

Kings Norton Baptist Church

Sunday 6th August 2023 10 am

The body II - If you do belong - do you love?

Welcome to all.

Opening Scripture and prayer

Hymn MP 1262 By faith we see the hand of God

Scripture Psalm 25 (page 556)

Prayer of praise and thanksgiving.

Children's talk

Chorus MP 633 Thank you Jesus

Notices Picnic lunch today

Prayer and share time

Communion

Reading Matthew 25:31-46 (page 995)

Romans 12:4-19 (Page 1139)

Hymn MP 239 Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord

Sermon If you do belong - do you love?

Hymn MP 445 Shine Jesus shine

Closing Prayer

Prayer and Exordium

This is the second of two sermons on what it is to be part of the body of Christ, the body of local believers. This two-part series is brought on because today is probably the last Sunday that we'll have communion this way again. The change we are proposing will affect some of you who take/took the bread and the cup and won't be able to do so anymore.

✚ Some of you are not in the body of Christ and act as though you are, - while others are in the body of Christ - and act as though you aren't !!

Last week we looked at Romans 12 one of the passages highlighting the importance of being members of one body. That is a true believer should recognise themselves as being part of the body - and so should others. We saw that this belonging or membership is a biblical principle.

✚ So if you are guardedly individualistic - this is not easy for you!

The Bible speaks of the whole church being together:

1. In worship,
2. In decision making – being present at the members meeting and sharing in deciding who is suitable to join, the appointment of leaders, the call of a minister, the setting apart of missionaries and the specific areas of Christian service. For example in Acts 15:22 **Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church, decided to choose some of their own men and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas.** And again in Ac 13:2-3

It's when we are all together that we discern God's voice & His will for us here

3. In Pastoral care - The shepherd looks after the flock under his care, not just any sheep anywhere. Chris and I as under-shepherds are to look after those Jesus has brought together here, here.

A shepherd shepherds a flock – we must know who is in the flock and who isn't. It is our duty to help, encourage, give advice, guidance and direction. And the best help is to help you live out your life within the body of Christ. But if that person is not a member and therefore not committed to do that then any help is limited. Some like us to commit to them - but not vice versa

4. The giving of hospitality - Ro 16:23 **Gaius, whose hospitality I and the whole church here enjoy, sends you his greetings.** More on this later.
5. Then there is discipline. - When that person can no longer be one of you! Those who profess faith but are unrepentant, whether greedy, a thief, or immoral as in 1 Cor 5, they should **be expelled from among 'you'**, and put

out of 'the fellowship'. We need to know who is in 'the fellowship' that they should be excluded from!

6. And in the use of gifts: 6 **We have different gifts, according to the grace given us.** Your **gifts** are to be used, - and used for the good of others. What can I do with the gifts He's given me? What can I bring? How can I serve? How can I bless others?

We concluded last week by saying that although church membership is not essential for salvation - it is however, essential for living the kind of life Jesus calls for, and the NT speaks of. No born-again believer should 'opt out' when it comes to our biblical duty to join a fellowship of believers.

You make it known that you are united with Him - by being united His people

- A congregation is not just items stacked conveniently on a supermarket shelf close to each other - but unrelated.

We are a body of people spiritually alive in Christ and vitally related to each other. There should be, there must be a warmth of kinship in the Christian family not to be found in any other group of people.

The church is described in various ways in the Bible.

It's - a **vineyard** - a **building** - a **flock**, a **family**, a **body**. A new community > H

In each of the above you are either 'in or out' - part of it - or not part of it.

How do you enter? The doorway is Jesus, through Him, in Him by repenting.

- ✦ Last week we asked the question: *Do you belong?* Now "If you do belong - do you love?"

Today we look at the second half of Chapter 12 which start with **love**.

It is a complete passage as it starts with evil and good, and ends v21 with evil and good.

- ✦ So how do the parts of the body relate to each other? Here we see.

The opening line is: 9 **Love must be sincere**.

Love must be 'unfeigned'.

- I mentioned last week of a church that did a lot of hugging and stood in circles holding hands. How easy it is to make it look like love.

It is when that person offends you and you cover it over – as Jesus did for you, that is love. It is when that person is in difficulty, and you visit to help – that is love. When you contact a brother or sister to see how they are and help them that is love.

