

PENTECOST:
THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

INTRO: You will not remember this, but in past messages on Pentecost I have been working through the doctrine of the Church. We looked at what the Church is. It is not a building. It is not the replacement of Israel, and nor is it a political entity. The Church is made up of all truly born again believers, from the time of Pentecost in Acts 2 until the rapture of the Church.

Then we looked at the history of the Church and I showed how it was spoken of at least to some degree in the Gospel of Matthew. In Acts we saw the birth and early growth of the Church as it began to spread from Jerusalem to Judea and then on to the uttermost parts of the earth. We looked at the Church in the Epistles and finally in the book of Revelation. In the book of Revelation we saw the disappearance of the Church in chapter 4, and then its reappearance in chapter 19.

We then took a very brief look at the history of the Church from the time of the writing of the NT until today. The accuracy of the Bible, though it should not surprise me, does so yet from time to time. Recently I thought through Jesus' teaching that few would be saved. On the one hand, it is very surprising that the Church is still in existence. When one looks at church history, it is truly amazing. Nikita Cruschev of Russia thought he would destroy Christianity in Russia. But He could not do it. The Romans had tried to do that and many others as well. Yet no one has succeeded. Today, Islam looks like it will overcome Christianity, at least in some parts of the world. But Islam will fail. They all will fail.

When Christ was on earth, one time when He was in the northern parts of Israel He asked the disciples who men thought that He was. So they told Him that some said He was John the Baptist, some said He was Elijah and others, He was Jeremiah or one of the other prophets. And then He said, "But who do you say that I am?" And Peter said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus said, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven." Then Jesus said to Peter, "And I say that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." And so today, in spite of how rampant sin is and how mankind fights against righteousness, the Church is still in building and we thank God for that. And so the Church still exists, but like Christ said, few would be

saved, that is precisely as it is today. In my calculations, I think maybe around 7% of people in the world today are saved.

Our subject this morning is the illustrations used in the NT of the Church. Our first illustration of the Church is that of the human body, and for that we begin with 1 Corinthians 12.

II. ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE CHURCH

A. As A Body

1. 1 Corinthians 12:1-31

In 1 Corinthians 13, the illustration of the Church as a body is given in verses 12-31. But verses 1-12 are the point that bring about the need for this illustration. I cannot go through this in detail, but look at verses 1-3 (read). Verse 1 says, "Now concerning spiritual gifts..." You will notice the word 'gifts' is in italics which means it is not there in the original. Literally, the original says, "Now concerning spirituals..." Spirituals, for Christians, are things done by the Holy Spirit through believers. So we call them spiritual gifts. These are simply things the Holy Spirit does through Christians.

Then Paul says, "I do not want you to be ignorant concerning these things that the Holy Spirit is doing through you." You see, when the Holy Spirit does things through us, and we are ignorant of the fact that it is the Holy Spirit doing those things, then we tend to either think God is not using us, or else, if He is using us we can tend to become puffed up as though we were something more special than others. But when we realize it is the Holy Spirit doing this, then we realize we have nothing to be proud of.

So let me put verse 2 in my own words, "You know that before you were saved you were carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led." Behind all these idols were demons, which are fallen spirits. And in the past these Corinthians were led by demons. Now they are to be led by the Holy Spirit. May I ask you this morning, by whom are you led? You say, "I am not. I make my own decisions." No we are all led by someone. So Paul says in verse 3 that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one

can say Jesus is Lord, except through the Holy Spirit.

It is hard to know what all took place in Corinth, but it was a very idolatrous place. There was all kinds of demonism, and demonic manifestations. So there may even have been those who professed to be believers, but they were saying bad things about Jesus. So how were they, having come out of such horrendous idolatry to know who was a true Christian and who was not? So Paul says that those who call Jesus things that are wrong are not Christians. A Christian cannot do that. And those who call Jesus Lord, that is to be able to truly say He is their Lord, cannot do so except by the Holy Spirit.

