

## The Christian's Attitude Toward Fellow Christians - Part 2

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** Romans 12:3-5

**Preached on:** Sunday, September 2, 2012

Will you join me again this morning by taking your Bibles? Turn to Romans chapter 12. We find ourselves now in verses three through five as we continue to look at the Christian's attitude toward fellow Christians. But what I would like to do is get a running start and begin again in verse one of chapter 12 so that we grasp in our minds the context in which the Holy Spirit is speaking to us through his inspired apostle. So let's begin with Romans chapter 12 verse one.

I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.<sup>1</sup>

We return to this very practical passage of Scripture where Paul clearly sets forth what it means to present our bodies as a living and holy sacrifice acceptable to God. Christ being the supreme example of self sacrificing love, something, I fear, we know little about in our culture, even in our Christian culture. Ours tends to be more of a self serving love than a self sacrificing love, love motivated to get rather than to give.

And then when we give it is far from sacrificial. Many times our love must have to criteria. Number one, it has got to be convenient and, number two, it has got to cost us nothing. After all, I have got to look out for number one, right? That is the idea.

Well, the Holy Spirit knew that we would struggle with this. This is part of the remaining elements of our falseness that we struggle with as we are still incarcerated in this unredeemed humanness. And so he begins this section in chapter 12 on helping us understand what it really means to live sacrificially. Of course, self sacrificing love begins with the proper attitude towards God, as we have learned. We are to be so overwhelmed by the mercy of God that he has extended to us through his sovereign grace that we erupt in doxology as Paul did at the end of Romans 11. And then on the basis of such undeserved mercy we are urged to present our bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God which is our spiritual service of worship.

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 12:1-5.

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So only when we are whole heartedly committed to God will we be able to develop the proper kind of attitude that we need to have towards our fellow Christians. And then we will have three kinds of attitudes that emerge, that all work together as we look at this text, an attitude of humility, an attitude of oneness and an attitude of service.

Now I fear, again, that we don't see these types of attitudes as much as, perhaps, we need to. We all struggle with our pride, a lack of humility. And many times this manifests itself in conflict in the Church. If you are honest, some of you don't like other people in the Church. You don't want anything to do with them. You say bad things about them. You have no desire to be reconciled to them. You think badly of them and you even want other people to join you in your disdain and so you choose the path of recrimination and rejection rather than reconciliation. Why do you do this? You think more highly of yourself than you ought to think. That is what Paul is telling us.

And it is frightening, because loving our brothers and sisters in Christ is one of the marks that validates genuine saving faith. Those of you who have no love for the brethren, frankly demonstrate a lack of love for Christ. 1 John three beginning in verse 14 we read:

We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.<sup>2</sup>

Of course, that would be the ultimate act of self sacrificing love and humility. But also the attitudes of oneness, the attitudes of service are in short supply in our day as it was in the first century church there in Rome and all through the regions where the gospel had gone forth. Frankly, as you look around most churches, ours included, only a minority of believers really see themselves as members one of another, as Paul says. We have a lot of lone ranger Christians and few truly serve in the body of Christ in a meaningful way. Most people in churches are merely spectators.

I think sometimes they see the church like a fitness club. You don't really want to go, but you know you need to because it is good for you. Church is all about you, not Christ, not others. And so churches are filled with what I would call Sunday saints. They show up once a week to worship God corporately and then the rest of the week they kind of forget about God. They go do their own thing. They serve themselves. They bow down to idols that they have erected in their hearts, those things that monopolize their thoughts, their time, their energy, their money. They are willing to spare a couple of hours a week for God and maybe give a little money, but the rest of it is spent on themselves.

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<sup>2</sup> 1 John 3:14-16.

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Well, why is this? Because there is no doxology in their heart. Because they are not presenting their bodies as a living and holy sacrifice. It is because they have allowed the world to squeeze them into its mold. It is because their mind is not being renewed by the Spirit of God through his Word. And so they end up worshipping self rather than God. That is what Paul was saying in this section of Scripture.

So Paul exhorts us to have an attitude of humility, an attitude of oneness and service.

