

What Your Part Is In Christ's Body

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of building the body of Christ in the New Covenant, where every believer is given the Spirit to prophesy and contribute to the growth of the church. It highlights the significance of each individual's role in the body, no matter how small, and the need for personal growth through a daily walk with God and obedience to difficult commands like loving others sacrificially.

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Scripture: Ephesians 4:16, Luke 10:42, Hebrews 5:7, John 13:34, 1 Corinthians 14:1

Topics: "Building the Body of Christ", "Personal Growth in Faith"

Description

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Transcript

I'm very thankful that in the New Covenant, we don't just speak about overcoming sin, but also about building the body. That's a very essential part of the New Covenant, because overcoming sin is a personal thing in which I can even sometimes glory in. But when I'm put in a body, I have to learn to appreciate others also.

And, you know, in the Old Testament, under the Old Covenant, anybody couldn't get up and prophesy. The Spirit of God was only upon certain people and only they could be prophets or speak. But in the New Covenant, the Spirit is given to everyone in different degrees.

They can prophesy and it may be just quoting a verse. A child can quote a verse and it could be a prophecy that goes to somebody's heart. So this prophecy is a very big word and we always think of the Old Testament, but it could just be sharing a word if that's a simpler word to free us from that burden of the word prophecy.

But I thought of this verse in Ephesians 4, 16, of how the body is built up and grows. How does the... how is... NCCF is a body. This church has to be an expression of the body of Christ.

It's not the total body of Christ, which is worldwide and not only worldwide, a lot of them are already in heaven, part of the body. So we're never going to see the whole body anytime on this earth till Jesus

comes. But each local church, even if it's three or four people in a church, has to be an expression of the body of Christ.

In other words, the same principles that operate in the whole body must be found even in a small local church. And in Ephesians 4, it tells us the last part how the body grows, building up itself in love. It's a tremendous expression.

The body of Christ grows building itself up in love. Now, how is that going to happen? There are two phrases before that, which says every joint supplies something and each individual part works properly. So you may not be the tongue or the eye or the hand or the leg, which are very, very important parts of the body.

Or you may not even be the heart or the liver or the kidney, which are also important parts, which are invisible. What about a joint? A joint is such a small little thing, but you know what happens to your hand if your elbow joint is causing a problem, or you know what happens to your walking if your knee joint is not functioning properly. Every joint, you may be a little joint.

Don't think you have no part in the body. I want to say that every one of you who has committed yourself to Christ and committed yourself to this body of believers, you have a function. And there's something which the body will miss or lose if you don't fulfill your function.

If you have such an inferiority feeling, well, I'm just, I'm not gifted, I don't know the Bible, I don't know this, or I don't even know what it is to be filled with the Holy Spirit. I want to say to you, Christ lives in your heart, you have a function, definitely. And if you exercise that function, it'll grow.

I mean, even the doctors say that if a muscle is not exercised, it gets useless. You won't be able to use it. People who lie in bed for a long time, a lot of muscles in their body are not used, they're not able to even walk properly when they get up after so many months in bed.

Not because anything was wrong, it's because they didn't use it. And we don't realize what a blessing it is just to be walking around. You're using something.

And so I want to say to those of you who don't use what God has given you, because you feel you're so unworthy, or so useless, or I've got nothing to contribute. If you're not born again, I fully agree, you've got nothing to contribute to the body of Christ. But if you are born again today, morning, you have to think that, well, I've got something to contribute, even if it's like a little joint, or each individual part, that could be the smallest little thing.

I've often spoken about the nails, which are very, very small, but how useful they are when we feel itchy somewhere. There's no part of the body which is unimportant. Eyelids, even eyelashes.

I know what eyelids do, they water your eyes, but I really don't know what eyelashes do, except make people look nice or something. But I'm sure there's some function, one day God will show us, even eyelashes have some function. What I'm saying is that the smallest little part of your body, which appears to have no function, one day we'll discover when God shows us in the human body, every part has a function which even doctors didn't discover.

And even more in the body of Christ, it's very, very important, my dear brother, sister, if you've given your life to Christ, you have to recognize, and if you've committed yourself to this body, you have a function to

fulfill. And it may not be sharing in a meeting, it may be more sharing in a meeting when there's a smaller group, very important. In fact, I feel that in our church in Bangalore, a lot of growth came in the weekday meetings in small groups, and could possibly be true here as well.

But a personal walk with God is very important if we are to make that contribution, because our personal walk with God means we are a healthy member. Only healthy members of the body can contribute something, however small, and to be a healthy member is very, very easy. It just means keep your conscience clear.

You know, sometimes we can be overwhelmed by some of the commands in Scripture. For example, think of this, where it says in Ephesians 6 and verse 18, one of the most widest commands, Ephesians 6, 18, it says, with all prayer, what does that mean? With all prayer, and all petition, pray at all times. That's another huge expression, at all times, and it must be in the spirit, and be on the alert, with all perseverance, and with petition.

