

Part of the body

Welcome

Scripture Psalm 30:4,1a,11,12

Hymn MP 1000 King of Kings Majesty

Scripture Psalm 19 (page 552)

Prayer

Children's talk Putting the parts together

Chorus MP 54 Bind us together Lord

Mission update

Notices: Midweek prayer meeting at the chapel, Fellowship lunch.
5pm evening service at Masefield Church.

Prayer time & Lord's prayer

Reading 1 Cor 12:12-27 (page 1153)

Reading Psalm 133 (page 626)

Hymn MP 712 O Soul are you weary and troubled?

Sermon Part of the body

Hymn MP 859 I want to serve the purposes of God

Closing prayer: 1 Tim 6:15b,16

Prayer

What you would say was our highest calling? The Bible unashamedly points to the glorification of God, through our adoration of God. If God is God, then above all we as His creation, are to glorify our creator. That is what the created beings do in the presence of God, **day and night they never stop saying Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty. You are worthy, our Lord and God to receive Gory and honour and power.** Rev 4:8,11

All else is subservient to that x2. That is what Christ came into this world to enable us to do. The forgiveness of our sins and the gift of His Spirit are given that we can be renewed as image bearers of God. The end aim? That you and I bring acceptable worship to our great & glorious Creator.

When the apostle Paul writes to Christians, whatever he is addressing, or correcting, all is ultimately designed that our worship be acceptable to God.

As we look today at chapter 12 about the Body of Christ, and how we are to function as its many parts, please see that its primary aim is to enable us together to bring right worship to God Almighty.

Note the context - chapter 11 is about order in worship. Acceptable worship can only come about when Christians gathering around the Lord's table do so in love. Then ch. 12 shows that the gifts the Lord gives are to be used for His church and not for the individual. And why?, the next ch. 13 is that love may prevail, and why? Chapter 14 so that worship should be orderly and acceptable and done out of love for God.

In other words, **for us to worship properly - the Body of Christ must function properly**, x2. Ch. 12 is one of the three main NT passages that speak about this. The functioning of the physical body provides an appropriate analogy of the variety but unity within the church, the body of Christ. It is a concept that is very well known. It is something that is easy to understand. And yet it is an area of Christian teaching which, despite its clarity, is more ignored than almost any other major doctrine.

- Hold up a cog, or hand, it is very easy to see that on its own it is useless. On its own it does not function properly.
- Look at a family, when a grown-up son only comes home because he is craving mum's cooking, or to throw all his laundry into the machine, or for a handout, we know there is something wrong.

But is that not how some treat the church?, they like this bit or that, put on food and there'll be there. Food yes, prayer meeting no. Sunday morning yes, join the outreach, no. God given abilities are used for self, yes, for the common good, no. So why is it that Christians fail to see the sinfulness of this? One reason for this sorry state of affairs is ignorance, Bibles are hardly opened, and rarely studied. Not that this teaching is lurking beneath the surface, it is about as obvious as it could be.

Ignorance is part of the issue. It was for me at the beginning. The Lord saves us individually, when He meets with us it is very personal. And yet we soon discover that we are part of a body of people.

- As a good friend after a phone call discovered an unknown of sister! I remember wrestling on Sundays about coming back out in the evening. But I could see from His word that the Lord would have us together and that it was his Will, and so I had to confront my laziness. Jean-Louis from the church in Worms was commenting on an elderly couple Jehoiachin and Ursula. They are new converts and they attend everything x2. They come because they have that fresh love for the Lord. They want to be there. Jean-Louis said if they had something on every day, they would be there every day.

- How is your first love? What motivates you to come? Why are you here this morning? Is it out of desire for Him?, or just habit, or maybe guilt?

In our short passage the word 'part' is mentioned no less than 19 times. A 'part' is never, can never be, the whole, or it wouldn't be a 'part'! **12 The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ.** **14 Now the body is not made up of one part but of many.** Obvious isn't it.

Every Christian is a part. Paul in this passage is highlighting three areas; Every part belongs to each other, needs each other and cares for each other. Belonging, needing, caring. Will you take your part? Do your part?