Now what Paul is telling us here is not hard to understand. But it is hard to apply because it is contrary to your flesh. This doesn't come naturally.

By way of review, briefly, you will recall last week we examined this attitude of humility. Notice what he says in verse three.

“I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think.”<sup>3</sup>

In other words, we have a tendency to think we are superior to others. This is summarized in the word pride. We all struggle with it. He goes on to say that we are to think so as to have sound judgment. By implication here, your inflated opinion of yourself is out of touch with reality. And, as we look at this in context, one of the greatest evidences of pride, the absence of self sacrificing love is having an apathetic attitude toward the spiritual gifts that God has given you and how you should function in the body of Christ, the Church.

Verse three he says:

“...think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.”<sup>4</sup>

Remember, faith is the doorway through which all the other gifts and graces enter. It is the receptive faculty of the renewed soul where we become receptive to the spiritual gifts that God has given to each one of us to be used to bless others in the Church, to honor Christ.

I want to camp on this for a moment, because it is crucial that you understand this. Remember, God has equipped every believer to serve him. As we see here, God has allotted to each a measure of faith. This, again, is equivalent to the expression found in Ephesians 4:7.

“But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Romans 12:3.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

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And you will recall, as well, in 1 Peter 4:10 Peter tells us:

“As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”<sup>6</sup>

So your spiritual gift that God has given you, it is not for you. It is for the rest of the body. And we all have a stewardship responsibility to serve one another. This is what humility looks like. This is the opposite of pride. This is self sacrificial love. And what does it mean to have sound judgment? What is he referring to here? It is simply this. Sound judgment means that we recognize that God has given us the kind and the quantity of faith necessary to be good stewards of the gift that he has allotted to us to serve one another in the body.

So we have no reason to be proud. Sound judgment acknowledges that anything that we have, all that we have comes from God. So we humbly rejoice in the gifts that God has given us and the commissioning that he has given us to serve in the body so that we can become a blessing to others by using that particular gift or gifts as the case may be, that God has endowed us to use in association with faith.

So, to say it a little bit differently, if a member of the body of Christ does not serve the head of the body who is Christ and wants little to do with the Church, there is really only two expiations. One is pride. They are living of themselves. They arrogantly prefer self rather than the Christ. Or, worse yet, it is due to hypocrisy. They may be a tare amongst the wheat.

Because I ask you. How can you be united to Christ by faith and not serve him? How can that be? Let's back up for a minute. You will remember that Paul has made it clear earlier in his epistle that God has not only justified the ungodly, but then he places that born again believer in Christ. An amazing concept. We were once in Adam. Now we are in Christ. And because we are in Christ we possess the divine life of God's own Spirit. We now operate based upon a divine principle of operation, a ruling force within us. And that is the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. Unbelievers are controlled by the flesh. Believers are controlled by the Spirit, because we are in Christ.

Romans 8:5:

“For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ephesians 4:7.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Peter 4:10.

<sup>7</sup> Romans 8:5.

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Those who are according to the Spirit can literally be translated: Those being according to the Spirit, emphasizing the believer's realm of living. In other words, the very bent of a believer's life is habitually dominated by the Spirit of God that dwells within them. So how can a man be united to Christ, literally be in Christ and bear no resemblance to him?

1 John 2:6 we read:

“... the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.”<sup>8</sup>

The basis of Galatians two verse 20. Every believer is united to Christ and can say:

“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.”<sup>9</sup>

The Word of God teaches that we have died with Christ. We are buried with him. We are raised up together in Christ. In Christ we are seated together in heavenly places in Christ. We are members of his body. Colossians 2:10 says in him we have been made complete. Colossians three beginning in verse three says we have died and our life is hidden with Christ our God. When Christ who is our life is revealed, then we also will be revealed with him in glory.

Beloved, this is absolutely staggering. Think of this. Spiritually we exist in Christ, if we have truly been united to him by faith. Christ came to earth not only to pay the penalty of our sin, but to establish an intimate, living eternal union with us whereby we become one with him. Beloved, we have been redeemed so that he might inhabit us.