And here's the most difficult part, for all the saints, how in the world can I do that? I read a verse like that, and I'm absolutely overwhelmed. I mean, you can read it casually, and say, go on to the next verse, and don't even take these verses seriously, but I've come to the place where I've taken, if I believe the Bible is God's word, I've learned to take every verse seriously, but I don't let it condemn me. I read that verse and say, Lord, maybe I'm not yet mature enough to understand how in the world to do it, but I see if I'm not yet able to do it, I see it as a goal that I will come to.

Maybe it'll take me 20 years to get there, but I'm going to get there. It's like a marathon race. It may take you many hours to reach the finishing line, but you're determined to pursue and go on.

So it's very easy to get condemned by some very difficult command, but I want to encourage you to pursue it. So one of the thoughts that's been coming, an old, old thought that's come to my mind for many years, almost from the beginning of my Christian life, what Jesus said about Mary in Luke 10 42, that Mary has chosen that good part to sit at my feet and listen to my word, which is far more important than doing a lot of service for me like Martha was doing in the kitchen. So that coupled with Jesus' first words in his ministry, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

It's come more and more to my mind that every day I must receive something from the Lord, maybe one word or one sentence from the Lord to be the word I have to live by. Man shall not live by bread alone, and every day all of us eat some food, even if it's a glass of juice or if you're fasting. Some little bit we all take every day, and it says that's not enough.

The Lord says there must be a word from God as well. Man shall not live even with a glass of juice or a cup of coffee or breakfast, lunch, or dinner, but by every word that proceeds from God's mouth, there's a word that God wants to give us every day. And as I've often said, Genesis chapter 1 tells us one thing, that God spoke every day.

On the first day he spoke, on the second day he spoke, the third day he spoke, fourth day, teaching me right in the very first page of the Bible that God speaks every day. I must listen, and if I don't listen like it says in Hebrews 5, I can be dull of hearing. John says in Revelation chapter 1, he heard God's voice like a trumpet, whereas many believers say, I don't hear it at all.

That must be because there's a dullness of hearing, because there's something in your conscience that is not set right. Be very careful. Have you hurt somebody? Ask his forgiveness.

I believe God's laid that so much on my heart, this business of asking forgiveness, that I'll keep on preaching it till Jesus comes. I don't know why it is. I never preached it so much in past years, but from this year onwards, that burden has tremendously come upon me.

It must be because we are coming close to the coming of the Lord, and people must be ready. And the other burden is to forgive people, to ask forgiveness. Matthew chapter 5, if your brother has something against you, don't pray.

Can you imagine the Lord saying, don't pray? There is a command like that. Don't pray. Leave your offering there.

God's not going to accept your prayer. Go first and settle matters with that person you hurt, then come and offer your prayer. And I don't want to meet the Lord with having something, I hurt somebody and I've not asked forgiveness.

Some debt I never even tried to repay. At least if you try to repay, even if you don't finish repayment in your life, God will accept it as repayment. But if you don't even attempt it, if you don't even attempt to make, ask forgiveness, you will not live in peace with everybody.

Romans 12, 16 is very clear, as much as lies in you, live at peace. But I must do my part. And the other is, if there's a single person on earth whom I have not forgiven, I'm conscious of.

I'm conscious, and there may be many things I'm unconscious of. But if I'm conscious and I'm not forgiven, it's clear that God will not forgive me. So this is something which I want to emphasize.

These are the only two things always very often that hinders us from hearing. Please say, Lord, I want to hear you every day. The other thing that I was thinking of, which I've repeated before, and I never hesitate to mention again and again, Jesus went into the wilderness because he wanted to be alone.

I thought much about that. Lord, we live in a city where there's no wilderness anywhere nearby. And even if there were, we don't have time to go into the wilderness.

Our life is so busy. Where can I be alone? Our life in a home is so rushed with children. We don't have a spot to be by ourselves.

I've discovered that my wilderness is when I'm awake in bed early in the morning before getting out of bed, or at any time when I'm in bed when the whole world is asleep around me, and it's just me and God. It could be in the middle of the night, awake for 10 minutes. That's the wilderness I find.

So there is a place for every one of us to have a time alone with God, a wilderness when we're all alone. And there could be other times as well. When you're alone in the home, no disturbance.

And all of us, certainly when we are in bed, take those times and Lord speak to me. I believe God will speak if he sees you're eager and thirsty for it. And the other word that came to me in relation to prayer was it says about Jesus not only went into the wilderness, but it says in Hebrews 5 that he prayed with loud crying and tears to be saved.

He needed to be prayed to save from sin. I don't want to sin, Father. I don't want to sin.