Before we look at these let us remind ourselves of how we become part of the body, how we enter this body. **13 For we were all baptised by one Spirit into one body.**

A Christian can say that 'the Lord has met me somewhere on the road as I travel through life and in a wonderful way he takes me out of the gutter, cleans me up and removes all my filth by taking it onto himself on the

cross'. We experience great joy as we are declared innocent in his sight, free from judgment and feel the presence of Christ with us. Wonderful.

We are taken out of something - so that we can be taken into something. You can't walk into a wedding reception dirty and dressed in rags, we clean up and dress up so as to enter in a way acceptable to the host.

- So salvation is to be saved out of, but also saved into.

We are cleaned up so that we can be brought into God's kingdom, God's people, God's family and therefore able to worship God acceptably. We, as his creation owe it to Him. From now on our lives are centered on the adoration and worship of God. That's what we were made for, that is what we will be doing eternally, and that is how we function and live best as image bearers of God. This is not just singing his praise as this morning, it's a life in a right relationship both with Him and with others.

Paul's key point for the Christians at Corinth is that worship is corporate. We worship as a body of people, together. Our worship is acceptable when we are united in love. Division destroys worship. Idols destroy worship. Immorality destroys worship. Lack of love, pride etc., destroys worship. Worship must be done together, united, loving, and looking to the risen Lord and fuelled by our own resurrection hope. The only way this can truly be, is when the Lord does a work in us by his Spirit. Flesh and blood, our natural selves, will never, can never, honour God. That is why **13 we were all baptised by one Spirit into one body.**

The blood Christ shed on the cross for us sinners is the only means by which a sinner can be washed clean, hence the phrase, "*Washed in the blood*" and washing is what we all need. You can be made clean if you want to be, he has done all that is necessary for you to be. Repentance is the sign you want it. No repentance means you want to stay as you are. Away from God with the stain of your sin remaining.

It's those who have been made clean who receive His Spirit. And once we have His Spirit then we belong to Him – and we belong to each other.

So '*Belong*'

15 If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. **16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body.**

- Find a jigsaw piece in the living room and you know it belongs with the rest in the box. Find a trowel in the kitchen and you know it belongs in the shed or garage. Find a spoon lying around and you know it belongs back in the drawer with the cutlery.

In the same way every true Christian belongs to others in Christ's body.

17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? In other words, without all the other parts the body is incomplete. The application is obvious. If you are missing, then the body is incomplete.

Why do some Christians not want to belong? One reason is succumbing to our doggedly independently minded western culture. The post 60's mindset is wildly individualistic. I feel it. More than ever, people defend their autonomy to the hilt. We think individually, we make decisions individually, we see no need to be tied to anyone beyond those we chose. Those around only mix with their own type, as I used to.

But the church is a body of people naturally very unlike, just as our bodies are made up of very different parts. Yet we all have one thing in common that irrevocably binds us to one another, and that is the indwelling Spirit. I have the Spirit, and if you have His Spirit, then we are bound together. So we sung *'bind us together Lord'*

Another reason is that we don't like commitment. The world around doesn't like commitment, so we end up not liking commitment. The world does not like serving others, it does not like submitting to others, it does not like the authority of others. Christian, do not absorb this mindset. Church leaders are often unable to shepherd the flock properly because the flock do not want to be told.

Sadly, many Christians do not function as the Lord tells us we should function. This is serious and affects our worship. Our worship maybe something we are pleased with, but if it is not brought as it should be, then is all but worthless. Again, this passage in 1 Corinthians 12 sits between the previous passage about acceptable worship, and the next major block of teaching which is about, yes, acceptable worship.

When I join a church I do so convinced that this is the right place for me, that the Lord has planned for me to be here. I've moved in nearby or there is something which assures me I should be. Good, this is something

3a

the Lord does. **18 in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.**

God in His wisdom knows what he is doing. The Lord knows what he wants us to do here at KNBC and at Masefield and has arranged all of us, the various components to carry out our different functions. Fail to do your part stops us functioning properly. The Lord has determined where you and I live and when. At the right time He fits and places us together for our own task. **God has arranged the parts.** It's His choice, His plan, His purpose. So there's no room for jealousy, or envy, or thinking "why aren't I doing that". A 'foot' bearing the weight of the body might easily envy a 'hand' swinging free and unencumbered.

- **The early church fathers Chrysostom commented that the: Foot is contrasted with hand, not with eye, 'because we are wont to envy not those who are very far above us, but those who are a little higher'.**

You have your part to play and so do I. Am I doing my part? Are you doing your part? It is a part only you can do!