In Galatians three and verse 28 we are all one in Christ Jesus. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:30:

“But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption.”<sup>10</sup>

So those of you who profess Christ as Lord yet have no desire to serve him, I humbly ask you: How can this be that you are truly united to Christ?

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<sup>8</sup> 1 John 2:6.

<sup>9</sup> Galatians 2:20.

<sup>10</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:30.

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As we look at the Word of God we see this amazing, mysterious spiritual union described in various pictures, John 15. We see it portrayed to us in the figure of the vine and the branches. What a picture of the life giving organic bond that we have with Christ, the likeness that we have of his nature. What a picture of the eternal impartation of life and the ability that comes from him for us to bear spiritual fruit.

So if you are a Christian and you are bearing no spiritual fruit, on what basis do you have to say that you have been united to the vine?

We see our union with Christ pictured in Ephesians one in the figure of the head and the body and also in the body of Christ pictured in 1 Corinthians 12:27. There we read:

“Now you are Christ’s body, and individually members of it.”<sup>11</sup>

What an amazing thought. Because we are united to Christ we make up a spiritual organism. So if you are truly part of that body, you are going to respond to the head. That makes sense. Very simple. And together we are going to serve the purposes of Christ’s body the Church.

Dear Christian, contemplate the reality of all of this, this astonishing union. I mean, think about the implications of this in you life. This is a supernatural union authored by God himself. It is a living union by which Christ’s life becomes our life. You see, he does not work upon us from the outside, but from the inside where he abides. This is an indissoluble union that can never be severed. And as we look at the Word of God we see that this is a mysterious union. It has absolutely no parallel, no analogy in any human experience.

Paul says in Colossians one beginning in verse 26:

“...the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations; but has now been manifested to His saints, to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”<sup>12</sup>

So literally our union with Christ is the basis of our salvation, the basis of our sanctification, the power of our service. So, my friends, let me put it to you as straight as I know how with utmost love, yet with concern. If you demonstrate no desire to serve Christ in his Church, you have no basis to claim that you have ever been united to him. Please don't deceive yourself. Don't play games with God. This is so often the case in our culture. Don't play church. But if you are in Christ you will increasingly resemble him and respond to him.

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<sup>11</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:27.

<sup>12</sup> Colossians 1:26-27.

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What is the result? You won't think more highly of yourself than you ought to think. You are going to have sound judgment. You are going to know that God has allotted to each one a measure of faith and you are going to rejoice over that spiritual gift that God has assigned you to bless others in the body of Christ and put his glory and his grace on display. You are going to employ that special gift as 1 Peter 4:10 says, again may I read it to you?

“As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”<sup>13</sup>

And, of course, all of this is going to flow from the well of genuine worship. And that is going to then spill over into heartfelt praise.

So unless our relationship with Christ is one of total commitment, we are never going to be able to truly love our brothers and sisters in Christ.

If I can digress for a moment, often people considering marriage will ask me: What is the most important thing that I should look for in a spouse? And my answer is: Look for a contagious doxology.

What is that? Oh, I am so glad you asked. A contagious doxology is a heart of praise. It comes from a person who can read Romans one through the end of verse 11 and respond in the very same way that Paul did, just erupt in praise because of what God has done.

Sadly many times we end up marrying people who have never even read Romans one through 11 nor do they want to, nor do they have any contagious doxology.

Well, how can I know if I have such a doxology or if I am dating or engaged to a person with such a doxology? The answer is quite simple. You will see that person presenting their body as a loving and holy sacrifice. The world is not going to be fashioning them into its mold. They are going to be allowing the Spirit of God to renew their mind through his Word. And they will have an attitude of humility, an attitude of oneness, an attitude of service. They will serve Christ and his Church. They will be a functioning member of his body.

So don't be deceived. If you are married to or thinking of marrying someone that is not serving Christ, don't think of a second they are going to serve you except for those ways that will benefit them.

So a sacrificial believer will actively pursue his place to serve his spouse and other

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<sup>13</sup> 1 Peter 4:10.

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believers in the body of Christ. They will faithfully use their gifts to build it into a unified body. They will have a contagious doxology. That is the kind of man or woman you want to marry which is the kind of husband or wife you want to be and this is the kind of believer that Paul exhorts us all to be in this next section.

