

**Ephesians 4: 16; “The Whole Body Knit Together”, Message # 32 in a series entitled
– “The Exceeding Greatness of His Power”, A Bible Study prepared by
Pastor Paul Rendall, for September 15th, 2021.**

I said to you in my last message that the apostle Paul gives us 3 reasons why pastor-teachers were given by Christ to the Church. They were given so that we would not remain children in the faith. They were also given so that we would learn to speak the truth in love. And now tonight we will look together at the truth that pastors were given so that believers would learn to more effectively work together to see the growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

From this verse, then, I want to open up 3 truths. 1st – That the whole spiritual body is joined and knit together by spiritual joints. 2nd – That there is an effective working by which every part does its share. And 3rd – The result of this working is the growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. So, let’s see if we can better understand what the Lord is doing, and what we should be doing, on a regular ongoing basis, to establish the growth of the body on both the local and Universal Church levels.

1st of all – The whole spiritual body of Christ is joined and knit together by spiritual joints.

It is good for us to remember, as Christians that we are joined together in one spiritual body, to our Head, Jesus Christ. His body which is the Church has these levels of local and Universal, as I have said to you before, and you and I have a responsibility toward both. Our responsibility is to speak the truth in love, so that we will grow up into our Head, who is Christ, as Paul says in verse 15. Here we see that the whole body is joined and knit together by what every joint supplies. Let’s take this on the larger level first. We are talking about joints and what they do for the body. In the human body joints connect the bones of the body. The joint is that which permits certain coordinated movements in the body.

If I flex my hand into a fist I am seeing 14 joints in action, not to mention the joints and bones in my wrist and the ligaments and muscles that it took to make that action. It is a coordinated effort, coming from my head. And if one or more of my joints has been injured, or for whatever reason does not work, then I could not complete that action of making my hand into a fist. Spiritually, if we could consider the skeletal bones of the body to spiritually be the true doctrine of the Bible and the joints as the connections between the true believers in many churches and denominations, then I think that we can begin to conceive of what Christ has called us to do on the larger level of the body of Christ.

What we are together called to, on this Larger level, is not to attempt ecumenical dialogue to see where we might compromise and come together to attain a unity contrived by us. But, rather, we are called to learn how we might preserve the unity of the faith that already exists. Because the Holy Spirit placed us all in the Body of Christ at the time of our conversion to Christ, we should study to do each other good, and to work together in service to Christ, where we can. There are numbers of denominations in the world. There are multiplied thousands of churches, and there are millions of true believers in the world today. And if we are following the Lord in uprightness of heart, we are all trying to come to terms with how we should view each other.

I believe that we ought to study to see what we could possibly do with other believers in other churches, and denominational settings, to promote the truth of the gospel and the word of God. The whole Body is joined and knit together, around the world, because the Holy Spirit has placed us into the same Body. And I believe that the Lord expects us to speak the truth in love with other believers who are in other denominational or non-denominational settings, so that we might have an impact for good upon them; and they upon us, where the Lord sees fit. Practically, this means that even though we do not go to the same church, that we will be

thinking about what we could do, to interact with them over the truth of the Bible. And, we may at times be able to share with them in certain activities of ministry and service to Christ, His cause, and His kingdom.

A good example of this is in our Bible Club ministry which our church conducts, for children 4-13, where Christian parents from 2 other Bible Believing churches in this community, bring their children to that activity, so that we might minister truth to them. I believe that this shows Christian love on both our part and theirs, and it promotes the cause of Christ, here in this city. In this regard, neither we, nor they, believe that we have compromised anything that we personally believe doctrinally, or what either of our churches holds to doctrinally. But we do affirm each other as believers who are learning together, how we can more effectively serve Christ, together with them.

Even though we are aware of the doctrinal disagreements that we have with them, we believe that still it is a good thing to work together with other believers outside of our church, where we can, than just keeping to ourselves, and not trying at all to affirm them as believers, and not working with them at all. This, I believe, glorifies God in the way that the apostle Paul is speaking of here. Speaking the truth in love, we are growing up into Christ.

