

One Body - Many Members

Series 1-32

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VerseQuest Ministries





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## **One Body - Many Members**

A 32-Part VerseQuest Study on the Body of Christ

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## **Introduction to the Series: One Body - Many Members**

The series **One Body - Many Members** is a thorough study built around one of the most powerful illustrations the Holy Ghost gives the church: the body. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul does not describe the body of Christ as a religious organization, a denomination, a platform, a club, a corporation, a social movement, or a loose crowd of people who happen to believe similar things. He describes it as a body. That matters. A body is living. A body is joined. A body has order. A body has members. A body has visible parts and hidden parts, strong parts and feeble parts, speaking parts and silent parts, active parts and supportive parts. No member is the whole body by itself, and no faithful member is nothing. That one truth alone cuts through a mountain of pride, envy, comparison, self-promotion, discouragement, and religious celebrity thinking. Paul says, “But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.” That means the placement of the members is not an accident, not a popularity contest, not a man-made ranking system, and not the result of fleshly ambition. God set the members where He wanted them, and the body is only healthy when every member functions under the Head, the Lord Jesus Christ.

This series takes that truth and walks through it member by member, using the human body as an extended spiritual analogy for the body of Christ. We begin with the foundation: God set the members as it pleased Him, and Christ alone is the Head. From there, we move through the eyes, ears, mouth, tongue, teeth, hands, fingers, arms, shoulders, back, heart, lungs, blood, bones, joints, feet, knees, skin, stomach, bowels, mind, face, nose, neck, nerves, immune system, scars, feeble members, uncomely parts, and finally the whole body fitly joined together in love. Each part opens a different window into Christian life and service. The eyes teach discernment. The ears teach hearing and correction. The mouth teaches speaking truth in love. The tongue warns of fire and poison. The teeth teach maturity and strong meat. The hands teach work. The fingers teach precise hidden service. The arms teach burden-bearing. The shoulders teach responsibility. The back teaches unseen endurance. The heart teaches charity. The lungs teach prayer. The blood teaches redemption and unity. The bones teach doctrine. The joints teach connection. The feet teach witness and walk. The knees teach humility. The skin teaches sensitivity. The stomach teaches digestion of the word. The bowels teach mercy. The mind teaches renewed thinking. The face teaches testimony. The nose teaches spiritual savor. The neck teaches submission. The nerves teach warning signals. The immune system teaches defense. The scars teach suffering and survival. The feeble and uncomely parts teach honor where men often see no glory. Then the whole series closes by bringing every part together under Christ, showing that the body edifies itself in love when every part works in its God-given measure.

What makes this study unique is that it does not merely repeat the familiar phrase, “We are one body,” and then move on. It slows down and examines the body carefully. It asks what each member represents, what spiritual lesson can be drawn from it, what danger appears when that member functions wrongly, and what blessing comes when that member is submitted to Christ. A mouth can preach truth, but it can also poison the body. A tongue can bless God, but it can also butcher a brother. Hands can serve, but they can also become idle. Eyes can discern, but they can also become proud. Bones can give structure, but without a heart the body becomes a cold skeleton. The immune system can defend truth, but if diseased, it can attack the body itself. The nerves can warn of danger, but if inflamed, they can wear the body down with constant alarms. The feeble members may seem weak, but Paul says they are necessary. This kind of study forces us to think deeper than surface-level Christianity. It brings doctrine, devotion, practical service, correction, mercy, discernment, and humility together in one body-wide picture.

The series also exposes how backward the world’s thinking is when it comes to value. The world honors the face, the mouth, the platform, the talent, the money, the polish, the charm, the influence, and the applause. But God sees the hidden parts. God sees the praying lungs nobody hears. God sees the strong back that keeps standing under pressure. God sees the shoulders carrying burdens no one else understands. God sees the fingers doing detailed work in obscurity. God sees the feeble member who teaches the whole body patience and compassion. God sees the uncomely parts that receive no public glory but are given more abundant honor by His own hand. This series is a direct rebuke to the celebrity spirit in Christianity. The body of Christ is not a stage where the impressive members perform and the rest are treated like spectators. It is a living body where every blood-bought member matters, every faithful function has value, and every hidden act of obedience is seen by the Head.

At the same time, this series does not flatten all distinctions and pretend every member has the same role. That is not Paul’s doctrine either. The eye is not the hand. The foot is not the ear. The mouth is not the heart. The bones are not the blood. The strong and the feeble do not have identical functions. The point is not sameness; the point is unity under Christ. The body is one, but it has many members. That means each member must stop envying what another member does and start being faithful in the place God gave him. The preacher must not despise the quiet servant. The servant must not envy the preacher. The strong must not crush the weak. The weak must not assume they are useless. The hidden must not believe they are forgotten. The visible must not believe they are superior. Every member must learn to function with humility, truth, charity, and obedience. The body is not healthy when one member tries to be everything. It is healthy when every member receives direction from the Head and supplies what God gave it to supply.

The great theme running through the whole series is that Christ must have the preeminence. A body without a head is dead, and a body with more than one head is a monster. The Lord Jesus Christ alone is the Head of the body. No pope, priest, scholar, celebrity preacher, church board, denomination, tradition, emotional experience, or religious system has the right to share His place. Every member answers to Him. The mouth speaks under Him. The hands work under Him. The feet go under Him. The knees bow under Him. The mind thinks under Him. The heart loves under Him. The immune system defends under Him. The joints connect under Him. The feeble members are valued by Him. The uncomely parts are honored by Him. This series keeps pulling the reader back to that central truth: the body belongs to Christ, was purchased by Christ, is directed by Christ, and will answer to Christ.

This study is also intensely practical. It is not merely a doctrinal outline for people who like analogies. It deals with real body life. It deals with gossip, slander, prayerlessness, doctrinal weakness, false unity, spiritual infection, church wounds, hidden service, suffering, pride, envy, comparison, burnout, mercy, correction, discernment, testimony, and the Christian walk. It speaks to the preacher, the teacher, the soul winner, the intercessor, the helper, the caregiver, the wounded saint, the elderly believer, the young Christian, the quiet servant, the strong leader, the feeble member, and the hidden laborer. It reminds the strong that strength is given for service, not display. It reminds the weak that weakness does not mean worthlessness. It reminds the visible that public usefulness is not the same as superiority. It reminds the hidden that God sees what men ignore. It reminds the whole body that truth without charity becomes cold, and love without truth becomes jelly.

In the end, **One Body - Many Members** is a call for the body of Christ to think biblically about itself. It is a call to stop measuring members by the world's standards and start seeing them through 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4. It is a call to honor the necessary members, protect the weak, value hidden service, reject pride, refuse envy, defend sound doctrine, practice real charity, and let every member function under the Head. The body is not built by self-promotion. It is not built by competition. It is not built by religious celebrity culture. It is not built by sentimental compromise. It is built when every member does its part, when every joint supplies, when truth is spoken in love, when Christ is obeyed as Head, and when the whole body edifies itself in love. This series is meant to awaken that awareness, sharpen that understanding, and remind every believer that in Christ's body, no faithful member is forgotten, no obedient service is wasted, and no member has the right to say to another, "I have no need of thee."

## **1 of 32: One Body - Many Members - God Set the Members as It Pleased Him**

### **Introduction**

There is a reason the Holy Ghost did not compare the church, which is Christ's body, to a corporation, a lodge, a political machine, a religious club, a seminary faculty, a denomination, or a collection of independent experts all sitting around arguing over who gets the microphone. He compared it to a body. A body is alive. A body has order. A body has a head. A body has members. A body has parts that are seen and parts that are hidden. A body has members that seem honorable and members that seem feeble. A body has parts that move, parts that support, parts that feel, parts that warn, parts that nourish, parts that defend, and parts that suffer quietly without anybody clapping for them. That is exactly why 1 Corinthians 12 is such a necessary chapter for this generation of believers, because modern Christianity has become obsessed with platform, personality, gift, influence, position, brand, title, voice, charisma, and public visibility. Men want to be the eye, the mouth, the hand, the head, and sometimes the whole body at once. But God did not design the body that way. God did not save a man to turn him into a one-man religious circus. God saves a sinner, puts him into Christ, seals him by the Holy Spirit, and places him in the body according to divine wisdom, not human ambition.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:12-14, "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many." That passage is not sentimental poetry for a church bulletin. It is doctrine. It explains what God has done with saved people in this age. The body is one, but it has many members. The members are many, but they are one body. That means unity does not destroy distinction, and distinction does not destroy unity. The eye is not the foot. The hand is not the ear. The head is not the body. The feeble member is not useless. The hidden member is not worthless. The public member is not independent. The strong member is not self-sufficient. The quiet member is not unnecessary. That one paragraph from Paul tears to pieces the whole carnal system of comparison that eats churches, ministries, families, and friendships alive. The question is not, "Why am I not what he is?" The question is, "Am I functioning where God set me?"

The anchor verse for this opening study is 1 Corinthians 12:18: "But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him." There is enough doctrine in that one verse to kill a thousand religious inferiority complexes and a thousand religious ego trips. God set the members. Not the preacher. Not the board. Not the crowd. Not the denomination. Not the online audience. Not the jealous critic. Not the insecure saint

measuring himself by another man's calling. God set them. He set them "every one," which means no saved member is accidental, misplaced, forgotten, or meaningless. And He set them "as it hath pleased him," which means the final authority in the matter is not your preference, your envy, your ambition, your disappointment, your insecurity, or your fleshly idea of usefulness. The whole purpose of this series is to take that doctrine seriously. We are going to look at the body, member by member, function by function, and learn that God never intended every believer to perform the same role. Some members see. Some hear. Some speak. Some carry. Some kneel. Some pray. Some suffer. Some warn. Some strengthen. Some nourish. Some are hidden. Some are feeble. But all are needed when they are where God placed them, doing what God gave them to do, under the authority of the Head, the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **Chapter 1: The Body Is Not a Machine, but a Living Organism**

A machine can be assembled by men, powered by programs, modified by committees, branded by experts, and operated by anyone who learns the controls. That is how much of modern Christianity works. It is scheduled, marketed, polished, analyzed, monetized, and managed until it looks efficient while being spiritually lifeless. But Paul does not say, "Ye are the machine of Christ." He says in 1 Corinthians 12:27, "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." A body is not merely organized; it is alive. A machine may have parts, but a body has members. A machine may operate, but a body lives. A machine can be impressive and still have no life in it. You can paint it, oil it, polish it, upgrade it, and decorate it, but it will never have a heartbeat. That is the difference between man-made religion and the work of God. Man builds systems. God forms bodies. Man manufactures movements. God gives life. Man wants a machine he can control. God has a body joined to a living Head.

That is why the church cannot be understood merely by studying organization charts, denominational history, church growth strategies, personality types, leadership techniques, or crowd psychology. Those things may explain religious operations, but they do not explain the body of Christ. The body of Christ exists because of the finished work of Christ, the regenerating work of the Spirit, and the placing of believers into one body by God Himself. Paul says, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." That is not water baptism. That is the Spirit's operation placing the saved sinner into Christ. This is not a man joining a club after filling out a card. This is God putting a redeemed sinner into a spiritual body. That means the unity of the body is not produced by sentimental slogans, ecumenical compromise, or pretending doctrine does not matter. It is produced by the Spirit of God on the basis of salvation in Christ. The body is one because God made it one, not because men signed a unity statement while denying half the Bible.

Once that truth settles in, it changes how a man looks at other believers. Saved people are not spare parts lying around a religious garage waiting for some ambitious mechanic to use them for his project. They are members of Christ's body. That does not mean every saved person is obedient, mature, sound, or useful in practice at every moment. The Corinthians were saved, and they were a mess. They were carnal, divided, puffed up, confused about gifts, tolerating sin, abusing the Lord's supper, dragging each other before unbelievers, and making a spiritual circus out of things God gave for edification. Yet Paul still teaches them the doctrine of the body. Why? Because the cure for carnal confusion is not less doctrine. It is more Bible. The answer to disorder is not emotional manipulation. It is truth. The body must learn what it is before it can function as it ought. A believer who understands he is a member of a living body will stop acting like a detached part trying to prove he matters by making noise.

## **Chapter 2: God Set the Members, Not Man**

The words "God set the members" should be enough to make every proud man tremble and every discouraged saint breathe again. God set them. That means the placement of members in the body is not random, accidental, or governed by the fleshly ranking system men love to use. God is the one who knows what the body needs. God knows where the eye belongs. God knows where the foot belongs. God knows where the hand belongs. God knows where the feeble member belongs. God knows where the hidden member belongs. God knows what every part can bear, what every part can supply, and what every part must learn. Men see visibility and call it importance. God sees necessity. Men see platform and call it power. God sees function. Men see weakness and call it useless. God says, "Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary" (1 Corinthians 12:22).

This destroys the idea that a believer has the right to despise his place because he wanted another member's function. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12:15-16, "If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?" That is exactly how Christians talk when they get swallowed up by comparison. "Because I do not preach like him, I must not matter." "Because I do not write like him, I must not matter." "Because I do not have her gift, his platform, their opportunity, that influence, this recognition, I must not matter." Paul says that is nonsense. The foot does not stop being part of the body because it is not the hand. The ear does not stop being part of the body because it is not the eye. A member's value is not determined by whether it can imitate another member. Its value is determined by the God who set it in the body.

This also destroys the arrogance of the visible member who thinks public function equals personal superiority. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12:21, “And 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.” That verse takes a sword to religious celebrity culture. The eye cannot dismiss the hand. The head cannot dismiss the feet. The preacher cannot dismiss the prayer warrior. The teacher cannot dismiss the giver. The apologist cannot dismiss the encourager. The public man cannot dismiss the hidden servant. The strong cannot dismiss the weak. The old cannot dismiss the young. The active cannot dismiss the suffering. The mouth may get heard, but it still needs the lungs to breathe, the heart to beat, the blood to flow, the bones to stand, the feet to move, and the stomach to receive nourishment. God designed the body so every proud member eventually has to admit, “I need somebody besides myself.” That is not a flaw in the design. That is the wisdom of God.

### **Chapter 3: The Body Is One, but the Members Are Many**

Paul’s doctrine is balanced. He does not teach unity by erasing distinction, and he does not teach distinction by destroying unity. He says, “For the body is not one member, but many.” Then he also says all those members are one body. That is Bible balance. Carnal men usually fall into one ditch or the other. Some want a fake unity where everybody has to look alike, talk alike, think at the same level, serve in the same way, and march in the same visible pattern. That turns the body into a row of manufactured mannequins. Others want radical individualism where every member acts like it belongs to itself and owes nothing to the rest of the body. That turns the body into a pile of severed parts. The Bible gives neither one. The body has many members, but the members are joined. The members have different functions, but they share one life. They are not identical, but they are not independent.

This matters because some believers confuse difference with division. The hand is not dividing the body by being different from the eye. The foot is not rebelling because it does not perform the function of the ear. The heart is not less spiritual because it works unseen. The bones are not less necessary because they do not speak. Different function is not the same thing as disunity. In fact, the body only works because the members are different. If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? Paul asks that very thing in 1 Corinthians 12:17. A body made entirely of eyes would be a horror show, not a healthy body. Imagine a church where everyone wanted to be a preacher and nobody wanted to pray, give, serve, listen, carry burdens, clean up messes, disciple young believers, visit the sick, comfort the grieving, or quietly do necessary work. That is not spiritual. That is a room full of eyeballs rolling around trying to be seen.

But the opposite error is just as deadly. Some use “different gifts” as an excuse to detach from responsibility, fellowship, accountability, and service. They talk about being unique while refusing to function. A foot that refuses to walk is not celebrating diversity. It is failing its purpose. An ear that refuses to hear is not practicing individuality. It is endangering the body. A hand that will not work is not expressing personal calling. It is lazy. The many-member doctrine is not an excuse for selfishness. It is a call to function. God did not set members in the body so they could admire their own uniqueness in a mirror. He set them there so the body could be edified. Ephesians 4:16 says the body is “fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth,” and that it maketh “increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.” Every member is not called to do the same thing, but every member is called to supply something.

#### **Chapter 4: No Member Is the Whole Body by Himself**

One of the most needed lessons in this series is that no member is the whole body by himself. God may use a man greatly, but that man is still not the whole body. God may give a man light, boldness, wisdom, utterance, skill, discernment, influence, or strength, but he is still not the whole body. The eye may see clearly, but it is still not the hand. The mouth may speak loudly, but it is still not the feet. The shoulder may carry weight, but it still needs the back, the knees, the lungs, and the heart. This is where gifted men often get themselves into trouble. They mistake usefulness for self-sufficiency. They begin as members and start acting like heads. They begin as servants and start acting like owners. They begin with a gift from God and end up building a throne for themselves out of the very gift they were supposed to use for edification.

The Bible never teaches that the body of Christ revolves around any man but Christ. Paul was used mightily, but Paul was not the Head. Peter was used mightily, but Peter was not the Head. John was used mightily, but John was not the Head. Apollos was eloquent and mighty in the Scriptures, but Apollos was not the Head. In 1 Corinthians 3, Paul rebukes the Corinthians for forming little personality camps around ministers. “I am of Paul,” “I am of Apollos,” “I am of Cephas,” and “I am of Christ.” Paul says that kind of thing is carnal. He asks, “Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed?” That is the right view. The best men are still ministers. The best teachers are still servants. The best preachers are still members. The body is Christ’s body, not Paul’s body, not Apollos’ body, not Peter’s body, not any preacher’s body, not any movement’s body, not any denomination’s body.

This also protects believers from the danger of turning one member into the measure of all other members. Some people get so attached to a particular kind of gift that they begin to judge the entire body by whether everyone looks like their favorite member. If a man is a

strong doctrinal teacher, they act like every Christian who is not a doctrinal teacher is second-class. If a man is an evangelist, they act like everyone who is not constantly doing evangelistic work in the same way is disobedient. If a man is a prayer warrior, he may wonder why everyone does not pray with his burden and intensity. If a man is a helper, he may resent the teacher who spends hours in study instead of doing the same kind of visible service. But the body is not one member. God distributes functions according to His own wisdom. The correct question is not, "Why is everyone not like me?" The correct question is, "Am I doing what God gave me to do, and am I honoring what God gave others to do?"

## **Chapter 5: The Feeble Members Are Necessary**

First Corinthians 12:22 is one of the greatest rebukes to worldly Christianity in the New Testament: "Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary." Notice the wording. Paul does not say they are tolerated. He does not say they are decorative. He does not say they are sentimental additions. He says they are necessary. That means the members that seem weak may be carrying out functions the proud members do not even understand. The feeble saint who can barely do much outwardly may teach the body patience. The elderly believer may teach faithfulness. The suffering member may teach compassion. The struggling member may expose whether the rest of the body has charity or just a doctrinal vocabulary. The poor member may expose whether the body values people or money. The quiet member may be praying more faithfully than the public member is preaching.

That word "seem" is also important. Paul says the members "which seem to be more feeble." They seem that way. That is how they appear to human judgment. But human judgment is often about as deep as a mud puddle. Men judge by appearance. God knows function. There are parts of the physical body that look weak but are essential. You can live without some things people notice, but damage certain hidden or delicate parts and the whole body is in danger. The same is true spiritually. Some believers do not look impressive. They do not have a commanding voice, a public platform, an aggressive personality, or visible strength. But they may be essential to the spiritual health of the body in ways carnal people cannot measure. God is not fooled by the applause meter.

This has to be preached because the age we live in despises weakness. Everything is marketed toward strength, beauty, influence, success, youth, visibility, and performance. Even churches can begin to think this way. They know what to do with talented people. They know what to do with wealthy people. They know what to do with charismatic people. They know what to do with skilled people. But God measures the health of a body partly by how it treats the members that cannot repay the attention. Paul says special honor belongs where men would naturally give less. "And those members of the body, which we think to

be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour” (1 Corinthians 12:23). That is not how the world operates. That is how God tempers the body together.

## **Chapter 6: God Designed the Body to Kill Pride and Envy**

The doctrine of the body is designed to kill two ugly sins that often wear religious clothing: pride and envy. Pride says, “I have no need of thee.” Envy says, “Because I am not thee, I am nothing.” Both are rotten. Pride despises other members. Envy despises God’s placement. Pride looks down on the foot because it is not the eye. Envy complains because it is the foot and not the hand. Pride says, “You are beneath me.” Envy says, “God cheated me.” Both sins are answered by 1 Corinthians 12:18: “But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.” If God set you there, envy is rebellion against His wisdom. If God set another member there, pride is rebellion against His design.

Pride is especially dangerous in gifted members because usefulness can intoxicate the flesh. A man can begin by serving God and end by worshipping the way God uses him. The mouth can become proud because people hear it. The eye can become proud because it sees danger early. The hand can become proud because it does so much work. The shoulder can become proud because it carries so much weight. But every member that boasts forgets it is dependent. The mouth cannot speak without breath. The eye cannot see without blood. The hand cannot work without nerves. The foot cannot move without bones. The heart cannot beat in isolation from the rest of the body. God made it that way. The member that thinks it is independent is not mature; it is delusional.

Envy is just as destructive because it causes a member to neglect its own function while staring at another member’s place. A foot that spends all day wishing it were an eye will not walk. An ear that spends all day wishing it were a mouth will not listen. A hand that spends all day resenting the head will not work. Envy freezes service. It turns attention inward. It makes a believer bitter toward God, suspicious of others, and blind to his own responsibility. The cure is not flattery. The cure is doctrine. God set the members. God gave the gifts. God knows what pleases Him. The safest place in the body is not the most visible place. It is the place God assigned. A man will have more peace being a faithful foot than an ambitious eye that God never called him to be.

## **Chapter 7: The Body Must Function Under the Head**

The whole body must function under the Head, and the Head is Jesus Christ. This is the final foundation stone for everything that will follow in the series. If the members are not submitted to the Head, the body becomes disorderly, diseased, confused, and dangerous. Colossians 1:18 says, “And he is the head of the body, the church.” Ephesians 4:15 says we are to “grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.” The Head gives

direction. The Head governs movement. The Head determines purpose. The Head does not exist to endorse the independent ambitions of the members. The members exist to obey the Head. Any ministry, church, teacher, preacher, movement, or believer that detaches from Christ's authority may still have motion, but it is not healthy motion. A chicken with its head cut off can move too, but that is not life. That is death spasms.

This is why right doctrine matters. The body cannot function properly when it ignores the words of the Head. Christ does not guide the body through dreams, emotions, traditions, cultural moods, church politics, or religious marketing. He gave us His words. A body that will not submit to Scripture is not being spiritual. It is being rebellious. Jesus said in John 14:23, "If a man love me, he will keep my words." He did not say, "If a man love me, he will follow every inner impression, mystical feeling, and religious trend that passes through the room." The Head speaks with authority, and the members are to respond in obedience. That includes doctrine, charity, holiness, service, correction, separation, forgiveness, humility, and truth. The body does not get to vote on whether Christ is right.

When the body functions under the Head, every member finds proper order. The eye sees for the body, not for its own glory. The mouth speaks for the body, not for its own ego. The hands work for the body, not for applause. The feet go where the Head directs, not where the flesh wants to wander. The heart loves according to truth, not according to sentiment. The immune system fights infection, not imaginary enemies. The feeble members receive honor, not neglect. The hidden members supply strength, not resentment. The whole body is edified, and Christ gets the preeminence. That is the goal of this series. Not to make men obsessed with their own member identity, but to make every member bow to the Head and function in the body as God intended.

## **Conclusion**

The doctrine of the body of Christ is one of the strongest medicines for the diseases that run wild in Christian circles: pride, envy, comparison, neglect, inferiority, celebrity worship, bitterness, isolation, and self-importance. Paul does not write 1 Corinthians 12 to give believers a cute illustration. He writes it to correct carnal thinking. The Corinthians were gifted, but carnal. They had manifestations, but they lacked maturity. They had knowledge, but they lacked charity. They had activity, but they lacked order. That is a dangerous combination. A gifted body without submission to the Head becomes a spectacle. A knowledgeable body without charity becomes cold. A busy body without doctrine becomes restless. A divided body without humility becomes sick. The Holy Ghost answers all of it by saying, "Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."

The key truth must be repeated until it gets down into the bones: “But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.” That means there is no room for boasting and no room for despair. If God made you an eye, see clearly and do not despise the hand. If God made you a hand, work faithfully and do not envy the eye. If God made you a foot, walk where He sends you and do not complain because you are not the mouth. If God made you an ear, hear the word and do not resent the tongue. If you are a feeble member, do not believe the lie that you are unnecessary. If you are a hidden member, do not think God has forgotten you because men have not noticed you. If you are a strong member, use your strength to bear burdens, not to advertise yourself. The body belongs to Christ. The placement belongs to God. The supply belongs to every member. The glory belongs to the Head.

This first essay is only the doorway into the larger study. From here, each member will teach us something about the life, service, health, weakness, warfare, and unity of the body of Christ. The eyes will teach discernment. The ears will teach hearing. The mouth and tongue will teach speech. The hands and feet will teach service and movement. The heart will teach charity. The lungs will teach prayer. The blood will teach life and redemption. The bones will teach doctrine. The joints will teach connection. The knees will teach humility. The scars will teach suffering. The feeble and uncomely parts will teach honor where the world sees none. But before studying any individual member, the foundation must be settled: there is one body, many members, one Head, one Spirit, one Lord, and one God who set the members as it pleased Him. Any believer who gets that straight will stop trying to be the whole body and start being faithful where God put him.

## **2 of 32: One Body - Many Members - The Head: Christ Alone Rules the Body**

### **Introduction**

Any study of the body must begin with the Head, and any study of the church must begin with Jesus Christ. Start anywhere else and you are already crooked before you get your shoes tied. A body without a head is dead, and a body with more than one head is a monstrosity. That is not hard to understand physically, but religious people suddenly lose all common sense when you apply it spiritually. The Bible says plainly in Colossians 1:18, “And he is the head of the body, the church.” That verse does not say a pope is the head of the body. It does not say a bishop is the head of the body. It does not say a board, a convention, a seminary, a scholar, a celebrity pastor, a prophetess, a church council, a denomination, a family tradition, or a religious system is the head of the body. It says “he,”

and the “he” is the Lord Jesus Christ. The body belongs to Him because He purchased it with His own blood, joined it to Himself by the Spirit, nourishes it by His word, governs it by His authority, and will one day present it to Himself. That means the body does not exist to fulfill the ambitions of men. It exists under the rule of Christ.

This is why the doctrine of Christ’s headship is not a decorative truth for a theological shelf. It is the controlling truth for the whole Christian life. If Christ is the Head, then every member must take direction from Him. If Christ is the Head, then the hand cannot invent its own ministry in rebellion against Him. If Christ is the Head, then the mouth cannot speak words He did not authorize. If Christ is the Head, then the feet cannot walk into places He never sent them. If Christ is the Head, then the eyes cannot look where He forbids. If Christ is the Head, then the heart cannot love what He hates. If Christ is the Head, then the mind cannot exalt itself against His words. The headship of Christ is not merely about church government. It is about authority, doctrine, worship, service, separation, obedience, affection, discipline, and direction. The Head tells the body what to do. The body does not tell the Head what it will permit Him to command.