19 If they were all one part, where would the body be? imagine that??

- **French theologian Godet said: If all organs were alike, the result would be a creature with only one sense organ, such as is found in the lowest forms of animal life'**

Need

20 As it is, there are many parts, but one body. 21 The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!"

For example, the eye, though naturally placed above' the hand, cannot do without the hand. There's no room for boasting here. **22 On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker such as the eyes are indispensable.**

In Corinth, as in many churches there were two types of people. Some thought that they alone could do everything and had no need of anyone else. If that is you or I then I am to humble myself and say "I need you". Others in Corinth felt second class, maybe they lacked spectacular gifts possessed by others. **But just as you need them - they in turn need you.**

We all need each other. All the different parts of a body need one another. Every member of the body is complementary and inter-dependent.

3b

No genuine believer, no child of God in the family of God is less important. Does your family have favoured brothers and sisters? I hope not! 23 We must consider no **parts less honourable** and no **parts unrepresentable**. In Corinth, a very class conscious society, Christians are not to be ashamed of any true believer. Philemon the slave owner called his returned slave Onesimus his brother. Grace is a great leveller. If a Christian chief of Police was here, a Christian MP, a Christian ex-convict we would all kneel together and equal before our Father in Heaven. **God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honour to the parts that lacked it,** 24b

Lastly, we are to have care and concern for each other.

25b **its parts should have equal concern for each other.**

The world is currently obsessed with 'equality' whatever they mean by that. It is not a biblical idea for people in God's Word.

It is mentioned with regard to giving, so that there are no comfortable Christians alongside hard-pressed Christians, but equality 2 Co 8:13,14

And it is mentioned here, that every Christian in the church **should have equal concern** x2 **for each other**. It does not mean we relate equally for we need to relate to each one in a way which is most loving for them. But that in our heart we have **equal concern**. We are not selective. We do not have favourites, we do not favour some, and turn a blind eye to others.

- **Who will you be talking to afterwards? Same as last week? Do you think of the needs of everyone? Or just some?**

Equal concern shows in relating selflessly so that every member feels involved in the misfortune of, or the prosperity, of each other. 26 **If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it.** This then is how the Christian church functions properly as a body. The result? 25 **so that there should be no division in the body**

Paul sums up 27 **Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.** A part given by the Lord who is the Head from whom our instructions come. It is not your idea, it is not your choice as to where you fit or what you do or not do, he has arranged you to be who you are, and to do what he's given you to do.

- **A previous leader of OM, a mission organization, said that he saw his church in Scotland go through a time of extraordinary blessing and many were added to their number. Why? Because there was a**

tangible love between each other within the body of believers who were functioning as the Lord intended.

David said in Psalm 133:1 **How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!**

And see the title which is there in the original it is *a song of ascents*. That means it is a song sung as they went up to the temple. It is a song sung as they approach God in worship. So let me come in full circle to conclude—

It is how we are together that determines our worship

We often hear of different worship styles. There are those who have left here because of worship style. There are those who have come here because of worship style. It's as if people are on a journey of self-discovery, as if their preferences determine how we are to approach God.

But worship is not based on music to tap your foot along to. It is not based on holding up our hands, contorting our faces or singing endlessly.

The book of Leviticus is all about how to approach God in a right way, how to bring right worship to God. Bring a wrong sacrifice, with wrong preparation, by a priest ceremonially unclean ... and it is not accepted. The Lord won't have it. Do it His way and he is pleased with it.

So Jesus brought the right sacrifice, the sacrifice of an obedient life. This is true for us too. Obey the Lord's Way and it is received as a fragrant offering arising to the throne in Heaven.

- **It is so important that you could say the Bible is all about this.**

Today the Lord tells us in divine Scripture that acceptable worship is brought when it reflects divine order, that is men and women in our right roles, when there is love between Christians, when gifts are used for the Lord and the common good, and when all is done in an orderly way.

That is His way. x2

Is your worship accepted on High? Or are you giving it no thought, turning up at any old time with no preparation? Or are you coming to the Lord at one with your brothers and sisters? Do you live as if you belong to them? Do you live knowing you need them? Does it show that you love and care for them? They your worship will be accepted on High.

How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity! For there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life for ever more Psalm 133:1,3b **END**