One of the outstanding names of the Spirit of God is the 'Holy Spirit'. Holiness has to do with separation from sin. One of the outstanding marks of the Christian is holiness, separation from sin.

Paul will now show the Corinthians the workings of the Holy Spirit. Look at verses 4-6 (read). There is only one Holy Spirit, but there are different gifts; different ministries; and different activities. And I would say that the outstanding feature of all gifts, ministries and activities of the Holy Spirit are holiness. That is how you know the difference between the workings of the Spirit of God and demonic spirits.

Now let me just make one more note for you here. In verse 4 we have the word 'gift'. It is not the regular word for gift. It is the word charisma. It is from this word that we get our English word 'charismatics', since charisma has to do with spiritual gifts, and that is the stress of modern charismatics.

Now note that in verse 4 we have different gifts but the same Spirit. In verse 5 we have different ministries but the same Lord. And in verse 6 we have different activities but the same God. There we have Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

And as a note of interest, some years ago I noticed that the following passage falls into three sections.

The first section (7-11) will deal with the Holy Spirit, but not Christ or God. The second section (12-17) will deal with Christ and the Holy Spirit but not with God. The Third section (18-30) will deal with God and the Lord Jesus (body) but not the Holy Spirit.

With that, look at verses 7-11 (read). Now, just what is the manifestation of the Spirit? The manifestation of the Spirit of God is when He can use some person to do something that is godly. For example, let us say someone is gifted in music and that person so surrenders their mind and body to the Lord that the Holy Spirit can minister to others through that person's ability. That is a manifestation of the Spirit. Let us say someone is an encourager. And now they become a Christian. And if that person so submits to the Spirit of God that the Spirit is able to use that ability to encourage others spiritually, that is a manifestation of the Holy Spirit through that person.

I was sharing with our Sunday School class a while ago something that I think the Lord helped me to understand. I do not know why I was thinking about spiritual gifts one day, while we were ministering in the Philippines. But as we were driving along in the motor cab, that is a motorcycle with a cab with an extra wheel, I thought about this. For years, when I would teach about spiritual gifts the question would come, "What is the difference between a spiritual gift and a natural gift?" I had pondered that over and over. And as our motorcab was weaving in and out of the traffic, the answer that finally satisfied me was this: A spiritual gift is any natural ability a person is endowed with that is brought under the control of the Holy Spirit. When a person's nature is brought under the control of the Holy Spirit, and He uses some ability that person has for divine purposes, that is a spiritual gift. And when the Holy Spirit uses a person in this way, that is a manifestation of the Holy Spirit. Now it may be that God gives a believer some gift that the person did not have before and that would certainly be a spiritual gift. But I believe any natural gift that comes under the control of the Holy Spirit is a spiritual gift.

So, in our passage are listed such gifts as the word of wisdom. Oh how tremendously helpful a word of wisdom can be. And it is amazing whom God can use for that at certain times in one's life. Then there is the word of knowledge, faith, gifts (charisma) of healings, miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, abilities with languages, abilities to interpret and so on. But verse 11 says, But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He (i.e. the Spirit of God) wills.

Now I must make a few more notes on that passage. In verse 9 we have the gift of faith. *Expand? Calvinism uses many such passages to prove that unless God gives us the gift of faith we cannot believe to get saved. We are dead in sins and dead people cannot believe. So God has to regenerate them and give them the gift of faith and only then can a person be saved. It is my view that you do not need a gift of faith to get saved. You just need the right message to believe in. Saving faith is never given in Scripture as a gift. In such passages as this one, the gift of faith is given to those who are already believers. If you will check out the Calvinist's proof texts, you will find those texts speak of those who are believers already. The gift of faith for believers is the gift to trust God for things. Let me just give you one example; George Mueller.

The other note I want to make is from verse 11. We do not choose our own gifts. We may develop our gifts but we do not choose them. The Spirit distributes to each one as He wills.