Modern Christianity is in such confusion because so much of it has either lost the Head or tried to add extra heads. Some groups are dead because they operate without Christ’s life, Christ’s word, Christ’s Spirit, and Christ’s authority. Other groups are monstrous because they confess Christ with the mouth while giving His authority to somebody else in practice. They have a Christ plus a hierarchy, Christ plus a tradition, Christ plus a scholar, Christ plus a council, Christ plus a denomination, Christ plus a mystical experience, Christ plus a political movement, Christ plus a personality cult, Christ plus a marketing strategy, Christ plus a self-appointed prophet, Christ plus a board of nervous men trying not to lose donors. That is not the body functioning under the Head. That is a religious creature stitched together in a laboratory, staggering around with borrowed parts and a dead man’s pulse. The Bible position is cleaner, stronger, and simpler: Christ alone rules the body. Every member lives under Him, receives from Him, answers to Him, and must grow up into Him in all things.

## **Chapter 1: Christ Is the Head by Divine Appointment**

The first thing that must be settled is that Christ did not campaign to become Head of the body, and men did not vote Him into office. God exalted Him. Ephesians 1:20-23 says that God raised Christ from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, “far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named,” and then says God “hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body.” That is not democratic language. That is not denominational language. That is not religious committee language. That is the language of

divine appointment. The Father raised the Son, exalted the Son, seated the Son, put all things under the Son's feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the church. A man may accept that or rebel against it, but he does not get to revise it.

This matters because the headship of Christ rests on resurrection glory, not religious sentiment. The crucified Saviour rose from the dead. The rejected stone became the head of the corner. The One whom men despised is now exalted far above all. That means the church does not take its orders from a dead founder whose memory is preserved by an institution. The church is joined to a living Head in glory. Buddha is dead. Mohammed is dead. Popes die. Reformers die. Scholars die. Pastors die. Denominational founders die. Seminary presidents die. Famous speakers die. Christ liveth. Revelation 1:18 says, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore." That is the kind of Head the body has. Not a relic. Not a corpse. Not a statue. Not an office. Not a tradition. A living, risen, glorified Saviour.

Once you see that, it becomes madness to put any man in Christ's place. No man was raised and seated far above all principalities and powers for the church. No man had all things put under his feet for the church. No man is the fullness of Him that filleth all in all. No man can nourish the body as Christ nourishes it. No man can hold the body together as Christ holds it together. A pastor may feed sheep under Christ. A teacher may instruct under Christ. An evangelist may preach Christ. A brother may help another brother serve Christ. But none of them become Christ. The moment a man's voice carries more weight than the words of Christ, the body is already sick. The moment a system's authority overrules Scripture, the body is already diseased. The moment believers fear disappointing men more than disobeying Christ, they have forgotten who the Head is.

## **Chapter 2: A Body Without a Head Is Dead**

A body without a head may still have shape for a while, but it has no life, no direction, no true identity, and no future. That is exactly what religious systems become when Christ is removed from practical authority. They may still have buildings, music, budgets, programs, robes, degrees, cameras, pulpits, followers, and a vocabulary full of religious words, but without Christ as the living Head, they are spiritually dead. Revelation 3:1 describes a church that had a name that it lived, but was dead. That is possible. A church can have a reputation for life and still be dead. A ministry can have motion and still be dead. A denomination can have history and still be dead. A preacher can have noise and still be dead. Activity is not life. Crowds are not life. Money is not life. Emotional excitement is not life. Life is in Christ.

The deadness shows up when the body no longer responds to the Head. A living body responds. If the head commands the hand to move, the hand moves. If the head sends a warning through the nerves, the body reacts. If the head directs the feet, the feet walk. But when a body no longer responds to the head, something is terribly wrong. Apply that to Christianity. If Christ says preach the word, but men preach psychology, politics, prosperity, tradition, social respectability, or self-esteem, the body is not responding to the Head. If Christ says keep His words, but men correct His words with their scholarship, the body is not responding to the Head. If Christ says separate from evil, but men call separation unloving, the body is not responding to the Head. If Christ says feed His sheep, but men entertain goats, the body is not responding to the Head. That is not health. That is paralysis.

This explains why so many religious gatherings have to manufacture life artificially. When the living direction of the Head is absent, men try to pump life into the corpse with lights, emotion, music, branding, conferences, slogans, celebrity appearances, mystical talk, and endless novelty. They mistake stimulation for life. You can run electricity through a dead frog and make its leg jump, but that does not mean it is alive. Likewise, you can run excitement through a dead church and get movement, but movement is not resurrection life. The body of Christ is not sustained by religious electricity. It is sustained by Christ. He is the Head, and from Him the body receives direction, nourishment, unity, and increase. A headless religion may impress men for a season, but it cannot produce spiritual health.

### **Chapter 3: A Body With Two Heads Is a Monster**

If a body without a head is dead, a body with two heads is a monster. That is what happens when men confess Christ as Head in theory but submit to another authority in practice. They say Christ is Lord, but tradition has the final word. They say Christ is Lord, but the denomination has the final word. They say Christ is Lord, but scholarship has the final word. They say Christ is Lord, but feelings have the final word. They say Christ is Lord, but church culture has the final word. They say Christ is Lord, but a pope, priest, pastor, prophet, board, movement, or celebrity teacher has the final word. That is not biblical Christianity. That is double-headed religion, and double-headed things do not move correctly. One head says go right, the other says go left, and the body ends up twisting itself into confusion.

This is where Rome is exposed immediately. Rome claims a visible head on earth and then tries to wrap that blasphemous confusion in religious vocabulary. But the Bible never gives the body of Christ an earthly head in place of the risen Christ. The Head is in heaven, and the body is joined to Him by the Spirit. Colossians 2:19 rebukes those “not holding the Head,” from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and

knit together, increaseth with the increase of God. The problem is not merely that men get some details wrong. The problem is that they stop holding the Head. A system that puts a man in Christ's functional place has already attacked the body at the point of authority. You can decorate that system with gold, history, Latin, incense, robes, councils, and ceremonies, but a decorated rebellion is still rebellion.

But this problem is not limited to Rome. Protestants can do it too. Baptists can do it. Fundamentalists can do it. Charismatics can do it. Calvinists can do it. Dispensationalists can do it. Any group can begin by claiming Christ and end by enthroning its own heroes, traditions, schools, personalities, pet doctrines, or unwritten rules. A man can say "Christ is the Head" while treating his favorite teacher as though he is beyond correction. A church can say "Christ is the Head" while obeying donors more than Scripture. A preacher can say "Christ is the Head" while making himself the unquestioned lord over God's heritage. A believer can say "Christ is the Head" while being governed by emotions, bitterness, lust, fear, pride, or social pressure. Two-headed religion is not always formal. Sometimes it is simply a heart that says, "Lord, I will obey Thee as long as Thou dost not cross what I already wanted to do."

#### **Chapter 4: The Head Gives Direction to the Members**

The Head gives direction. That is one of the simplest and most practical truths in the whole study. The hand does not decide independently what it wants to touch. The feet do not decide independently where they want to go. The eyes do not decide independently what they want to fix on. The mouth does not decide independently what it wants to say. In a healthy body, the members respond to the head. That means Christian service is not merely doing whatever seems useful, exciting, emotional, profitable, or popular. Christian service must be governed by Christ through His word. The Lord Jesus Christ is not a mascot for our plans. He is the Head of the body. He gives direction, and the members are to obey.

This means Scripture must be the controlling authority in the life of every member. A man who refuses the words of Christ while claiming to follow Christ is fooling himself. In John 14:23, Jesus said, "If a man love me, he will keep my words." That verse is not complicated. Love for Christ shows up in submission to His words. Not just admiration for His character. Not just emotional warmth during a song. Not just religious excitement. Not just using His name in a testimony. Keeping His words. This is where modern Christianity gets exposed. It talks constantly about relationship with Jesus while treating His words as negotiable. It talks about the Spirit while ignoring the Scriptures the Spirit gave. It talks about love while redefining obedience. It talks about being led while walking contrary to what is written. That is not a body responding to the Head. That is a body having spasms.

The Head directs the members through the Book, and that is why Bible believers must never apologize for being stubborn about Scripture. A body cannot function when the signals from the head are garbled, ignored, corrected, or replaced. If the hand receives mixed signals, it trembles. If the feet receive mixed signals, they stumble. If the body stops receiving clear direction, paralysis or chaos follows. Apply that spiritually. When people are taught that the Bible is uncertain, outdated, poorly preserved, culturally trapped, wrongly translated, or subject to endless correction by experts, the members lose confidence in the voice of the Head. Then every man starts doing that which is right in his own eyes. The cure is not more confusion. The cure is a settled authority. Christ rules His body by His words, and the members must submit.

### **Chapter 5: The Head Nourishes and Holds the Body Together**

The Head does not merely command the body; He nourishes it. Colossians 2:19 says that from the Head “all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.” That is a rich verse. The body receives nourishment from the Head. It is knit together from the Head. Its true increase comes from God through the Head. This means the body is not sustained by human cleverness, religious entertainment, emotional manipulation, academic pride, or organizational machinery. It is sustained by Christ. The Head feeds the body. The Head holds the body together. The Head supplies what the members cannot produce in themselves.

This is why a Christless ministry eventually starves people even if it keeps them busy. The members may be active, but they are underfed. They may be entertained, but they are malnourished. They may be emotionally stimulated, but they are spiritually weak. A body can only run so long without nourishment before it begins to break down. The same is true for believers who are fed everything but Christ and His word. Give them stories, jokes, motivational speeches, political outrage, mystical experiences, personality-driven preaching, church growth strategies, or religious traditions long enough, and they may remain active, but they will not be strong. The body needs nourishment from the Head, and that nourishment comes through truth, doctrine, Scripture, fellowship with Christ, and the ministry God ordained to edify the saints.

This also explains why false doctrine is so dangerous. It is not merely an intellectual mistake. It is bad food in the body. Feed the body poison, and the body will suffer. Feed the body sugar, and it may enjoy the taste while losing strength. Feed the body air, and it will starve. Feed the body corruption, and disease will spread. Sound doctrine nourishes. Right division nourishes. The gospel of the grace of God nourishes. The words of God nourish. Preaching Christ according to Scripture nourishes. But man-made tradition, sacramental systems, works-based confusion, Bible correction, charismatic chaos, Calvinistic fatalism,

prosperity nonsense, and liberal unbelief do not nourish the body. They weaken it. They may come wrapped in religious packaging, but the stomach still knows bad food when it starts making the body sick.

## **Chapter 6: The Members Have No Right to Rebel Against the Head**

No member has a right to rebel against the Head. That sounds obvious, but it needs to be preached because the flesh is a rebel even after salvation. The hand has no right to touch what the Head forbids. The eye has no right to gaze on what the Head condemns. The tongue has no right to speak what the Head hates. The feet have no right to run where the Head has not sent them. The mind has no right to exalt itself against the knowledge of God. The heart has no right to treasure idols while pretending loyalty to Christ. The whole body must be brought under the authority of the Head. Romans 12:1 says to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. That is not fanaticism. That is reasonable.

This is where practical sanctification enters the study. Christ is not only the Head in doctrinal statement; He must be obeyed in daily life. A man can defend Christ's deity and still live like his own flesh is lord. He can preach Christ's headship and still let bitterness rule his tongue. He can argue against Rome's pope and still act like a little pope in his own home. He can rebuke denominational control and still be controlled by his temper, appetites, pride, fear, or lust. It is easy to attack visible false heads outside of us while tolerating hidden false heads inside of us. The flesh wants to sit on the throne. The world wants to sit on the throne. The devil wants influence over the members. But the body belongs to Christ. He bought it. First Corinthians 6:19-20 says, "Ye are not your own" and "ye are bought with a price." Therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

Rebellion against the Head damages more than the rebel. In a physical body, if one member acts against the head's direction, the whole body can be harmed. A foot that steps into danger affects the whole body. A hand that touches fire affects the whole body. A mouth that swallows poison affects the whole body. A member's rebellion is never as private as he thinks. The same is true in the body of Christ. One man's sin can wound others. One teacher's false doctrine can infect many. One gossiping tongue can divide friends. One proud leader can damage a ministry. One bitter believer can discourage the weak. One careless testimony can give occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. That is why obedience to the Head is not merely personal preference. It is body health.

## **Chapter 7: Christ Must Have the Preeminence in All Things**

Colossians 1:18 says that Christ is the Head of the body, the church, “that in all things he might have the preeminence.” That is the end of the argument. Not prominence. Preeminence. Christ is not to be one important piece among many. He is not to be the honored guest at a religious banquet planned by men. He is not to be the opening prayer before the real business begins. He is not to be the logo on the sign while the machinery runs on flesh. He is to have the preeminence in all things. In doctrine, Christ first. In preaching, Christ first. In worship, Christ first. In service, Christ first. In correction, Christ first. In charity, Christ first. In the church, Christ first. In the home, Christ first. In the mind, Christ first. In the body, Christ first.

This destroys personality worship. The body is not built around a preacher. It is not built around a ministry brand. It is not built around a movement. It is not built around a school. It is not built around a style. It is not built around a favorite teacher, an online following, a denomination, a music program, a building, or a historical tradition. God may use men, but He will not surrender Christ’s preeminence to them. If a man is truly serving the body, he points men to the Head, not to himself. If a preacher has to keep people dependent on his personality to maintain influence, something is wrong. If a teacher cannot be questioned by Scripture, something is wrong. If a leader becomes irritated when people grow enough to follow Christ without needing his permission for every step, something is wrong. Good ministry strengthens members to obey the Head, not to become slaves of another member.

This also destroys self-preeminence. It is not enough to say Christ must be preeminent in the church while demanding preeminence in our own little kingdom. The Lord Jesus Christ must have first place in the believer’s life. That includes the secret life, the thought life, the speech, the habits, the relationships, the ambitions, the money, the time, the ministry, and the affections. Many believers want Christ to save them from hell but not rule their schedule. They want Christ to forgive their sins but not touch their idols. They want Christ to comfort them but not correct them. They want Christ to bless their plans but not govern their steps. That is not how headship works. The Head is not a consultant. He is Lord. The body is healthiest when every member says, in practice and not just in song, “Not my will, but thine, be done.”

## **Conclusion**

The body must begin with the Head, and the Head is the Lord Jesus Christ. Everything else in this series depends on that truth. The eyes cannot see properly unless they are directed by the Head. The ears cannot hear properly unless they are tuned to the Head. The mouth cannot speak properly unless it speaks under the Head’s authority. The hands cannot work properly unless they do the Head’s will. The feet cannot walk properly unless they follow

the Head's command. The heart cannot love properly unless it loves according to the Head's truth. The bones cannot give structure unless the doctrine is Christ's doctrine. The immune system cannot fight infection unless it knows what the Head calls disease. The feeble members cannot be honored rightly unless the body receives its values from the Head rather than the world. Everything rises or falls on Christ's headship.

This doctrine also gives a needed rebuke to all forms of religious replacement. Anything that functionally takes the place of Christ as Head is an enemy to the health of the body. A pope in Rome is not the Head. A boardroom is not the Head. A seminary is not the Head. A denomination is not the Head. A favorite preacher is not the Head. A scholar is not the Head. A mystical experience is not the Head. A church tradition is not the Head. A political cause is not the Head. A personal feeling is not the Head. A man's ambition is not the Head. Christ alone rules the body. The church does not need an earthly substitute for a heavenly Lord. The body does not need a second head. It needs to hold fast to the Head it already has.

The practical question, then, is simple: is the body responding to the Head? Not merely naming Him. Not merely singing about Him. Not merely defending facts about Him. Is the body responding to Him? Is the mouth speaking His words? Are the feet walking His path? Are the hands doing His work? Are the eyes looking where He directs? Are the ears hearing what He says? Is the heart beating with His charity? Is the mind brought under His truth? That is the issue. The Lord Jesus Christ is not a religious ornament placed on top of a human system. He is the risen, exalted, living Head of the body. A sane member does not fight the Head, ignore the Head, replace the Head, or pretend to be the Head. A sane member receives direction from the Head and functions accordingly. Christ alone rules the body, and the body is healthy only when every member remembers it.

### **3 of 32: One Body - Many Members - The Eyes: Spiritual Vision and Discernment**

#### **Introduction**

When Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12:21, "And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee," he gives us one of the most practical pictures in the entire chapter. The eye is a seeing member. It notices what other members do not notice. It detects movement. It recognizes danger. It reads signs. It distinguishes light from darkness, distance from nearness, beauty from deformity, truth from counterfeit, and danger from safety. The eye is not the whole body, but the body is in trouble when it has no eyes. A blind body can still have hands, feet, ears, lungs, bones, blood, and strength, but if it cannot see where it is

going, that strength may carry it straight into a ditch. That is why spiritual vision and discernment matter. A church, a family, a ministry, or an individual believer that cannot see spiritually is vulnerable to every false teacher, every religious salesman, every smooth-talking deceiver, every emotional trick, every doctrinal counterfeit, and every wolf who learned how to comb his hair like a sheep.

The eyes represent watchfulness, perception, doctrinal awareness, and the ability to spot danger before the whole body feels the damage. The foot may not know the cliff is ahead until it is too late, but the eye can see it before the step is taken. The hand may not know the object is hot until it touches it, but the eye can see the flame. The mouth may not know that the cup is poisoned, but the eye may read the label before the body drinks death. That is the function of discernment in the body of Christ. It is not there to make a man feel superior. It is not there to give him a ministry of constant suspicion. It is not there so he can sit in a corner with folded arms, sneering at every other member while calling it “discernment.” It is there to protect, guide, warn, and help the body walk in truth. A good eye does not exist for itself. It exists for the whole body. Vision is not a trophy. Vision is a responsibility.

But there is also a warning here, because the eye can become proud. A member that sees danger early can begin to think seeing is the only thing that matters. The eye can start despising the hand that works, the foot that walks, the heart that loves, the knees that pray, and the feeble members that suffer. That is when discernment becomes arrogance. That is when watchfulness becomes suspicion. That is when perception becomes harshness. That is when a man becomes a Pharisee with a telescope, able to spot a speck ten miles away while ignoring the beam lodged in his own skull. The body needs eyes, but the eye still needs the body. Vision without charity becomes cruelty. Discernment without humility becomes pride. Warning without patience becomes noise. And seeing error without loving truth enough to edify others becomes nothing but a spiritual sniper hiding in a church steeple.

## **Chapter 1: The Eye Gives Light to the Body**

The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 6:22-23, “The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness.” That is one of the most searching statements in the Bible. The eye affects the whole body. What a man sees, how he sees, what he looks for, what he focuses on, and what kind of light he receives will affect everything else. If the eye is clear, the body can move with confidence. If the eye is diseased, distracted, evil, or darkened, the whole body suffers. A man does not walk well when his vision is corrupt. He stumbles, misjudges,

reaches wrong, fears shadows, misses hazards, and follows lights that may be nothing but reflections off a swamp.

Spiritual vision begins with light from God's word. Psalm 119:18 says, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." That is the right prayer. The believer does not naturally see everything as he ought. His eyes need opening. His judgment needs Scripture. His perception needs cleansing. The natural man may be brilliant in worldly matters and still blind as a bat in spiritual matters. A scholar can know Hebrew roots, Greek grammar, church history, manuscript theories, philosophy, archaeology, psychology, and literary criticism, and still be blind to the plain authority of God's preserved words. That is why spiritual sight is not the same thing as academic eyesight. A man can read books and never see truth. He can have eyes in his head and darkness in his soul. The eye that gives light to the body must be governed by the Book.

The "single" eye in Matthew 6 is an eye fixed in the right direction. It is not darting all over the place chasing lust, ambition, vanity, applause, and religious novelty. It is not double-minded. It is not half on Christ and half on the world. It is not trying to serve God while flirting with the devil's marketplace. A single eye sees with holy focus. That kind of spiritual vision fills the body with light because it keeps the members moving toward the right object. When the eye is fixed on Christ, the hands work better, the feet walk straighter, the mouth speaks cleaner, and the heart beats with better affections. But when the eye is evil, the whole body becomes darkened. That is why discernment is not merely the ability to detect what is wrong in others. It begins with the eye being right before God.

## **Chapter 2: The Eye Sees Danger Before the Foot Steps Into It**

The eye has a preventive function. It sees the cliff before the foot walks over it. It sees the pit before the body falls into it. It sees the snake before the hand reaches toward it. That is what discernment does in the body of Christ. It identifies danger early. It notices a doctrinal shift before it becomes open apostasy. It sees compromise while others are still applauding the new tone. It hears a false note in a sermon while others are admiring the speaker's polish. It notices when charity is being used as a cloak for cowardice, when liberty is being used as a cloak for sin, when grace is being twisted into looseness, when holiness is being twisted into legalism, and when zeal is being twisted into pride. The eye warns because it sees.

This is why spiritually discerning believers are often misunderstood. The foot does not always appreciate the eye's warning. The hand may think the eye is too cautious. The mouth may say, "Why are you always pointing things out?" The heart may say, "Can we not just love everybody?" But if the eye is seeing real danger, silence is not love. A watchman

who sees the sword coming and refuses to blow the trumpet is not gracious. He is guilty. Ezekiel 33 gives that principle plainly in Israel's context, and the moral lesson remains: when danger is visible, warning is not optional. In the church age, Paul did the same thing. He warned about grievous wolves entering in, not sparing the flock. He warned about perverse men arising from within. He warned with tears. That is discernment with a burden, not discernment with a sneer.

The problem today is that many people do not want eyes in the body. They want decorations. They want cheerleaders. They want singers, speakers, managers, marketers, and comforters, but not watchmen. The moment a discerning believer says, "That doctrine is dangerous," "That teacher is off," "That movement is corrupt," "That version is tampering with the words," "That emotional experience is not Bible," or "That spirit is not clean," people call him divisive. But the eye is not being divisive by seeing a fire. The fire is the problem. The eye is not being negative by seeing a wolf. The wolf is the problem. The eye is not creating danger by pointing to poison. The poison was already there. A body that punishes its eyes for seeing danger is begging to walk into ruin.

### **Chapter 3: The Eye Must Judge by Scripture, Not Suspicion**

Discernment must be governed by Scripture, or it turns into suspicion. There is a difference between a clear eye and a suspicious eye. A clear eye sees what is there. A suspicious eye invents what might be there. A clear eye tests things by the Book. A suspicious eye tests things by personal trauma, bitterness, insecurity, rumors, preferences, and imagination. That distinction matters because some people call everything discernment when half of it is just a bad attitude wearing Bible shoes. First John 4:1 says, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God." That is not a command to believe every accusation, chase every rumor, assume every motive, or treat every brother as a criminal suspect. It is a command to test the spirits.

The measuring line is Scripture. Isaiah 8:20 says, "To the law and to the testimony." In this age, the believer tests doctrine by the completed revelation of God's words rightly divided. The question is not, "Do I like the man?" The question is not, "Does he sound educated?" The question is not, "Does he have a big following?" The question is not, "Did he make me feel spiritual?" The question is not, "Does my favorite group approve him?" The question is, "What saith the scripture?" A good eye does not judge by surface glitter. It judges by light. If a teacher denies the blood, corrupts the gospel, confuses Israel and the church, attacks the preserved words of God, mixes works into salvation, exalts tradition over Scripture, or replaces sound doctrine with mystical fog, the eye should see it and say so. But the eye must say so because the Book says so, not merely because the man irritates him.

This is where humility is needed. A discerning man must be careful not to confuse personal preference with Bible conviction. Not every difference is apostasy. Not every weakness is heresy. Not every immature statement is wolf behavior. Not every clumsy phrase requires a public execution. A man can become so addicted to spotting error that he stops recognizing growth, sincerity, repentance, and partial understanding. That is not discernment. That is spiritual cynicism. The eye must be sharp, but it must also be clean. It must be trained by the words of God, not warped by pride. Hebrews 5:14 says strong meat belongs to them “who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” Notice both. Not evil only. Good and evil. A man who can only see evil may not have discernment at all. He may just have a darkened eye.

#### **Chapter 4: The Eye Must Not Despise the Hand, the Foot, or the Heart**

Paul says, “And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee.” That statement is aimed straight at the pride of the seeing member. The eye sees, but the hand works. The eye detects the tool, but the hand picks it up. The eye sees the wound, but the hand binds it. The eye sees the hungry man, but the hand gives him bread. The eye sees the Bible, but the hand turns the page. The eye sees danger, but the foot moves the body away from it. The eye sees suffering, but the heart cares. If the eye begins to think seeing is the only function that matters, it has already become diseased with pride. A discerning believer who despises servants, workers, encouragers, givers, helpers, and compassionate saints is not as healthy as he thinks.

There is a type of Bible believer who can spot error from a mile away but cannot help a wounded brother three feet in front of him. He can identify every false teacher, chart every doctrinal decline, expose every corrupt system, and smell apostasy in the wallpaper, but he has no patience, no tenderness, no burden, no tears, and no ability to build. That is a diseased eye. It sees, but it does not serve the body. It turns discernment into self-display. It knows how to point, but not how to help. It knows how to warn, but not how to restore. It knows how to tear down error, but not how to strengthen truth in another believer. That is not the full ministry of spiritual vision. The eye must work with the hand, the foot, the heart, the knees, and the rest of the body.

The body needs discerning believers, but discerning believers need the rest of the body. They need the heart to keep them charitable. They need the knees to keep them prayerful. They need the hands to keep them practical. They need the ears to keep them teachable. They need the feet to keep them moving. They need the mouth to speak truth carefully. They need the bones of doctrine to keep them stable. They need the blood of Christ to keep them humble. A man with discernment must remember he was saved by grace, not by having better eyesight than somebody else. The eye is useful, but it is not independent. The

eye that says, “I have no need of thee,” has stopped seeing clearly in the most important area: itself.

## **Chapter 5: Blind Guides Lead Bodies Into Ditches**

The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 15:14, “And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.” That is one of the simplest explanations of religious disaster ever spoken. Blind guides are dangerous because they do not merely stumble alone. They lead others into the ditch with them. A blind teacher with a Bible in his hand is more dangerous than a blind man with a cane, because one can damage a sidewalk and the other can damage souls. The Pharisees had religion, tradition, influence, public respect, and confidence, but they were blind. Christ called them blind guides. That should sober any man who teaches, preaches, leads, posts, writes, counsels, or claims to guide others in spiritual matters.