Paul as he recalling the ways God's servants commend the Lord to others through trials includes maintaining a **sincere love** x2 2 Co 6:6

When Paul says here the phrase 9 **Love must be sincere** at the beginning of a veritable **smorgasbord** of phrases - that don't seem very connected – He is, I suggest to you, laying out for us what love means in action. And he starts with:

Hate what is evil;

None of us hate evil as we should. Today we are often going to think of word meanings. The Greek word here for **hate** means to abhor, and it is used only here. We should **abhor evil**.

The world around blurs evil and good together. In doing this the world ends up inverting them, as the Lord said to those in Isaiah's day **Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.** 5:20 Or as people now say 'male for female' and 'female for male'

Jude in his catalogue of evil practices ends by saying how evil should repulse us: **snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.** v23 in other words we are not to get caught up in this world - but snatch others out of it.

- As when you are having a BBQ and a burger slips down into the flames and hot ashes it requires a swift movement down with the pincers to snatch it out. (quickly so no one sees) but to save being burned yourself

cling to what is good. Or cleave to what is good

- Hold up a tube of superglue. Ever had any on your fingers? Beware.
- I remember in the mid 70's when superglue came out. In our local town magistrates court on a couple of occasions a couple glued themselves – their hands together so one could not be sentenced. They had to be literally cut apart.

The word **cling** is actually the word which at its root means glue, glue.

We should glue ourselves to that which is **good** - so stuck to the **good** that you would have to use a very sharp knife to separate us!

Let us then glue ourselves to what is good. **whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things..** Phil 4:8

In the context of the fellowship then we do what we can to keep the whole good.

We are to guard the good, Jesus warns of the evil which so easily takes over, we must get rid of **the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness**, and have **bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth.** 1Co 5:8

As the proverb says let us **fear the LORD and shun evil.**” Prov 3:7

10 **Be devoted to one another in brotherly love.**

■ We have had some families here in the past, who have shown very strong family bonding. The Filipino ones come to mind. It’s commendable, especially when I think of my natural family, my brothers and sisters I can’t say we are close at all, certainly a western problem.

Yet there was a downside, whenever there was a church commitment which clashed with the family, the family always came first. Every time. Even a seemingly small affair at home and when it comes to anything to do with the brothers and sisters here it was “sorry we can’t make it” we have this or that.

Essentially the problem was a low view of Christian brotherhood.

We are to **Be devoted to one another in brotherly love.** v10

Many Christian’s view of this is a long way from what we are told to do - Here the Lord says that we should be **devoted** to our fellow believers. The word in Greek which only appears here is used of the affectionate regard of members of a family, to cherish one’s kindred, especially parents or children. Do you treat each other in the church like that? and with our fellow Christians have *Philadelphia*. = brotherly love = love for the brethren for each other here. That means we have to spend time together, our lives have to weave together.

Paul shared his life with the churches as an example for them to do the same. **We are not withholding our affection from you, but you are withholding yours from us. As a fair exchange—open wide your hearts also.** 2 Cor 6:12,13. The problems is some do more than others - Peter tells the churches to: **have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.**” 1 Pe 1:22

Remember that word Allelon ‘one another’ translated **belong**, each member **belongs to ‘one another’** so we are to **love ‘one another’.** John 13:34,35, 15:12,17

Be devoted - to one another - in brotherly love v10

One another is in the middle - and the bookends left **devotion** – right **love**

Honour one another above yourselves. Preferring one another above yourselves
Honour in Greek. literally means to lead before.

11 **Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord.**

Don’t be lacking or lagging. The word *okneros* used only here means slothful, or hesitating or backward. Don’t ever, never, go backwards in your **zeal, keep your spiritual fervour.** You may be lacking other things but not your enthusiasm for the Lord. Note never that – keep this

And we are told how to do this. **Serving.** x3. I am convinced that if we only stepped out to serve, - one step at a time - and increase in it you would be filled with joy - so many of those other things that weigh you down would go.

Christians have largely lost this work ethic. We are in an age of leisure. The world loves it, and people seek it for their happiness. Go to the shopping centres and see all the long miserable faces. How many are the despondant, the miserable and the morose to be found not at work but idling away at home. The Lord has given the means of good health, and the means for a happy heart. It is all centered around the church. Belonging, engaged, purposeful, accountable, active, working together with others. for the Lord and His Glory.

[I recall a lecture by a psychiatrist ably making the point of how the church and all that is involved in it, is the Lord’s plan for a sound mind and heart.](#)

‘How is it going’ people often ask don’t they. Do you say ‘well’ or ‘not so well’. The truth is the Christian life is a giant mix of joys and sorrows often simultaneously, all mixed up together, yes every day. So how should we be?