And he cried out with loud crying and tears. It's an amazing verse. Most Christians don't even believe that Jesus ever prayed like this to be free, to overcome temptation.

They thought it was easy just like walking on the water. It wasn't. He had to pray with loud crying and tears because temptation was so strong and to be alert all the time.

He could not allow one single sin in thought or word or deed or attitude or motive to come in, but then the sacrifice would be imperfect on the cross. So we had to be very careful, far more careful than we are because we tend to take it lightly because if you slip up somewhere, you say, well, the blood of Jesus cleanses me. Jesus couldn't do that.

Imagine, I have thought of it like this sometimes when the Lord says to me, I've forgiven all your sin until today. But from today onwards, I'm not going to forgive any more your sins. Just be careful.

Would I take more sin seriously if I heard the Lord say that to me? It's a question all of us can ask ourselves. Would you take sin more seriously if the Lord told you from today onwards, no more forgiveness? Just be careful. We tend to take it so lightly because unconsciously at the back of our mind is the blood of Christ, the blood of Christ.

We've made the blood of Christ like tap water. You need to take it more seriously, I want to say. So this loud crying and tears also I discovered when I'm alone.

Again, when I'm in bed, I can cry out aloud in my heart without any sound coming out of my mouth. I've experienced it and you can experience it. It's a loud cry in the heart.

Oh God, help me, keep me pure at any cost. And not a sound comes out of our mouth. I encourage you to pursue it.

Your life will be changed. And one last thing. What is the most difficult commandment that Jesus gave? We have studied much on the Sermon on the Mount.

And for some people, you'd say, well, it's anger. Well, I'm just not able to overcome my anger. And the Lord says anger is the first of three steps to hell in Matthew chapter 5 and verse 22 onwards.

And for some people, it may be lusting with the eyes. Oh Lord, I'm just not able to get over this lusting with the eyes, just not able to get over this occasional watching of pornography. Those are not the most difficult commands.

Those are some of the easier commands. We have to start with the easier ones. You have to start with two plus two before you go to multiplication and division and square root and all that.

So I'm not saying you should jump to the higher classes. If you're in the kindergarten, be faithful in the kindergarten, but don't get stuck in the kindergarten. Move on to first grade and second grade and third grade.

Move on to a PhD. You want to get a PhD on a post-doctoral in following the Lord. But as I've thought about it more and more, is this is the most difficult command for myself anyway.

A new commandment I give you, that you love one another. Love others as you love your neighbors. Yourself is an old covenant thing, but to love one another as I have loved you.

John 13, 34. There's absolutely nothing more difficult than that. To love somebody who hates you and who's hurt you badly, done evil to you.

To love everybody in NCCF, that's easy. That's kindergarten stuff. But to love people who hate you and even some who call themselves believers.

Jesus loved, when he died on the cross, he wasn't dying for believers. He was dying for everybody. One John 2 says he died for the whole world.

And I think of people who may hate me and detest me and I forgive them, okay. But am I willing to die on a cross to save those people from hell? Am I willing to experience hell like Jesus experienced on the cross to save those people from hell? I say no, Lord. I'm sorry.

But if that's the goal you want me to pursue, I'm ready. Working my heart through the spirit. I don't want to imagine myself as a spiritual person if I'm not pursuing this.

That's why the Holy Spirit says in 1 Corinthians 14, 1, pursue unto love. Read 1 Corinthians 13, love never seeks its own. It's the most difficult command of all.

The mark of being filled with the Holy Spirit is that the love of God should have brought in our hearts. Pursue it. Don't say it's impossible.

Nothing is impossible with God. Say, Lord, I want this. I want to be able to love as you loved.

If it takes me a lifetime, so be it. But I'm going to pursue it. And some of these other things like anger and lusting and all will fall into place when I pursue this.

God bless you all. Thank you. Continuing on the basis of what I just shared earlier, Luke 22, verse 14 onwards.

When the hour had come, he reclined at table and the apostles with him. This is where the first breaking of bread. And listen to these words.

I earnestly desire to eat this with you before I suffer. And in some translations is with desire I have desired. And it was, it's an expression of tremendous love.

I mean, if you think about it, it's exactly what I said. To love one another as I have loved you means he was willing to, I want to say this reverently, he was willing to experience hell to save others from hell. That's exactly what he experienced on the cross.

That's why I said it is the most difficult command to obey. And let's not take lightly this command to love one another. I think we have taken it too lightly.

It's far as I have. And I want to repent of it and pursue it more eagerly and to never seek my own. Love does not seek its own in anything.

And when we break bread together, we are making a covenant of love saying we want to love like Jesus loved us. We're not there, but we want to get there. And I want to encourage you, my brothers and sisters,

that this symbol of Jesus' body and blood, the bread in the cup, body broken and blood poured out.

Let's see why he did it and for whom he did it. And let's say, Lord, I want to go that way for myself. Amen.

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