A blind guide may be blind for several reasons. Some are blinded by tradition. They cannot see Scripture because they have inherited a religious system that tells them what they must find before they ever open the Book. Some are blinded by pride. They cannot be corrected because their identity is built on being right. Some are blinded by scholarship. They are so busy correcting the Bible that they cannot hear it. Some are blinded by emotion. They think something must be of God because it made them cry, shake, laugh, dream, or feel warm. Some are blinded by sin. They avoid light because light exposes what they want to keep. Some are blinded by ambition. They see opportunities for influence where they should see dangers to the soul. Whatever the cause, blindness in a guide is deadly.

This is why the body must be careful whom it lets function as eyes. Not every confident man can see. Not every educated man can see. Not every popular man can see. Not every sincere man can see. Not every smooth speaker can see. A blind guide can use Bible words and still lead people into error. He can talk about grace while corrupting the gospel. He can talk about love while attacking truth. He can talk about the Spirit while ignoring Scripture. He can talk about unity while merging light with darkness. He can talk about humility while demanding unquestioned loyalty. The test is not confidence. The test is light. Does he see according to Scripture? Does he point to Christ? Does he submit to the Book? Does he distinguish things that differ? Does he warn where God warns and comfort where God comforts? If not, do not hand your eyes to a blind man and then act surprised when you wake up in a ditch.

## **Chapter 6: Discernment Must Be Joined to Charity**

Discernment without charity becomes a weapon in the hands of the flesh. That is why 1 Corinthians 13 follows 1 Corinthians 12. The Corinthians were fascinated with gifts,

manifestations, knowledge, and spiritual operations, but Paul shows them “a more excellent way.” Though a man has knowledge, prophecy, understanding, and mountain-moving faith, without charity he is nothing. That is not modern softness. That is Bible. Charity does not mean tolerating false doctrine, patting wolves on the head, or pretending leaven is harmless. Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth. But charity also suffereth long and is kind. That means a discerning man must not only ask, “Is this true?” He must also ask, “Am I handling this truth in a way that edifies the body and honors Christ?”

The eye that sees disease must not enjoy the disease. There is something wrong with a man who seems happiest when he has something to expose. Warning should carry weight, not entertainment. Paul warned with tears, not with a smirk. A man may have to rebuke sharply. Titus 1 says so. A man may have to mark and avoid. Romans 16 says so. A man may have to contend earnestly for the faith. Jude says so. A man may have to withstand a brother to the face when truth is at stake. Galatians 2 shows that. But even when the tone is sharp, the motive must be clean. The goal is not to prove that the eye is smarter than everyone else. The goal is to protect the body, honor Christ, and preserve truth.

Charity also helps discernment distinguish between wolves, weak sheep, ignorant brethren, wounded saints, and honest learners. Not everyone who says something wrong is a wolf. Some are babes. Some are confused. Some are repeating what they were taught. Some are trying to unlearn error. Some are asking clumsy questions sincerely. Some need correction with patience. Others need a public rebuke. Others need to be marked. Charity does not erase judgment; it refines judgment. It keeps the eye from treating a bruised reed like a raging wolf. It keeps the watchman from firing the cannon at a sheep that wandered near the fence. A discerning believer must learn not only what he sees, but what he is looking at. That takes Scripture, prayer, humility, and charity.

## **Chapter 7: The Eye Must Stay Fixed on Christ**

The eye must ultimately stay fixed on Christ. Discernment that only looks at error can become spiritually unhealthy. Yes, the eye must see danger. Yes, the eye must identify corruption. Yes, the eye must warn the body. But the highest function of spiritual sight is not merely to stare at darkness. It is to behold the Lord. Hebrews 12:2 says, “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.” Second Corinthians 3:18 speaks of beholding the glory of the Lord and being changed. A believer who spends all his time studying darkness and never looking at Christ will eventually become hard, suspicious, restless, and spiritually dry. You cannot feed your soul on exposure alone. The eyes need light.

This is especially important in an age where error is everywhere and can be studied endlessly. A man can spend all day watching apostasy, false teachers, cults, corrupt Bible versions, charismatic madness, Roman deception, liberal unbelief, political manipulation, conspiracy, paganism, witchcraft, and religious fraud. Some of that study may be necessary for warning. But if he is not careful, his eyes will be filled with the very darkness he is trying to expose. The eye is the light of the body. If the eye becomes occupied with filth beyond what duty requires, the whole body can become affected. There is a difference between being aware of danger and being obsessed with corruption. The discerning man must return constantly to Christ, Scripture, prayer, worship, and edification.

When the eye is fixed on Christ, discernment becomes healthier. It sees error more clearly because it knows truth more deeply. It recognizes counterfeit because it is familiar with the real thing. It warns with more authority because it is not merely reacting against men but standing with the Lord. It remains humble because it sees the holiness of Christ and remembers its own need for grace. It remains charitable because it sees the compassion of Christ. It remains bold because it sees the authority of Christ. It remains steady because it sees the coming judgment seat of Christ. The eye that looks unto Jesus will not become a proud critic sitting above the body. It will become a faithful member serving the body under the Head.

## **Conclusion**

The body needs eyes. That cannot be denied without denying the wisdom of God's design. A body that cannot see is vulnerable. It may have strength, energy, resources, emotion, and movement, but without sight it will stumble into danger. In the body of Christ, spiritual vision and discernment are necessary. The church needs believers who can see doctrinal drift, recognize false teaching, detect compromise, test spirits, warn of danger, and distinguish between truth and error. It needs men and women who are not hypnotized by charisma, credentials, music, tradition, emotionalism, scholarship, or popularity. It needs eyes that are open to the word of God, trained by Scripture, and fixed on Christ. A blind body is not humble. It is endangered.

But the eye must also be warned. The eye is not the whole body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of thee." Discernment is not an excuse for pride, harshness, isolation, bitterness, or constant suspicion. A believer who sees clearly must still love rightly, speak carefully, pray deeply, serve practically, and remain teachable. Vision without charity becomes arrogance. Discernment without humility becomes cruelty. Watchfulness without prayer becomes paranoia. Knowledge without love becomes a brass cymbal clanging in a room full of wounded people. The eye must not become proud because it

sees what others miss. It must become more responsible, more prayerful, and more careful because the body depends on what it sees.

So let the eyes see, but let them see under the Head. Let them see through the light of Scripture. Let them see danger before the foot steps into it. Let them see wolves before the flock is torn. Let them see leaven before the lump is corrupted. Let them see wounded members before they are forgotten. Let them see opportunities for service, not merely targets for criticism. Let them see Christ above all, because He is the Head of the body and the Light that makes all true sight possible. The body needs eyes, but not proud eyes, not evil eyes, not wandering eyes, not blind eyes, and not suspicious eyes. It needs clear eyes, single eyes, Scripture-washed eyes, Christ-fixed eyes, and charitable eyes that see for the good of the whole body.

#### **4 of 32: One Body - Many Members - The Ears: He That Hath Ears to Hear**

##### **Introduction**

The ear is not the loudest member of the body, but it may be one of the most necessary. The mouth gets attention because it speaks. The eye gets attention because it sees. The hand gets attention because it works. The foot gets attention because it moves. But the ear sits quietly on the side of the head and receives. It does not boast, flash, push, grab, or parade itself. It listens. That is exactly why the ear is such a needed picture in the body of Christ. We live in a time where everybody wants to talk, post, preach, correct, answer, argue, expose, rebuke, comment, and broadcast, but very few want to hear. Men want microphones before they have ears. They want platforms before they have been corrected. They want to teach before they have learned. They want to defend themselves before they have listened long enough to know whether the rebuke is true. But the Bible says in James 1:19, "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath." That verse is not complicated. God put hearing before speaking, and most of the religious messes men make come from reversing that order.

The ears represent hearing, learning, receiving correction, and being sensitive to the word of God. Romans 10:17 says, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." That means the ear is tied directly to faith. A man does not get saving faith by staring at candles, handling beads, trusting sacraments, chanting traditions, meditating on his emotions, or climbing a religious ladder. Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. The ear receives what God has spoken. That is why the devil works so hard to corrupt, distract, dull, and close men's ears. If he can keep a sinner from hearing the

gospel, he can keep him blind in unbelief. If he can keep a saved man from hearing correction, he can keep him proud. If he can keep a church from hearing sound doctrine, he can turn it into a theater, a therapy group, a political rally, a mystical circus, or a dead religious monument. The ear may be quiet, but it is a battlefield.

When the Lord Jesus says repeatedly, “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear,” He is not filling space. He is putting responsibility on the hearer. It is possible to have physical ears and still not hear spiritually. Israel had that problem. Religious leaders had that problem. Churches can have that problem. Bible readers can have that problem. A man can sit under preaching and hear sound waves while never receiving truth. He can read Scripture and hear his own tradition instead of God’s words. He can hear correction and immediately prepare a defense instead of letting the Book cut him. He can hear a warning and label it negative because it disturbed his comfort. He can hear doctrine and reject it because it crossed his system. The body of Christ needs ears that still know how to hear the Book. Not itching ears. Not selective ears. Not dull ears. Not rebellious ears. Not ears tuned to popularity, tradition, emotion, and entertainment. It needs sanctified ears, humbled ears, corrected ears, attentive ears, Bible-trained ears that can still say, “Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth.”

## **Chapter 1: Faith Cometh by Hearing**

Romans 10:17 is the great foundational verse for the ear: “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” There is no way to exaggerate the importance of that statement. Faith does not come by human imagination. Faith does not come by religious atmosphere. Faith does not come by inherited tradition. Faith does not come by priestcraft, sacraments, rituals, candles, stained glass, emotional music, or a mother’s church membership. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. The ear receives the message God gave, and that message is centered on Jesus Christ, His death, burial, and resurrection according to the Scriptures. The sinner must hear what God said before he can believe what God said. That is why preaching matters. That is why Scripture matters. That is why words matter. God chose words as the vehicle of truth, and the ear is the member that receives them.

This immediately exposes the modern contempt for preaching. The world may laugh at preaching, but God chose “the foolishness of preaching” to save them that believe. Men want drama, ritual, entertainment, scholarship, conversation, dialogue, atmosphere, and experience, but God put His word in the center and said faith cometh by hearing. That does not mean every loud man is preaching God’s truth. It means the God-ordained method involves the proclamation of His words. A silent gospel saves nobody. A hidden Bible converts nobody. A preacher who refuses to preach because he wants to be liked is not

loving sinners. He is starving their ears. If faith comes by hearing, then the devil does not have to make every man an atheist; he only has to keep the word from being heard clearly. He can bury it under tradition, corrupt it in translation, replace it with philosophy, drown it in music, soften it with psychology, or silence it with fear.

The ear, then, represents the beginning of spiritual response. Before the mouth confesses, the ear hears. Before the feet walk, the ear hears. Before the hands serve, the ear hears. Before the mind understands, the ear hears. Before the heart believes, the ear hears. A man may be proud of his religious heritage, but has he heard the gospel? He may be proud of his denomination, but has he heard the gospel? He may be sincere, moral, charitable, conservative, traditional, emotional, or mystical, but has he heard the gospel of the grace of God? The body of Christ must never forget that hearing is not a minor matter. Souls are at stake. Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Close the ear to the Book, and you close the door to faith. Open the ear to the Book, and God can send light into a dark soul.

## **Chapter 2: Hearing Comes Before Speaking**

James 1:19 puts hearing in its proper place: “swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.” That order is not accidental. A man who is slow to hear will usually be quick to speak and quick to wrath. He will answer before he understands. He will defend before he considers. He will react before he examines. He will assume before he listens. Proverbs 18:13 says, “He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.” That verse should be nailed to every pulpit, phone screen, keyboard, debate thread, and kitchen table in the country. Half the arguments in life would die young if men would simply hear a matter before answering it. But the flesh hates that. The flesh wants to speak now, win now, defend now, correct now, and feel justified now.

In the body of Christ, this matters tremendously because a body with no ears becomes a body full of noise. Everybody talks, nobody listens, and then they wonder why there is confusion. The mouth may be useful, but the mouth without the ear becomes dangerous. A man who can speak but cannot hear is not mature; he is lopsided. A teacher who cannot be taught is dangerous. A preacher who cannot receive correction is dangerous. A husband who cannot listen is dangerous. A parent who cannot hear is dangerous. A believer who answers every rebuke with an excuse is dangerous to himself. Hearing is a mark of humility because it admits, “I do not already know everything. I may need correction. I may have missed something. The word of God may have something to say to me before I have something to say to everyone else.”

This is especially needed in debate and doctrinal conflict. A man must learn to hear what is actually being said before he answers what he thinks was said. Many people do not listen to understand; they listen only long enough to reload. That is why they talk past each other for hours and never touch the real issue. The ear must work before the tongue. The believer should hear the statement, weigh it by Scripture, identify the actual claim, and then answer with truth. That is how sound speech works. The flesh wants to jump in early because it is afraid of losing control. Wisdom can wait long enough to hear. A man who has Bible truth does not need to panic. Truth can afford to listen because truth is not threatened by examination.

### **Chapter 3: The Ear Must Receive Reproof Before the Mouth Defends the Flesh**

One of the hardest things for any man to do is hear reproof without immediately defending himself. The flesh has a lawyer living inside it, and that lawyer never sleeps. The moment correction comes, the flesh files an appeal. "That is not what I meant." "You misunderstood me." "Other people are worse." "I had a reason." "You are being harsh." "You do not know my heart." "Who are you to judge?" The mouth rushes to defend what the ear has barely heard. But the Bible repeatedly connects wisdom with the ability to receive reproof. Proverbs 9:8 says, "Rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee." Proverbs 15:31 says, "The ear that heareth the reproof of life abideth among the wise." Notice that phrase: "the ear that heareth the reproof of life." Reproof can be life-giving if the ear will receive it.

This is where many believers fail. They want preaching that corrects everyone else. They want strong doctrine against Rome, liberals, Calvinists, charismatics, modern versions, cults, hypocrites, false teachers, and the wicked world, and there is certainly plenty to rebuke in those places. But when the same Book turns and cuts their own attitude, pride, bitterness, laziness, prayerlessness, temper, lust, covetousness, gossip, envy, or stubbornness, suddenly they want a softer tone. That is not a hearing ear. That is a selective ear. The word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any twoedged sword. It cuts outward and inward. If a man only enjoys the sword when it is swinging away from him, he has not submitted to the Book. He has simply weaponized it for his own comfort.

The ear must let Scripture correct the heart before the mouth defends the flesh. That does not mean every accusation from men is true. It does not mean every critic deserves obedience. It does not mean every rebuke is wise, balanced, or rightly applied. But it does mean a spiritual man should be willing to ask, "Is there any truth here? Does the Book confirm this correction? Is God using even an imperfect messenger to expose something in me?" David heard correction from Nathan and did not spend the next hour explaining royal stress. He said, "I have sinned against the Lord." That is what a hearing ear sounds like. Saul, by contrast, always had an excuse, a religious cover, or a blame-shifting explanation.

The difference between those two men is a warning. A man who cannot hear reproof will eventually become a monument to his own stubbornness.

#### **Chapter 4: The Ear Must Be Sensitive to the Voice of Scripture**

The body needs ears that are sensitive to the word of God. Not sensitive in the modern fragile sense, where every uncomfortable word is called abuse, but sensitive in the biblical sense, where the heart is tender enough to tremble at God's word. Isaiah 66:2 speaks of the man who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at God's word. That is the right kind of sensitivity. A hard ear hears Scripture and shrugs. A tender ear hears Scripture and yields. A dull ear requires thunder. A sensitive ear can be corrected by a verse. The more spiritual a man becomes, the less God has to break him to get his attention. The word itself begins to govern him.

This kind of sensitivity is badly needed because sin dulls hearing. Pride dulls hearing. Repetition without obedience dulls hearing. Sitting under truth while refusing to respond dulls hearing. Hebrews 5:11 speaks of those who were "dull of hearing." That is a frightening condition. They had been around truth long enough that they ought to have been teachers, but they still needed someone to teach them again the first principles. Their problem was not lack of exposure. It was dull hearing. A man can sit under Bible preaching for years and become harder, not softer, if he keeps refusing the light he receives. He hears sermons, but not God. He hears words, but not warning. He hears doctrine, but not correction. He hears truth, but not personally.

The sensitive ear listens for Scripture above all other voices. It does not put tradition above the Book. It does not put feelings above the Book. It does not put scholarship above the Book. It does not put family pressure above the Book. It does not put church culture above the Book. It does not put personal preference above the Book. The sensitive ear says, "What saith the scripture?" and then it listens. This is one of the marks of a healthy member in the body. When the Book speaks, the ear should not be arguing, bargaining, editing, correcting, or explaining it away. The ear should receive. A man who constantly explains away the verses that cross him is not rightly dividing; he is wrongly dodging.

#### **Chapter 5: Itching Ears Want Scratching, Not Sound Doctrine**

Second Timothy 4:3-4 gives one of the clearest prophecies of modern church life: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears." Notice the problem is not that they cannot find teachers. They heap them to themselves. There is no shortage of teachers for itching ears. The religious market will always supply demand. If people want flattery, someone will preach it. If they want prosperity, someone will sell it. If they want mysticism,

someone will dramatize it. If they want tradition, someone will sanctify it. If they want intellectual unbelief, someone will dress it in academic robes. If they want grace without holiness, someone will twist Paul. If they want works salvation, someone will twist James. If they want a Bible they can correct, someone will hand them one with footnotes.

Itching ears are not merely curious ears. They are lust-driven ears. The passage says, “after their own lusts.” That means the ear is not neutral. It is being governed by desire. The hearer wants a certain kind of message, so he finds teachers who will give it to him. That is why sound doctrine becomes unbearable. The issue is not that sound doctrine cannot be understood. The issue is that it will not be endured. Sound doctrine has weight. It corrects. It defines. It divides truth from error. It rebukes sin. It exalts Christ. It humbles man. It exposes false religion. It gives no quarter to the flesh. It does not scratch the rash; it diagnoses the disease. Itching ears hate that. They want relief, not truth. They want soothing, not surgery.

This is why the body of Christ must guard its ears. What you listen to will shape you. Sit under soft compromise long enough, and strong preaching will sound mean. Sit under emotional manipulation long enough, and Bible doctrine will sound dry. Sit under Bible correction long enough, and the King James Bible will sound like something that needs help from scholars. Sit under legalism long enough, and grace will sound dangerous. Sit under antinomian looseness long enough, and holiness will sound like bondage. The ear must be trained by sound doctrine, or it will develop cravings for religious junk food. The body needs ears that can endure truth, not ears that demand a backscratcher.

## **Chapter 6: Hearing Must Become Obedience**

Hearing is not complete until it moves toward obedience. James 1:22 says, “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.” That is one of the great dangers of religious life: hearing without doing. A man can become a professional hearer. He listens to sermons, studies doctrines, reads books, watches debates, takes notes, discusses theology, and nods at truth, but never obeys what he hears. James says that man deceives himself. He may think exposure equals growth, but it does not. Hearing truth and refusing to do it can actually increase self-deception because the man begins to mistake familiarity for spirituality. He knows the verses, but the verses have not governed him.

This is a particular danger for Bible believers because we can become rich in knowledge and poor in obedience if we are not careful. A man can defend the right Bible and still fail to obey the Bible he defends. He can know dispensational truth and still be carnal. He can expose false doctrine and still neglect prayer. He can explain the body of Christ and still mistreat members of it. He can preach grace and still refuse to show mercy. He can argue

eternal security and still live selfishly. He can quote Paul and still ignore Paul's commands. Hearing must become doing. Otherwise, the ear has become a storage unit instead of a doorway to obedience.

The hearing ear should send truth through the whole body. The ear hears, the mind understands, the heart receives, the mouth confesses, the hands obey, and the feet walk. That is healthy. If truth stops at the ear and never reaches the hands and feet, something is wrong. The body is not functioning properly. The Lord did not give Scripture merely to satisfy curiosity. He gave it for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. Notice that end: good works. Not salvation by works, but saved men furnished for work. The ear that truly hears the Book should produce a life that increasingly obeys the Book.

### **Chapter 7: The Body Needs Ears That Can Hear the Head**

The final and highest function of the ears is to hear the Head. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Head of the body, and the members must be able to receive His direction through His words. The ear that is tuned to every voice except Christ's is a danger to the body. Some ears are tuned to culture. Some to tradition. Some to emotion. Some to fear. Some to politics. Some to family pressure. Some to religious systems. Some to online noise. Some to their own wounded pride. But the body needs ears tuned to the Head. Jesus said in John 10:27, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." Hearing and following go together. The sheep that hear the Shepherd follow the Shepherd.

This is why Scripture must remain central. Christ's words are not vague impressions floating around in a man's feelings. The Spirit of God never leads a man contrary to the word of God. A believer who says, "The Lord told me," while contradicting Scripture did not hear the Lord. He heard something else, or he heard himself. The ears of the body must be trained to recognize the voice of Scripture so that strange voices are rejected. In John 10:5, Jesus said of His sheep, "And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers." That is discernment through hearing. The ear knows the Shepherd's voice well enough to reject impostors. The more a believer hears the Book, the less easily he is fooled by religious accents.

The body also needs ears that can hear cries from within the body. Hearing the Head does not make a man deaf to hurting members. It makes him more attentive. When one member suffers, all the members suffer with it. A healthy body hears pain signals. It hears the weak. It hears the wounded. It hears the warning. It hears the reproof. It hears the need. A church full of mouths and no ears will crush people. A ministry full of opinions and no listening will

become hard and brittle. The body needs ears that hear God first and, because they hear God, are able to hear rightly the needs of others. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

## **Conclusion**

The ear may not be flashy, but the body cannot afford to despise it. Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. That alone makes the ear one of the great spiritual pictures in the body. The sinner must hear the gospel. The saint must hear doctrine. The proud man must hear reproof. The wounded man must hear comfort. The foolish man must hear wisdom. The confused man must hear correction. The body must hear the Head. A Christianity that will not hear is already drifting into darkness. A church that will not hear Scripture will eventually hear anything else. A believer who will not hear correction will eventually become trapped inside his own excuses.

The warning is just as clear. Not all ears are healthy ears. Some are dull. Some are itching. Some are selective. Some are rebellious. Some are trained to tradition and deaf to Scripture. Some are addicted to smooth teachers who know how to scratch without healing. Some are so quick to speak that they never really hear. Some have heard truth for years and become harder instead of humbler. That is a fearful condition. The answer is not to hear less Bible, but to hear it rightly. Swift to hear. Slow to speak. Slow to wrath. Trembling at the word. Receiving reproof. Enduring sound doctrine. Doing the word, not merely hearing it. That is what healthy ears look like.

The body of Christ needs members who still know how to hear the Book. Before the mouth answers, let the ear hear. Before the flesh defends itself, let the ear hear. Before the feet run, let the ear hear. Before the hands act, let the ear hear. Before the heart reacts, let the ear hear. Let the word of God enter, correct, cleanse, guide, and strengthen. Let the voice of the Shepherd rise above every strange voice. Let itching ears be rebuked, dull ears awakened, proud ears humbled, and wounded ears comforted. The Lord Jesus said it for a reason: "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." The body will be healthier when its ears finally do.

## **5 of 32: One Body - Many Members - The Mouth: Speaking the Truth in Love**

### **Introduction**

The mouth is one of the most powerful members in the body because it can take what is in the heart, shaped by the mind, governed by the Head, and release it into the world as words. With the mouth a man can preach Christ, confess salvation, comfort the broken,

rebuke error, teach doctrine, warn the careless, encourage the weak, pray to God, sing praise, give thanks, and testify of the grace of God. But with the same mouth a man can lie, flatter, gossip, slander, rail, manipulate, boast, deceive, exaggerate, murmur, complain, wound, divide, and poison the body. That is why the mouth is a dangerous member if it is not sanctified. It is not enough for a man to have a mouth that is busy. The question is whether the mouth is governed by the Head. A mouth that is not under Christ may still sound religious, but it can do more damage than a drunkard at a bar. Religious speech is not automatically sanctified speech. A man can talk about God while dishonoring God with the way he talks.

In the body of Christ, the mouth represents preaching, teaching, witnessing, confession, rebuke, comfort, public testimony, and verbal ministry. Romans 10:9-10 says, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." The mouth is tied to confession. It declares what the heart believes. That alone gives it weight. But the mouth also has a ministry among believers. Ephesians 4:15 speaks of "speaking the truth in love." Ephesians 4:29 says, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying." Colossians 4:6 says, "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt." Those verses do not produce a weak, sentimental, spineless mouth. They produce a truthful, gracious, seasoned, edifying, Christ-governed mouth. The mouth must have truth, or it becomes useless. The mouth must have love, or it becomes cruel. The mouth must have salt, or it becomes bland. The mouth must have grace, or it becomes harsh. The mouth must have Scripture, or it becomes flesh with a religious accent.

This essay is necessary because the Christian life is filled with mouths that are not surrendered to God. Some mouths are loud but empty. Some are smooth but false. Some are bold but carnal. Some are polite but cowardly. Some are doctrinally correct but spiritually rotten in tone. Some are loving in sound but treacherous in substance because they refuse to speak hard truth. Some mouths entertain when they should preach. Some flatter when they should warn. Some argue when they should listen. Some comfort when they should rebuke. Some rebuke when they should restore. Some confess Christ publicly but deny Him practically by filthy speech, sarcasm, pride, and unbridled foolishness. A sanctified mouth is not merely a mouth that avoids cuss words. A sanctified mouth is a member yielded to Christ, filled with Scripture, controlled by charity, sharpened by truth, and restrained from sin. The mouth must speak, but it must speak as a member of the body under the Head, not as a rebel with teeth.

## **Chapter 1: The Mouth Confesses Christ Before Men**

The mouth has a public connection to faith because what the heart believes, the mouth should confess. Romans 10 does not teach salvation by repeating a ritualistic formula while the heart remains dead. It teaches that true faith in the risen Christ is not ashamed to confess Him. The heart believes unto righteousness, and the mouth makes confession unto salvation. That means the mouth becomes the outward witness of inward faith. A man who has believed on the Lord Jesus Christ should not be ashamed of the One who saved him. He should not mumble about Him like a man embarrassed to mention a poor relative. He should not hide Him under religious fog. The mouth should say plainly that Jesus Christ died for our sins, was buried, rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that salvation is by grace through faith, not of works, lest any man should boast.

This is where the mouth stands against the world. The world does not mind religious language as long as it is vague. The world can tolerate “faith,” “spirituality,” “values,” “higher power,” “love,” “community,” and “hope,” but the moment the mouth names Jesus Christ as the only Saviour, the atmosphere changes. The name of Jesus Christ still divides. The cross still offends. The blood still disturbs religious pride. Grace still insults self-righteousness. The resurrection still mocks unbelief. The mouth that confesses Christ must be willing to bear reproach. If a man’s speech has been carefully engineered so nobody can tell whether he actually believes the gospel, something is wrong. The mouth was not given to hide the truth under polished cowardice. It was given to confess.