So first we are to have an attitude of humility, as we have learned. Secondly, what we will focus on this morning is an attitude of oneness. So let's look closely at verse four and five. He says:

For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.<sup>14</sup>

This is a powerful metaphor. The physical body is made up of many members performing various functions and yet it is a single unit. So also in Christ the many members form one body, a single unit called the Church.

Now in Ephesians and Colossians Paul speaks of, quote, the body of Christ. And there he is emphasizing headship. But here in verse five he speaks of, quote, one body in Christ. It could be translated: one body in union with Christ. So here he is emphasizing the unity of the members of the body despite all of the diversity. And what is the unifying factor? What is the glue that holds this all together? We are all in Christ.

What an amazing thought. Even with all of our diversity, diversity in personality, diversity in looks, diversity in preferences, diversity in spiritual giftedness. Despite all of that, there is unity in Christ. And the Lord doesn't reduce us all into some colorless uniformity where we are all the same. No, no. Quite the contrary. With this vast diversity of all of us as members, he pictures this beautiful mosaic of his glory and this gives us... gives the Church life and power, because we are interdependent. We are interrelated. For each member belongs to all of the others.

Now for you that may be a lone ranger Christian, please understand there is no such thing as being a member of nothing. There is no such thing as being a member of yourself. There is no such thing as being a member of just your family. We are individual members one of another, verse five.

Now I want to draw your attention to this very informative phrase here in verse five. He says:

“...so we, who are many, are one body in Christ.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Romans 12:4-5.

<sup>15</sup> Romans 12:5.

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Now every believer is united to Christ, as we discussed earlier. We are all part of his body and, according to Ephesians one verse 22 we read that God gave Christ Jesus as head over all things to the Church which is his body. So Christ is the living person who unites and animates the body. Therefore if you are not united to the body, if you have no desire to be a part of the Church, then you are not animated by its head. And, again, you have no basis to assume that you have ever been united to Christ by faith.

Ephesians four beginning at verse 15, pastor Joe read earlier, quote:

“...we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”<sup>16</sup>

And Paul describes this in great detail in 1 Corinthians chapter 12, for example, beginning in verse 12 he says:

For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many.<sup>17</sup>

So God has uniquely outfitted each of us to function in different ways within the body the Church.

Now here in this text when Paul speaks of the body, he is stressing unity. And when he speaks of, quote, many members that do not have the same function, he is speaking of diversity. Later he is going to illustrate the diversity in function by describing the various categories of gifts that God has assigned to various members of this body. We will look at that closely next week.

But let's return to what Paul was saying here with respect to this attitude of oneness that we are to have. Verse four.

For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ephesians 4:15-16.

<sup>17</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:12-14.

<sup>18</sup> Romans 12:4-5.

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Well, the implication here is very simple. We are mutually dependent upon each other. We are, he says, members one of another. God has created this amazing organism, one body in Christ. And despite all of its immense diversity, there is an inner dependence, there is an inter relatedness that makes us {?}. If some members refuse to use their gift in their unique function, if they refuse to fulfill their assignment or if they use it wrongly, we all suffer. And you must all ask the question: What is my assignment? Am I doing my part? Because Paul's point in all of this is if you are not fulfilling your God given role in the Church, you lack a whole hearted commitment to God. You are not decisively committed to avoiding the world and renewing your mind. You are not a living sacrifice in light of God's mercy. You lack sound judgment and so forth.

So, beloved, if you are a willing slave of God as Paul says in Romans 6:22, the assignment from the master becomes one way to prove and carry out God's good, pleasing and perfect will. And this is what Paul exhorts the believers at Rome to do and, by extension each of us. He exhorts each one of us to carry out the assignment that he has given us in the body of Christ according to whatever spiritual endowment, spiritual enablement that he has bestowed upon you at salvation and which is discovered in the context of serving Christ in the Church and being affirmed in that service.

Ah, but what happens when church members don't exercise sound judgment? Well, let me give you a little list. And I will confess I see my name next to some of these. Oh, my goodness. I see some of your names as well.

