

A Functioning, Healthy Member of Christ's Body

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Introduction: Open your Bibles to **Ephesians 6:21-24**. We enter into our last message on the book of Ephesians. The title of the message is "A Functioning, Healthy, Member of Christ's Body".

Dawn Dubsy is a pediatric nurse who travelled to Africa last year. Little did she know that the fever she came back with was caused by a microscopic parasite we know as "malaria". The Chicago Tribune just a few days ago carried an article on her. They said, quote: "Despite the efforts of 15 doctors, the microscopic parasite that causes malaria rampaged through her bloodstream, blowing up cells, clogging veins and arteries and shutting down vital organs. Her skin blistered and turned purple. She started to die an inch at a time." Unquote. She went in with a 103 degree fever. But malaria had destroyed so much of Dawn Dubsy's tissue that a surgeon had to amputate her limbs just below the elbows and knees.

When she awoke and was informed of what was done. She was furious. She screamed out: "Why didn't you let me die?"

Dawn Dubsy is doing well in her recovery, but she is very limited in what she can do. Dawn Dubsy would tell you today that a functioning body is a precious gift from God that none of us ought to take for granted. Every thing Dawn does now takes ten times the effort because of the members of our body that we take for granted.

It is the same way with the Body of Christ. If you are not a member of the Body of Christ, you are being relied upon with the weight of God's people. If you are not carrying your weight—if you are not a functioning member, you are hurting the whole Body.

We are all to be active, functioning members of Christ's Body. Today I'm speaking to several groups of people.

- I've spoken with several of you here today who have been saved but not yet baptized. You may be saved, but you are not a functioning member of Christ's Body. This message is for you.
- There are some here today who were faithful, useful, functioning members of Christ's Body years ago. You were involved. You were depended upon. But now you have a hard time even making it to services. This message is for you.
- Most of you here today are faithful, functioning members of Christ's Body, and I want to encourage you that each one of you is vitally important. God is

using you as His hands, His feet, and His mouth for the salvation of the world and the glory of God. And this message is also for you.

We are all to be active, functioning members of Christ's Body.

A non-functioning limb of your body brings will bring your life to a standstill. It is the same with each of you as a member of Christ. Your involvement is vital.

Illustration: When my dear mother-in-law was found to have cancer, there was something in her where her body was not functioning normally, and it was interrupting the body so much that it brought her to a standstill.

When Body parts start shutting down, you could die. If your heart or your liver shut down, you are at risk of death. So it is in Christ's Body, the church. We are ALL to be active, functioning members. Christ didn't just save us just to save us. He saved us and put us in a Body where we are called to build up those around us.

This morning we are going to see two things. We are going to look at an example of a healthy, functioning member that Paul mentions at the very end of the book of Ephesians. His name is **Tychicus**. But before we get there we are going to look at the New Testament and see how important it is to have every member of Christ's Body functioning.

I. Let us first see the importance of having every member of Christ's Body functioning.

A. **A functioning member carries out Christ's promise that He would build His church.** In **Matthew 16:18**, we hear Jesus Christ announcing, "I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Your involvement in the local Body of Christ is vital because **building the church is vital and important**. It is Christ who first promised He would build His church. You are carrying that promise out as you meet in the local church for fellowship, for the apostles doctrine, in corporate prayers, and the Lord's table. Look over at **Acts 2:41-42**. These are the things that make a local church a local church. Look at how they are described: "they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. 42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."

These things can only be engaged in together during the assembly of a local church. Where is it that preaching and fellowship and the Lord's table and corporate prayers take place? The local church. You are functioning just by meeting on Sunday School, Sunday morning, Sunday evening, and Wednesday evening. You ought to be here each time the church unites. You are not functioning if you find it easy to make excuses for these services.

B. **A functioning member is not a lone ranger Christian!** We see this by the first official definition of the church is found in NT in the **Ephesians 1**. What is the church? It is not you alone. It is you together with other Christians. It is not until **Ephesians 1:23** that you find a description of what the church is. "The church...is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all". The church is not just you! The church is you connected and building up those whom Christ has saved.