Now all of that preceding context brings Paul to give this illustration of the Church as a body from verses 12-31. Paul will show us that all these different workings of the Spirit in different people are as necessary as all our body parts are necessary to the whole body. So look at verse 12 (read).

Paul says, "For as the body is one..." Though the body has many individual parts, it is one body. He says, "So is Christ." Well, what does that mean? Well, that speaks of the Church. Christ is the head, we are the body.

Listen to these verses: Ephesians 1:22, "And He put all *things* under His feet, and gave Him *to be* head over all *things* to the church..." Ephesians 5:23, "For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Colossians 1:18, "And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence."

Christ is the head of the Church. We are the rest of the body. So look at how we become members of that body in verse 13 (read). When we repent of our sins and trust in Christ for salvation, we are baptized into one body. It does not matter if we are Jew or Gentile; whether we are a slave or free, or whether we are a man or a woman or any other such designations. When we truly convert we become members in the body of Christ, or the Church, which that body illustrates.

So look at what Paul says in verse 14 (read). Here is a fact we must reckon with. The body is not one member. It is made up of many members. Now I must add here that this holds true of the universal Church, but this also holds true of the local church.

Now verses 15-16 indicate that there may be discontentment in members because they are not some other part of the body (read). That means God may have gifted certain persons in one thing, but they wish for another. So look at what it says (read).

What is the problem with that kind of thinking? Well, look at verse 17 (read). We cannot imagine just an eye without the rest of the body, or just an ear without the rest of the body. We know all the parts are needed. It is amazing what happens to the rest of the body if the large toe is lost. We do not know how we use that toe for balance until it is gone.

So let us read verse 18 (read). One cannot do much study of the body until one feels like the Psalmist who said, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made." If one undertakes a study of just the skin, and the various kinds of skin we have one is simply amazed.

When you study the bones, again it is incredible. And so it is throughout the body. The senses like the ears and the eyes are phenomenal. And God has placed the members just as it pleased Him. And here we are reminded of the Church and what verse 11 says, "But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills." Just as God built the body exactly as He wanted it, so the Holy Spirit enables each Christian exactly as He wishes.

So we go to verses 19-26 (read). Let me point out verse 25 that the members should have the same care for one another. As we have ability, we are to care for one another. One of my major tasks is to spiritually nurture the body here. Each of you has something to do. Some of you are very good at recognizing the needs of others and you do a lot to help that. Some of you visit and encourage many people. Maybe some of you feel left out. May I ask you, what do you do? We do not need to be voted into a special committee to encourage or visit one another.

Verse 26 says that if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it. I am amazed at how some of you recognize and minister to such needs. There are many people here with gifts I do not have. That is the body. Have you ever noticed this time of year when the mosquitoes get thick and they bite your ear, how quickly your hand goes to the rescue of the ear? You don't even need to think about it. It just happens. The next time you get bit on the hand and the other hand comes to its rescue.

And so now look at verse 27 (read). We, all born again believers, make up the body of Christ. And each one of us is a member in that body. And God has so designed the body that there are members in charge of areas of need and we find this in verse 28 (read).

Let me mention here that there are two major views of what speaking in tongues is. Some view these as ecstatic utterances. That is, they are not known languages such as English and German etc.. They are a special Holy Spirit language and they cannot be understood except by someone who has been given the

gift to understand such ecstatic utterances. Others, among whom I find myself, view tongues as referring to human languages. I have done detailed study on this and that study is available for those who might wish it.

Now it seems that the Corinthians had exalted the ability to speak in various languages as one of the most important gifts. And if you look at verse 28, you will find that Paul lists it among the least important, not the most important (read). And then in verses 29-30 he again he downplays the importance of this gift (read). Now the original construction of these questions is so that they demand the answer, "No" after each question.

From this passage I am reminded of an incident my wife and I experienced when we were on our honeymoon. We had traveled down the west coast of into California, and then headed straight across the US to Pennsylvania where we were going to visit Dr. J. Otis Yoder and his wife. It was a hot and dry spring and we were just into South Dakota when we got warnings of a snow storm. If you have been in southern Saskatchewan or Manitoba in the spring time you know that they can get some real blizzards.