12 **Be joyful in hope, be patient in affliction, - and be faithful in prayer.**

Bring everything to him – to change me, we pray that he will change me

13 **Share with God’s people who are in need.** Or as the AV says **Distributing to the necessity of saints; Distributing or sharing** is often translated "partake". The word is *Koinoneo* is from *koinonia* meaning fellowship, [One pastor named his house ‘koinonia’.](#) The word means: communion, or community, or association, or joint participation, or contribution, or a gift shared, a collection, an embodiment and proof of fellowship.

Jesus is very clear about what this is in practise. On the day **all the nations will be gathered before him, he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.** "Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. How can we know who is going where? For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you

came to visit me.' did we? ... "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.' Mt 25:32-40

Did you notice this is not everyone, but particularly **these brothers of mine**. x2

Jesus is expecting all this to be done for each other, one another - in the body

Yes **the least of these**, not those charismatic members in which it is a delight to be running after, no the least, the last and the hardest, that is who we do it for.

We are to **Practise hospitality**. The word for **hospitality** = welcoming others, the Greek word *philoxenia* means kindness to strangers. (Only here and in Heb 13).

I was a stranger and you invited me in, Yes not just a brother or sister you know

"Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it. Heb 13:2. As Abraham discovered.

The word for **practise** 'diokontes is the same word translated persecute below:

14 **Bless those who persecute you;** (see phone app)

The word means pursue. **Pursue** hospitality search out ways of giving it, look for ways to give hospitality. If the Lord has blessed you with a nice home, don't just keep it for yourself, let others enjoy it too. And the food you have, share it with others, there's little cost involved, they won't mind if it is not the best, and you will be blessed by the Lord.

14 **Bless those who persecute you;**

Yes there will be those who pursue you, trouble you, attack you, persecute you That is what a Christian can expect in this world. Don't react like the world.

We have had trouble with neighbours for years on and off, One neighbour's response is to not to talk to another neighbour, another complains, in fact almost every one complains. Not you, you seek a way of doing good to them – no it is not easy that is why Paul has to say it again **bless x2 - and do not curse**.

15 **Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.**

■ **Toothache, can you get on with the rest of your body and have a normal day? No the tooth is shouting to the rest of the body 'pay attention to me' What if you have a bad back, doesn't your whole body know it!**

I have been to places where people are worshipping together, but each one is doing 'their own thing' with little thought to the person next to them. We are to be aware and mindful of one another. Is it loving to be full of exuberance when someone else is grieving? No. We are to be sensitive to each other.

Yes - **if one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it.** 1 Co 12:26

16 **Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.**

Good, godly relationships only work if there is Grace and humility. Only then will others be lifted up others before ourselves. The monster of pride has to be constantly beaten back.

It is pride that drives a revengeful spirit. So 17 **Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody.**

■ **A neighbour left a note on the church minibus when I parked it on the road. I thought "Lord that's no problem that can be the end of it". Satan had other ideas. As it kept popping into my mind - I kept pushing it out.**

This is what came to mind - **Starting a quarrel is like breaching a dam; so drop the matter before a dispute breaks out.** Prov 17:14 **so drop the matter, drop it.**

■ **As has been said: You can't stop a bird flying over your head - but you can stop it nesting in your hair!**

18 **If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.**

live peaceably =we are to **be at peace with one other** 1Th_5:13.

19 **Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord."** Leave it with Him

Did you notice how many imperatives there were, - do not do this, do that. Paul is not listing the 10 commandments, this is the new law – the new law of love.

It is a privilege to be part of a living fellowship. The church is not just an institution – it's a living organism. It's a body which shares a common life in Christ, not just a club that has a common interest in religion or anything else.

There is only one reason we are together and that is we all share in the life of Christ. Each member is part of that body and needs the other members just as an arm and leg, head and foot, ear and eye are parts of our human body and need each other 1 Cor 12:14-20.

The church is a living body, and it is busy with living activities. The church worships, and worship is a living thing, the church prays, and prayer is a living conversation with the living God. The church evangelises: people who have new life go to people who are still dead in their sins with the message of life. The church cares: encouraging, correcting, comforting. It is good to be part of a living fellowship that worships God, prays to him, tells out the good news and really cares. Let us see and honour Christ's body, He does. **end**