- C. **There is no church of ONE.** “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst” (Matthew 18:20). **Ephesians 1:23** says that you are part of a Body with other people that you must be constantly engaged in. Churches have become so man-centered and focused on meeting the individual’s needs, that we have lost our corporate identity as the BODY of Christ. That means you cannot function if you are not vitally involved in the Body’s life. You cannot be a lone ranger.
- D. **In the New Testament we find three simple teachings on how Christ’s church functions.** There are actually three major chapters that discuss how the church functions in regard to spiritual gifts: **1 Corinthians 12**, **Romans 12**, and **Ephesians 4**, and at the very end of the book of Ephesians we have the description of a man who exemplifies a member of Christ’s Body who is functioning and healthy.
1. **You are important to the Body of Christ.** In **1 Corinthians 12**—we learn that there are various people functioning in various ways, but they are all bound in this one living Body, this organism. Paul asks in this chapter, “[What] if the whole Body were an eye?” (1 Corinthians 12:17). You can imagine if you were only an eye rolling down the street. Someone could call your name out, and you wouldn’t hear them. Because if the whole Body were an eye, where were the hearing?” That’s what Paul asks. Or what if the whole body were a foot, or a hand? Paul is making the point that every individual gift is necessary. Every one of you as part of Christ’s Body is necessary for the functioning of the whole Body.
 2. **You ought to use your gifts for the Body of Christ.** So it is on this basis, you have another epistle that speaks of the functioning of the church, in **Romans 12:6**. Paul says, “Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them” (ESV). The point that Paul is making is: let every person understand what he’s gifted to do, and then stretch himself out in that ministry.
 3. **The unity and health of our church is directly connected to how involved you are.**

Paul makes these same kinds of points in **Ephesians 4**. After explaining the seven-fold unity of the Body of Christ (“One body, one spirit, one hope, One faith, one Lord, one baptism, one God and Father of all”)—Paul says, in **verse 7**, “unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ”. He goes on to say in **Ephesians 4:15-16**, that we are to “grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”

In other words, the unity of the one body is strengthened by the diversity of gifts. As we use our gifts, we build up the saints around us, and we are endeared to them, and we are more and more unified.

- II. Let us look at an example of a healthy, functioning member that Paul mentions at the very end of the book of Ephesians through the **example of Tychicus**.

At the very end of the book of Ephesians, we are introduced to a man that is a member of Christ's Body that is healthy, thriving, and really plugged in. His name is Tychicus, and through his life we see what it is to be a fruitful Christian and a healthy member of Christ's Body. We need this message this morning, because there's coming a day when we want to hear the words from **Matthew 25:21**, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things".

Let's look at our text in **Ephesians 6:21-22**, "But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister [DEPENDABLE SERVANT] in the Lord, shall make known to you all things: 22 Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts".

We come to the end of the book of Ephesians. Paul closes his letter describing the messenger of the letter to the Ephesians. Paul commends him as someone who was being used of God in the churches. Paul refers to a man named Tychicus. We learn much from this man. He was born and raised in the city of Ephesus. Raised as a pagan, he was saved in Paul's third missionary journey when he planted the church at Ephesus during a two year period.

Now Tychicus's name has a very interesting name—his name means "favored one", or one who has received grace. That brings us to our first point.

- A. A functioning member first, realized the privilege it is to be recipients of God's **grace**. Tychicus was a faithful man, but he was not perfect. He was a flawed man that needed the grace of God.

Tychicus transcribed this letter while Paul dictated to him, and he is actually going to deliver it to his home church. Tychicus was a pagan, but now he is chosen and "favored" by God to work with Paul.

He's mentioned five times in the New Testament. As I said, Tychicus was very likely a native of Ephesus. He might have been one of those who gathered to hear Paul in the meeting hall at the school of Tyrannus in Ephesus (**Acts 19:9**). During that time, it seems that Tychicus lived up to his name. He was favored by God, and it became apparent to Paul.

God's grace was so obvious in the life of Tychicus, that when Paul left to finish his third missionary journey after founding the Ephesian church and go to Jerusalem with an offering from the churches of Asia Minor, he chose Tychicus to go with him.

Application: Do you see how honored you are by God to receive His grace? Do you realize the only reason you are hearing the Gospel this morning is because God has had mercy on you. None of us deserve to be members of Christ's body, but we often take it for granted. Let us awaken to our first love and realize how privileged we are to be instruments of God and ambassadors for Christ!