But confession must be more than slogans. A man can say “Jesus is Lord” and then spend the rest of his speech serving the devil’s purposes. The confession of the mouth should be joined to the submission of the life. That does not mean sinless perfection. It means the mouth should not be double-tongued. It should not bless God on Sunday and butcher brethren on Monday. It should not preach grace and then speak with cruelty. It should not defend the Bible and then use speech filled with deception, arrogance, filth, or foolishness. The mouth that confesses Christ before men must remember it is representing Him before men. Every believer with a mouth has a testimony. The question is whether that mouth makes Christ clear or makes Christ look like a doctrine attached to a bad attitude.

## **Chapter 2: The Mouth Must Be Filled With Scripture**

A mouth that speaks for God must be filled with the words of God. That sounds simple, but it is one of the main problems in modern preaching and teaching. Too many mouths are full of stories, jokes, psychology, motivational slogans, political outrage, denominational talking points, mystical impressions, church traditions, academic speculation, and emotional manipulation, but not enough Scripture. Jeremiah 23:28 says, “he that hath my

word, let him speak my word faithfully.” There is the preacher’s duty in one sentence. If a man has God’s word, let him speak God’s word faithfully. Not correct it. Not apologize for it. Not bury it under Greek fog. Not replace it with personal stories. Not use it as seasoning on a plate of human opinion. Speak the word faithfully.

The mouth in the body of Christ must feed the body, and the body is not fed by religious air. Matthew 4:4 says, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” If man lives by the words of God, then the preacher who withholds those words is starving the hearers. A sermon without Scripture may be interesting, emotional, clever, and memorable, but it is not nourishment. A Bible study where the Bible is treated like a reference book under the authority of the teacher’s system is not true feeding. A testimony that magnifies experience above Scripture is not safe food. The body needs the words of God. The mouth must bring those words out clearly, rightly divided, and applied with spiritual understanding.

This is especially important because the mouth can misuse Scripture as easily as it can neglect it. The devil quoted Scripture to the Lord Jesus, but he did not handle it rightly. A mouth can quote verses while twisting context, confusing dispensations, mixing Israel and the church, blending law and grace, using kingdom passages to corrupt salvation, or using grace passages to excuse sin. That kind of mouth is dangerous because it appears biblical while misleading the hearer. The mouth must be filled with Scripture, but also governed by Scripture. It must speak as the oracles of God, not as a man using the Bible as a prop for his own agenda. The body needs mouths that can open the Book and say, “Here is what God said,” not mouths that use verses like decorations on a religious sales pitch.

### **Chapter 3: The Mouth Must Speak the Truth**

Ephesians 4:15 says, “But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.” Notice first that the mouth must speak the truth. It does not say speaking comfort in love, speaking approval in love, speaking tradition in love, speaking feelings in love, or speaking whatever keeps the room calm in love. Truth comes first in the phrase because love without truth becomes sentimental treason. If a man refuses to speak truth because he is afraid of hurting feelings, he is not loving. He is protecting himself from conflict. If a doctor knows a man has cancer and says, “You look wonderful,” because he wants to be pleasant, he is not kind. He is wicked. If a preacher knows the gospel is being corrupted and stays silent because he does not want to divide, he is not charitable. He is a coward with a Bible.

Truth must be spoken because lies do not become harmless when they are spoken softly. False doctrine does not become safe because the teacher smiles. Error does not become

Christian because it uses Bible words. A mouth that belongs to Christ must be willing to say what God says about sin, salvation, judgment, hell, grace, blood, righteousness, holiness, the body of Christ, sound doctrine, false teachers, and the authority of Scripture. The mouth must warn sinners. The mouth must correct saints. The mouth must rebuke gainsayers. The mouth must mark corrupt doctrine. The mouth must comfort the weak. The mouth must answer confusion. The mouth must testify plainly. The truth does not help anyone while it is locked behind the teeth of a fearful believer.

But speaking truth requires more than being loud. Some men think boldness means volume, insult, and heat. A man can be loud and still be shallow. He can be blunt and still be foolish. He can be offensive and still not be biblical. Truth must be accurate. Truth must be timely. Truth must be rightly applied. Truth must be governed by the Head. A mouth that fires true statements at the wrong target in the wrong spirit at the wrong time can still wound unnecessarily. The answer is not to stop speaking truth. The answer is to speak truth as a sanctified member, not as a carnal man trying to win a verbal fistfight. The mouth must speak the truth, but it must remember that the truth belongs to God, not to the ego of the speaker.

#### **Chapter 4: The Mouth Must Speak in Love Without Becoming Cowardly**

The phrase is not merely “speaking the truth.” It is “speaking the truth in love.” That matters because truth spoken without love can become a club in the hands of the flesh. A man can be right and still be wrong in spirit. He can have the correct doctrine and a rotten disposition. He can identify error and enjoy humiliating people. He can rebuke sin and secretly savor the sound of his own authority. He can defend the Bible while treating people like targets instead of souls. That is not spiritual strength. That is carnality wearing a sword. First Corinthians 13 stands right next to 1 Corinthians 12 for a reason. Gifts, knowledge, utterance, and boldness without charity become noise.

Love does not weaken truth. Bible love strengthens the purpose of truth. Love asks, “How can this truth honor Christ and edify the hearer?” Love does not mean every word must be soft, because some diseases require cutting. Paul rebuked sharply. Christ called religious hypocrites serpents and vipers. Elijah mocked Baal’s prophets. Stephen called his hearers stiffnecked. The Bible is not a handbook for delicate religious flower petals who think every hard sentence is unloving. But the sharpness of Bible rebuke is not fleshly cruelty. It is surgery. There is a difference between a surgeon cutting to remove corruption and a thug cutting because he likes blood. The mouth must know the difference.

At the same time, “love” must never become a mask for cowardice. The modern religious crowd has nearly turned love into a gag for truth. They say, “Speak in love,” but what they

often mean is, “Do not say anything that makes anyone uncomfortable.” That is not love. That is cowardice baptized in perfume. If a man is on the road to hell, love speaks. If a doctrine corrupts the gospel, love speaks. If a wolf is near the flock, love speaks. If a brother is walking into sin, love speaks. If a church is drifting into apostasy, love speaks. True love does not flatter a man into destruction. True love tells the truth with the right motive, under the authority of Christ, for the good of the soul.

## **Chapter 5: The Mouth Can Feed, Warn, and Comfort the Body**

The mouth can feed the body. A faithful teacher or preacher takes the word of God and gives nourishment to the saints. He breaks bread, serves meat, gives milk to babes, and strong meat to those of full age. That is not entertainment. That is feeding. When the Lord Jesus told Peter, “Feed my sheep,” He did not say, “Amuse my goats,” “Impress my critics,” “Build your brand,” or “Keep the religious customers satisfied.” He said feed. The mouth in the body of Christ must help believers grow in truth. That means doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction, comfort, warning, and exhortation. A mouth that only excites people but never feeds them is like a cook who bangs pots in the kitchen and sends out empty plates.

The mouth can also warn the body. Warning is one of the most neglected ministries of speech because modern ears do not like it. But warning is Bible. Paul said in Acts 20:31, “by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.” He did not say he ceased not to affirm every one. He warned. He warned because wolves were coming. He warned because men would arise speaking perverse things. He warned because the body needed protection. A mouth that never warns is not more loving than Paul. It is less faithful. Warnings may concern false doctrine, bad associations, sin, pride, bitterness, worldliness, corrupt Bible versions, religious systems, or spiritual laziness. A warning mouth must not be hysterical, but it must be willing.

The mouth can also comfort the body. This must not be forgotten. Some mouths only know how to correct, but the body also needs comfort. First Thessalonians 5:14 says, “comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.” The same mouth that rebukes error should know how to speak peace to a wounded saint. The same mouth that exposes false doctrine should know how to encourage a struggling believer. The same mouth that warns the careless should know how to strengthen the weary. A sanctified mouth has more than one setting. It can preach, teach, rebuke, exhort, comfort, pray, praise, and testify. It knows the difference between a wolf needing resistance and a wounded sheep needing care. That kind of mouth is rare, but the body needs it badly.

## **Chapter 6: The Mouth Must Be Restrained From Gossip, Flattery, Railing, and Foolishness**

A mouth that is not restrained can poison the body. Proverbs 18:21 says, “Death and life are in the power of the tongue.” That is not exaggeration. Words can strengthen or destroy. In the body of Christ, gossip is especially deadly because it often disguises itself as concern. “I am only telling you so you can pray” has carried more poison than many outright slanders. A gossiping mouth takes private matters, half-truths, suspicions, personal offenses, and unverified reports and spreads them like infection through the body. The person doing it may feel important because he knows something, but he is functioning like a disease, not a ministry. The mouth was made to edify, not to traffic in other people’s weaknesses.

Flattery is another corrupt use of the mouth. Flattery is not love. It is manipulation with a smile. The flatterer says what benefits himself, not what benefits the hearer. Proverbs warns repeatedly about flattering lips because flattery disarms judgment. A flattering preacher tells people what keeps them loyal. A flattering friend tells people what keeps the relationship comfortable. A flattering teacher softens truth to protect his influence. That kind of mouth is dangerous because it sounds kind while refusing to be honest. Better is a faithful wound than a deceitful kiss. The body does not need flatterers. It needs faithful mouths that would rather tell the truth and be misunderstood than lie smoothly and be applauded.

Railing and foolishness must also be restrained. Some men excuse filthy speech, crude jokes, constant sarcasm, and verbal brutality by saying they are just being bold. No, sometimes they are just being carnal. Ephesians 4:29 says, “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth.” Ephesians 5:4 warns against “filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient.” That does not mean a believer can never laugh or use wit. It means the mouth is not to become a sewer pipe. A man can be sharp without being filthy. He can be firm without being foolish. He can be bold without being a railer. He can rebuke without becoming a verbal drunk swinging broken bottles in the street. The mouth must be restrained because an unrestrained mouth will eventually embarrass the doctrine it claims to defend.

## **Chapter 7: The Mouth Must Answer to the Head**

The mouth is not independent. It belongs to the body, and the body belongs to Christ. That means the mouth must answer to the Head. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 12:36-37, “But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be

condemned.” That is a sobering statement. Words are not as light as men pretend. A man may forget what he said, but God does not. A careless sentence, a dishonest accusation, a corrupt joke, a flattering lie, a proud boast, a cruel rebuke, a cowardly silence, a false testimony, a deceptive teaching—all of it matters. The mouth will answer to God.

This should make every preacher, teacher, parent, husband, wife, friend, counselor, debater, and witness tremble a little. Speaking for God is not a game. A man who opens the Bible and speaks to others carries responsibility. James 3:1 says, “My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.” That does not mean nobody should teach. It means teaching is serious. The mouth that instructs others must be careful. Do not pretend to speak for God where God has not spoken. Do not soften what God made hard. Do not harden what God made gracious. Do not twist what God made plain. Do not use the Bible to win personal arguments while ignoring its authority over your own life. The mouth must be under orders.

When the mouth answers to the Head, it becomes a blessing to the body. It speaks Scripture faithfully. It confesses Christ clearly. It rebukes error when needed. It comforts the weak when needed. It refuses gossip. It avoids flattery. It will not rail to satisfy the flesh. It will not become silent to satisfy cowards. It uses salt and grace. It knows that truth and love are not enemies. It knows that boldness and humility can live in the same sentence. It knows that words can build or burn. A mouth governed by Christ is not tame in the worldly sense. It is sanctified. It can be sharp, but clean. Gentle, but not weak. Loving, but not compromising. Bold, but not proud. That kind of mouth is one of the most useful members in the body.

## **Conclusion**

The mouth is a mighty member, and because it is mighty, it is dangerous when unsundered. It can preach the gospel or corrupt the gospel. It can confess Christ or deny Him by silence. It can feed saints or starve them with religious air. It can warn the body or flatter it into danger. It can comfort the weak or crush them. It can rebuke error or spread error. It can edify or destroy. It can speak the truth in love or use truth as an excuse for cruelty. It can speak love without truth and become cowardly. The issue is not whether the mouth will have influence. It will. The issue is whether that influence will be governed by the Head.

The body of Christ needs sanctified mouths. Not merely loud mouths. Not smooth mouths. Not entertaining mouths. Not academic mouths. Not flattering mouths. Not gossiping mouths. Not cowardly mouths. Not cruel mouths. Sanctified mouths. Mouths filled with Scripture, seasoned with grace, sharpened by truth, restrained from corruption, and

controlled by charity. The preacher, teacher, witness, parent, friend, and brother all need the same lesson: your words are not toys. They are tools, weapons, medicine, food, and sometimes fire. Use them under Christ, or they will use you under the flesh.

So let the mouth speak, but let it speak as a member under the Head. Let it confess Christ plainly. Let it preach the Book faithfully. Let it warn without apology. Let it comfort without weakness. Let it rebuke without pride. Let it love without compromise. Let it be quiet when silence is wisdom and bold when silence is sin. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of it, but that which is good to the use of edifying. A body with no mouth cannot testify, but a body with an unsanctified mouth can poison itself. The mouth must belong to Christ. When it does, it becomes a powerful member for truth, grace, warning, comfort, and the edifying of the body in love.

## **6 of 32: One Body - Many Members - The Tongue: The Small Member That Can Set a Fire**

### **Introduction**

The tongue is a little member, but God never measured danger by size. A match is little, but it can burn down a city. A spark is little, but it can set a forest ablaze. A needle is little, but it can inject poison into the bloodstream. A rudder is little, but it can turn a great ship. James knew exactly what he was doing when he singled out the tongue and warned believers about its power. James 3:5-6 says, “Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity.” That is not preacher exaggeration. That is the Holy Ghost telling the truth about one of the most dangerous members in the body. A man may have sound doctrine in his head, a Bible in his hand, verses on his lips, and religious zeal in his bones, but if his tongue is unbridled, James says his religion is vain. That ought to make every Bible believer slow down before he opens his mouth and starts firing.

The tongue deserves its own essay because it is not merely the mouth speaking truth in public ministry. It is the hidden daily use of speech in private life, relationships, arguments, reactions, complaints, whispers, side comments, sarcasm, accusations, exaggerations, and religious talk that can sound spiritual while carrying poison. A man can bless God in the morning and butcher a brother by lunch. He can post Scripture and then spread suspicion. He can rebuke false doctrine and then slander a saint. He can preach holiness and then lie about his motives. He can defend the King James Bible and then use the same tongue like a dirty knife in a back alley. The tongue is where doctrine meets discipline. It is one thing to believe right words. It is another thing to use your own words rightly. Many men

want their Bible corrected by nobody, and amen to that, but they never let the Bible correct their tongue. That is where the rubber meets the road, and sometimes that road has skid marks all over it.

This essay will be direct because James is direct. The tongue can heal wounds or open them wider. It can defend truth or spread poison. It can comfort a trembling saint or crush him. It can expose a wolf or falsely accuse a sheep. It can rebuke sin or indulge pride. It can preach grace while acting like it never tasted any. It can speak with smooth religious language while destroying people behind the scenes. The body of Christ cannot treat the tongue as a small issue simply because it is a small member. Some of the worst damage ever done in churches, homes, ministries, friendships, and families was not done with fists, guns, knives, or lawsuits. It was done with a tongue. A rumor. A lie. A whisper. A sarcastic jab. A flattering deception. A tale carried from one ear to another. A half-truth dressed up like concern. A railing accusation called discernment. A smooth religious speech hiding a crooked heart. The tongue must be bridled, because an unbridled tongue will set fire to everything around it and then act shocked when the smoke fills the room.

## **Chapter 1: The Tongue Is Small, but It Is Not Weak**

James begins his warning by showing that small things can direct large things. He compares the bit in a horse's mouth and the helm of a ship to the tongue in a man's body. A bit is small compared to a horse, but it turns the whole animal. A helm is small compared to a ship, but it turns the vessel through fierce winds. Then James applies it: "Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things." That is the first lesson. The tongue is small, but it is not weak. It may be hidden behind the teeth most of the day, but when it comes out, it can steer a home, a church, a friendship, a ministry, or a man's reputation into either safety or disaster. People often excuse words because they are "just words," but the Bible does not talk that way. God created with words. God revealed truth with words. The gospel is preached with words. Lies are spread with words. Souls are comforted with words. Reputations are murdered with words. Words matter.

The tongue's power is seen in how quickly it can change the condition of a room. One sentence can calm a storm or start one. One accusation can put suspicion into minds that never had it before. One careless joke can humiliate someone for years. One bitter comment can poison a child's heart. One flattering word can draw a fool into danger. One false report can divide brethren. One word of grace can steady a trembling soul. One Bible answer can rescue a confused believer from error. One gospel witness can be used of God to bring a sinner to Christ. The tongue is not neutral. It is always serving something. It is serving truth or error, charity or pride, peace or strife, Christ or the flesh. A man who says,

“That is just how I talk,” may be confessing more than he realizes. Sometimes “how I talk” is the plain evidence of what has been ruling the heart.

The tongue also boasts great things because the flesh loves to use speech to enlarge itself. Boasting does not always sound like open bragging. Sometimes it sounds like name-dropping, subtle self-praise, spiritual performance, humble-sounding vanity, or constantly steering the conversation back to one’s own insight, suffering, ministry, knowledge, sacrifice, or importance. The tongue can make a man appear bigger than he is. It can build an image. It can manufacture a reputation. It can polish a hypocrite until he shines in public while rotting in private. That is why God’s people must not underestimate this little member. The tongue is small, but it can steer the whole life. If the tongue is not under the government of Christ, it will gladly take the wheel and drive the whole man into a ditch while singing hymns on the way down.

## **Chapter 2: The Tongue Is a Fire**

James says, “The tongue is a fire.” He does not say the tongue is like a fire only in mild poetic comparison. He says it is a fire, and then he says it can set on fire the course of nature. Fire spreads. Fire consumes. Fire disfigures. Fire leaves scars. Fire does not need a large opening to get started. Give it a little dry material, a little wind, and a little time, and it will grow beyond the control of the one who started it. That is exactly how words work. A man can say something in anger, toss it into a conversation, and think he has moved on, but the flame travels. Somebody repeats it. Somebody adds to it. Somebody misremembers it. Somebody uses it as evidence. Somebody carries it into another circle. Before long, a statement that began as one spark has become a wildfire, and the fool who struck the match says, “I didn’t mean for all that to happen.” But that is the nature of fire. It does not ask permission to spread.

Gossip is one of the favorite fuels of this fire. Gossip takes what may be true, half-true, misunderstood, private, exaggerated, or completely false and carries it where it does not belong. It often wears the mask of concern. “I am just telling you so you know.” “I am just burdened.” “We need to pray.” “I thought you should be aware.” Sometimes that may be legitimate warning. But many times it is just tale-bearing in a choir robe. Proverbs 26:20 says, “Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out.” That means some fires keep burning because people keep feeding them. Every gossip needs listeners. Every tale-bearer needs ears willing to serve as kindling. A sanctified believer should not only refuse to start fires; he should refuse to provide wood for another man’s fire.

The tongue as fire is especially dangerous inside the body of Christ because fire spreads through connected things. Members are connected. Families are connected. Churches are

connected. Ministries are connected. Friendships are connected. When the tongue sets one part ablaze, the heat reaches others. A slander against one brother can affect his wife, children, friends, ministry, and testimony. A careless accusation against a church can discourage weak saints. A rumor about a preacher can make hearers suspicious before they ever examine truth. A bitter comment in a family can burn through generations. The tongue's fire is not private. It spreads through the body. That is why a man must fear God enough to put out verbal sparks before they become blazes.

### **Chapter 3: The Tongue Can Poison the Body**

James also says the tongue is "an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." Poison is different from fire. Fire is loud, visible, and obvious once it spreads. Poison can be quiet. Poison can be dropped in slowly. Poison can be mixed with something sweet. Poison can work inside the body before the body understands what is happening. That is how many tongues operate. Not every harmful tongue is loud and explosive. Some are soft, smooth, careful, and deadly. They know how to plant doubt without making an outright accusation. They know how to praise with a hidden knife. They know how to ask a question that poisons confidence. They know how to say, "I hope I'm wrong, but..." and then deliver enough venom to make a serpent blush.

Slander is poison. It attacks a person's name, reputation, character, or motives with words that are false, twisted, unproven, exaggerated, or maliciously framed. Backbiting is poison. It says behind a man's back what it would not say honestly to his face. Tale-bearing is poison. It transports infection from one place to another. Flattery is poison with sugar in it. It tells a man what benefits the speaker rather than what helps the hearer. Lying is poison. Exaggeration is often poison diluted just enough to make the liar feel respectable. Manipulation is poison in the form of persuasion. Smooth religious speech can be poison when it is used to control, deceive, intimidate, or cover sin. The devil does not care whether poison comes in a bottle marked "worldly" or "spiritual," as long as somebody drinks it.

The body must learn to recognize poison because not every dangerous word sounds ugly at first. Some poisonous words sound reasonable. Some sound compassionate. Some sound humble. Some sound like inside information. Some sound like discernment. Some sound like "just asking questions." But the fruit reveals the nature. Does it produce suspicion without evidence? Does it stir strife? Does it make brethren view one another through a fog of accusation? Does it tear down without a righteous purpose? Does it move people away from Scripture and into personality conflict? Does it feed bitterness? Does it leave confusion and uncleanness behind? Then the body has been poisoned. A faithful member should not drink poison just because it was poured into a clean glass.

## **Chapter 4: The Tongue Can Bless God and Curse Men**

James 3:9-10 says, “Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.” That is one of the most convicting passages in the Bible because it exposes the contradiction of religious speech. A man can sing praises to God and then speak cruelly of someone made in God’s image. He can pray beautifully and then rail viciously. He can say “Amen” to a sermon and then assassinate a brother’s character in the parking lot. He can quote Scripture online and then behave like a butcher in the comments. James does not shrug and say, “Well, nobody’s perfect.” He says, “These things ought not so to be.”

This does not mean a believer can never rebuke, expose, mark, warn, or call sin by its name. The Bible does all of that. Christ did it. Paul did it. The prophets did it. Stephen did it. The issue is not whether evil should be identified. The issue is whether the tongue is operating in righteousness or flesh. There is a difference between rebuking a wolf and cursing a man because you enjoy the taste of blood in your mouth. There is a difference between calling out false doctrine and venting personal hatred. There is a difference between warning the body and humiliating someone for sport. There is a difference between sharp truth and carnal railing. The tongue that blesses God must not use God’s name as a cover for sinful speech.

This contradiction is especially dangerous among people who know doctrine. Sound doctrine does not automatically sanctify the tongue. A man can have the right Bible, the right gospel, the right dispensational chart, the right position on eternal security, the right view of prophecy, and the wrong spirit in his speech. That does not make the doctrine wrong, but it makes the man inconsistent. The tongue must come under the same authority as the doctrine. If a man says he believes the Book, let the Book govern his speech. If he says he follows Christ, let his words answer to Christ. If he says he loves the brethren, let him stop devouring them. The blessing and cursing contradiction should not be normal in a Christian’s mouth. James says it ought not so to be, and that settles it.

## **Chapter 5: The Tongue Reveals the Heart**

The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 12:34, “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” That verse takes away many excuses. The tongue is not merely a loose instrument disconnected from the inner man. It reveals what is stored within. A man may say, “I did not mean that,” and sometimes he may mean he did not intend to say it out loud, but the fact that it came out still tells something about what was inside. Pressure does not create the contents of the heart; it reveals them. Shake a bottle, and what comes out was

already in it. Squeeze a man with anger, fear, jealousy, disappointment, or embarrassment, and the tongue often reveals what has been sitting in the heart.

This is why controlling the tongue is not merely a matter of polishing speech. It requires dealing with the heart. If bitterness fills the heart, bitterness will eventually flavor the tongue. If pride fills the heart, boasting will leak out. If lust fills the heart, corrupt words will appear. If envy fills the heart, criticism will multiply. If fear fills the heart, flattery and compromise may come out. If Scripture fills the heart, Scripture-shaped words will come out. If charity fills the heart, speech will be different. The tongue is the messenger, but the heart is the warehouse. A man who wants a clean tongue must not only watch his mouth; he must guard his heart.

That also means the body must be careful not to mistake controlled public speech for a sanctified heart. Some people know how to talk clean in public while their private speech reveals the truth. They know how to sound humble in front of a crowd but arrogant in private. They know how to sound gracious in a pulpit but cruel at home. They know how to sound spiritual in a post but bitter in conversation. God hears all of it. There is no private tongue before God. Every whispered slander, every hidden accusation, every flattering manipulation, every secret complaint, every cruel joke, every dishonest spin, every muttered resentment is heard by the One before whom all things are naked and opened. The tongue reveals the heart, and God is not fooled by public editing.

## **Chapter 6: The Tongue Must Be Bridled**

James 1:26 says, “If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridled not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.” That is a tremendous verse. It does not say the man has no religious appearance. It says he seems to be religious. He may have the look, the language, the habits, the affiliations, the knowledge, and the outward reputation. But if he does not bridle his tongue, his religion is vain. That means an unbridled tongue can empty a man’s profession of practical weight. He may be able to debate doctrine, quote verses, criticize churches, expose false teachers, and talk about holiness, but if his tongue runs wild, James says he is deceiving his own heart. That is blunt, and it needs to be.

A bridle does not destroy a horse’s strength. It directs it. Likewise, bridling the tongue does not mean a believer never speaks strongly. It means his speech is governed. A bridled tongue can still rebuke. It can still preach. It can still warn. It can still answer sharply when truth requires it. But it does not run wherever the flesh pulls. It does not bolt into gossip because it feels exciting. It does not gallop into sarcasm because it wants a laugh. It does not charge into slander because it is angry. It does not trample the weak because it enjoys

being right. The bridle is the discipline of bringing words under the authority of God. Psalm 141:3 says, “Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.” That is the prayer of a man who knows his mouth needs a guard.

The bridle must be applied before the words escape, not after they have already burned the barn down. Apologies may be necessary, but they do not always erase damage. A man can confess that he spread a rumor, but he cannot always gather every fragment of it from every mind that heard it. He can apologize for a cruel statement, but the wound may still ache. He can admit he exaggerated, but trust may have been weakened. He can say, “I should not have said that,” and that may be true, but the better wisdom is to learn not to say it in the first place. The tongue must be bridled by Scripture, prayer, fear of God, charity, and self-control. A man who refuses the bridle should not be surprised when his tongue drags him through the mud.

### **Chapter 7: The Tongue Must Be Used to Heal, Not Destroy**

The tongue is dangerous, but it does not have to be destructive. Proverbs 15:4 says, “A wholesome tongue is a tree of life.” That is a beautiful contrast to James’ warning about fire and poison. The same member that can burn and poison can also heal and nourish when surrendered to God. A wholesome tongue can strengthen the weak, encourage the discouraged, comfort the grieving, restore the fallen, teach the ignorant, warn the careless, and magnify the Lord. The goal is not merely to stop speaking evil. The goal is to use the tongue for good. A silent tongue may avoid some sins, but a sanctified tongue does positive ministry. It speaks life where life is needed.