The snow was beginning to fall and we found a nice town, rented a room and settled in. We were there for a few days. Our car eventually disappeared. Not even the radio antenna was visible any more. And one day the cleaning lady came in and she saw my Bible and she said, "Oh, I see you are King's Kids." Well, it took us a while to realize she was saying we were Christians and so we got to talking. She was of the charismatic persuasion and we got to talking about speaking in tongues. She believed every Christian should have this gift. Some charismatics held that if you did not speak in tongues, neither were you a Christian. And so, in our discussion I asked her these questions: Are all Christians apostles? She said, "No". Are all prophets? "No". Are all teachers? "No". Are all workers of miracles. "No". Do all have the gift of healings? "No". Do all speak with tongues? "Yes." I do not remember if she caught the inconsistency, but I always valued that experience.

And it may be because of the stress placed in Corinth on speaking in tongues that Paul closes in verse 31 as he does (read).

2. Ephesians 4:4-16

We go now to the last passage we want to Ephesians 4 and we'll read it as we go. We won't expand on this passage as I have just done a message on the thoughts of leading captivity captive, and what it means when Christ descended to the lower parts of the earth. If you were not here, the message is "Leading Captivity Captive" on sermonaudio/lhec. Let me just mention that if you hold a different view from the one I hold on that passage, I have no problems with that at all.

But when I did that message I mentioned that a key thought that runs from verses 1-16 is that of unity. And I conclude from this passage that the purpose of spiritual gifts is to bring about unity in the church. Let me just briefly review a few parts of this chapter. We begin with verses 1-3 (read). Here we have stress on the unity of the Spirit. It is the unity which the Holy Spirit brings. This unity is stressed by all the oneness of verses 4-6 (read).

But, in the midst of that unity, the one body, we find in verses seven there are many individual members (read). Here it speaks of 'each one of us'. And to each one of us, each member of that one body, are given gifts according to the measure of Christ's gift. The giving of gifts is then illustrated from how a victorious army paraded their captives and gave gifts to their own people which they had taken from the captives. And then in verses 11-12 Paul enumerates some of those gifts (read).

Now it is important to see that these gifts are to function for the edifying of the body of Christ. So, through the spiritual gifts, the body is built up, and there is a purpose for that building up. Notice, what I view as a very important word in verse 13, the very first one, 'till'. We are to be built up 'until' we come to the unity of the faith. Now the faith it is speaking of here, is the Christian faith. It is the doctrines important to the Christian faith.

Today there is much stress on unity. And on the far outer circles, it is ecumenical unity. That is unity between evangelicals and Catholics and today efforts involve even including some cults. But such a unity can never truly be achieved. Such a unity must avoid what is here called 'the faith', the true Christian faith. In the circle a little closer, we may stress unity between evangelicals. But the spectrum among those who call themselves evangelicals has grown so wide that it is not much better than ecumenical unity. Then we seek unity between local churches. One allows for divorce. Others now allow for homosexuality. Then, on a lesser note, there are those who are Calvinists or Charismatics etc... And so I have come to the position, that as long as these churches seem to be sound on salvation I accept and respect them as fellow believers, but I do not feel obligated to try to have meetings together or ministerial meetings.

I think that those churches that are truly evangelical but differ in some such doctrines, all have a different role to play in the Church universal body. Possibly the various churches that are truly evangelical, all play their own role as members in the universal Church. As senior pastor, I do not feel it my role to keep us unified with these other churches. Wherever possible, I respect them as Christians. If we could help them out in any way without compromising our convictions, I would encourage us to do so. But I feel that they need to contribute to the whole body that which they sense God wants them to do, and we need to seek to contribute to the body of Christ that which we, as a church, sense we should do.