Transition: Tychicus is mentioned five times in the NT. We see him mentioned first in Acts 20:4, and then in Ephesians 6:21 where he is called a "beloved brother".

- B. A functioning member inspires **affection**. "a beloved brother". The grace of God in your life will endear you to God's people. Because of this, Tychicus was highly regarded by the Apostle Paul. He was a compassionate man, and a faithful man. He was worthy of Paul's trust and confidence. There are many people in ministry. In order to be a functioning member, you must be able to endear yourself to each one. You must take them where they are. You must not judge their spiritual life just because they are not exactly where you are. Love them. Sometimes you must rebuke them, but you do it in love.

..."faithful ministers". Do the Lord's people think of you as "beloved"? If they don't, what a wonderful gracious thing that God is still giving you enough life to change that! You can quickly become so highly valued and treasured to the people of God if you would just begin to be a "faithful minister", literally a "dependable servant". That's all it would take. Remember the Body grows and increases by what you contribute, and it is what endears you to the Body. Your constant contribution to the fellowship of the saints is what endears you to the Body, so that if God in His providence were to move you away from this Body, you would be dearly missed! Are you just someone who takes up a seat, or are you a "beloved brother" or sister?

- C. A functioning member is **dependable**. Tychicus was a dependable servant, as Paul said, "a beloved brother and faithful minister". Minister= διακονος. He is one of company of men going from Asia Minor collecting the offering for the Jerusalem saints.

1. **Tychicus with Paul to Jerusalem.** In **Acts 20:4**, he is first mentioned as a co-laborer of the Apostle Paul. We find Tychicus mentioned with **Trophimus** as being from "Asia" or "Asia Minor". The main church in Asia Minor at that time was the church of Ephesus. ***Tychicus here is said to accompany the Apostle Paul all the way back to Jerusalem in order to bring a love offering to the poor saints there.*** Tychicus is chosen to accompany Paul to take the offering from the Corinthian church, and Philippian church, and the Thessalonian church to the Jewish believers.

The next time we see Tychicus, he is in Rome with the Apostle Paul. You see, Tychicus does arrive with Paul in Jerusalem, but Paul is arrested in the Temple while offering a sacrifice.

2. **Tychicus back to Ephesus, Tychicus's home church in Ephesus**
Then in **Ephesians 6:21-22**. When Paul writes Ephesians, where is he? He is in the Mamertine prison in Rome. He has been in prison for some 3 to 4 years. You know the story—Paul takes the offering to the Jerusalem church, and has a discussion with the Apostle James, the half brother of the Lord who is the pastor of the Jerusalem church. You find out in Acts 22 that while Paul is making a blood sacrifice in the Temple, he is found out by some zealous Jews, and accused and arrested. He eventually appeals to Caesar, and is sent to Rome. He is later released from this imprisonment.

It is in Rome that Paul writes the prison epistles: Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon. All but Philippians (transcribed by Epaphroditus) was transcribed by Tychicus.

On his way to Rome as a prisoner, of course we know that Paul ship was shipwrecked at the island of Miletus before arriving at Rome.

- D. A functioning member is totally **surrendered** to the will of God. Tychicus did not live for this world. He was completely given over to build up the kingdom of Christ at any cost. Are you consecrated to God or are you just a complainer?

In **Colossians 4:7** Paul gives the same commendation of Tychicus as in **Ephesians 6:22**, but he adds another description. Let's see what it is: "All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, *who is* a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord". What a description! Paul says you are a "sundoulov" or "fellow slave" of Jesus Christ. He was someone totally sold out for Christ.

If you are a believer in Christ, you've come to the end of yourself and you've sold out. You are not your own. You've let go of your agenda and the control of your life. You're a slave! Christ is our Master; He is our Lord.

What does someone totally sold out for Christ in the first century look like? Tychicus puts himself at risk as a companion and co-worker of Paul. Tychicus very likely left his secular employment when he came to know Christ in Ephesus, and threw his lot in with the Apostle Paul.

Paul describes the dangers he faced in **2 Corinthians 11:23**. He had many "imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death". Paul says he was "beaten with rods"; he was "stoned" once at Lystra and left for dead under a heap of rocks. He was shipwrecked three times. He suffered from thieves who would rob him. In **verse 27** he says, he suffered "in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure" (ESV).