First there is the snob Christian. This is the Christian that may have a prominent gift, but wrongly assumes they have all of the gifts. This is the type of Christian that will be large and in charge, a D U, short for director of the universe. This is the Christian that really has no need of anyone else, because they have all of the answers. Many times they are critical, unteachable and so forth. Paul addresses this in 1 Corinthians 12:11 and says:

“And the eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you’; or again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’”<sup>19</sup>

Ah, but the snob can. And, of course, this kind of believer is terrified of two words, delegate and change. They don't like delegating because no one could do it as good as me. And they hate change because, after all, my way is the right way.

Well, then there is the second kind of church member that doesn't exercise sound judgment regarding their gifts and this is what I would call the show off. They insist that they have some prominent gift when, in fact, they don't. They wrongly assume also, by the way, that there is some kind of ranking in gifts, that somehow some people have

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<sup>19</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:21.

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really great gifts and other people have the gifts that aren't so important. And that is not at all a biblical concept. These people are always seeking the spot light. They try to find it so they can run underneath it and take a bow. They are not satisfied with the gift and the function that God has assigned to them, so many times they are a square peg in a round hole. On many occasions I have heard preachers who claim they have been called to preach and yet when I hear them, even after their seminary training, they are absolutely painfully boring and butcher the text. And yet if you in any way insinuate that perhaps they are a square peg in a round hole, they are furious, because they are the show off, you see. But God has a place for that man. It is just not in the pulpit.

1 Corinthians 12 verse 29 Paul asks rhetorically.

“All are not apostles, are they?”<sup>20</sup>

The answer is: Of course not. He goes on.

“All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they? All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they?”<sup>21</sup>

And the answer, of course, is no. But the show off is terrified of this thought. He is terrified of two words, step aside. I might add another word to that. He is terrified of the word reposition. Brother, sister, why don't we put you into a role in which you are more suited where you can bear more fruit.

Well, then there is the opposite of the show off Christian. I would call this the shrug off Christian. This is the self abasing, self depreciating believer, the one that likes to minimize their gifts. They shrug them off with false humility which is really nothing more than a manipulative strategy to seek praise while at the same time demeaning the gift that God has given them, as if God has made a mistake. They fail to grasp 1 Corinthians 12 verse 11.

“But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.”<sup>22</sup>

So, hey, he has given you whatever gift he has given you to put his glory on display. And, of course, the one thing the shrug off hates more than anything is silence. He is desperate for someone to notice him and to thank him and to give him praise so he can

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<sup>20</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:29.

<sup>21</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:29-30.

<sup>22</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:11.

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say, "Oh, I am no good. Thanks anyway," hoping that you will say, "Oh, no, you really are. You are really great."

And then, fourthly, there is the sour face Christian. And, by the way, these will all have Ss in case you didn't realize it. The sour face Christian is sullen, pessimistic, gloomy, a little bit jealous, envious. He is like the little lugubrious donkey in Winnie the Pooh, Eeyore, that mopes around kind of sad and mad that his gift seems so unimportant. Oh, I just seem so unnecessary in the church when, in fact, every gift is equally important in the body.

1 Corinthians 12 verse 15 Paul says:

If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired.<sup>23</sup>

And, of course, the sour face Christian hates more than anything else hearing his pastor preach on this issue.

And then, finally, there is the sluggard. And here, unfortunately, is where I see many faces. The sluggard Christian is just a lazy Christian. He has a thousand reasons to justify his neglect, none of which hold any water in God's eyes. This is the spectator that never gets involved, that lacks humility and love, which is really the fuel of service. Paul speaks directly to the sluggard in Romans 12 verse six. He says:

"And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let each exercise them accordingly."<sup>24</sup>

You know, the writer of Hebrews describes a very positive response to the gospel, that we should erupt in love and service. So he admonishes us in Hebrews 10 beginning in verse 24.

"...and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds."<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:15-18.

<sup>24</sup> Romans 12:6.

<sup>25</sup> Hebrews 10:24.

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Consider means let us pay attention. Let us contemplate with continual consideration how to stimulate, literally how to stir up, how to motivate one another to love and good deeds...