The body of Christ needs tongues that heal wounds instead of opening them wider. That does not mean pretending wounds do not exist. Sometimes a wound must be cleaned, and that may hurt. Sometimes sin must be rebuked, and that may sting. Sometimes false doctrine must be exposed, and that may upset people. But the purpose of a sanctified tongue is not to make wounds worse. It is to bring truth to bear for health. A tongue can say, “Brother, that is wrong,” with a desire to restore. It can say, “That doctrine is false,” with a desire to protect. It can say, “You need to repent,” with a desire to see recovery. It can say hard things without enjoying the pain. That is the difference between a healer and a butcher.

A sanctified tongue should also be ready to praise, thank, confess, pray, and encourage. Some believers are quick to criticize and slow to encourage, quick to rebuke and slow to thank, quick to correct and slow to comfort. That imbalance can wear down the body. The tongue should not be a constant hammer. Sometimes it should be a balm. Sometimes it should be a trumpet. Sometimes it should be a sword. Sometimes it should be a cup of

cold water. Wisdom knows the difference. The Lord can take the tongue that once lied, cursed, boasted, gossiped, and wounded, and make it an instrument of truth and grace. That is what practical sanctification looks like: the member that once served sin now serving righteousness.

## **Conclusion**

The tongue is a little member, but it is not a little issue. James gives it more attention than many Christians are comfortable with because the Holy Ghost knows what men like to excuse. A man may think his speech is a minor weakness, but God calls the tongue a fire, a world of iniquity, an unruly evil, and full of deadly poison. That ought to sober anybody with a mouth. The tongue can set the body ablaze. It can poison relationships. It can bless God and curse men in the same day. It can reveal a heart that is not nearly as spiritual as the man's doctrine sounds. It can make a religious profession vain when it refuses the bridle. No believer should treat this lightly.

But the answer is not to become mute, fearful, soft, or useless. The answer is a bridled tongue, not a buried tongue. The body still needs speech. It needs preaching, warning, teaching, confession, prayer, comfort, rebuke, praise, and testimony. But it needs those things from a tongue under the authority of Christ. A tongue that tells the truth without becoming cruel. A tongue that loves without becoming cowardly. A tongue that warns without becoming hysterical. A tongue that comforts without flattering. A tongue that rebukes without railing. A tongue that refuses gossip, slander, backbiting, exaggeration, manipulation, and smooth religious poison. That kind of tongue is not natural. It is disciplined by the Book and governed by the Spirit.

So let the tongue be brought to the altar. Let the Lord set a watch before the mouth and keep the door of the lips. Let the words of the mouth and the meditation of the heart be acceptable in the sight of the Lord. Let the tongue that once burned become a torch for truth instead of a wildfire of strife. Let the tongue that once poisoned become wholesome, a tree of life. Let the tongue that once boasted learn to praise Christ. Let the tongue that once gossiped learn to pray. Let the tongue that once wounded learn to heal. A man's doctrine is not the only thing that needs to be right. His tongue needs to get right in practice. The body of Christ has suffered enough from unbridled tongues. It is time for the little member to bow to the Head.

## **Introduction**

The teeth are not the most glamorous members of the body, but without them the body has a serious problem with nourishment. A mouth may receive food, a tongue may taste it, a stomach may digest it, but the teeth have to break it down. Teeth are not placed in the body for decoration, vanity, or religious smiling. They are there to bite, tear, grind, and prepare food so the rest of the body can receive strength from it. That is a fitting picture for spiritual maturity in the body of Christ. Some believers are able to take the stronger truths of Scripture, chew them carefully, break them down rightly, and serve them in a way that strengthens others. Others cannot handle much more than milk. That is not an insult if they are babes. Babies need milk. The problem is when a man has been saved long enough to need meat, but still wants a bottle, a blanket, and somebody to burp him after every sermon.

Hebrews 5:12-14 says, “For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” That passage is a rebuke to prolonged immaturity. It does not condemn a newborn babe for needing milk. First Peter 2:2 says, “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.” Milk is good in its place. Milk is necessary in its season. Milk is not the enemy. The enemy is arrested development. The problem is not a new convert needing simple truth. The problem is a ten-year-old Christian who still cannot chew doctrine without choking, gagging, crying, or accusing the preacher of being too hard.

The teeth represent the ability to handle strong meat: doctrine, correction, prophecy, judgment, dispensational distinctions, hard sayings, difficult passages, rebuke, separation, spiritual warfare, and truths that do not fit neatly into sentimental Christianity. Some people want dessert Christianity. They want sweet devotional crumbs, motivational sugar, religious frosting, and soft slogans that dissolve on the tongue without requiring any chewing. But God gave the body more than dessert. He gave milk for babes, bread for daily strength, honey for sweetness, and meat for maturity. The body needs members who can chew strong truth without becoming proud and serve it without choking the weak. Teeth are not there so a man can grin at himself in the mirror and admire how sharp he is. They are there to prepare nourishment for the body.

## **Chapter 1: Milk Is Necessary, but Milk Is Not the Final Diet**

A baby without milk is in danger, and a newborn believer without the simple nourishment of the word is in danger too. First Peter 2:2 says to desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby. That is not a negative verse. Milk is clean, nourishing, necessary, and suited to the condition of a babe. A new believer needs the plain gospel, assurance of salvation, the basics of prayer, the authority of Scripture, the difference between the old man and the new man, the importance of fellowship, the need to confess sin, and the comfort of God's promises. It would be foolish to shove a steak into the mouth of a newborn and then blame the baby for choking. Spiritual babes need patient feeding. The teeth in the body must remember that.

That is where some strong-doctrine people make a mess. They learn a few hard truths and then start throwing meat at babies like they are feeding lions at a zoo. They forget that growth has order. A man who has just believed on Christ may not be ready for every prophetic chart, every textual issue, every church history controversy, every cultic error, every doctrinal landmine, every dispensational distinction, and every deep study on angels, devils, kingdoms, covenants, and judgments in the first week. He needs truth, but he needs it served wisely. The goal is not to prove how much the teacher knows. The goal is to nourish the hearer. A good set of teeth does not throw whole chunks into the throat. It breaks food down.

But milk is not supposed to be the final diet. That is the rebuke in Hebrews 5. "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers," they still needed someone to teach them again the first principles. Time had passed. Opportunity had been given. Truth had been available. But they had not matured. That is a problem. A babe needing milk is normal. A grown man demanding a bottle is not. There comes a point where a believer ought to be able to handle more than the basic truths. He ought to know why he believes what he believes. He ought to be able to endure reproof. He ought to distinguish law from grace, Israel from the church, the gospel of the kingdom from the gospel of the grace of God, the rapture from the second coming, justification from sanctification, standing from state, salvation from discipleship, and eternal security from loose living. If he cannot chew anything after years of exposure, something is wrong with his appetite, his teachers, or his obedience.

## **Chapter 2: Strong Meat Belongs to Those of Full Age**

Hebrews 5:14 says, "But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age." That phrase matters. Strong meat belongs somewhere. It is not unnecessary. It is not optional for maturity. It is not a hobby for argumentative men. It belongs to those who are of full age. Strong meat is the harder, heavier, deeper truth that requires exercised senses. It includes doctrine that cuts across emotion, distinctions that require study, rebuke that requires humility, prophecy that requires careful division, and passages that will not yield to lazy

reading. The body of Christ cannot live forever on spiritual baby food. It needs grown men and women who can take strong truth, chew it, digest it, and be strengthened by it.

Strong meat is often rejected because it requires work. Milk can be swallowed quickly. Meat must be chewed. That is why many Christians prefer shallow teaching. It asks little from them. It gives them a pleasant thought, a comforting line, a soft emotional lift, and sends them away unchanged but temporarily soothed. Strong meat makes demands. It says, "Study." It says, "Compare Scripture with Scripture." It says, "Rightly divide." It says, "Change your mind where the Book crosses you." It says, "Let go of that tradition." It says, "Stop hiding behind feelings." It says, "Grow up." A lazy spiritual appetite will always resent strong meat because meat exposes the fact that the teeth have not been used.

Full age is not merely about how long a person has been saved. There are old babies in churches and young believers who are growing fast because they receive truth and obey it. Hebrews says those of full age have their senses exercised "by reason of use." That means maturity comes through practice, use, obedience, repetition, discernment, and handling the word. A man does not become mature by owning a Bible. He becomes mature by using it. He does not develop discernment by hearing truth once. He develops it by repeated use. Teeth become strong by chewing. Senses become exercised by use. A believer who never applies doctrine, never studies hard passages, never receives correction, and never tests things by Scripture will remain soft no matter how many years he has been around church.

### **Chapter 3: Teeth Break Down Hard Doctrine Without Destroying It**

The purpose of teeth is to break food down, not destroy its nourishment. That distinction matters spiritually. A mature teacher, preacher, or Bible student must be able to take hard doctrine and break it down so others can receive it without corrupting it. Breaking truth down is not watering truth down. Explaining doctrine plainly is not weakening doctrine. Making a hard passage understandable is not compromising it. The teeth do not turn meat into milk; they prepare meat so it can be swallowed and digested. That is a valuable function in the body. Some truths are too large, too dense, or too difficult for weaker believers to receive all at once. They need someone who can chew carefully and serve wisely.

This is where right division is essential. A man who cannot rightly divide the word of truth will often choke himself and others on passages that were never meant to be swallowed the way he is forcing them. Second Timothy 2:15 says to rightly divide the word of truth. That is not a suggestion for advanced students only. It is the basic rule for Bible study. Mix Israel and the church, and you will choke. Mix law and grace, and you will choke. Mix the tribulation saint's endurance with the body of Christ's salvation, and you will choke. Mix the

kingdom gospel with Paul's gospel, and you will choke. Mix justification before God with justification before men, and you will choke. Mix standing and state, and you will choke. Strong meat requires strong teeth, but also a straight knife. The Bible must be divided where God divides it.

Hard doctrine should not be handled recklessly. Some men learn a difficult truth and start swinging it like a bone club. That is not chewing meat. That is beating people with the carcass. A man may be right about a doctrine and wrong in how he serves it. If he gives too much too soon, the hearer may choke. If he serves it with pride, the hearer may resist because the messenger stinks. If he removes important parts to make it easier, he corrupts the meal. If he adds his own speculation, he contaminates it. A faithful set of teeth breaks down the truth while preserving its nourishment. The goal is not to impress people with how hard the doctrine is. The goal is to strengthen the body with what God said.

#### **Chapter 4: Some Christians Want Dessert Instead of Meat**

There is a spiritual appetite problem in modern Christianity. Many do not want milk for growth or meat for strength. They want dessert. They want sweetness without substance, comfort without correction, joy without judgment, grace without doctrine, love without truth, worship without holiness, Bible words without Bible authority, and encouragement without repentance. They want sermons that taste like cake and leave like cotton candy. They want short sayings, sentimental phrases, emotional music, religious therapy, and inspirational crumbs. Then they wonder why they have no strength when trouble comes. Dessert can be pleasant, but a body cannot be built on sugar.

This explains why strong preaching is so often rejected. Strong meat exposes weak appetites. When a preacher deals with sin, people say he is too negative. When he deals with doctrine, they say he is too divisive. When he handles prophecy carefully, they say he is too intense. When he makes Bible distinctions, they say he is too technical. When he warns about false teachers, they say he is too harsh. When he rebukes worldliness, they say he is legalistic. Sometimes the preacher may indeed be unbalanced or carnal, but often the real problem is that the hearers have been eating spiritual pudding for so long that steak feels like an attack. They do not need less truth. They need better teeth.

The dessert crowd is easy prey for false teachers. A wolf knows how to sweeten poison. He knows how to give people what they crave. If they want prosperity, he gives them money verses ripped out of context. If they want mystical excitement, he gives them signs and wonders language without Bible order. If they want tradition, he gives them religious history above Scripture. If they want intellectual pride, he gives them Bible correction dressed up as scholarship. If they want moral looseness, he gives them grace without fear of God. If

they want works, he gives them commandments for tribulation saints and tells them Paul was not enough. Dessert Christianity may taste good at first, but it leaves the body weak, diabetic, and ready to faint in the day of adversity.

### **Chapter 5: Teeth Must Not Despise the Babes**

While strong meat is necessary, the teeth must not despise those who still need milk. Spiritual maturity does not mock spiritual infancy. A newborn babe is not shameful for needing milk. A new believer who asks simple questions should not be treated like an enemy. A confused believer coming out of false doctrine should not be crushed because he cannot digest everything immediately. A wounded saint may need gentle feeding before he can handle heavier instruction. The body must have patience. Strong teeth are not given so the mature can grin at the weak and show off their bite. They are given so the body can be nourished.

Paul shows this balance in 1 Corinthians 3 when he says, “I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it.” He did not deny that meat existed. He did not pretend milk was the final goal. But he recognized their condition. A wise teacher does not only know the truth; he knows the condition of the hearer. That does not mean pandering to carnality forever. Paul rebuked the Corinthians sharply. But it does mean a man should distinguish between a babe who needs growth and a rebel who refuses growth. The babe needs milk. The rebel needs correction. The sincere learner needs patience. The gainsayer needs his mouth stopped. Wisdom knows the difference.

There is also a danger of weaponizing maturity. Some men learn deeper doctrine and then act like everyone who has not reached their level is worthless. That is pride. If God gave a man teeth, he should use them to help the body, not to bite the body. A mature believer should be able to bring hard truth down to a simpler level without sneering at those who need it. Christ fed multitudes. Paul adjusted his instruction. The writer of Hebrews rebuked immaturity but still taught. Strong meat must not produce arrogance. If doctrine makes a man despise weak believers, he has not digested it properly. He may have chewed it, but it turned sour in his stomach.

### **Chapter 6: Strong Meat Trains Discernment**

Hebrews 5:14 connects strong meat with exercised senses and discernment. Those of full age have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. That means strong doctrine is not merely for intellectual satisfaction. It trains judgment. It enables a believer to tell the difference between things that look similar but are not the same. A child may not see the difference between a diamond and a piece of glass. A mature eye can. A babe may not see the difference between grace and license, law and righteousness, zeal and pride, unity and

compromise, conviction and preference, correction and cruelty, or truth and tradition. Strong meat trains the senses.

Discernment is badly needed because error rarely introduces itself honestly. False doctrine does not usually walk through the door wearing a name tag that says, “Hello, I am here to corrupt your church.” It comes with verses. It comes with emotion. It comes with sincerity. It comes with scholarship. It comes with tradition. It comes with tears. It comes with testimonies. It comes with confidence. It comes with half-truths. Strong meat gives the believer the ability to chew through the packaging and identify what is actually being served. The mature man asks, “What saith the scripture?” He checks context. He rightly divides. He compares. He tests. He does not swallow every religious dish set before him.

This is why believers must be trained beyond slogans. Slogans may be useful as summaries, but they cannot replace doctrine. A man who only knows slogans can be manipulated by anyone who sounds confident. He may know “God is love,” but not know that love rejoiceth in the truth. He may know “judge not,” but not know righteous judgment. He may know “faith without works is dead,” but not know Paul from James or justification before God from justification before men. He may know “endure to the end,” but not know Matthew 24’s context. He may know “rightly divide,” but not actually do it. Strong meat trains the believer to handle truth with accuracy, not merely repeat phrases. The body needs that kind of exercised discernment.

## **Chapter 7: Teeth Must Serve the Whole Body, Not Themselves**

Teeth exist for the whole body. They do not chew for themselves alone. When the teeth break down food, the whole body benefits. That is a vital lesson for Bible students, teachers, preachers, and doctrinally mature believers. If God gives a man the ability to chew hard truth, that ability is not for self-display. It is for ministry. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. A man can become proud of how much doctrine he can handle, how many hard passages he can explain, how many systems he can refute, how many errors he can expose, and how many distinctions he can make. But if all that knowledge does not edify the body, he has turned teeth into jewelry. Teeth are not for showing off. They are for chewing.

Serving the body means truth must be prepared, portioned, and applied. A faithful teacher does not merely dump a slab of doctrine on the table and walk away. He studies, prays, divides, explains, illustrates, warns, applies, and feeds. He considers the babes, the mature, the wounded, the confused, the rebellious, and the hungry. He does not compromise truth for any of them, but he handles it wisely. He knows when to give milk, when to give bread, when to give meat, and when to rebuke someone for still demanding

milk when he should be chewing. This is not easy work. It requires patience, discernment, and a burden for the body.

The teeth must also remain connected to the Head. Strong doctrine without submission to Christ becomes cold and sharp in the wrong way. A believer can chew prophecy, dispensational truth, textual issues, and doctrinal distinctions all day long, but if he is not walking with the Lord, his teeth may become fangs. He starts biting people instead of feeding them. He starts devouring brethren instead of strengthening them. He uses meat to prove superiority instead of promote growth. That is a corruption of function. Teeth belong in the mouth under the direction of the head, serving the body. Strong truth belongs under Christ's authority, governed by charity, used for edification. Anything else is spiritual dentistry gone mad.

## **Conclusion**

The teeth teach us that the body needs more than soft food. Milk is good, but it is not the whole diet. Babies need milk, and no faithful teacher should despise them for it. But prolonged babyhood is a rebuke. When a believer has had time, access, teaching, correction, and opportunity, and still cannot endure sound doctrine, still cannot handle reproof, still cannot rightly divide, still cannot distinguish truth from error, and still wants religious pudding instead of Bible meat, something is wrong. God expects growth. The Christian life is not designed to keep saved people in spiritual diapers until the rapture. The word of God is given to nourish, strengthen, correct, mature, and furnish the man of God unto all good works.

Strong meat is necessary because the body lives in a world full of deception, pressure, false doctrine, compromise, and spiritual junk food. The believer must be able to chew. He must handle hard passages, serious doctrine, correction, prophecy, dispensational truth, and the Bible's sharper edges without choking or throwing a tantrum. He must learn to discern both good and evil by reason of use. He must study, compare, rightly divide, and obey. The body needs members who can process hard truth and serve it in a way that strengthens others. A church full of people with no teeth will eventually be at the mercy of anyone who can blend error into a smoothie and call it nourishment.

So let the teeth do their work. Let them chew strong meat without pride. Let them break down hard doctrine without watering it down. Let them serve babes patiently without keeping them babes forever. Let them reject dessert Christianity and develop a taste for the words of God. Let them train the senses to discern both good and evil. Let them serve the whole body, not themselves. Teeth are not for showing off in a religious smile. They are for chewing. The body of Christ needs believers who can handle the meat of the Book, digest

it, live by it, and help others grow strong through it. Strong meat belongs to those of full age, and the day is far too dangerous for God's people to remain toothless.

## **8 of 32: One Body - Many Members - The Hands: The Members That Do the Work**

### **Introduction**

The hands are the working members of the body. They lift, carry, build, repair, write, give, hold, help, defend, prepare, clean, serve, and minister in practical ways that often go unnoticed until they stop working. A body can have eyes that see, ears that hear, a mouth that speaks, teeth that chew, and a mind that understands, but if the hands never move, much of the body's purpose remains theoretical. That is exactly how many Christians live. They can see problems, hear sermons, talk doctrine, chew hard truths, and understand arguments, but their hands never seem to find any work to do. They become professional spectators in the body of Christ, sitting around with enough Bible knowledge to correct everybody else, but not enough obedience to pick up a burden, help a saint, give to a need, prepare a lesson, visit the hurting, fix what is broken, or serve where nobody claps. That kind of Christianity may sound impressive in conversation, but it has no calluses. A faith that never reaches the hands is often nothing more than religious noise rattling around in the head.

The hands represent service, labor, building, giving, repairing, helping, carrying, and practical obedience. They are not always glamorous. The eye may receive attention because it sees what others miss. The mouth may receive attention because it speaks where others are silent. But the hand is often working while the eye is being admired and the mouth is being heard. The hand sets up chairs before anybody arrives. The hand writes the check nobody knows about. The hand prepares food, carries boxes, opens doors, fixes equipment, visits widows, prints materials, sends messages, cleans the mess, holds the hurting, and keeps the work moving when talkers are still holding committee meetings about what should be done. In many ministries, the difference between a burden and an accomplishment is a pair of hands willing to obey God without needing a parade.

This essay is necessary because the body of Christ must never confuse talk with work. Talk has its place. Doctrine matters. Preaching matters. Teaching matters. Warning matters. But doctrine that never becomes service is like a blueprint that never becomes a building. Vision without work is a daydream. Conviction without labor is a speech. Compassion without action is sentiment. Faith without service is often just vocabulary. The hands teach us that Christianity is not merely something believed, discussed, defended, and posted. It

is something lived. The Lord did not save men so they could sit in the bleachers and rate the performance of the workers. He saved sinners and created them in Christ Jesus unto good works. The body needs hands. It needs members who are willing to do the work, not just analyze it, criticize it, or explain why someone else should be doing it.

## **Chapter 1: God Made the Hands for Work**

The first thing to settle is simple: God made the hands for work. Ecclesiastes 9:10 says, “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.” That verse is not complicated. If the hand finds work, the hand should do it with might. Not lazily. Not halfheartedly. Not while complaining under the breath. Not only when someone is watching. Not only when the work is public, impressive, or personally rewarding. Do it with thy might. A hand that refuses work is not spiritual because it stays clean. It is useless because it never serves. God did not put hands on the body as ornaments. He put them there to act. The Christian life may begin with faith in the heart and confession in the mouth, but it must not stop there. Eventually truth should reach the hands.

This is where practical obedience exposes religious talk. A man can say he loves the brethren, but will his hands help them? He can say he cares about missions, but will his hands give? He can say he loves Scripture, but will his hands open the Book? He can say he believes in prayer, but will his hands fold and his knees bend? He can say he has a burden for souls, but will his hands pass out a tract or send a message? He can say the church should be strong, but will his hands help strengthen it? Words are easy. Work costs something. Hands get tired. Hands get dirty. Hands get cut. Hands get calloused. Hands get overlooked. That is why many people prefer opinions to service. Opinions do not require sweat.

The Bible never presents work as something beneath the people of God. Paul worked with his own hands. Acts 20:34-35 says, “Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.” Then he says he showed them how laboring ought to support the weak. Paul could preach mysteries, write Scripture, contend with false apostles, and unfold doctrine deeper than the religious world could handle, but he was not too important to work with his hands. That rebukes the modern spirit that wants influence without labor, ministry without sacrifice, and recognition without service. If Paul’s hands could work, ours can too.

## **Chapter 2: Hands Turn Doctrine Into Practice**

Doctrine is not weak because it becomes practical. Doctrine is fulfilled in practice. Titus 2:10 speaks of adorning “the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.” That means a believer’s conduct can make doctrine visible and honorable. The hands are one of the chief

ways doctrine gets dressed in daily life. A man may believe the doctrine of charity, but the hands show whether he helps. He may believe the doctrine of grace, but the hands show whether he gives. He may believe the doctrine of the body, but the hands show whether he serves the members. He may believe the doctrine of stewardship, but the hands show whether he uses what God gave him for God's purposes. Doctrine that never reaches the hands has stopped short of its intended effect.

This is not works salvation. That distinction must be clear. The believer is not working to become saved, stay saved, prove himself worthy of the blood, or earn a place in Christ's body. Salvation is by grace through faith, not of works. But Ephesians 2:10 follows Ephesians 2:8-9 for a reason: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." Good works do not produce salvation; salvation produces good works. A living tree bears fruit. A living body moves. A saved man should not use grace as an excuse for laziness. The same passage that excludes works from the cause of salvation includes works in the purpose of the saved life. Any man who uses grace to justify idle hands does not understand grace. He understands excuses.

Hands reveal whether doctrine has become obedience. A man can argue about charity and still not help a brother in need. He can explain the difference between Israel and the church and still ignore the widow down the road. He can expose every false teacher online and still never lift a finger to strengthen a local work. He can preach the body of Christ and still act like the body exists to serve him. That kind of contradiction is common, but it is not healthy. The hands bring doctrine down from the shelf and put it into motion. They turn belief into burden-bearing, truth into service, and conviction into action. The body does not need doctrine less. It needs doctrine that reaches the hands more.

### **Chapter 3: The Hands Do Hidden Work That Keeps the Body Functioning**

Much of the hand's work is hidden, repetitive, and uncelebrated. That is why it is so valuable. Public ministry often rests on private labor. A sermon may be heard by many, but someone prepared the room, paid the bill, maintained the equipment, cleaned the floor, organized the materials, sent the invitations, drove someone to the meeting, watched the children, printed the handouts, or prayed while others worked. A ministry that looks effortless in public usually has many hidden hands behind it. People may notice the mouth when it speaks, but the mouth often depends on hands nobody saw. The body functions because unseen members are doing necessary work.

This hidden service is precious to God because it is often done with little earthly reward. Matthew 6 reminds us that the Father sees in secret. That matters. Men may forget. God does not. Men may overlook the one who served faithfully for years. God does not. Men

may applaud the public voice and never thank the hands that made the work possible. God does not miss them. The Judgment Seat of Christ will correct many public assumptions. Some people who received little attention here may receive great reward there because they labored faithfully when nobody but God was watching. That should encourage every hidden servant. The hand may be unseen by the crowd, but it is not unseen by the Head.

The devil loves to discourage hidden workers by whispering, “Nobody notices. Nobody cares. This does not matter.” That is a lie. The body notices when the work stops. People may not thank the hands while they are functioning, but they feel it when the hands withdraw. Let the servants stop serving, the givers stop giving, the helpers stop helping, the cleaners stop cleaning, the organizers stop organizing, the burden-bearers stop carrying, and suddenly everyone discovers how necessary they were. The fact that some work is only noticed when it is absent does not make it unimportant. It may prove it was essential all along. The body needs faithful hands that will serve because Christ sees, not because men applaud.

#### **Chapter 4: The Hand Must Not Envy the Eye or the Mouth**

The hand has its own temptation: envy. Because the hand often works behind the scenes while the eye sees and the mouth speaks publicly, the hand may begin to feel overlooked. It may say, “Why am I always doing the work while others get noticed?” It may resent the teacher, preacher, discernor, singer, writer, or visible leader. But the hand must remember that God set the members in the body as it pleased Him. The hand does not become less important because it is not the eye. It does not become less necessary because it is not the mouth. God did not call the hand to see like the eye or speak like the mouth. He called the hand to work.

Envy ruins service because it turns obedience into a competition. A servant who begins comparing himself to visible members will soon lose joy in the very work God gave him. He stops seeing service as worship and starts seeing it as evidence that he is being used while others are being praised. That bitterness can poison the hands. The work may continue outwardly, but inwardly it becomes resentful. The hand still lifts, carries, prepares, and gives, but now it does so with a wounded pride that says, “Somebody better notice.” That is dangerous. Service done for recognition will eventually become anger when recognition does not come. Service done unto the Lord can survive being overlooked by men.