You may remember that in a message a while ago I asked you these questions: "Do you agree with this statement: Only truly born again believers make up the true Church." Well, we agreed that was so. Second, I asked if you would agree with this: Many people who are members in churches are not truly born again. Even such liberals as Billy Graham acknowledged that a very large part of those who profess to be believers are not. So, when you ponder the fact that in many churches 1/4 or maybe even 1/2, and sometimes more are not truly believers, how can

there be unity? So what happens in churches like that? Well, standards are dropped and tolerance for most everything is practiced.

And so I have come to the position that as much as possible every church is responsible to keep the unity within itself. We have that same task here. And what has the Lord given us to achieve that unity? He has given us various gifted people to edify the body. And the body needs to be edified UNTIL this unity is achieved. Any healthy church should seek to grow mature members, and then there should be new members that are being matured. Take, for example, the skin of the body. And so the church needs to always replace mature Christians with mature Christians. It is constantly replacing itself with new skin. So look at verses 15-16 (read).

3. Romans 12:3-8

Well, let us briefly note a few more passages on our subject. Go to Romans 12 (read 3-8). Once more we have the illustration used of the body. Let me note first here, that it is possible that the Holy Spirit is able to use a certain person's abilities, and for that person to begin to think of himself more highly than he ought to think. This is a danger for many Christian workers.

Then here again, we have a number of spiritual gifts mentioned. There is prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhortation, giving, leading, and showing mercy.

4. Colossians 1:24-29

Let us go to another passage in Colossians 1 (read 24-29). Note again in verse 24 that the Church is likened to a body (read). Then in verse 25 Paul says that he became a minister of that church, but it was according to the stewardship from God. This word, stewardship, is used of one who is given the responsibility of running someone's household. When one is a steward, one is not the owner. One is doing that which another has entrusted to us. When we have a spiritual gift, we do not have that which we built up ourselves. We have something entrusted to us by God.

Now let me mention something I have not mentioned yet. From my understanding, every spiritual gift is given for the purpose of helping or building up others. There is no gift given for the purpose of building up ourselves. A study of 1 Corinthians 14 reveals that gifts are given for the purpose of edification. To edify is to build up. It is held by some that tongues are to be used in private, for personal edification. I see that as entirely unbiblical. All gifts are for the benefit of the body.

Let me mention something else that ties in here regarding the gift of prophecy. I think, when used like this, it does not generally refer to foretelling the future. You need to see this so turn to 1 Corinthians 14 (read verse 3).

CONCL: And so we bring to a conclusion this Pentecost message on the doctrine of the Church. We have considered this morning the illustration of the Church as a body. We have seen that Christ is the head, and we make up the body. And God has placed all of us in some way in the body and we all have a part.

Let me add here that one reason God does not take us to glory the moment we get saved is so that in life He can begin to conform us to the image of Christ. That is one huge task. And as I see it there are several main areas God uses. He uses family life. In family life, if we respond to circumstances in godly ways, God knocks many ugly lumps off our inner man. The home is a place God can use in very many ways to conform us to the image of His Son. He wants us to become like Christ.

Then God uses the workplace. For the wife, many times that is homemaking. I believe that is what is meant for mothers when it says a woman will be saved in child bearing. It is that sanctification part of salvation it is talking about. For the man that involves his job. Here God will use the many circumstances of life to conform us to the image of His Son. The third major area is the Church. For some people the home becomes so unbearable that they leave it. For some people, their jobs become so unbearable that they leave it. For some people, the problems in the church become so unbearable for them, they leave it. There are times, I agree, when it becomes necessary to leave a job, but one does need to find a new one. There are times when

it becomes necessary to leave a church, but one does need to find a new one.

I believe that it is important to belong to a church if at all possible. And it is important to seek to find one's place in the church. Maybe you say, "I just don't know what my part in the church is. I don't know what my gifts are." Did you know that attending regularly is an important part right there? When you talk to people, or pray for them, or contribute in any such a way, it is all important. Janitor work is important. Visiting new people who attend is important. Encouraging people is important as well as the regular tasks such as SS teaching or song leading.