“...not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near.”<sup>26</sup>

You see, beloved, as Christians, we have a corporate responsibility to help those who are failing in love, to help those who are failing in service. And we are called here to just concentrate, literally concentrate on how we can lovingly prod our fellow believers who are faltering, especially those that are neglecting the meeting together in corporate worship that is so essential for growth.

Beloved, love is always linked with service, the using of your spiritual gift. Love is action. It is not abstraction. And often we don't realize how important a person's gift really is, their function is until we lose them.

Can I give you an example from a physical body? About five years ago my precious wife Nancy was beginning to lose sight in one of her eyes. We found from the doctor that she had a cyst on her pituitary gland and it needed to be removed. Well, we weren't sure what a pituitary gland really was. So we immediately learned. It is this teeny little gland in the middle of your brain, about the size of a pea. It is located at the base of your skull between your optic nerves. And as we studied we learned that this gland secretes hormones. Those are chemicals that travel through the bloodstream and the surgeon told us that it wasn't until they finally developed microscopes capable of measuring extremely small amounts of things that they were able to realize really how important this little pea shaped gland is, because, for years, they weren't really sure and really paid little attention to it because it was so small. It was so hidden, so obscure. The pituitary gland is sometimes called the master gland, because it controls hormone functions such as our temperature and our thyroid activity, growth during childhood, urine production, testosterone production in males and ovulation and estrogen production in females.

In effect, this gland functions as our body's thermostat. It controls the temperature for all of the other glands and is responsible for hormone secretion. So this gland is absolutely a critical part of our ability to respond to our environment and be able to function. And we don't even know what it is up to, what it is doing. I didn't even know what it was, or where it was. I had heard about it, but you never think about those things after Biology 101 in high school.

Folks, like the pituitary gland, you may be on the scene. You may be obscure. You may be small in your own mind, but you are crucial to the body of Christ.

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<sup>26</sup> Hebrews 10:25.

## The Christian's Attitude Toward Fellow Christians - Part 2

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** Romans 12:3-5

**Preached on:** Sunday, September 2, 2012

Well, my ministry is primarily to my family. Well, yes, that is, yes, that is... that is true. But also to your church family of which your biological family is a part. That is what Peter tells us again.

“As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”<sup>27</sup>

In other words, you get no waver for having a family. All right? Your gifting is ultimately to serve the body of Christ.

Well, but, pastor, you must understand. I am in college. I have got lots of classes. Or, pastor, you must understand. My career is just too demanding. I just don't have time to serve Christ somehow in and through the church.

Really? Could you show me in Scripture where any of this qualifies you for an exemption? I don't see that.

You see, my friend, you don't have a shortage of time. You have a shortage of humility. You have got the wrong priorities. You are serving self, not Christ.

Yes, but, pastor, I am faithful in writing checks to support the body.

Great. We all have a stewardship responsibility there. But, you know, God says he wants you to present your body, not your money.

Think about it. Do you think you bribe God with a check? Are you trying to purchase an exemption to serve the one that purchased you, that purchased your redemption? I hope not.

A number of year ago I ran across a book entitled *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made*. It was written by an internationally renowned surgeon Dr. Paul Brand, a believer. And in his work he describes this unity and diversity that exists within our human body. And I want to read you a section where he explains just this fascinating inter relationship of vastly diverse cells and how they serve in the body and you will quickly see the parallel in the church. And this is why our creator God used this analogy.

He said this. “I am first struck by their variety,” referring to cells. “Chemically my cells are almost alike, but visually and functionally they are as different as the animals in a zoo. Red blood cells discs resembling Life Saver candies voyage through my blood loaded with oxygen to feed the other cells. Muscle cells, which absorb so much of that

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<sup>27</sup> 1 Peter 4:10.

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nourishment are sleek and supple full of coiled energy. Cartilage cells with shiny black nuclei look like bunches of black eyed peas glued tightly together for strength. Fat cells seem lazy and leaden like bulging white plastic garbage bags jammed together.” That is encouraging, isn’t it? He goes on to say, “Bone cells live in rigid structures that exude strength. Cut in cross section, bone resembles tree rings overlapping strength with strength, offering impliability and sturdiness. In contrast, skin cells form undulating patterns of softness and texture that rise and dip, giving shape and beauty to our bodies. They curve and jut at unpredictable angles so that every person's fingerprint, not to mention his or her face, is unique.