Turn over with me, to Mark 9, verses 38-41, and you will find the Biblical justification for what I am saying. “Now John answered Jesus saying, ‘Teacher, we saw someone who does not follow us casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because He does not follow us.’” “But Jesus said, ‘Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in My name can soon afterward speak evil of me.’” “For he who is not against us is on our side.” “For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.” There are several principles of truth for us here to consider. The fellow believers that John mentions here were casting out demons, not by the power of demons, but in Jesus name. But John forbade them because they weren’t following them; that is, they weren’t following Jesus with their group.

But Jesus told John not to forbid him, because anyone able to do a miracle in His name can’t afterwards speak evil of Him. And then He gives this very revealing comment: For he who is not against us is on our side. In other words, you may not know all of the reasons why they aren’t following Jesus along with your group, but if they are not against you, they are on your side. And then He illustrated this truth by a good deed done, by one believer for another. Whoever gives you a cup of cold water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, that person shall not lose their reward. This makes it apparent that it is good to help other believers in the smallest of ways, to do them good, or to promote the common interest in serving Christ that you both have.

Now, let’s think about the local church level of spiritual joints. If physical joints facilitate the movement of the various limbs of the body, enabling the body to move and accomplish various tasks of things physical, then we should understand that spiritual joints within the spiritual body facilitate our working together with other members of the body. And this is always done in regard to commonly held doctrine, to glorify God. We consciously see ourselves connected together spiritually in the work. And we all are conscious that we are connected to Christ; our risen, living, Head. We therefore want to put forth coordinated efforts to see things accomplished for Christ, in terms of our service to Him, and all the good works that we hope to do, to help people both within, and outside the body.

Practically, this means that we think about each other, as members of the local church, in terms of what we can do with them. That is what joints do in the spiritual body of Christ in the Local church. We are joined and knit together by what every joint supplies. This means consciously striving together for the faith. It means that we consciously strive together to promote our commonly held doctrine in relation to the Bible; both in the church and outside of

it, as a witness to our community. Sound Doctrine is the strong skeletal bones of the body in the Local church. But these skeletal bones must have joints and ligaments and muscles on them. All the members of the local church must strive to have real and living connection and interaction with each other over how we can glorify Christ, our head in terms of promoting .

We must think about what our own position is in the body in relation to our own spiritual gift. And we must also think about what other people's positions are in the body, in relation to their spiritual gift. And when we discover the truth concerning these things, then we will try hard to work together with each other. We try hard to promote Christ's glory and His kingdom, though our gift, and out of a sincere love for each other other. And then we will find that the Lord will be blessing us in regard to our attempts to be fruitful in our service to Him.

2nd – There is an effective working by which every part does its share.

Let's think together about the phrase – “according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body.” The effective working that is being spoken of here, is not our own striving to be effective in our own strength and by our own wisdom, but rather our being effective in our ministry and service to Christ according to the Holy Spirit's conception and His power. It is His teaching us how to use our gifts and abilities. It is His making our ministry and service to Christ effectual to God's glory. How does the body of Christ in the local church grow with a growth that is from God? This growth takes place as the Holy Spirit leads us and guides us into the truth of how we can honor God in the use of our gifts and abilities. He brings us to a humble assessment of the things that we can do by His power to serve our Lord Jesus. And that service is thought of, in terms of church that we are a part of.

The Holy Spirit is teaching you how to be patient, how to be kind, how to be thoughtful, how to be loving, how to manifest all the fruit of the Spirit. He is teaching you how to apply truth; not in the sense that you are trying to confront people in order to force them to the conclusions that you know are right, in regard to doctrine or practice; but that you know how to come up alongside them and know how to interact with them, as a friend or a brother or a sister, that over time that you might win them to that truth, and that they might see that truth in you first. These things are so important when we are thinking about the effective working in which every part does its share. Do you know that you have a share, a part, in the growth of the body?

So the growth takes place as the Holy Spirit guides us into the truth about how we can honor God in the use of our gifts and abilities. A lot of people just think – I have this gift, and I am going to use it. But you need to pray about other people, in terms of how you can build them up, so that they are edified, that they become stronger in their faith, so that they themselves become more effective in their own personal ministry in terms of the gift that God has given to them. A lot of times, pride enters in and we don't think of how our gift should be used in terms of patience, kindness, and love to other believers. Because we are good at a certain thing we go ahead and use it without thinking of the way that we come across to them.

Turn with me over to 1st Corinthians 12, verses 14-26 – “For in fact the body is not one member but many.” “If the foot should say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,’ is it therefore not of the body?” And if the ear should say, ‘Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,’ is it therefore not of the body?” “If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing?” “If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling?” “But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.” “And if they were all one member, where would the body be?” “But now indeed there are many members, yet one body.” “And the eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you’; nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’”

“No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.” “And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, but our presentable parts have no

need.” “But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another.” “And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.” “Now you are the body of Christ and members individually.”

Now, we see here that the local church is an organic, living, spiritual body. It is not composed of one member, but many. The problem that most frequently comes up according the apostle Paul’s assessment, is that people do not grasp the importance of of all the members of the body. Notice how he words it in verses 15 and 16 – “If the foot should say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,’ is it therefore not of the body?” “And if the ear should say, ‘Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body’ is it therefore not of the body?” In other words, Christians in a local church often have a wrong conception of themselves, and do not think of themselves as being a part of the body at all. They place a great important upon the hands and the eyes of the body, but think little of the other members of the body.

If we should think about the hands of the body as being those members who are very practical in their doing things for others in the church, and if we think of the eye as being the person who watches over the church, watching over them for the good of their souls, you can see that a false assessment may be made. A person, not having either of those gifts may consider themselves to either be an unimportant part of the body of Christ, or not part of it at all! But Paul says that there are many members in the body and they are all very important in terms of their working together to worship and serve Christ, to the glory of the Father. The diversity of gifts is very important to a God-glorifying representation of Christ, the gospel, and the truth of the word of God, by that church; both to itself, and to others looking on.

The issue, in any local church that would grow with a growth that is from God, is whether they are interested in honoring God’s choice of weaker members of the spiritual body; that He would use them to demonstrate the power of His love and grace towards them. The issue is not whether that church is honoring the most gifted members of the body. Paul says in verse 22 that those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary, and those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor. In verse 24, he says that God has composed the body having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. This glorifies God when His strength is perfected in our weakness.

This is what promotes a real consideration of one member for another, as to how the strong can help the weak, and how the less presentable parts of the body can be encouraged to use their gift for Christ. A person with the gift of mercy may be very useful to the body, both within in, and outside of it, as a witness to people of Christ’s compassion. And a gift of helps is very useful to both the pastor and the deacons of the church in their ministries, as they can many people in many ways, great and small, to accomplish many tasks which would be a great burden to the leaders of the church if they were to go about to do them, all on their own. This is how the body of Christ grows. The Holy Spirit makes the ministries of all effective as they learn to work together. He blesses them greatly, when they humble themselves greatly, to consider each other in their work.

3rd – The result of this working is the growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

The result of the Holy Spirit’s effectual working brings about the growth of the body in that we learn to edify each other in love. That is, we will build each other up in our faith, as we each exercise our gift in love to others in the body. 1st Corinthians 12: 31 – “But earnestly desire the best gifts.” “And yet I show you a more excellent way.” The most excellent way is use the gift that God the Holy Spirit has given you, in a loving way. 1st Corinthians 13: 1 – “Though I speak

with the tongues of men and of angels, but have love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.” But when I exercise my gift in love, real spiritual growth will take place in me and it will have the very beneficial effect of building up others in the church. We become more like Christ the more that our love for one another as brethren is shown to each other.

And, we will have a deep appreciation of what God has given to each person in our local church, in terms of the spiritual gift and abilities which Christ has given to them, when we have this love for them. 1st Corinthians 13: 4-8a – “Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things endures all things.” “Love never fails.” And verse 13 – “Now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.” This is how the body grows with a growth that is from God the Holy Spirit, when every part, every member does their share, contributes their part. The body edifies itself, builds itself up, in love.