The cure is to remember the Head. Colossians 3:23-24 says, “And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.” That verse belongs in the hands. The hand must learn to work as unto the Lord. Not unto the preacher. Not unto the church crowd. Not unto the critic. Not unto the people who never say thank you. Unto the Lord. That does not mean

people should be ungrateful. They should honor faithful workers. But the worker's deepest motive must be higher than human appreciation. A hand that works unto Christ can keep serving when men forget, fail, misunderstand, or overlook. The Head knows what the hand has done.

### **Chapter 5: The Eye Must Not Despise the Hand**

If the hand must not envy the eye, the eye must not despise the hand. Paul says the eye cannot say unto the hand, "I have no need of thee." That is a direct rebuke to any member who thinks seeing, speaking, knowing, or leading makes practical workers less important. A visionary without workers is just a man with a dream and no building. A teacher without servants may speak truth into a room that was made ready by someone else's labor. A preacher without helpers may quickly discover how much "small" work was holding up the "big" ministry. The eye may see the need, but the hand often meets it. The mouth may announce the plan, but the hand usually does the work.

This rebukes the pride of public ministry. No preacher, teacher, leader, or visible member should treat workers like tools for his own importance. The hands are members, not machinery. They are saints, not servants of a man's ego. They are part of Christ's body, not replaceable parts in a religious operation. When leaders forget this, they become users instead of shepherds. They notice hands only when something needs done and ignore the person attached to them. That is not Christlike. The Lord Jesus washed feet. He did not treat service as beneath Him. Any man too important to appreciate workers is too small to lead them.

The body is healthiest when visible and hidden members honor each other. The eye should thank the hand. The mouth should encourage the hand. The hand should value the eye and mouth. The foot should carry the body where the hand can serve. The heart should supply charity to all of it. No member should act like the body would be fine without the rest. A church or ministry with good preaching but no workers will strain. A church with workers but no truth will drift. A church with vision but no hands will dream. A church with hands but no headship will scatter its labor. The body needs all its members, and the hand is not optional.

### **Chapter 6: Idle Hands Are a Spiritual Problem**

The Bible does not praise idleness. Second Thessalonians 3:11 speaks of some who were "working not at all, but are busybodies." That is a perfect picture of idle hands attached to active mouths. When hands are not working, the tongue often starts meddling. People who will not carry burdens frequently become experts at criticizing those who do. Idleness breeds gossip, discontentment, nitpicking, and self-importance. A man with nothing to do

will often invent problems to discuss. The body does not need busybodies. It needs busy hands.

This applies not only to physical labor but spiritual service. There are believers who have time to complain about everything but no time to help with anything. They can identify every flaw in a ministry but never offer one hour of useful labor. They can explain what the church should do, what the preacher should say, what the workers should fix, what the servants should change, and what everyone else is doing wrong, but somehow their own hands remain folded. That is not discernment. That is laziness with a commentary track. The easiest job in the world is inspecting the calluses on someone else's hands while your own are soft.

Idle hands must be challenged because God saved people for service. Not everyone can do the same work. Some are limited by age, health, circumstance, ability, or season of life. The feeble members are necessary too, and this is not a rebuke to those who truly cannot do what others can. But almost every believer can do something. Pray. Give. Encourage. Write. Call. Visit. Help. Carry. Teach. Prepare. Support. Share Scripture. Comfort a saint. Bear a burden. Open the door. Clean the room. Send the message. The issue is not whether every hand can do the same task. The issue is whether the hand is yielded to the Head for whatever work God gives it.

## **Chapter 7: The Hands of Christ Were Wounded for the Body**

No study of hands can end without remembering the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ. His hands touched lepers, lifted the fallen, broke bread, washed feet, healed the sick, blessed children, and finally were nailed to a cross. The greatest hands that ever served were pierced for sinners. John 20:27 records the risen Christ telling Thomas, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands." Those wounded hands are eternal witnesses of love, sacrifice, obedience, and redemption. The Head of the body does not ask the members to serve from a throne of selfish ease. He served first. He gave Himself first. He bore the wounds first.

That should sanctify every believer's hands. First Corinthians 6:19-20 says, "Ye are not your own" and "ye are bought with a price." If Christ purchased us with His blood, our hands are not our own. They belong to Him. What they touch matters. What they refuse to do matters. What they build matters. What they carry matters. What they give matters. What they write matters. What they hold matters. What they let go matters. Saved hands should not be used to serve sin, greed, vanity, cruelty, lust, laziness, or pride. They should be instruments of righteousness unto God. The hands that once served the old man should now serve the Lord who bought them.

The wounded hands of Christ also teach the cost of real service. True service is not always convenient. It may hurt. It may be thankless. It may leave marks. It may require sacrifice. It may require time, money, energy, patience, and humility. But the servant is not greater than his Lord. If the Lord's hands were wounded in obedience, why should the member demand a painless ministry? The body of Christ needs hands willing to bear some wear for the sake of others. Not for salvation. Not for applause. Not for religious pride. For Christ. The hands do the work because the Head is worthy.

## **Conclusion**

The hands teach us that Christianity must become practical. A body with no working hands is severely limited, no matter how well it sees, hears, speaks, or thinks. The same is true in the body of Christ. Vision without work is a daydream. Doctrine without labor becomes a lecture. Compassion without service becomes sentiment. Faith that never serves anybody is often just religious noise. The body needs hands that will set up chairs, prepare lessons, help widows, write checks, carry burdens, visit the hurting, repair what is broken, distribute truth, clean messes, give quietly, and do the necessary work that keeps ministry from becoming mere talk.

The hand must not envy the eye, and the eye must not despise the hand. God set the members in the body as it pleased Him. Some members are visible. Some are hidden. Some speak. Some serve. Some see. Some carry. Some teach. Some give. Some repair. Some hold. None has the right to boast, and none has the right to complain against God's placement. The hand has dignity because God gave it function. Hidden labor is not wasted when it is done unto the Lord. Men may overlook it, but Christ never does. The Judgment Seat of Christ will reveal many faithful hands that did more for the body than the loudest mouths ever knew.

So let the hands be yielded to the Head. Let them work heartily as unto the Lord. Let them be clean from sin and ready for service. Let them stop folding themselves in laziness and start reaching toward need. Let them give, carry, help, build, repair, write, prepare, and serve. Let them bear burdens without bitterness and labor without demanding applause. The Lord Jesus Christ had wounded hands for the body. The least the members can do is offer their hands back to Him for His use. The body has had enough talkers who never work. It needs hands that do the work.

## **Introduction**

The fingers are small members, but the body quickly learns their value when they are injured, numb, missing, or unable to function. A man may have strong arms and capable hands, but without fingers his work becomes clumsy, limited, and frustrating. The arm can lift, the hand can grasp, but the fingers handle detail. They button the shirt, turn the page, hold the pen, type the message, tune the instrument, thread the needle, count the money, open the latch, adjust the screw, prepare the meal, wipe the tear, and touch with careful precision what the larger members cannot manage with the same delicacy. That is a tremendous picture of small, detailed, precise service in the body of Christ. Not every member is called to broad, visible, public labor. Some are called to detailed work that many people never notice unless it is missing or poorly done. The body needs those members more than most people realize.

In a church, ministry, family, or Bible work, there are always broad labors and fine labors. The broad labors may get noticed first. The preacher speaks. The teacher teaches. The singer sings. The leader leads. The worker carries. But then there are the detailed labors that make the work clean, orderly, useful, and effective: editing, organizing, designing, planning, bookkeeping, scheduling, typing, proofreading, answering messages, following up with visitors, arranging supplies, setting up technology, preparing documents, maintaining lists, communicating details, watching children, helping guests, arranging meals, making sure things are in place, and quietly solving problems before most people even know there was a problem. Those are finger ministries. They may be small compared with an arm, but try doing precise work without them. The body may still have strength, but it loses finesse.

This essay is for the saints who feel small because their work is small in appearance, detailed in nature, hidden in location, or rarely praised by men. The finger is not the arm. It is not the shoulder. It is not the mouth. It is not the eye. But the finger can do things the arm cannot do. That is the point. God does not measure usefulness only by size, visibility, volume, or public applause. He measures faithfulness. A small member doing precise work in obedience to the Head may be more useful in its assigned place than a large member trying to do something God never gave it to do. The body of Christ needs fingers: detailed servants, careful workers, quiet craftsmen, patient helpers, precise thinkers, faithful finishers, and unnoticed members whose careful work makes the whole body function better. Do not despise small service. God often hides great usefulness inside small members.

## **Chapter 1: Small Does Not Mean Unnecessary**

The first lesson from the fingers is that small does not mean unnecessary. Men are usually impressed by size. They count crowds, followers, dollars, buildings, platforms, titles, views, programs, and visible influence. But God has never been trapped by the tape measure of human pride. The Lord can use a shepherd's sling, a widow's mite, a lad's lunch, a jawbone, a rod, a nail, a little maid's testimony, and a small member in the body. First Corinthians 12 already warned us against judging members by appearance. Paul says the members that seem to be more feeble are necessary. The fingers are a perfect example. They are small, but the body depends on them constantly. Much of daily life becomes difficult when the small members stop working.

This truth is needed because many believers talk themselves out of service by despising the size of what they can do. They think, "I cannot preach, so I do not matter. I cannot teach like that person, so I am not useful. I do not have a public gift, so my contribution is small. I am not strong enough to carry major burdens, so what difference can I make?" That is the foot complaining because it is not the hand, and the ear complaining because it is not the eye. The finger could do the same thing. "I am not the arm. I am not the shoulder. I am not the mouth. I am just a small member at the end of the hand." But the body answers, "Yes, and I need you right there." God may not have made you large in appearance, but He may have made you precise in function.

Small service becomes great when it is connected to the body and offered to Christ. A small act of obedience can prevent confusion, encourage a saint, correct an error, strengthen a work, preserve order, or open a door for the gospel. One edited paragraph can make truth clearer. One phone call can keep a weak believer from drifting. One organized list can save hours of confusion. One corrected typo can prevent misunderstanding. One prepared room can make ministry smoother. One note of encouragement can steady a discouraged servant. One faithful treasurer can protect a church from chaos. One quiet planner can keep a whole event from falling apart. Small does not mean unnecessary. Sometimes small means precise, and precision can be the difference between usefulness and confusion.

## **Chapter 2: Fingers Handle What Larger Members Cannot**

The arm has strength, but it does not have the precision of the fingers. A man can swing an arm with power, but he cannot thread a needle with his elbow. He can carry a box with his arms, but he needs fingers to tie the knot. He can push a door with his shoulder, but he needs fingers to turn the key. That is the beauty of the body. Different members have different abilities. Large members are not superior because they are large, and small members are not inferior because they are small. They are designed for different work. The

body needs broad strength and fine precision. A ministry needs both the arm that carries the load and the fingers that handle the details.

This applies directly to service in the body of Christ. Some believers are broad workers. They can carry heavy responsibilities, speak publicly, lead visibly, or move large projects forward. Others are detailed workers. They notice what others miss. They see the missing comma, the broken link, the unreturned message, the financial discrepancy, the visitor standing alone, the child needing help, the song slightly out of tune, the chair out of place, the schedule conflict, the typo in the bulletin, the unclear sentence in a lesson, or the gap in follow-up. That kind of precision is not glamorous, but it is extremely useful. The body can suffer greatly when detailed members are ignored or absent.

There is a reason God gave skilled craftsmen detailed work in the tabernacle. Exodus 31:3-5 speaks of men filled with wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and workmanship for artistic and practical service. Not everyone was Moses standing before Pharaoh. Not everyone was Aaron serving as high priest. Some were craftsmen, engravers, builders, sewers, designers, and workers in detail. Their work mattered because God's service was not sloppy. The same principle applies now. The body of Christ should not despise craftsmanship, order, carefulness, administration, and detailed skill. Some members serve God with a pulpit. Others serve Him with a pen, a spreadsheet, a keyboard, a broom, a kitchen, a schedule, an instrument, a design, a phone call, or a carefully prepared lesson. The finger may be small, but it can perform work the arm cannot.

### **Chapter 3: Detailed Service Often Goes Unnoticed Until It Is Missing**

One of the hardest parts of finger ministry is that it often goes unnoticed when it is done well. That is the nature of detailed service. If the room is ready, nobody thinks about who prepared it. If the sound works, nobody thinks about who checked it. If the lesson is clean, nobody thinks about who edited it. If the records are accurate, nobody thinks about who maintained them. If the event runs smoothly, nobody thinks about who planned the details. If guests are welcomed and followed up with, nobody thinks about the quiet servant who made sure they were not forgotten. But let those things fail, and suddenly everyone notices. People may not notice order, but they notice disorder. They may not notice precision, but they notice mistakes. That is why detailed servants often carry a burden that is only visible when something goes wrong.

This can become discouraging. The finger servant may wonder, "Does anyone even know what I do?" The answer may be, "Not always." But God knows. That must be enough at the deepest level. Colossians 3:23-24 says to do whatever we do heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men, knowing that of the Lord we shall receive the reward of the inheritance. That

verse is medicine for hidden workers. If the service is done for men's applause, detailed work will eventually make the servant bitter, because men often overlook what quietly works. But if the work is done unto the Lord, it has dignity even when unnoticed. Christ sees the corrected detail, the prepared file, the cleaned room, the reconciled account, the quiet hospitality, the careful follow-up, and the hidden labor.

The body should still learn to honor these members. The fact that God sees does not give other members permission to be ungrateful. A healthy body appreciates what the fingers do. It learns to thank the ones who handle the details. It recognizes that visible ministry often stands on invisible preparation. The preacher should thank the editor. The teacher should thank the organizer. The musician should thank the sound worker. The leader should thank the planner. The church should thank the treasurer, the cleaner, the nursery worker, the hospitality servant, the technical helper, the follow-up worker, and the quiet saints who keep things from falling apart. The body functions better when small members know they are valued, not worshipped, but valued.

#### **Chapter 4: Precision Is Not Pettiness When It Serves the Truth**

There is a difference between godly precision and carnal pettiness. The fingers teach us the value of precision, but precision must serve truth, order, and edification. Some people are detail-oriented in a helpful way. Others are simply picky, critical, and impossible to satisfy. The difference lies in motive and fruit. Godly precision asks, "How can this be clearer, more faithful, more orderly, more useful, more honoring to Christ?" Carnal pettiness asks, "How can I prove I noticed something others missed?" One serves the body. The other irritates the body. The finger must be careful not to turn its sensitivity to detail into a ministry of constant nitpicking.

Precision matters because God's words matter, doctrine matters, clarity matters, stewardship matters, and order matters. A misplaced word can confuse doctrine. A careless statement can mislead a reader. A poorly organized lesson can make truth harder to receive. A sloppy financial record can cause distrust. A missed follow-up can leave a wounded believer alone. A technical problem can distract from preaching. A careless design can make good material look untrustworthy. Details are not always minor. Sometimes a small detail is the hinge on which a larger usefulness turns. The body needs members who care enough to get things right.

But the precise member must also beware of pride. A finger can become proud of how much it notices. It can start correcting everything and encouraging nothing. It can become more concerned with polish than substance, more concerned with preferences than truth, more concerned with neatness than charity. That is when precision becomes pettiness. A

servant who handles details must remain under the Head and in harmony with the body. Correct what helps. Improve what serves. Speak up when accuracy, order, or usefulness is at stake. But do not turn every personal preference into a hill to die on. The body needs precise fingers, not fingernails scratching at every surface.

## **Chapter 5: The Fingers Teach Craftsmanship and Care**

God is not glorified by careless service. That does not mean every servant has the same ability, training, money, tools, or opportunity. It means each member should do what he does heartily unto the Lord. The fingers remind us that some service requires craftsmanship and care. A musician must practice. A writer must choose words carefully. An editor must pay attention. A bookkeeper must be accurate. A designer must think about presentation. A teacher must prepare. A technical worker must test equipment. A cook must measure and season. A hospitality worker must notice needs. Craftsmanship is not worldly simply because it involves skill. Skill surrendered to God can be a form of service.

In the Old Testament, God used skilled hands for sacred work. The tabernacle did not fall out of the sky fully assembled. God gave instructions, and men worked with skill. The work involved materials, measurements, patterns, craftsmanship, and careful execution. That should rebuke the sloppy spirit that says, “It is for the Lord, so anything will do.” No, if it is for the Lord, that is a reason to care more, not less. The Christian should not use spirituality as an excuse for laziness, disorder, ugliness, or carelessness. If the world can be diligent for money, applause, and vanity, surely God’s people can be diligent in service to Christ.

Care also communicates love. When someone prepares carefully, follows up faithfully, edits thoroughly, organizes clearly, or handles details responsibly, it says, “This matters. The people receiving this matter. The truth being presented matters. The Lord being served matters.” Sloppiness often says the opposite. Of course, perfectionism can become bondage, and no servant should be paralyzed by fear of mistakes. But there is a holy difference between humble imperfection and careless neglect. The fingers teach us to handle the work with care. Not to show off. Not to impress men. Not to build an image. To serve the body and honor the Head.

## **Chapter 6: Small Members Can Touch What Strong Members Might Crush**

One of the beautiful things about fingers is their ability to touch gently. An arm can carry, a shoulder can bear, a hand can grasp, but fingers can touch with careful tenderness. They can wipe a tear, hold a small hand, bandage a wound, turn a fragile page, or handle something delicate without crushing it. That is a picture of certain kinds of ministry in the body. Some saints are especially useful in delicate situations. They know how to follow up with the wounded, speak to the shy, help children, encourage the elderly, comfort the

grieving, and handle sensitive matters with grace. That kind of service may not look mighty, but it is precious.

Not every problem needs a hammer. Some problems need a careful touch. Some believers are bruised reeds, and if handled roughly, they may break. Some are smoking flax, and if blasted with harshness, they may go out. A strong arm may be necessary in some situations, but a delicate finger is necessary in others. The body needs members who can deal with details of the heart, not just details of organization. A kind message, a thoughtful visit, a remembered name, a gentle question, a prepared meal, a quiet seat beside someone grieving, a careful word to a confused new believer—these are finger ministries. Small touches can carry large mercy.

This also applies to restoration. Galatians 6:1 says that spiritual believers should restore one overtaken in a fault in the spirit of meekness, considering themselves. Restoration is delicate work. A broken bone must be set carefully. A wounded conscience must be handled wisely. A repentant saint should not be trampled by members who only know how to swing clubs. The fingers represent the kind of precise service that can help restore, adjust, and steady. The body needs strength, but it also needs tenderness. It needs members who know when to grip firmly and when to touch gently. That is not weakness. That is spiritual skill.

## **Chapter 7: The Finger Must Stay Connected to the Hand, the Body, and the Head**

A finger separated from the hand is useless no matter how well-shaped it is. It cannot function independently. Its life, movement, usefulness, and purpose depend on connection. That is a simple but powerful lesson. A detailed servant may be gifted, skilled, careful, and precise, but he still must remain connected to the body and under the Head. Some detailed people become isolated because they think nobody appreciates their work or nobody does things carefully enough. They withdraw, criticize, and begin functioning like detached fingers lying on a table, pointing at everything but helping nothing. That is not health. The finger's usefulness depends on its place in the body.

Connection also keeps precision from becoming rebellion. A finger does not command the hand by itself. It functions with the hand, under the direction of the head. Likewise, detailed servants must not try to control the whole body through details. Some people use organization, finances, technology, editing, or administrative knowledge as leverage for control. They become gatekeepers instead of servants. They act as if the ministry cannot function without their approval. That is a corruption of the finger's role. The finger is necessary, but it is not the head. Its precision must serve the body, not rule it.

When the finger is connected properly, it becomes a tremendous blessing. It receives direction from the Head, strength from the body, movement from the hand, and purpose from the work. It does not need to be large to be useful. It does not need to be famous to be faithful. It does not need to be praised constantly to matter. It simply needs to function where God placed it. The body of Christ is better, cleaner, clearer, more orderly, more careful, more compassionate, and more effective when the small precise members do their work in humility and love.

## **Conclusion**

The fingers teach us not to despise small members or precise service. A body with strong arms but no fingers is limited. It may have power, but it lacks fine usefulness. It may lift heavy things, but it struggles with careful things. In the body of Christ, God uses detailed servants to do work larger, more visible members cannot do as well. Editors, organizers, planners, bookkeepers, writers, musicians, technical workers, hospitality servants, follow-up workers, designers, caregivers, and quiet helpers all perform finger ministry. They may not receive much applause, but the body feels the benefit of their careful labor. Small does not mean unnecessary. Small may mean precise.

This should encourage every believer who has thought, “What I do is not much.” Do not judge your usefulness by size alone. Judge it by faithfulness to the Head and service to the body. A small member in the right place can do a work that a larger member cannot. One faithful detail can prevent confusion. One careful act can strengthen truth. One gentle touch can comfort a wounded saint. One organized servant can save a ministry from chaos. One precise worker can make the whole body function more smoothly. God sees the little things men miss. He sees the hidden service, the careful preparation, the corrected errors, the quiet follow-up, the delicate care, and the faithful craftsmanship.

So let the fingers serve. Let them handle details without pride, pursue precision without pettiness, practice craftsmanship without vanity, and touch the weak without crushing them. Let them stay connected to the hand, the body, and the Head. Let them remember that their smallness is not a defect but part of their design. The body needs broad strength, but it also needs careful precision. It needs arms, but it also needs fingers. God uses small members with precise service, and many a great work for Christ has depended on little fingers doing faithful work where only God was watching.

## **Introduction**

The arms are members of strength, reach, support, defense, embrace, labor, and burden-bearing. A body without arms can still live, but it is greatly limited in what it can carry, lift, hold, protect, and help. The arms reach outward from the body to take hold of what must be carried, to pull close what must be protected, to lift up what has fallen, and to push away what threatens harm. That is a powerful picture in the body of Christ. Some members are strong. Some have spiritual muscle. Some have endurance, doctrinal stability, emotional toughness, experience, courage, maturity, resources, influence, or ability to carry weight that would crush others. But God never gives strength so a man can parade it like a bodybuilder in a mirror. Strength in the body is not for showing off. It is for service. Arms are not merely for flexing. They are for lifting.

Romans 15:1 says, “We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.” That verse is a direct rebuke to the modern religious spirit that confuses strength with self-display. The strong are not told to mock the weak, despise the weak, lecture the weak from a distance, or use the weak as an opportunity to brag about how strong they are. They are told to bear the infirmities of the weak. That means strength comes with obligation. If God has made a man strong in doctrine, he must use that strength to help those who are confused, not merely to win arguments. If God has made a man strong in faith, he must help those who tremble, not sneer at them. If God has made a man strong in endurance, he must help those ready to faint, not call them worthless. If God has given a believer strong arms, those arms are supposed to carry something besides his own ego.

This essay is needed because many strong personalities in Christian circles use truth like a club instead of using strength like a servant. They can fight, but they cannot carry. They can rebuke, but they cannot restore. They can expose, but they cannot embrace. They can swing, but they cannot lift. That is not biblical strength. Arms can defend, but they can also hold. Arms can fight off a wolf, but they can also carry a wounded sheep. Arms can labor, but they can also comfort. Arms can protect, but they can also gather the weak close enough to feel safe. A strong arm that will not lift the weak is not spiritual strength. It is just religious muscle. The body of Christ needs arms that are strong under the Head, governed by charity, trained by truth, and willing to bear burdens for those who cannot bear them alone.

## **Chapter 1: Strength Is Given for Service, Not Display**

The first lesson from the arms is that strength is given for service, not display. An arm that only flexes in front of a mirror has missed its purpose. It may look impressive, but it is not

helping the body much. In the same way, a believer may have strong doctrine, strong convictions, strong speech, strong experience, and strong courage, yet still be useless to hurting saints if all he does is show everyone how strong he is. God does not give strength so a man can build a stage around it. He gives strength so burdens can be carried, dangers can be resisted, and weak members can be supported. Strength that never serves becomes vanity.

Romans 15:1 does not say, “We then that are strong ought to enjoy being stronger than others.” It says the strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak. The word “ought” matters. It is obligation language. Strength creates responsibility. The strong do not merely have permission to help the weak; they owe it. That cuts against the flesh. The flesh wants strength to become independence. “I am strong, so I do not need to be bothered by weak people.” The Bible turns that upside down. “You are strong, so you are exactly the kind of member who should help carry weak people.” The strong man is not free to please himself. He is called to bear.

This exposes a lot of false strength. Some people are only strong when strength benefits themselves. They can endure pressure when their pride is involved. They can fight when their reputation is at stake. They can speak boldly when it makes them look fearless. But ask them to patiently help a weak brother, bear with a struggling saint, restore someone overtaken in a fault, or quietly support someone who cannot repay them, and suddenly their strength disappears. That is not spiritual strength. That is selective toughness. Bible strength bends down. It reaches out. It carries. It does not merely stand on a hill and shout at the wounded to climb faster.

## **Chapter 2: Arms Can Defend the Body**

Arms can defend. They can block a blow, hold a shield, swing a sword, and keep danger from reaching vital parts of the body. That is a needed function. The body of Christ needs defenders. It needs men who will stand against false doctrine, protect the weak from wolves, resist spiritual abuse, rebuke corrupt teaching, and guard the flock from those who would devour it. Paul warned the elders at Ephesus in Acts 20 that grievous wolves would enter in, not sparing the flock. In that kind of hour, the body does not need limp noodles. It needs strong arms. A shepherd who will not defend sheep is not gentle. He is negligent.

But defense must be governed by the Head. Arms that swing wildly can hurt the very body they are meant to protect. Some defenders become so accustomed to fighting that they cannot tell the difference between a wolf, a confused sheep, a weak lamb, and a sincere brother who needs instruction. They swing at everything that moves and call it boldness. That is not protection. That is spiritual recklessness. A strong arm must know when to

strike, when to shield, when to hold, and when to restrain itself. The same arm that blocks a wolf's teeth must be gentle enough not to break the sheep's neck. Discernment must govern strength.

This is where truth and charity must work together. If a man has charity with no defense, wolves will eat the flock while he smiles about love. If he has defense with no charity, he may injure the flock while claiming to fight wolves. The arm must be strong, but it must be attached to a heart. The defender must care about the body, not merely enjoy combat. Paul warned with tears. That matters. He did not warn as a man entertained by conflict. He warned because souls were in danger. That is the model. Defend the truth. Defend the weak. Defend the gospel. Defend the words of God. But do it as an arm serving the body, not as a brawler looking for another head to crack.

### **Chapter 3: Arms Can Carry the Wounded**

Arms do not only fight; they carry. That may be their most tender ministry. A wounded sheep cannot always walk. A broken brother cannot always stand. A grieving saint cannot always move forward without help. A weak believer may not need another lecture first. He may need somebody strong enough to carry him for a while. Galatians 6:2 says, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." That is arm work. Burdens are not carried by theories. They are carried by members willing to get underneath the weight with another person. The arm that can carry is one of the most Christlike pictures in the body.

There are many kinds of wounded members. Some are wounded by sin and need restoration. Some are wounded by grief and need comfort. Some are wounded by betrayal and need stability. Some are wounded by false doctrine and need careful correction. Some are wounded by family trouble, sickness, loneliness, discouragement, depression, failure, poverty, or spiritual warfare. A strong arm does not treat every wound the same way. It does not pour salt into every cut and call it ministry. It does not ignore sin, but it also does not treat sorrow like rebellion. Carrying the wounded requires wisdom. A broken bone must be handled differently from a stubborn fist.

The Lord Jesus gave the perfect picture of carrying when He spoke of the shepherd laying the lost sheep on his shoulders, rejoicing. That is not weakness. That is strength in mercy. The shepherd does not stand over the sheep saying, "You got yourself into this mess, now walk." He carries what cannot carry itself. That does not mean there is never correction. It means restoration sometimes begins with being lifted. The body of Christ needs arms that can carry wounded saints without making a public performance out of it. Some of the strongest ministry happens when no one is watching: a visit, a phone call, a ride, a meal, a prayer, a quiet gift, a patient conversation, a steady presence. Arms carry.

## **Chapter 4: Arms Can Embrace Without Compromising Truth**

Arms can embrace. That is another part of strength. An embrace can comfort, welcome, reassure, and communicate belonging. The body of Christ needs that. Some people have been battered by the world, confused by false religion, wounded by family, misused by churches, or discouraged by their own failures. They do not always need a doctrinal sledgehammer in the first five seconds. Sometimes they need a strong, clean, biblical embrace that says, “You are not beyond help. Christ is sufficient. There is a place to stand. Let us get you to the Book and help you walk.” That kind of embrace is not compromise. It is mercy with bones in it.

The danger, of course, is that many use the language of embrace to erase truth. That is not Bible charity. A Christian embrace must never become a hug around sin that refuses to call it sin. The father embraced the prodigal when he came home, but the prodigal did not bring the hog pen with him and demand the father celebrate it. The Lord receives sinners who come to Him, but He does not redefine sin to make rebellion feel affirmed. Arms must be open to the repentant, the wounded, the weak, the confused, and the weary, but they must not wrap themselves around corruption and call it love. The embrace of the body must remain under the authority of the Head.

A strong believer should therefore know how to embrace without becoming soft-headed. There is a biblical way to welcome without approving everything, to comfort without lying, to be patient without tolerating leaven, to restore without minimizing sin, and to love without surrendering truth. This takes maturity. Weak sentimentalism hugs everything and calls it grace. Harsh carnality hugs nothing and calls it separation. Bible strength can do better than both. It can put an arm around a struggling brother while still pointing him to holiness. It can receive a wounded sheep without inviting a wolf into the fold. It can love the person without making peace with the sin. That is strength for the weak.

## **Chapter 5: Arms Bear Burdens Without Making Everything About Themselves**

Burden-bearing is costly because burdens are heavy. That is why the arms are needed. But the strong must be careful not to turn burden-bearing into self-glorification. Some people cannot help anyone without making sure everyone knows how much they helped. They carry a burden with one arm and wave for applause with the other. They turn service into a public announcement, mercy into reputation-building, and sacrifice into spiritual advertising. That kind of service loses much of its purity. The arm is supposed to lift the weak, not point back at itself and say, “Look how strong I am.”

The Lord warned about doing alms before men to be seen of them. That principle applies broadly. Some burden-bearing must be known because practical needs require

communication, but the motive must be clean. A mature arm does not need to broadcast every load it carries. It does not use another person's weakness as evidence of its own greatness. It does not secretly enjoy being needed. It does not keep people weak so it can remain important. That last danger is subtle. Some "strong" members help in a way that creates dependence on themselves instead of helping the weak stand under Christ. That is not true burden-bearing. That is control wearing a servant's towel.

True strength helps the weak become stronger where possible. It carries when carrying is needed, but it also strengthens, teaches, steadies, and encourages growth. A father carries a child who cannot walk, but he also wants the child to learn to walk. A mature believer may carry a weak saint through a crisis, but he should not want that saint to remain helpless forever. The goal is not to create a personal fan club of dependents. The goal is to edify the body under Christ. Arms bear burdens best when they lift others toward the Head, not toward themselves.

## **Chapter 6: Strong Arms Must Be Gentle Enough Not to Crush**

Strength without gentleness can crush what it means to help. A strong arm can lift a child, but if it squeezes too hard, it harms the child. A strong believer can handle hard truth, heavy doctrine, strong rebuke, and spiritual pressure, but that does not mean every weak believer can receive the same amount at the same speed. Romans 14 deals with receiving the weak in the faith, not to doubtful disputations. First Thessalonians 5:14 says, "support the weak, be patient toward all men." Support and patience belong together. Strength must learn restraint.

This is where many strong personalities fail. They think because they can handle something, everyone else should handle it instantly. They forget that their own strength may have been built through time, failure, correction, suffering, teaching, and mercy from God. They forget that they did not become strong overnight. Then they turn around and crush weak believers for not being where they are. That is hypocrisy with muscles. A strong arm must remember what it was like to be weak. If it cannot remember, it should at least believe the Bible when it says to bear infirmities and support the weak. Strength that has no patience is not mature strength.

Gentleness does not mean weakness. The Lord Jesus Christ was the strongest man who ever walked this earth, and yet Isaiah 42:3 says, "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench." That is strength under perfect control. He could rebuke Pharisees with terrifying force and still deal tenderly with the broken. He could drive out moneychangers and still receive sinners. He could expose hypocrisy and still restore Peter. He could speak judgment and still weep. That is the pattern. Arms in the body of Christ

must learn from Christ: strong enough to confront evil, gentle enough not to crush the bruised.

## **Chapter 7: The Everlasting Arms Are Under the Body**

Deuteronomy 33:27 says, “The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.” That is one of the great comforting phrases in Scripture. Underneath are the everlasting arms. Before any believer can use his arms to help another, he must remember that he himself is upheld by God. No member is strong independently. All spiritual strength is received strength. The strongest arm in the body is still being held up by the Lord. That truth destroys pride and produces compassion. A man who knows God’s arms are underneath him should be more willing to put his arms underneath another weak member.

This matters because strong believers can begin to think they stand by their own power. They become impatient with weakness because they have forgotten their own dependence. But Paul said, “By the grace of God I am what I am.” That is the right confession. If you have strength, grace gave it. If you have endurance, grace sustained it. If you have doctrine, grace taught you. If you have courage, grace strengthened you. If you have survived wounds, grace carried you. If you have wisdom, grace corrected you. You are not strong because you manufactured yourself out of better material. You are strong because God helped you. That should make your arms available to help others.

The everlasting arms also teach us where to put the weak ultimately. We do not carry people so they can rest forever in our arms. We carry them toward His. Human arms get tired. God’s arms do not. Human arms are limited. God’s arms are everlasting. A strong believer must never become the final refuge of another soul. Christ is the refuge. The Lord is the strength. God is the one underneath. The arms of the body can help, support, and carry for a season, but the goal is always to bring the weak to deeper dependence on the Lord. The best arms in the body are those that lift others toward the everlasting arms.

## **Conclusion**

The arms teach us that strength is not for self-display but for service. God gives some members strength so they can bear what others cannot bear, carry what others cannot carry, defend those who cannot defend themselves, and support those ready to fall. The strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak and not to please themselves. That verse should govern every strong believer, every strong preacher, every strong teacher, every strong father, every strong friend, and every strong member of the body. Strength that will not serve is not spiritual strength. It is religious muscle flexing in a mirror.

The body of Christ needs arms that can do more than fight. It needs arms that can defend truth, yes, but also carry wounded sheep. It needs arms that can block wolves, but also embrace the repentant. It needs arms that can bear burdens quietly without turning every act of service into a monument to self. It needs arms strong enough to lift and gentle enough not to crush. It needs members who understand that truth is not a club for proud men to swing at the weak, but a sword, a staff, a balm, and a burden-bearing truth under the authority of Christ. The strong must not become bullies in Bible clothing. They must become servants.

So let the arms be yielded to the Head. Let them reach for the fallen, hold the hurting, defend the vulnerable, bear the weak, and serve without applause. Let them remember that underneath them are the everlasting arms, and that any strength they have was given by grace. Let the strong stop pleasing themselves and start bearing infirmities. Let them fight when wolves come, but let them hold when sheep are wounded. A strong arm that will not lift the weak is not spiritual strength. It is just muscle. The body needs better than muscle. It needs arms that serve Christ by strengthening His members.

## **11 of 32: One Body - Many Members - The Shoulders: Bearing the Weight Others Never See**

### **Introduction**

The shoulders are where weight rests. A man may lift with his hands, reach with his arms, walk with his feet, see with his eyes, and speak with his mouth, but when a heavy burden must be carried for any length of time, sooner or later it finds the shoulders. That is why the shoulders are such a fitting picture of responsibility, leadership, accountability, pressure, and hidden burdens in the body of Christ. The shoulder is not the showpiece of the body. It is not usually the first member noticed. It is not there to be decorated, admired, or applauded. It is there to bear weight. That is a needed correction in a day when leadership has been turned into branding, platform-building, religious celebrity, professional influence, and polished public performance. Bible leadership is not a throne for the ego. It is a burden for the shoulder. The man who thinks leadership is mainly about being seen has not understood the weight of it.

In the body of Christ, some members carry responsibilities others never see. Pastors, teachers, fathers, mothers, ministry leaders, mature saints, faithful counselors, burden-bearing friends, and steady workers often carry pressures that are invisible to the people who benefit from them. Others may see the public lesson, the sermon, the decision, the

correction, the counsel, the schedule, the service, the finished work, or the calm face in front of the room, but they do not see the sleepless night behind it. They do not see the private prayer. They do not see the spiritual concern. They do not see the criticism swallowed quietly. They do not see the grief over straying sheep. They do not see the weight of deciding when to speak and when to be silent. They do not see the hard choice between pleasing people and obeying God. They do not see the tears that never make it to the pulpit. They see the shoulder standing upright, but they do not always see what is resting on it.

This essay will not glorify leadership as though the shoulder is better than the rest of the body. The shoulder is not the head. Christ alone is the Head. The shoulder is not independent. It cannot boast over the hand, the foot, the eye, the ear, the heart, or the feeble members. But the shoulder does have a necessary function. It carries. It bears. It supports. It receives pressure so other parts can keep moving. The body needs members who can bear responsibility without constantly demanding applause for the burden. It needs shoulders that can carry weight without becoming bitter, proud, controlling, or self-pitying. It needs leaders who understand that authority under Christ is not self-importance, but stewardship. The shoulder is not there to strut. It is there to carry.

## **Chapter 1: The Shoulder Is Made for Burden-Bearing**

The first lesson from the shoulder is that it is built to carry. A burden may be lifted by the hands at first, but if it must be transported, stabilized, and endured, it often goes to the shoulder. That is true spiritually. Some burdens are not momentary. They cannot be solved with one conversation, one sermon, one correction, one prayer, one act of service, or one quick decision. They must be carried over time. A pastor bears concern for souls. A father bears responsibility for his house. A mother bears emotional and spiritual weight that often goes unnoticed. A teacher bears the burden of handling truth accurately. A mature saint bears the infirmities of the weak. A ministry leader bears the pressure of decisions that affect others. These are shoulder burdens.

Isaiah 9:6 says of the Lord Jesus Christ, “and the government shall be upon his shoulder.” That is a tremendous phrase. The ultimate government rests on His shoulder because He alone is worthy to bear it perfectly. No human shoulder can carry what Christ carries. But under Him, God gives certain responsibilities to men and women in their proper places. That responsibility is not a toy. It is not a decoration. It is not a religious badge. It is weight. The father who treats headship as a privilege for selfish control has not understood the shoulder. The pastor who treats oversight as personal ownership has not understood the shoulder. The teacher who treats influence as a platform for self-display has not understood the shoulder. The shoulder exists for burden, not vanity.

This is why the body must stop confusing leadership with celebrity. A celebrity is watched. A shepherd watches. A celebrity is served. A shepherd serves. A celebrity is protected by handlers. A shepherd stands between danger and sheep. A celebrity performs for admiration. A shepherd carries responsibility before God. The shoulder does not exist so the body can hang medals on it. It exists because there is weight to bear. The church does not need leaders who love being called leaders. It needs shoulders strong enough to carry when the work is heavy, lonely, criticized, and misunderstood.

## **Chapter 2: Leadership Is Weight, Not Ornament**

In much of modern religion, leadership has been polished into something ornamental. Men love titles. They love seats. They love recognition. They love the sound of their own authority. They love being quoted, followed, consulted, platformed, and praised. But Bible leadership is not ornament. It is weight. When Paul spoke of his apostolic burdens in 2 Corinthians 11, after listing beatings, shipwrecks, perils, hunger, thirst, cold, and nakedness, he added in verse 28, “Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.” That is shoulder language. The care of the churches came upon him daily. Not occasionally. Daily. Public ministry was only part of the burden. The inward care was constant.

This is where many people misunderstand those who carry responsibility. They see a man teach, preach, decide, correct, organize, answer, or lead, and they assume the visible portion is the whole thing. They do not understand that visible leadership often sits on top of invisible concern. The sermon may last an hour, but the burden behind it may have been carried all week. The correction may take five minutes, but the prayer and grief behind it may have taken months. The decision may be announced in one sentence, but the weight of making it may have pressed on the shoulder for nights. It is easy to criticize a burden you never had to carry. It is easy to judge a decision when you did not have to bear the consequences of either choice.

That does not mean leaders are above correction. They are not. A shoulder can become proud, crooked, abusive, selfish, or weak. Every leader must answer to the Head. But the body should at least understand that real responsibility has weight. Hebrews 13:17 speaks of those who watch for souls “as they that must give account.” That phrase ought to make any spiritual leader tremble. Watching for souls is not a branding opportunity. It is an accounting before God. A man who carries responsibility in the body must not ask, “How important does this make me look?” He must ask, “How will this appear before Christ?”

## **Chapter 3: The Shoulders Carry Hidden Pressure**

Shoulders often carry pressure that is not visible. A person may look composed outwardly while inwardly bearing grief, concern, disappointment, spiritual pressure, and unanswered questions. This is especially true in ministry and family responsibility. A pastor may preach with strength while grieving over people who are drifting. A father may work and lead while wondering if he is doing enough for his children. A mother may serve everyone while carrying emotional burdens nobody asks about. A teacher may handle doctrine publicly while fearing the danger of saying something careless. A mature saint may encourage others while privately fighting weariness. Shoulders carry what the crowd never sees.

This hidden pressure can come from criticism. Anyone who carries responsibility will be criticized by people who do not carry the same load. Sometimes criticism is needed and righteous. Sometimes it is ignorant, petty, cruel, or cowardly. A leader will be criticized for speaking too much and for not speaking enough, for being too hard and for being too soft, for acting too quickly and for waiting too long, for helping one person and not helping another, for correcting sin and for not correcting it fast enough, for being visible and for not being available enough. If a man is ruled by criticism, he cannot carry the shoulder burden. But if he ignores all correction, he becomes dangerous. That balance is heavy.

Hidden pressure also comes from knowledge. Sometimes the shoulder carries information that cannot be spread. A mature leader may know details he cannot repeat. He may know why a situation is more complicated than observers realize. He may know the private grief behind a public problem. He may know the sin, repentance, weakness, or pain involved, but cannot expose it just to defend himself. That is weight. A carnal man will relieve pressure by talking. A spiritual shoulder may have to bear the pressure quietly. Not every burden can be explained to the crowd. Some things must be carried before God.

#### **Chapter 4: The Shoulder Must Be Strong Without Becoming Hard**

A shoulder must be strong enough to carry, but not so hard that it becomes unfeeling. This is one of the dangers of long-term burden-bearing. Constant pressure can make a person calloused in a bad way. The leader who has seen enough foolishness may become cynical. The parent who has carried enough concern may become harsh. The teacher who has dealt with enough ignorance may become impatient. The helper who has served enough ungrateful people may become bitter. The shoulder can become strong but cold. That is not health. The body needs shoulders with strength and tenderness together.

The Lord Jesus Christ shows the perfect balance. He carried the government on His shoulder, bore the cross, carried our sins, and yet was moved with compassion. He could rebuke with authority and still weep over Jerusalem. He could expose Pharisees and still receive sinners. He could bear burdens without becoming bitter. That is the pattern.

Strength must not turn into hardness. A leader who can no longer feel the weakness of others has become dangerous, even if he is still technically right. A father who leads without tenderness can break spirits. A pastor who rebukes without tears can become a butcher. A teacher who instructs without patience can make truth feel like a whip.

But tenderness must not become weakness. A shoulder that collapses under every emotion cannot bear responsibility. The body needs members who can feel and still stand. There are times when love must carry pain without surrendering truth. There are times when compassion must make a hard decision. There are times when a leader must be misunderstood for the good of others. There are times when a father or mother must say no because yes would destroy. There are times when a teacher must speak plainly because softness would be treason. The shoulder must be strong without becoming hard, tender without becoming weak, and steady without becoming proud.

### **Chapter 5: The Shoulder Must Not Demand Applause for the Burden**

One of the temptations of burden-bearing is self-pity. A shoulder can begin to say, “No one knows what I carry. No one appreciates me. No one understands the weight.” Sometimes that may be true in a limited sense, but if the heart feeds on it, the burden becomes poisoned. A shoulder that constantly demands applause for carrying weight is turning responsibility into a stage. The body should honor faithful burden-bearers, but burden-bearers must not become addicted to being recognized. Some of the heaviest responsibilities must be carried quietly before God.

Colossians 3:23 says, “And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.” That applies to shoulders as much as hands. Carry as unto the Lord. Lead as unto the Lord. Serve as unto the Lord. Parent as unto the Lord. Teach as unto the Lord. Bear responsibility as unto the Lord. Men may misunderstand, overlook, criticize, or forget. Christ does not. The shoulder that remembers the Judgment Seat of Christ can keep carrying when human appreciation is thin. The shoulder that requires constant applause will eventually grow bitter and drop the load.

This does not excuse the body from ingratitude. It should not be normal to use faithful shoulders and never encourage them. The body should pray for those who carry responsibility. It should not make burdens heavier through needless criticism, gossip, and childish demands. It should recognize that leaders are not machines. Parents are not machines. Teachers are not machines. Burden-bearing saints are not machines. Still, the shoulder must settle the matter internally: the burden is carried for Christ, not for applause. If appreciation comes, receive it humbly. If it does not, keep carrying faithfully.

### **Chapter 6: The Shoulder Must Stay Under the Head**

The shoulder carries weight, but it does not rule the body. Christ is the Head. That must remain clear. A shoulder that forgets the Head becomes abusive. Responsibility can become control. Leadership can become domination. Burden-bearing can become self-importance. A pastor can begin to act like the church belongs to him. A father can begin to act like headship means selfish tyranny. A teacher can begin to act like his understanding is beyond examination. A ministry leader can begin to treat helpers like property. That is not shoulder ministry. That is rebellion disguised as authority.

First Peter 5:2-3 tells elders to feed the flock of God, taking the oversight, “neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.” That verse strikes directly at abusive leadership. The flock is God's heritage. The shoulder carries under the Shepherd; it does not become the Shepherd. Oversight is real, but it is not ownership. Authority is real, but it is accountable. Leadership is real, but it is not lordship over God's heritage. A man who uses responsibility to exalt himself has forgotten the Head. He may still carry a title, but spiritually he is out of order.

The shoulder must stay under the Head by remaining obedient to Scripture, humble in prayer, open to correction, and aware of final accountability. The greater the burden, the more a man must fear God. The more influence he has, the more carefully he must walk. The more people depend on his leadership, the less room he has for selfishness, pride, and spiritual laziness. A shoulder connected to the Head can carry safely. A shoulder acting independently can injure the body. The body needs shoulders, but it needs shoulders that bow to Christ.

## **Chapter 7: The Shoulder Points to Christ, Who Bore the Greatest Weight**

Every true study of the shoulder must end with Christ, because He bore the greatest weight. Isaiah 53:4 says, “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.” First Peter 2:24 says He “bare our sins in his own body on the tree.” There is the ultimate burden-bearing. No pastor, parent, teacher, saint, or leader has ever carried what Christ carried. He bore sin. He bore wrath. He bore shame. He bore the cross. He bore what no other shoulder could bear. That means every lesser burden in the body must be understood in light of Him. We carry because He carried first.

This truth humbles the burden-bearer. No matter how heavy the weight feels, the servant is not the Saviour. That needs to be remembered. Some leaders develop a saviour complex because they carry real burdens. They begin to think everything depends on them. It does not. Christ is the Saviour. Christ is the Head. Christ is the Shepherd and Bishop of souls. A man may carry responsibility faithfully, but he cannot redeem anyone, sanctify anyone by

his own power, or hold the body together by himself. The shoulder must bear its assigned weight, but it must not pretend to bear Christ's weight. That distinction preserves sanity.

This truth also comforts the burden-bearer. Christ knows weight. Christ knows rejection. Christ knows misunderstanding. Christ knows betrayal. Christ knows weariness. Christ knows sorrow. Christ knows what it is to carry a burden others cannot comprehend. The one who carries responsibility in the body does not carry it before a distant Lord who has never felt pressure. He carries it under a High Priest touched with the feeling of our infirmities. That means the shoulder can go to Christ for strength. It can cast its care upon Him. It can admit weakness. It can find grace to help in time of need. The shoulder that carries others must itself be carried by Christ.

## **Conclusion**

The shoulders teach us that responsibility is weight. Leadership is not a religious decoration, a celebrity platform, or a throne for the ego. It is pressure, accountability, care, decision, prayer, endurance, and often hidden grief. Pastors, teachers, fathers, mothers, ministry leaders, mature saints, and faithful burden-bearers carry things others may never see. The public part is only part of the story. Behind it may be sleepless nights, criticism, spiritual concern, private sorrow, difficult decisions, and the daily care of souls. The shoulder is not there to be admired. It is there to carry.

But the shoulder must carry rightly. It must be strong without becoming hard, tender without becoming weak, faithful without demanding applause, and responsible without becoming controlling. It must stay under the Head. Christ alone rules the body. No leader, parent, teacher, or burden-bearing saint has the right to turn responsibility into tyranny. The burden is real, but so is accountability. The shoulder serves the body; it does not own it. The shoulder bears weight; it does not become the Head. Every responsibility must be carried under the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ and according to His words.

So let the shoulders be strengthened. Let them carry what God has assigned without bitterness, pride, self-pity, or abuse. Let the body learn to pray for those who bear weight and not add needless burdens through childish criticism and ingratitude. Let burden-bearers remember that Christ carried the greatest weight and still carries them. The body needs shoulders. It needs members who can bear responsibility when no one sees, stand steady when pressure comes, and carry weight without turning the burden into a stage. The shoulder is not there to be decorated. It is there to carry.

## **12 of 32: One Body - Many Members - The Back: Unseen Strength That Keeps the Body Standing**

### **Introduction**

The back is one of those members most people do not think about until it hurts, weakens, or gives out. A man may notice the face first, the eyes, the mouth, the hands, or the feet, but he usually does not walk into a room and admire the back. Yet without the back, the body cannot stand upright, bear strain, turn, lift, walk steadily, or endure pressure for long. The back is not a showpiece. It is support. It is strength behind the visible movement. It is stability beneath the activity. It carries pressure quietly while other members receive more attention. That makes the back a powerful picture of certain believers in the body of Christ: saints who are not always seen, not always named, not always praised, not always consulted, and not always out front, but who help keep the work standing through long years of faithfulness. They are the kind of people you may not notice when they are present, but you surely feel the weakness when they are gone.

The back represents endurance, support, stability, and unseen strength. It is not as expressive as the face, not as vocal as the mouth, not as precise as the fingers, not as visible in service as the hands, and not as active in motion as the feet. But the back supports them all. A weak back affects the arms. A strained back affects the legs. A broken back can paralyze movement. In the body of Christ, some members function this way. They may not be the most gifted speakers, the most visible workers, the most applauded singers, the most recognized teachers, or the most publicly known servants, but they provide stability to the whole work. They are steady. They show up. They pray. They give. They support. They remain. They endure criticism, hardship, disappointment, grief, and pressure without constantly advertising the load. They do not need a spotlight to be faithful. They have learned how to stand.

This essay will honor those believers who quietly support the work year after year without needing to be seen, praised, named, or promoted. They are not always out front. They are not always speaking. They are not always noticed. But they help keep the body standing. Some of the most valuable members in the body of Christ are not the ones making the most noise, but the ones still standing after pressure would have folded others in half. In a day when men love platforms, visibility, recognition, and religious performance, the back teaches a needed lesson: unseen strength is still strength. Faithfulness without applause is still faithfulness. Support without fame is still service. Endurance under pressure is one of the clearest marks of spiritual maturity. The body needs a strong back, and the church needs saints who can stand when the weight comes.

## **Chapter 1: The Back Supports What Others See**

The back supports much of what people notice elsewhere. When the mouth speaks, the back helps the body stand. When the hands work, the back stabilizes the movement. When the feet walk, the back helps maintain balance. When the shoulders bear weight, the back receives strain. Yet most attention goes to the visible action, not the support behind it. That is exactly how many ministries and churches function. People notice the preacher, the teacher, the singer, the leader, the public worker, or the visible event, but behind that visible work are saints whose steady support made it possible. They prayed. They gave. They prepared. They encouraged. They stayed faithful. They kept the structure from bending under pressure.

This kind of support is easy to overlook because it is not loud. Some members support the work simply by being stable. That may not sound impressive to a generation addicted to novelty, but stability is precious. A stable saint who does not panic every time trouble comes, does not quit every time feelings get hurt, does not gossip every time confusion appears, does not run after every new wind of doctrine, and does not need constant emotional babysitting is a tremendous blessing to the body. He may not be spectacular, but he is strong. He may not be famous, but he is useful. He may not be the face of the ministry, but he helps the ministry stand.

The back also teaches that not all support is visible from the front. Many believers only value what they can see. God sees deeper. He sees the quiet saint who has prayed for years. He sees the faithful giver who never announces it. He sees the older believer who keeps showing up when younger ones drift in and out with every mood. He sees the mother carrying grief while still serving her family. He sees the father laboring under pressure to keep his house steady. He sees the friend who keeps encouraging others while fighting private battles. He sees the servant who never asks for a title but always helps hold the line. Men may miss these things. God does not.

