

## Members Together

***“For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.”*** Romans 12:4-5

### Paul’s Message

1. In his epistles, Paul alone teaches of the body of Christ and its individual members and separate responsibilities (Romans 12:4-5, 1 Corinthians 6:15, 12:12, 18, 20, 22, Ephesians 2:19, 4:25, 5:30).
2. It would be good to see when Paul first spoke personally to the Lord Jesus. It is found in Acts 9 where he was struck from his animal and left blind for days.

***“And they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul.”*** Acts 7:58

***“Now Saul was consenting to his death.***

***At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial and made great lamentation over him.***

***As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.”*** Acts 8:1-3

***“Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.***

***As he journeyed, he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?”*** Acts 9:1-4

3. The Jewish leaders were dumbfounded at the rise of the Christians as no group had ever done this before.
  - a. Individuals had risen before with a few followers but were soon killed and their movement ended.

- b. These Christians were dedicated to the crucified Jesus and were growing in numbers rapidly. Persecution from the Jews and Romans were only causing them to grow more.
  - c. They were extremely dangerous to the Jews because they taught man is not saved by keeping the Jewish law and people no longer needed to go the temple for salvation, forgiveness, or spiritual growth.
  - d. These were common people. Many who were formerly non-religious. All were moved with the same fervor, dedication, and love for each other and their Lord.
  - e. They declared their love for each other and fervor came from the Lord Jesus, claiming He was the Messiah.
  - f. They also had the same power Jesus possessed to perform miracles and get people healed.
4. Saul was dedicated to the Jewish religion of his fathers.
- a. Rightfully it seems, Saul remained faithful to the only form of religion he had ever known and was zealously defending it against this new form of apostasy against his God.
  - b. Moses declared that anyone who spoke against the Law was to be cut off from Israel, even killed.
  - c. Such people were stoned to death and Saul had just watched, and consented to the killing of such a man – Stephen.
  - d. After Stephen’s death and because of intensified Jewish religious opposition, great persecution against Christian’s broke out in Jerusalem and began to spread to other cities, led by Saul.
  - e. Even in death, the unity of the Christian believers had never been seen before.
  - f. This only seemed to incense the Jewish leaders and they sent Saul to many more cities to kill those of the Way.
  - g. Something had to be done about Saul or there would be no more Christians left.

***“For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.”*** Galatians 1:13-14

5. One of the first of the Christians Saul saw killed was Stephen. He was strong in his teaching gift and won many Jewish leaders to the Lord Jesus and they became converts to Christianity
- a. He was taken before the religious leaders to be questioned and tried.
  - b. False witnesses had been set up who lied about Stephen, twisting his words to sound as if he was blaspheming God.
  - c. Stephen’s sermon was one of the three best sermons of Acts, ranking with Peter’s on the Day of Pentecost and Paul’s on Mars Hill (Acts 6:8-7:60).
    - 1. He told how the prophets spoke of Jesus and the Jews of their day killed them.

2. Now the Messiah, Jesus, they prophesied of had come and the Jewish leaders killed him.
3. The Jewish leaders covered their ears and cried out loud so they could not hear Stephen's sermon.
4. They dragged Stephen out of town and stoned him to death.
- d. Saul of Tarsus held the coats of those who stoned Stephen and watched Stephen die in rejoicing as Jesus greeted him.
5. The frenzy of the Jews increased and now a cry rose up for Christians to be killed in foreign cities.
  - a. Legal permission was given for Saul to go to other countries and persecute and kill Christians.
  - b. Paul then headed for Damascus, Syria with the blessings of the Jewish leaders to kill Christians.