Tychicus went through many of these things with Paul. He was very likely hand to mouth as far as food and needs. He probably never knew quite where he was going to be fed next, or if he would be arrested and put to death.

- E. A functioning member is a **peacemaker**. Tychicus with Onesimus. Now it says that Tychicus had another important mission. He was to bring Onesimus, who was a runaway slave, back to Colossae. Paul says in **Colossians 4:8** of Tychicus: "Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts; 9 With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is *one of you*. They shall make known unto you all things which *are done* here". Tychicus would have also brought Onesimus, Philemon's runaway slave, back to Colossae. Philemon was now to receive Onesimus "no longer as a slave but more than a slave, as a beloved brother" (**Philemon 1:16**, ESV). Philemon was a key person in the church of Colossae, as the church met in his "house" (**Philemon 2**).

- F. A functioning member is a **Communicator**. Tychicus to the Jews. In Acts 20, Tychicus is sent to Jerusalem with the offering for the poor Jews.. And now Tychicus is sent back to the Gentiles with the letters.

Tychicus's main purpose in going to the churches was *carrying information*. He was the carrier of this very letter of Ephesians. But in **verses 21-22**, we find that he is to let people know how he is doing.

Tychicus chosen to carry the letters from Paul in prison. God gave those letters to the churches at Ephesus and Colosse along with the book of Philemon. It is because of Tychicus' faithfulness and dependability that we hold this book in our hands today. What you have is a copy of a copy of a copy, of a translation, etc.

- G. A functioning member demonstrates **flexibility**. Tychicus apparently replaced Titus for a time, so that Titus could come and comfort the apostle Paul. Here we see a model of shared leadership. Tychicus does the same thing for Timothy at the church of Ephesus (**2 Timothy 4:12**).

Titus 3:12. Paul wants Titus to leave Crete and join him in Nicopolis, which is on the western edge of Greece. So if Titus leaves Crete, who does Paul have pastor the church in his place? **Titus 3:12**, "When I shall send Artemas unto thee, or Tychicus, be diligent to come unto me to Nicopolis: for I have determined there to winter." Tychicus is going to be a replacement on the island of Crete.

2 Timothy 4:12. When Paul writes 2 Timothy where is he? He is in his second and final imprisonment in Rome. He is released from this imprisonment by martyrdom. He is beheaded. **2 Timothy 4:12**, "And Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus." Paul is going to die, and he is very anxious that Timothy see Paul one more time.

In this, you have a fascinating view into the administrative workings of the early church. Paul is not free to preach. In prison Paul is more of an administrator.

Tychicus was sent half way across the Mediterranean world with massive sums of money. He was a dependable servant. He was sent twice as a replacement for two pastors.

- H. A functioning member is an encourager. **Ephesians 6:22**, "Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and *that he might comfort your hearts*".

Finally, Tychicus was to be an encourager. "*that he might comfort your hearts.*" Here you have a living example of someone maturing in the faith and edifying the body of Christ. Paul was putting forth a living example of someone who lived out what is written in the book of Ephesians.

Why is Tychicus' role so important? He was not primarily a preacher. Certainly he filled in. But he was really an encourager and a communicator. Tychicus is the link between Paul and the churches.

Are you a link? Are you a communicator? Do you know what is happening in the rest of the Body? When's the last time you saw people outside of church?

People wanted to know how Paul was. How can we apply this to our lives? You need to either be here in the fellowship of the congregation when we meet, or we need to know where you are.

Conclusion: If a church could say about you today is that you were a beloved brother or sister, a faithful minister, a fellow servant, it could say no more. But it wasn't the church that described Tychicus this way. The Holy Spirit breathed out these words to be forever recorded about Tychicus. And what He breathed out was true. Though he was fallen—just a sinner saved by grace—certainly aware of his own shortcomings—yet the Holy Spirit moved Paul to write these things about this man. So let every believer here take heart—that God could make you a choice gift to the Body of Christ.

As we close the book of Ephesians, I will give the closing benediction as Paul gave it to the beloved Ephesians church in **Ephesians 6:23-24**, "Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 24 Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen."