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## **The Body of Christ**

***By David Wilkerson***

July 29, 2002 The apostle Paul instructs us, "Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular" (1 Corinthians 12:27). Then he says more specifically, "As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members...being many, are one body: so also is Christ" (12:12).

Paul is telling us, in essence, "Take a look at your own body. You have hands, feet, eyes, ears. You're not just an isolated brain, unattached to the other members. Well, it's the same way with Christ. He's not just a head. He has a body, and we comprise its members."

The apostle then points out, "We, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another" (Romans 12:5). In other words, we're not just connected to Jesus, our head. We're also joined to each other. The fact is, we can't be connected to him without also being joined to our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Paul drives this point home, saying, "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread" (1 Corinthians 10:16-17). Simply put, we're all fed by the same food: Christ, the manna from heaven. "The bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world" (John 6:33).

Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life...I am the living bread which came down from heaven...he that eateth me, even he shall live by me" (John 6:35, 51, 57). The image of bread here is important. Our Lord is telling us, "If you come to me, you'll be nourished. You'll be attached to me, as a member of my body. Therefore, you'll receive strength from the life-flow that's in me." Indeed, every member of his body draws strength from a single source: Christ, the head. Everything we need to lead an overcoming life flows to us from him.

This bread is what distinguishes us as members of his body. We're set apart from the rest of humanity because we dine from a single loaf: Jesus Christ. "We are all partakers of that one bread" (1 Corinthians 10:17).

Some Christians, however, don't want to be connected to other members of the body. They commune with Jesus, but they deliberately isolate themselves from other believers. They want nothing to do with the body, other than the head.

But a body can't be comprised of just a single member. Can you picture a head with only an arm growing out of it? Christ's body can't be made up of a head alone, with no limbs or organs. His body consists of many members. We simply can't be one with Christ without being one with his body also.

You see, our need isn't just for the head. It's for the whole body. We're knit together not only by our need for Jesus, but by our need for each other as well. Paul states, "The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you" (1 Corinthians 12:21).

Note the second half of this verse. Even the head can't say to another member, "I don't need you." What an incredible statement. Paul is telling us, "Christ will never say to any member of his body, 'I have no need of you.'" Our head willingly connects himself to each of us. Moreover, he says we're all important, even necessary, to the functioning of his body.

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This is especially true of members who may be bruised and hurting. Paul emphasizes, "Much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary" (12:22). The apostle then adds, "And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness" (12:23). He's speaking of those in Christ's body who are unseen, hidden, unknown. In God's eyes, these members have great honor. And they're absolutely necessary to the work of his body.

This passage holds profound meaning for us all. Paul is telling us, "It doesn't matter how poor your self-image may be. You may think you're not measuring up as a Christian. But the Lord himself says, 'I have need of you. You're not just an important member of my body. You're vital and necessary for it to function.'"

In Matthew 22, Jesus tells a parable that reveals much about his body on earth. Each of Christ's parables contains a hidden truth of God. These secrets have been shared by Father, Son and Holy Ghost from before creation: "I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 13:35). Jesus testifies that these hidden truths are revealed only to those who take time to seek them.

In Matthew 22, we read a parable that I believe reveals much about Christ's body. In it, God outlines his eternal purposes in raising up a body of believers. In short, he wants a bride for his Son. This bride is to be joined to Jesus, knitted together with him as one flesh, one body. Christ will become her very life, as well as her source. He'll be connected to her, and she to him.

Jesus begins the parable by stating, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding" (Matthew 22:2-3). The king in this parable is clearly God the Father. And the son here is Christ.

Here we see the Father sending forth the Holy Ghost to seek a bride for his Son. The bride, of course, is the church of Jesus Christ. And this bride is made up of many members. In fact, she's comprised of every person who accepts the king's invitation to the marriage supper.

Yet, Jesus states in the next verse, "They would not come" (22:3). He's speaking here of his own preaching to the Jews. Christ urged Israel to receive him, but they refused. Scripture says, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (John 1:11).

So the king tried once more: "Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: and the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them" (Matthew 22:4-6).

Not only did the Jews kill Jesus, but they slew his apostles who followed. So, Christ tells us, "When the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city" (22:7). Jesus was speaking prophetically here. Just decades after his death, Roman armies marched into Jerusalem and destroyed the holy city. Earlier in Israel's history, God had used Assyria to chastise his people. Now he sent the Roman generals Vespasian and Titus to burn Jerusalem to the ground. Thus, Jesus' prophecy was fulfilled to the letter: "Your house is left unto you desolate" (23:38).

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The next passage in the parable contains the heart of my message about Christ's body. Jesus tells us, "Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests" (22:8-10).

Since Calvary, the gospel has gone out to all of humankind: Jew and Gentile, slave and free, rich and poor, good and bad alike. This is how "the wedding was furnished with guests" (22:10). Please understand, this scene isn't about the marriage supper of the Lamb. That celebration will take place after the judgment. No, this supper is an espousal feast. And the guests are those who heed the call to receive Christ as Lord.

Think of it. According to Jesus, this bride is comprised of "as many as they found, both bad and good" (22:10). Such a group includes formerly bad people: addicts, alcoholics, prostitutes, murderers, gamblers, drug pushers. Yet it also includes formerly good people, those who once relied on a righteousness of flesh.

Now they all have been changed. They've confessed their sins and been washed clean by Christ's blood. Just as multitudes sing each week, they testify, "He brought me to his banqueting house, and his banner over me was love" (Song of Solomon 2:4).

A great host has gathered into God's banqueting hall. When Jesus says the feast was "furnished" with guests, the Greek word he uses is pletho. It means to imbue, fill, influence. In other words, these guests represent the cleansed, redeemed body of Christ. They've been influenced, imbued and filled by God's Holy Spirit. And he has robed each of them in a white wedding garment.

Typically, we think of wedding feasts as lasting a few hours. In the Jewish culture of Jesus' day, such feasts could last up to seven days. Yet to God, a day is as a thousand years. And in this parable, the feast we're seeing has lasted since Calvary. It has been going on for centuries. And it won't end until the Bridegroom returns.

Dear saint, do you realize what this means? Every day is your wedding day. As a member of Christ's body, you're a part of his bride. That means each morning when you rise, you're to put on your white wedding garment. If it becomes spotted or soiled, you're to bring it to his Word, to be washed clean. And you're to wear your wedding ring at all times. It signifies your married status, as sealed by the Holy Ghost. Finally, you're to feast on the bread of heaven: Christ, the heavenly manna.

**THIS WEDDING FEAST IS TAKING PLACE EVERY DAY IN CHRIST'S BODY. HOWEVER, AN INTRUDER HAS BEEN DISCOVERED IN THE BANQUETING HALL.** Jesus continues the parable:

"When the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment. And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 22:11-13).

Who is this man in the parable? Clearly, his identity is a serious matter, because of the awful fate he suffers. Some commentators suggest the man represents those who come to Christ dressed in rags of their own self-righteousness. The image is of a poor, deluded, ragged soul who's condemned by his self-reliance.

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I don't accept this interpretation. You may be shocked when I tell you who I believe this man is. I find a clue when the king addresses him as "Friend." Jesus uses the same word to address Judas, before being betrayed. I believe the king in this parable is using the word in great derision. After all, he was about to send this man to hell.

In my opinion, this visitor is the man of sin himself: Satan. I envision him parading into the feast, wearing a gorgeous, purple robe of his own making, and not the robe prescribed. He's the very picture of pride.

If the man described is Satan, why was he allowed into the banquet? Why wasn't the man of sin stopped at the door? I believe Zechariah gives us the answer. The prophet says, "He shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee" (Zechariah 3:1-2).

Joshua, of course, signifies the high priesthood, those saved by Jehovah. To believers today, he also represents the body of Christ, God's royal priesthood. In Zechariah's vision, Satan stood beside Joshua to "resist him." The word for resist here means to attack and accuse.

I have to confess, I don't know why Satan is allowed to accuse and attack God's people. But I do know what God says will become of our enemy: "The accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night" (Revelation 12:10). One day, the Lord is going to bind the devil and cast him into an eternal prison.

But this hasn't happened yet. Meanwhile, Satan knows his time is short. So he's coming against the body of Christ with great wrath. Indeed, his attacks are marked by a boldness and brazenness such as never before. Why? He knows the greatest threat to him is a body of blood-cleansed believers, walking in unity. And in these last days, the Holy Spirit has performed a marvelous work of raising up and knitting together saints all over the world.

These dedicated servants stand together as one body. They love each other, pray for one another, minister to the wounded and discouraged among them. And they also stand united in warfare. They do battle with the enemy, binding his kingdom, casting out principalities, taking authority over hellish powers.

We see this last-days army in Jesus' parable, embodied in the wedding party. These blood-cleansed warriors are gathered at Christ's banqueting table, where they grow strong by feasting on his bread. And they all have one goal: to be fully prepared to meet the Bridegroom when he comes.

We shouldn't be surprised at all that Satan has intruded in God's house. It's his last chance to try to break up Christ's growing, maturing body. So he has entered the wedding feast on a rampage, looking to destroy everyone he can. And he's convinced the best way to do this is to try to deceive God's elect.

How does the devil go about this? He does what he's always done since Calvary: he lies to you. He accuses you. He injects doubts and fears into your mind. I picture this purple-clad figure table-hopping, seeking out each guest for deception. He plants doubts and fears in them, subtly accuses them, and tries to stain their white robes.

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The man of sin especially targets a certain kind of believer. I believe we find the key to Satan's strategy in Genesis 3. The devil had just succeeded in tempting Eve. Now God told him, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Genesis 3:15).

The woman's seed referred to here is Jesus. In other words, the Messiah would proceed from humankind. And God was prophesying his victorious work on the cross. At Calvary, Christ would put his foot on Satan's head and wound him.

Yet the Lord also prophesied that Satan would bruise Christ's heel. What does this mean, exactly? As members of Jesus' body, we are his seed. Obviously, some of this seed makes up the heel in Christ's body. Who does this refer to?

We're given a couple of clues. First, the heel is a part of the foot. We know the main role of the foot is to stand or to walk. Thus, I believe the feet in Christ's body are made up of those believers who take a stand for Jesus. These members are also responsible for walking after the Holy Spirit's leading. Note that these works are support roles. They're mostly hidden and unseen, while other parts of the body are noticed. In these respects, the feet are an example to the other members of Christ's body.

Yet the foot is also one of the most sensitive parts of the body. It's covered most of the time, for protection. In this respect, the Hebrew meaning of "bruise" becomes telling. It means to trick, or lie in wait to trip up. Simply put, I believe Satan targets those members of Christ's body who are sensitive and easily wounded.

You probably know such Christians. They love Jesus with all their heart. But often they think they don't measure up to what's expected of them. They're desperate to please God, but they're convinced they never do. They don't doubt him but themselves. And they easily fall under condemnation, feeling unworthy, unwanted and unused.

The devil knows this about them, because his principalities have observed their lives. So now, as Satan enters the King's banquet hall, he's fully prepared to attack. He makes the rounds, whispering accusations into their ears. His goal? To convince these tenderhearted saints to give up. He wants to see them cast off their white garments and leave the banqueting table in utter despair.

I have to ask you: has Satan been to your table yet? Have you heard a voice whispering:

- "You look pure and holy. But your heart is black with sin. You're going to fail God. You're a useless hypocrite."
- "Other Christians don't respect you, because you're not gifted. You're taken for granted. Nobody loves you."
- "That old sin of yours is going to catch up with you. You're going to disgrace God and his people. And your good name is going to end up in ruin."
- "You can forget all about those promises you thought God spoke to you. I fooled you. That was my voice you heard in your ear."
- "God is mad at you. That's why your prayers aren't being answered. You've sinned too often."
- "You're about to lose your job. You're going to end up in total poverty."
- "You're not going to make it. Before it's all over, you'll take a fall."

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Night and day you hear these accusations. I tell you, Satan only wants to pull you away from the banqueting table. Then he can starve you of Christ's nourishment. He wants to isolate you so he can poison your spirit. He's trying to convince you, "You just don't measure up. What's the use of going on? You'll never be a member of Christ's holy body." The truth is, Satan knows his greatest enemy is a united body of believers. He's aware of Jesus' promise that whenever two or three gather together, the Father happily grants their requests. That's why he's determined to pick us off one by one.

The king in this parable sees all that the man of sin is doing. The king finally confronts this man, asking, "How did you get in here without a wedding garment?" He's saying, in essence, "What do you think you're doing here, by harassing my people? Did you think I wouldn't see you? Did you believe I wouldn't deal with you?"

From the very first lie Satan whispered to you, God has observed his every action. And he has made a move to silence the devil's lies. Scripture says the king rendered the unwelcome man speechless (see Matthew 22:12). God was saying, "No more accusations in my banqueting hall, Satan. No more of your lies to my people." Then the king commanded his servants, "Bind him up and cast him out into the darkness."

Finally, the parable concludes with these words from the king: "For many are called, but few are chosen" (22:14). I picture God looking over that banqueting hall, declaring, "For many years I called out to Israel, through my apostles. But they refused to hear. Now these guests here in my house have responded to my call. I tell you, they have been chosen. And I won't allow Satan to cut off any one of them from my body."

We know the devil hasn't yet been cast into his eternal prison. Yet, as we feast at the banqueting table, waiting for the Bridegroom to come, we're given a command. The King has told us to bind up the devil and cast him out of the banqueting hall. In short, we're to rise up and take serious action against Satan's attacks on Christ's body.

Amazingly, this command is ignored by many Christians. Whenever we see a tenderhearted believer in pain, we think, "I'll offer him comfort. I want to be a listening ear." Or, "I can provide some kind of support. I'll bring him a meal, or offer financial help." These are indeed acts of godly love. But often, they're not enough.

If we know Satan is speaking lies into someone's life, we're required to do more than merely listen or offer counsel. We're to gather other believers together and take authority over the enemy. Jesus tells us some kinds of demonic oppression "goeth not out but by prayer and fasting" (Matthew 17:21). Thus, with fasting and prayer, we're to bind up the enemy. And we're to cast him out of our fellow believer's mind, soul and circumstances.

I've spent many hours trying to counsel downcast believers out of their troubles. Yet more and more, I recognize the devil standing over them, convincing them of his lies. Now, whenever I see the devil working on yet another sensitive saint, a holy anger rises up in me. And I realize I must do what every true body minister is called to do: bind Satan hand and foot, in Jesus' name, and cast him into outer darkness.

Are you living under a cloud of despair? Do you know a brother or sister who's downcast, listening to Satan's accusations? I urge you, seek out praying believers in Christ's body. Go to those who truly know God's heart. And let them point out the enemy's lies for what they are.

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Scripture says that if one of us hurts, we all hurt. That's why it's absolutely vital that we gather together in Jesus' name, for each other's sake. We're to call on our Savior's authority, bind up the enemy, and cast him out of each other's lives. Then we'll be able to bring every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. That is truly the work of Christ's body.

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