### **Saul's Conversion**

1. Saul was struck by a blinding light, and he fell to the ground, hearing the voice of the Lord Jesus speaking to him.
2. The Lord Jesus asked Saul why he was persecuting HIM.
  - a. Saul probably reasoned, "but Lord, I oversaw the killing of one young man, just a helper in the Christian group."
  - b. But Jesus would have said, "No, they killed ME."
  - c. "But his name was Stephen."
  - d. "No, his name was Jesus. You have been persecuting ME."
3. Saints from the Day of Pentecost until today, form one great body of believers – the Body of Christ. We are all part of Jesus, making up His spiritual body on earth.
  - a. your arm, they have struck YOU.
  - b. For someone to persecute you for being a Christian, they have persecuted Christ and He is capable of defending Himself. "Vengeance is mine, I will repay" (Romans 12:19).
  - c. God has willed that the risen Jesus Christ and all believers since that day are to be the body of one Man, the Head, Christ.
  - d. Ephesians teaches of the body of Christ and Colossians teaches of the head.
  - e. At the new birth, we became Christ. He and we are the whole man.
    1. We are as inseparable form Him as He is from the Father.
    2. We are one with Him as He is one with the Father. *"And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one"* John 17:22-23
4. Jesus gave previews of this teaching where we would take His place when He left and fulfilled His ministry.
  - a. *"I am the light of the world."* John 8:12
    1. John 9:5, Matthew 5:14

- b. Jesus was given God's power of the Holy Spirit to show signs, wonders, and miracles. Now we have been given the same power and are here long enough to do even greater miracles (John 14:12).
- c. Jesus was God's ambassador. Now we are ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20) and have been given the same ministry of reconciliation Jesus was given.

### **The Crucifixion Seems to be the Main Message of the Gospels**

1. His death marks the end of the historical human Jesus.
2. It seems the four gospels tell the same story – that Jesus came to die (Matthew 17:22, 20:8, Mark 9:31, 10:33).
  - a. More detail is given surrounding His arrest, trial, beatings, and crucifixion than His works, His acts of healing, and miracles.
  - b. You might say the whole purpose of His life was to die.
  - c. No book on the life of any person would give a greater amount of time and explanation to their departure than the formation of beliefs and accomplishments of their life
  - d. Although Jesus rose from the dead, more time is still dedicated to His sufferings and death.

### **Jesus' death is an Introduction to the Main Message**

1. The seeming defeat of Jesus and His sudden departure only set the stage for the main message of the time to come – the Church, His Body.
2. Out of His death came our life, "*Christ in you the hope of glory*" (Colossians 1:27).
3. The Head had to go to Heaven so the Body could be formed, filled with His same life, and anointed by the same Holy Spirit, with His same power, and same authority.
4. God's desire was to replace His only Son with a multitude of sons and daughters.
5. He who said:
  - a. "*I am the light*" – saw that light extinguished at death as far as His humanity was concerned.
    1. His light has been reignited in all believers since.
    2. His light lives in us, His members, His Body.
  - b. "*I am the life*" – saw that life killed on the cross as far as His humanity was concerned.
    1. His eternal life has been given to anyone who will believe.
    2. We who are born into death can be redeemed into eternal spiritual life and everlasting life with God Himself.
    3. "He who believes in me will never die."

### **We Are Not Only Members With God, But Members With Each Other**

1. If you are going blind, your nose cannot fill the place of the eye.
2. If the heart is failing, the stomach cannot fill its place and pump blood.

3. The parts of the body play a unique role as do each of us in the body of Christ.
4. We are designed to use our unique callings and gifts to work together with the rest of the body of Christ.
5. We are as one with each other as we are one with Christ and God the Father.
6. God does not see us as Baptists, Methodists, or Pentecostals, but as Christ's One Body.
7. We not only see ourselves as separate from denominations, but also separate from those of our same persuasion.
  - a. We separate from our own over the rapture, 1 John 1:9, or whether or not we can lose our salvation.
  - b. The only thing God sees is hands, feet, ears, and eyes.
  - c. When He sees us, He sees Christ.
8. If you are born again, you are a member of the Body of Christ, one with the Father, Jesus Christ, and all other believers.
9. Only one who calls himself a Christian but does not believe in the atoning work of Jesus as the only way to redemption is not a member of the Body of Christ.
  - a. No universal Fatherhood of God or brotherhood of man.
  - b. We have no fellowship with that person in life.
  - c. We will have no fellowship with him in eternity.
10. When a radical Muslim beheads a Christian, he does not ask if he is a Baptist, Methodist, or Catholic. He thinks all are Christian (Mark 9:38-40).

### **How to Handle Differences**

*"Therefore, let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind." Philipians 3:15-16*