



Old Testament Reading – Psalm 133-135:3

New Testament Reading – 1 Timothy 3:1-16

**The Pillar and Ground of Truth
“The Church: The Body of Christ”**

1 Corinthians 12:12-31

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When the eternal Son of God entered our world through Mary’s womb, He took upon Himself the physical body the Holy Spirit had “prepared” for Him.

- It was through His physical body that Jesus demonstrated the love of God for all people of every age by giving His life as the sacrifice for the sins of those who believed in Him and received Him as their Savior and Lord.
- It was through the resurrection of His physical body that Jesus proved His Deity, i.e., His victory over sin, Satan, death, and the grave, and, therefore, His power to give everlasting life to those who confessed their faith in Him.
- As John Wilbur Chapman wrote in one of his classic hymns about the life of Jesus Christ:

“Living, He loved me: Dying, He Saved me: Buried He carried my sins far away. Rising He justified, freely forever. One day He’s coming, O glorious day.”

- Are you prepared for that day?
- Would it be a glorious day for you?
- What if it were today?

Although Jesus ascended back into heaven and is now enthroned at the right hand of God the Father, God's redeeming love continues to be demonstrated by the power of the Holy Spirit through those who have received Christ as their Savior and Lord.

- He empowers every believer with certain abilities so the body of believers can function as Jesus did while He was on earth.
- Not long after the events of Pentecost (Acts 2-3) that universal body of believers became known as the "Church," those who were called out of the world by the Holy Spirit, and united in their common faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord.
- By the end of the Book of Acts, the gospel had spread from Jerusalem to Judea, to Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the world; even to the city of Rome.
- In less than three years, the Christian population had grown from 1,000 in the 40 A.D. to over 7,500 in 100 A.D., over six million in 300 A.D, and more than 33 million in 350 A.D.
- In Acts 17, Luke said the Apostle Paul went to the Synagogue on the Sabbath, hoping to engage in a debate with the religious leaders regarding some point of Scripture. However, on this day, Paul created such a controversy the religious leaders brought him before the rulers of the city and said: ***"Those who have turned the world upside down have come here too!"***

The two questions we must ask and answer are obvious:

- **What does the church have today that those first-century Christians did not have?**

- Buildings – church buildings were not built until the 2nd century, and even they were torn down in the 3rd century in a misguided effort to stop the growth of the church.

- **What did the first-century church have that the 21st- century church does not have?**

- The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.
- W. Tozer once said: ***"If the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from the church today, 95% of what we do would go on and no one would know the difference. If the Holy Spirit had been withdrawn from the New Testament church, 95% of what they did would stop, and everybody would know the difference."***
- Today's churches have replaced the Holy Spirit with mind-numbing music, multi-media presentations, repetitive mantras, and metaphysical experiences that mimic a true encounter with a Holy God.
- The term "church" has been redefined to represent a physical structure or a denominational distinction rather than the body of believers who gather to worship God.
- "Ekklesia" is the term that identified those who were summoned by the town crier to assemble in the town square for a meeting.
- In John 14:6, Jesus said He was ***"the way"*** unto the Father, and those who "followed the way of Christ" were called ***"The people of the way."***
- Therefore, the true, New Testament Church has nothing to do with buildings they gather in or denominational differences.
- The New Testament Church is made up of all those who have expressed their faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior and who, by their character, conduct, and life choices, reveal the love of God and the Lordship of Jesus Christ to others.
- The New Testament Church includes all of those who have been born again and indwelt by the Holy Spirit since the day of Pentecost 2,000 years ago; people of every tongue, every tribe, and every nation, and beloved, that is the only Church that represents the Body of Christ in the world today, not the church of the Christian religion.

The Apostle Paul took this doctrine very seriously, for he mentioned it in all of his epistles.

- In 1 Corinthians 1:10, Paul pleaded with the church members to ***“speak the same things”*** so there would be no divisions among them, for they were representing the Body of Christ, in whom there were no divisions.
- He said the same thing in:
 - Romans 12:4-5: ***“For as in one body we have many members, and all members do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ.”***
 - Ephesians 1:22-23: ***“Christ has put all things under His feet and has made Him the head over all things for the church, which is His body.”***
 - Colossians 1:24: ***“I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh, I complete what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of His body, that is the Church.”***
- God has gifted every believer with a unique spiritual gift to be used to unify and build up the Church, of which Jesus Christ is the Head, and if that results in our suffering, so be it, for that only confirms our effectiveness as the Body of Christ in the world today.

Notice the three characteristics of a church that effectively reflects the **Body of Christ**.

1. **Paul speaks of Unity – Vs. 12, *“For as the body is one, and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.”***

- For a physical body to be productive, all of the parts of the body must work in unity.
- Even though the various parts of the body are independent of each other and have their own separate function, they must work together if that body is to accomplish anything of value.
- The organizational chart for the New Testament Church shows Jesus Christ as the Head, and underneath Him is a big family circle of all those who have received Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord, and since we all came to Christ in the same way, we all have the same standing with Him, for we are one in the Spirit and one in the Lord.

2. **Paul speaks of diversity – Vs. 14 – *“For in fact the body is not one member but many.”***

- In Romans 12:3-8, Paul listed the seven motivational gifts.
 - Prophecy, Ministry, Teaching, Exhortation, Giving, Ruling and Mercy.
 - The Holy Spirit enabled every believer with one of those gifts when they were born again.
- In Ephesians 4:7ff, Paul listed the various ministries through which the motivational gift can be expressed.
 - Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, and Teachers.
 - But each gift was given for the ***“perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, and for the edifying of the body of Christ.”***
- In 1 Corinthians 12:4ff, Paul listed the manifestations of the use of the above gifts.

3. **Paul speaks of Harmony – Vs. 18 – *“But God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He”***

- God gifted us with the same grace **to be saved**, but then He gifted us with a unique way **to serve**, so none of us would

compete with one another, but complete each other.

And the Jesus in us cooperates with the Jesus in others, we can be used of Christ to reveal the love of God to the world.