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers. There is another meaning related to but overriding these that I want to focus on for a few moments. All that I have just been saying refers to us as people, as people who come together in Christ, in His name, but still as individual persons.

St. Paul uses another term, one that speaks of something that is not divisible, that cannot be separated out into individuals. That is the term body. That wonderful passage in Ephesians 5, 23 to 32, that calls on husbands to love their wives as Christ loves His church, speaks of a man in loving his wife as loving his own body.

This reference to the bride of Christ, the church, as His body, is one of the most intimate and rich in meaning. In verse 32, Paul calls it a profound mystery. In Colossians, he also calls the church Christ's body.

In chapter 1, verse 18, he writes, Christ is also head of the body, the church. And again in verse 24, now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions. Of this church, I was made a minister.

And of course, there is a well-known passage in First Corinthians, chapter 12, about the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the members of the body of Christ. Let me read a few verses to you. 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.

For by one spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free. And we were all made to drink of one spirit. For the body is not one member, but many.

That was First Corinthians 12, 12 to 14. Think about what this means. As we think about the importance of the unity of the church, we think about the fact that the church is a body.

And not just anybody. It is the very body of Jesus Christ here on earth. This is why Jesus Himself says in Matthew 18, 20, that He is present when two or three are gathered in His name.

If Christ is everywhere, then why does He say that He is present when two or three are gathered, as if He were not otherwise? This must mean that He is present in some special way, right there, where people of God have gathered in response to His call. Right there, the church is present. The church that is the body of Christ.

Jesus Christ is present in a very real, organic way, because His church is present. So, what happens when a body is divided? It is maimed, or spastic. It is disabled.

If the situation is bad enough, the body actually dies. What has happened to the body of Christ? What has it become? If we think carefully about what Paul says in First Corinthians 12, 13, 14, Romans 12, Ephesians 4, and elsewhere, we must ponder deeply the idea that we are all connected to one another in a very tight, organic bond, just the way that members of a body are, just the way the hand is connected to the wrist and the arm, the arm to the shoulder, and so forth. We cannot pull the members of our body apart without causing great pain and severe disability.

Just so it is with the body of Jesus Christ, the church. As we have pulled away from each other over the centuries, every separation, every division has been a deep and painful wound in the very body of Jesus Christ. Each division has hurt Him grievously.

True, we sometimes do have to operate on our body to cut away infection or cancer, but we don't relish that, and we do everything we can to restore that which was cut away. I feel like we, in this day and age, are much too cavalier about separating from each other for just about any reason. We take it much too lightly.

Better to put up with a deformed thumb than to cut off the hand and throw it away. Not only are we to try in every way we can to stay together, but these same passages show us that we, all of us, each and every one born into the body of Christ through baptism, have been given gifts by the Holy Spirit, and the responsibility to use these gifts, not for ourselves, but for Jesus and everyone in His body. As we all function as healthy members of His body, exercising the gifts given to us, then the body, Christ's church, is able to accomplish all the work that He established it to do.

And the most important work of all is to share the wonderful, life-giving gospel with those who have not heard it. Let us pray. O Lord, may we all be one in You.

May each of us called by You to be a part of Your body accept gratefully the gifts that You have given to us and that You want us to use for Your glory and the glory of Your church. May we at all times seek the greater unity of Your church in humility and love. Help us to heal Your wounds and seek restoration of relationships and reconciliation among the different parts of this broken and wounded body.

Forgive us for our uncaring attitudes that accept so easily the fact that there are so many divisions within Your own precious body. Cleanse and heal Your bride, Your very body, O Lord Jesus. Amen.

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