“The aristocrats of the cellular world are the sex cells and the nerve cells. A woman's contribution, the egg, is one of the largest cells in the human body, its ovoid shape just visible to the unaided eye. It seems fitting that all the other cells in the body should derive from this elegant and primordial structure. In great contrast to the egg's quiet repose, the male's tiny sperm cells are furiously flagellating tadpoles with distended heads and skinny tails. They scramble for position as if competitively aware that only one of billions will gain the honor of fertilization.

“The king of cells, the one I have devoted much of my life to studying, is the nerve cell. It has an aura of wisdom and complexity about it. Spider like, it branches out and unites the body with a computer network of dazzling sophistication. Its axon's wires carrying distant messages to and from the human brain can reach a yard in length. I never tire of viewing these varied specimens or thumbing through books which render cells. Individually they seem puny and oddly designed but I know these invisible parts cooperate to lavish me with the phenomenon of life.”

He goes on to say, “My body employs a bewildering zoo of cells, none of which individually resembles the larger body. Just so, Christ's body comprises an unlikely assortment of humans, unlikely is precisely the right word for we are decidedly unlike one another and the one we follow from whose design come these comical human shapes which so faintly reflect the ideals of the body as a whole from God. The body of Christ like our own bodies is composed of individual unlike cells that are knit together to form one body. He is the whole thing and the joy of the body increases as individual cells realize they can be diverse without becoming isolated outposts,” end quote.

In some strange way we can all see ourselves in those cells, can't we, a vast number of pony—I like—zoo like creatures that we are, individually created to serve the creator.

Well, so much for a description of diversity. Dr. Brand also speaks of how God has supernaturally united the myriad of diverse cells together. And I close with this. He says, quote, “What moves cells to work together? What ushers in the highly specialized functions of movement, sight, consciousness through the coordination of a hundred trillion cells? The secret to membership lies locked away inside each cell nucleus,

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chemically coiled in a strand of DNA. Once the egg and sperm share their inheritance, the DNA chemical ladder splits down the center of every gene, much as the teeth of a zipper pull apart. DNA reforms itself each time the cell divides, two, four, eight, sixteen, thirty-two, each with the identical DNA. Along the way cells specialize but each carries the entire instruction book of one hundred thousand genes. DNA is estimated to contain instructions that if written out would fill a thousand-six-hundred-page books. A nerve cell may operate according to instructions from volume four and a kidney cell from volume 25, but both cells carry the whole compendium. It provides each cell's sealed credential of membership in the body. Every cell possesses a genetic code so complete that the entire body could be, catch this, reassembled from information in any one of the body's cells."

Finally he says, "Just as the complete identity code of my body adheres in each individual cell, so also the reality of God permeates every cell in His body, linking us members with a true organic bond. I sense that bond when I meet strangers in India or Africa or California who share my loyalty to the head. Instantly we become brothers and sisters, fellow cells in Christ's body. I share the ecstasy of community in a universal body that includes every man and woman in whom God resides," end quote.

Well, beloved, as we close this morning I would challenge you to examine your heart. How has God designed you? Where has he commissioned you to serve? And will you be obedient in serving in the body? And I pray that you will not only develop this attitude of humility that we have discussed, but also the attitude of oneness and the attitude of service that we will examine next week as we look at the sample categories of spiritual gifts that God has given to the members of his body the Church.

Let's pray together.

*Father, thank you for these glorious truths. May we not just hear them and be awed by them, but, Lord, may we apply them that we might enjoy fully all that you long for us to enjoy when we serve you. Lord, bring conviction as well as comfort. And especially for those that do not know you as Savior, oh, Lord, may today be the day that they are so overwhelmed with the guilt of their sin that they will confess their sin and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved. I ask all of this in the precious name of Jesus our Savior who gave himself for us. Amen.*

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