## **Chapter 2: The Back Takes Pressure Without Always Complaining**

The back takes pressure. It absorbs strain from lifting, bending, carrying, and standing. It can ache under weight others never notice. That is one of the clearest analogies for unseen burden-bearing in the body of Christ. Some saints carry pressure quietly. They are not always announcing their pain, rehearsing their sacrifices, or turning every hardship into a public testimony of how much they suffer. They simply keep standing. They may be grieving, tired, disappointed, criticized, misunderstood, or under financial, family, physical, or spiritual pressure, but they still support the work. They keep moving, keep praying, keep serving, keep believing, and keep standing.

This is not because they are made of stone. A strong back still feels pain. Enduring saints are not unfeeling saints. Sometimes they feel more than others realize. They may carry private sorrows that would shock people if known. They may be holding up under family burdens, health struggles, ministry disappointments, betrayal, loneliness, financial strain, or years of unanswered prayer. But they have learned something many never learn: you can hurt and still stand. You can be tired and still remain faithful. You can be disappointed and still obey God. You can be under pressure and still refuse to collapse into bitterness. That is not fake strength. That is grace working in the inner man.

There is a danger here, though. Because strong backs often do not complain much, others may assume they do not need encouragement. That is a mistake. The body should not abuse its stable members by putting weight on them endlessly and never checking whether they are weary. Even the strongest back can be strained. Galatians 6:2 says, “Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.” That applies to burden-bearers too. The body must learn to support the supporters, encourage the encouragers, pray for the steady ones, and notice the ones who quietly carry strain. Strength should be honored, not exploited.

### **Chapter 3: The Back Teaches Endurance Under Hardship**

Endurance is one of the great forgotten virtues in a soft age. Many people can start. Fewer can continue. Many can get excited. Fewer can remain. Many can speak boldly when the sun is shining. Fewer can stand when the pressure comes. The back teaches endurance because it is involved in standing upright over time. Ephesians 6:13 says, “and having done all, to stand.” That is not flashy, but it is mighty. Sometimes the most spiritual thing a believer can do is stand. Not run. Not perform. Not impress. Not reinvent himself every month. Stand. Stand in truth. Stand in grace. Stand in sound doctrine. Stand in the evil day. Stand when others sit down. Stand when others fall away. Stand when others compromise.

The body of Christ needs saints with staying power. It needs believers who are not spiritual fireworks, bright for a moment and gone in smoke. It needs old-fashioned endurance. The Christian life is not a sprint around a church auditorium while everyone claps. It is a long race through temptation, grief, correction, warfare, weariness, disappointment, and waiting. Hebrews 12:1 says, “let us run with patience the race that is set before us.” Patience there carries the idea of endurance. The race requires more than a burst of excitement. It requires perseverance. The back keeps the body upright when the race is long and the load is heavy.

Endurance under hardship also proves the difference between emotion and conviction. Emotion can carry a man for a little while. Conviction keeps him standing when emotion is

gone. Many believers are faithful when they feel inspired, appreciated, refreshed, and surrounded. But what happens when the feelings fade, the applause stops, the opposition increases, and the burden stays? That is where the back is tested. The steady saint says, “I am not standing because it feels good today. I am standing because Christ is worthy, the Book is true, the gospel is right, and the work matters.” That kind of endurance keeps the body from collapsing every time circumstances change.

#### **Chapter 4: The Back Is Often Hidden Behind the Face**

Most people notice the face before the back. The face represents public appearance, testimony, expression, and what others see first. But the back represents hidden strength behind what is visible. This matters because public Christianity often receives more attention than private faithfulness. People notice the visible testimony, the public message, the polished presentation, the confident expression, and the outward impression. But what keeps that testimony upright may be years of hidden discipline, private prayer, personal suffering, unseen repentance, quiet obedience, and steady endurance. The face may be what people see, but the back is what helps it remain upright.

This rebukes the shallow way people measure spiritual value. The world is obsessed with faces. Images, profiles, brands, platforms, appearances, and public presentation dominate the age. Even Christians can get caught up in it. They admire what looks strong, sounds strong, and photographs well. But God often values what is hidden. A smiling face may hide a weak back, and an unnoticed back may support a faithful life. The question is not merely how a thing appears from the front. The question is whether it has the strength to stand when pressure comes from behind. Many polished religious faces collapse because there is no back of endurance behind them.

The hidden back also warns against judging too quickly. You do not always know what is supporting the person in front of you. You do not always know what strain they carry. You do not always know what battles they have survived. You do not always know how many times they almost folded and did not. Some people who look ordinary may have endured extraordinary pressure. Some quiet saints may have more spiritual backbone than the loudest personalities in the room. The body should be careful not to confuse visibility with depth. A strong back may be hidden, but when the storm hits, you will find out who can stand.

#### **Chapter 5: The Back Must Not Become Bent Under Bitterness**

A back can become bent under years of strain. Spiritually, one of the things that bends burden-bearing saints is bitterness. A person can carry pressure for a long time and begin to resent the weight. He may think, “Why am I always the one standing? Why do others quit

and I remain? Why do people lean on me but not notice me? Why do I support others while nobody sees my pain?" Those thoughts may arise under real pressure, but if fed, they can deform the inner man. Bitterness bends the back. It takes a strong member and twists him into a resentful one.

Hebrews 12:15 warns about a root of bitterness springing up and troubling many. Bitterness is not private. A bent back affects the whole body. A bitter supporter may keep serving outwardly while inwardly becoming hard, critical, cynical, and joyless. He may still show up, still give, still work, still support, but the spirit changes. The service becomes heavy with resentment. The strength becomes stiff. The endurance becomes grim. The member is still standing, but not standing freely. Bitterness has turned the burden into bondage. That is why burden-bearing saints must bring their pressure to the Lord before it turns poisonous.

The cure is not pretending the weight is light. Some burdens are heavy. The cure is casting the burden on the Lord. Psalm 55:22 says, "Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee." The verse does not say He will always remove the burden immediately. It says He shall sustain thee. That is what the back needs: sustaining grace. A saint can carry weight without becoming bitter when he remembers he is not carrying it alone, not carrying it for applause, and not carrying it forever. The Lord sees. The Lord sustains. The Lord rewards. The Lord can straighten what pressure has bent if the saint will not let bitterness take root.

## **Chapter 6: The Back Gives the Body Backbone**

The word backbone has become a way of describing courage, firmness, conviction, and refusal to collapse under pressure. That fits the spiritual analogy perfectly. The body of Christ needs backbone. It needs saints who can stand for truth when compromise is popular. It needs believers who can remain steady when others are tossed to and fro. It needs men and women who will not fold under intimidation, flattery, fear, criticism, or the pressure to be accepted. A body without backbone cannot stand upright. A Christianity without conviction cannot stand either.

Backbone is not stubbornness for its own sake. Some people confuse having a backbone with simply being hard-headed. A mule has stubbornness, but that does not make it spiritual. Biblical backbone is conviction under the authority of Scripture. It stands because God has spoken. It refuses to bend where the Book is clear. It will not sell truth for approval, trade sound doctrine for unity, or abandon conviction because the crowd has changed direction. This kind of backbone is needed in every generation, but especially in

one where truth is constantly softened, edited, apologized for, and traded away by men who want a seat at the respectable table.

The body also needs backbone in daily obedience. It is not enough to stand against obvious false systems while collapsing in ordinary faithfulness. Backbone means staying faithful in marriage, parenting, ministry, prayer, Bible study, giving, service, witness, and holiness when the flesh wants ease. It means standing when tired. It means standing when misunderstood. It means standing when the crowd does not care. It means standing when there is no visible reward. Some of the strongest backbone in the body is not seen in dramatic public confrontations, but in quiet daily faithfulness that refuses to quit. That kind of unseen strength keeps the body upright.

### **Chapter 7: The Back Must Rest in the Strength of the Lord**

No back can carry forever in its own strength. Even the strongest saint must learn to rest in the Lord. Isaiah 40:31 says, “But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength.” That is not poetic decoration. That is survival truth for burden-bearing believers. If the back represents support and endurance, then it must be renewed by God. A saint who keeps carrying without waiting on the Lord will eventually strain, bend, or collapse. Human strength is limited. Spiritual endurance must be supplied by grace. The strongest back in the body still needs the Lord to sustain it.

This is where prayer becomes essential. The unseen supporter must have an unseen life with God. Public strength without private renewal is dangerous. A man may appear steady for a season while running on habit, discipline, personality, or sheer willpower, but those resources are not enough for the long haul. The back must rest. The saint must get alone with God, open the Book, confess weariness, seek strength, and receive grace. The Lord does not despise the burden-bearer for admitting weakness. Paul learned that when he heard, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” Sometimes the strongest thing a back can do is admit it needs divine support.

Resting in the Lord also keeps the supporter from thinking everything depends on him. That is a subtle trap. Because the back supports so much, it may begin to believe the body cannot stand without it. In one sense, the function matters. In another sense, Christ is the true sustainer. The body belongs to Him. The work belongs to Him. The burden-bearer is responsible to be faithful, not to play Messiah. Resting in the Lord reminds the strong supporter that he is a member, not the Head. He can carry what God assigns, but he must not pretend to carry what only Christ can bear. The back serves best when it is strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

### **Conclusion**

The back teaches us the value of unseen strength. Most people notice the face, the mouth, the hands, or the feet before they ever think about the back, but the body cannot stand properly without it. In the same way, many of the most valuable saints in the body of Christ are not the loudest, most visible, most celebrated, or most publicly praised. They are the steady ones. The supporters. The burden-bearers. The saints who keep showing up. The ones who pray, give, encourage, endure, stand, and support the work year after year without needing their names in lights. They are not decorations. They are part of the strength that helps the body remain upright.

The back also teaches endurance under pressure. It takes strain. It carries weight. It supports movement. It feels pressure others may never see. That is why burden-bearing saints must guard their hearts. Pressure can produce strength, but it can also produce bitterness if not brought to the Lord. The answer is not to quit carrying every weight, nor to demand constant applause, nor to become hard and resentful. The answer is to cast the burden upon the Lord and let Him sustain the one who supports others. A strong back still needs grace. A faithful supporter still needs encouragement. A steady saint still needs prayer.

So let the back stand. Let the body honor unseen strength. Let steady saints know their labor is not in vain in the Lord. Let those who support the work quietly remember that God sees what men overlook. Let them have backbone without becoming bitter, endurance without becoming proud, strength without forgetting dependence, and stability without demanding the spotlight. The body of Christ needs visible members, but it also needs unseen strength. Some of the most valuable members are not the ones making noise, but the ones still standing after pressure would have folded others in half. The back may be hidden, but without it the body cannot stand.

## **13 of 32: One Body - Many Members - The Heart: Charity as the Life of the Body**

### **Introduction**

The heart is the inward member that keeps the body alive, supplied, and moving with purpose. A man may have eyes to see, ears to hear, a mouth to speak, hands to work, shoulders to carry, and a back to stand, but if the heart stops, all the visible members become useless. The body may still have structure, shape, and parts, but the life is gone. That is why the heart is such a fitting picture of charity in the body of Christ. Paul did not place 1 Corinthians 13 after 1 Corinthians 12 by accident. The Holy Ghost did not have a moment of sentimental interruption between spiritual gifts and church order. First

Corinthians 12 lays out the body and its many members, and then 1 Corinthians 13 shows the inward life that must govern those members. A body full of gifts without charity is not a healthy body. It is a religious corpse with moving parts. It may speak, prophesy, understand mysteries, possess knowledge, exercise faith, give sacrificially, and even suffer outwardly, but without charity it is nothing. That is not a soft devotional thought. That is a divine rebuke.

Charity is the heart of the body because it governs motive. The eye may see danger, but charity determines whether it warns to protect or exposes to exalt itself. The mouth may speak truth, but charity determines whether it speaks to edify or to bruise. The hand may serve, but charity determines whether it serves Christ or fishes for applause. The shoulder may carry burdens, but charity determines whether it bears them willingly or resents every pound. The back may stand under pressure, but charity keeps endurance from turning into bitterness. The tongue may rebuke error, but charity keeps it from becoming a flamethrower fueled by pride. The body needs doctrine. The body needs discernment. The body needs work. The body needs strength. But all of those things must be animated by the right inward life. Without charity, the members may still function outwardly, but they become cold, mechanical, harsh, self-serving, and eventually destructive.

But let it be said clearly at the beginning: Bible charity is not the soft, mushy, sentimental substitute that modern religion calls love. Charity is not compromise. Charity is not cowardice. Charity is not smiling while wolves chew on sheep. Charity is not pretending sin is harmless, doctrine is optional, truth is negotiable, and everyone is fine as long as the atmosphere stays pleasant. First Corinthians 13:6 says charity “rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.” That one verse knocks the syrup bottle out of the hand of every sentimental compromiser. Charity and truth are not enemies. Charity rejoices in truth. At the same time, truth without charity becomes hard, cold, proud, and cruel. The body needs a heart that beats with both truth and charity. It must not be a doctrinal machine with no compassion, and it must not be an emotional puddle with no backbone. It must be a living body under Christ, with charity as the inward pulse of its service.

## **Chapter 1: Paul Placed Charity After the Body for a Reason**

First Corinthians 12 deals with spiritual operations, gifts, members, and the unity of the body. Paul shows that the body is one, yet has many members, and that God set those members in the body as it pleased Him. Then, before he continues dealing with spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 14, he gives the famous chapter on charity. That placement is important. First Corinthians 13 is not a wedding poem dropped into the middle of a doctrinal discussion. It is the divine heart examination of every member in the body. The Corinthians were gifted, but they were carnal. They had utterance, knowledge, zeal,

spiritual manifestations, and public activity, but they were divided, proud, competitive, disorderly, and selfish. They had members moving, but the heart was sick. So Paul shows them that gifts without charity are noise, knowledge without charity is nothing, sacrifice without charity profits nothing, and spiritual activity without charity can be empty.

This is a needed lesson because many Christians measure spirituality by visible function. They ask, “Can he preach? Can he teach? Can he debate? Can he sing? Can he organize? Can he lead? Can he give? Can he prophesy? Can he explain mysteries? Can he expose error? Can he move a crowd?” Paul asks something deeper: does charity govern it? The mouth may be eloquent, but without charity it becomes sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. The mind may understand mysteries, but without charity the man is nothing. The hand may give all goods to feed the poor, but without charity it profiteth nothing. That is a terrifying truth. A man can do impressive religious things and still have no profit before God if the motive is wrong. The heart matters.

This also explains why some churches and ministries can appear active but feel spiritually dead. They have programs, preaching, music, debate, teaching, events, organization, and service, but the inward life is cold. Members function, but they do not care for one another. Truth is spoken, but not with tears. Labor is done, but with resentment. Correction is given, but with superiority. Service is performed, but for recognition. Doctrine is defended, but charity is missing. That is the kind of body Paul is correcting. The answer is not to throw away doctrine, gifts, order, or truth. The answer is to put the heart back in the body. Charity does not replace the members. Charity gives the members the right life.

## **Chapter 2: Charity Is Not Sentimental Compromise**

Modern religion has nearly ruined the word love by turning it into a soft pillow used to smother truth. The moment a man speaks plainly about sin, false doctrine, hell, judgment, separation, Bible corruption, religious hypocrisy, or the exclusive gospel of Christ, some tender little theologian with a wet napkin for a backbone says, “That is not loving.” But Bible charity is not sentimental compromise. It does not rejoice in iniquity. It rejoices in the truth. If a doctrine sends souls to hell, charity does not smile at it. If a wolf enters the flock, charity does not hand him a visitor card and ask him to share his journey. If a brother is walking into sin, charity does not applaud his authenticity. If a church is drifting into apostasy, charity does not call silence unity. Bible charity loves God too much to lie and loves people too much to flatter them into destruction.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the perfect manifestation of love, and He spoke some of the hardest words ever spoken. He called religious hypocrites serpents, vipers, whited sepulchres, blind guides, fools, and children of hell. He warned of hell fire. He told sinners

to repent. He exposed false shepherds. He rebuked His own disciples when needed. Yet no man ever loved like He loved. That alone proves that strong words and love are not mutually exclusive. The issue is not whether the words are hard. The issue is whether they are true, rightly aimed, rightly motivated, and under God's authority. A surgeon cuts because he intends to heal. A butcher cuts because he intends to carve flesh. Charity can cut when cutting is needed, but it cuts under truth and for righteousness.

Sentimental compromise is not charity because it cares more about immediate comfort than eternal good. It wants peace without purity, unity without truth, forgiveness without repentance, ministry without correction, and acceptance without righteousness. That kind of love is a counterfeit. It is not the heart of the body; it is spiritual heart disease. If the heart pumps poison through the body, the whole body suffers. Charity must be clean. It must be holy. It must be governed by the words of God. It must love what God loves and hate what God hates. The body needs a heart, but it does not need a diseased heart that calls corruption compassion.

### **Chapter 3: Truth Without Charity Becomes Cruel**

While sentimental compromise is a counterfeit, harsh truth without charity is also dangerous. A man can be right in doctrine and wrong in spirit. He can know the Book and still use it like a crowbar on weak saints. He can expose error and enjoy humiliating people. He can rebuke sin and secretly feed his pride on the reaction. He can preach grace with no graciousness, holiness with no humility, and truth with no tears. That is not spiritual maturity. That is a doctrinal machine with a cold engine. First Corinthians 13 warns that a man may speak with tongues, prophesy, understand mysteries, possess knowledge, have faith, give sacrificially, and even surrender his body, yet without charity he is nothing. Nothing is a strong word. God is not impressed by loveless orthodoxy.

Truth without charity often becomes impatient with weakness. It forgets that babes need milk, wounded saints need care, confused people need instruction, and learners need patience. It treats every wrong statement like rebellion, every question like an attack, every weakness like stupidity, and every slow-growing believer like a nuisance. That is not how Christ handles His sheep. He can rebuke sharply when needed, but He also carries lambs, restores Peter, receives Thomas, and does not break the bruised reed. A Bible believer must be careful not to become so good at spotting error that he becomes bad at helping people. The eye needs the heart. The mouth needs the heart. The tongue needs the heart. The hands need the heart. Otherwise the members may function, but they function coldly.

This does not mean truth must be watered down to appear loving. Watered-down truth is not loving at all. But truth must be ministered with the right motive. Why am I saying this?

Am I trying to help, warn, restore, strengthen, and honor Christ? Or am I trying to win, embarrass, dominate, vent, and prove myself superior? That question cuts deep. The same sentence can be spoken from different motives. A rebuke can come from love or from pride. A warning can come from burden or from bitterness. A doctrinal correction can come from a desire to edify or a desire to display knowledge. Charity examines the heart behind the words. A man who loves truth must ask God to keep his heart warm while his doctrine stays sharp.

#### **Chapter 4: Charity Governs Motive**

Charity is not merely what a person does outwardly; it governs why he does it. That is why Paul says a man can give all his goods to feed the poor and still profit nothing without charity. Giving is good, but motive matters. Sacrifice is impressive, but motive matters. Speech can be powerful, but motive matters. Knowledge can be vast, but motive matters. A man may serve because he loves Christ, or because he wants recognition. He may preach because he wants souls helped, or because he loves the sound of his own authority. He may rebuke because truth is being endangered, or because he enjoys conflict. He may help the weak because he cares, or because he wants people dependent on him. The outward act may look similar, but God sees the heart.

This is where the heart analogy is so fitting. The heart is hidden, but it affects everything. Motive is hidden, but it colors every act. Two men may preach the same doctrine, but one is moved by charity and the other by pride. Two people may give the same amount, but one gives unto the Lord and the other buys a reputation. Two believers may correct the same error, but one does it to protect the body and the other does it to make himself look sharp. Men may not always know the difference, but God does. First Samuel 16:7 says, “man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.” That verse should terrify religious performers and comfort sincere servants.

The body of Christ must constantly bring its motives under the light of Scripture. Why do we serve? Why do we speak? Why do we contend? Why do we give? Why do we teach? Why do we correct? Why do we post? Why do we help? Why do we sacrifice? If the answer is self, applause, control, envy, pride, fear, habit, or resentment, the heart is not right. Charity purifies motive by directing the member toward God and toward the good of others. Charity says, “I want Christ honored, truth upheld, saints edified, sinners warned, the weak strengthened, the wounded helped, and the body built up.” That kind of motive gives life to service. Without it, religious activity becomes motion without a heartbeat.

#### **Chapter 5: Charity Suffers Long and Is Kind**

First Corinthians 13:4 says, “Charity suffereth long, and is kind.” Those two statements alone rebuke much of the flesh in Christian circles. Charity suffereth long. It has patience. It does not quit on people the first time they are difficult. It does not explode at every inconvenience. It does not treat slow growth as unforgivable. It does not expect babes to act like mature saints overnight. It can endure disappointment, immaturity, weakness, misunderstanding, and trouble without immediately becoming bitter. That does not mean charity tolerates all things without discernment. It means charity is not short-fused, thin-skinned, and eager to cast people away the moment they require effort.

Charity is also kind. That word is simple, but it is needed. Some Christians have mistaken harshness for holiness and rudeness for boldness. They can speak truth but seem allergic to kindness. Yet the Bible says charity is kind. Kindness is not weakness. Kindness is strength with tenderness. It is the ability to deal with people as souls, not merely as arguments to be defeated. A kind word can help a wounded saint receive truth that a harsh word would make him resist. A kind action can open a door for ministry. A kind tone can show that correction is not hatred. The body needs kindness because the members are not steel parts in a machine. They are living members that can be bruised, discouraged, wounded, and strengthened.

Longsuffering and kindness are especially necessary among believers because the body is full of imperfect people. Even saved people can be slow, difficult, fearful, proud, confused, needy, immature, and inconsistent. If charity is absent, the members will devour one another. The strong will despise the weak. The discerning will mock the confused. The workers will resent the inactive. The speakers will trample the quiet. The wounded will withdraw. But charity suffers long and is kind. It keeps the body from turning into a battlefield where every member is suspicious of every other member. It creates room for growth, correction, restoration, and service without compromising truth.

## **Chapter 6: Charity Rejoices in the Truth**

One of the most important statements in 1 Corinthians 13 is that charity “rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.” This verse saves charity from every modern counterfeit. Charity does not rejoice in iniquity. It does not celebrate sin. It does not excuse rebellion. It does not wink at false doctrine. It does not find pleasure in compromise. It does not call darkness light to make people feel included. If something is iniquity, charity cannot rejoice in it. That means real love has moral backbone. It is not soft toward evil. It is not neutral toward lies. It cannot be bribed by popularity, pressure, family ties, or emotional stories into rejoicing over what God condemns.

But charity rejoices in the truth. That means truth is not the enemy of love. Truth is the joy of love. A loving body wants truth preached, truth believed, truth obeyed, truth defended, truth applied, and truth preserved. Charity rejoices when the gospel is clear. It rejoices when doctrine is sound. It rejoices when a sinner is saved. It rejoices when a saint grows. It rejoices when error is corrected. It rejoices when repentance happens. It rejoices when Scripture is honored. It rejoices when Christ is exalted. This is not the fake love that groans every time doctrine is discussed. Bible charity loves truth because it loves the God of truth.

This has practical teeth. If a man says he is loving but hates doctrine, he is not operating in Bible charity. If he says he loves people but refuses to warn them, he is not operating in Bible charity. If he says he loves unity but rejoices in compromise, he is not operating in Bible charity. At the same time, if a man says he loves truth but treats people like trash, he is not walking in charity either. The heart of the body must beat with truth and love together. It must rejoice in truth without becoming cruel, and it must love people without rejoicing in iniquity. That balance is not optional. It is Bible.

### **Chapter 7: Charity Keeps the Body Alive Under the Head**

Charity is not independent of Christ. The heart must beat under the Head. Christ is the Head of the body, and charity must be shaped by Him, not by the world, emotion, tradition, or religious fashion. The Lord Jesus Christ is full of grace and truth. He is not half grace and half truth, as though the two were competing qualities. He is full of both. That is the pattern for the body. The body must not be all truth in a cold mechanical sense, nor all emotion in a truthless sentimental sense. It must receive its life from Christ and express that life in charity governed by truth.

When charity is healthy, every member functions better. The eyes see danger and warn with burden. The ears hear correction without pride. The mouth speaks truth in love. The tongue is bridled from poison. The teeth chew strong meat and serve it wisely. The hands work without resentment. The arms carry the weak without showing off. The shoulders bear burdens without self-pity. The back stands without bitterness. The feet go with the gospel because souls matter. The knees bow in prayer because the body depends on God. Charity does not replace these members; it gives them the right pulse. It makes doctrine warm without making it weak. It makes service sincere without making it showy. It makes rebuke righteous without making it cruel.

A body with no heart is dead, no matter how many members remain attached. A church or ministry with no charity may still have programs, doctrine, warnings, activity, teaching, giving, and public speech, but it will become cold and dangerous. On the other hand, a body with a diseased heart pumps corruption through everything. That is why the heart

must be guarded. Proverbs 4:23 says, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” The body of Christ needs a heart kept under Christ, filled with truth, governed by charity, and cleansed from pride, bitterness, envy, self-glory, and compromise. Charity is the life-pulse of the body’s service.

## **Conclusion**

The heart teaches us that the body of Christ must have more than correct parts and visible activity. It must have inward life governed by charity. Paul placed 1 Corinthians 13 after 1 Corinthians 12 for a reason. The members may function, gifts may operate, mouths may speak, minds may understand, hands may give, and bodies may sacrifice, but without charity it becomes nothing. That is a searching truth. It exposes the religious performer, the proud teacher, the loveless defender of truth, the selfish servant, the bitter burden-bearer, and the noisy mouth that speaks without the heart of God in the matter. The body needs charity because charity is the pulse that keeps service from becoming machinery.

But charity must be defined by the Bible, not by modern sentimentalism. Bible charity is not compromise, softness, cowardice, or emotional syrup. It does not rejoice in iniquity. It rejoices in the truth. It will warn, rebuke, separate, correct, and contend when truth requires it. But it does not do those things with pride, cruelty, vanity, or hatred. It suffers long. It is kind. It seeks not her own. It is not easily provoked. It beareth, believeth, hopeth, and endureth according to truth. Charity keeps strong doctrine from becoming cold brutality and keeps compassion from becoming spineless compromise. The body needs both truth and charity because Christ is full of grace and truth.

So let the heart beat rightly in the body. Let every member examine not only what it does, but why it does it. Let the eye see with charity, the mouth speak with charity, the hands serve with charity, the arms carry with charity, the shoulders bear with charity, and the back endure with charity. Let truth stay sharp, but let the heart stay warm. Let love stay real, but let it never rejoice in iniquity. A body may have movement without charity, but it does not have health. It may have gifts without charity, but it does not have profit. It may have noise without charity, but it does not have life. The body of Christ needs a heart that beats under the Head, rejoices in the truth, and supplies every member with the life of Bible charity.

## **14 of 32: One Body - Many Members - The Lungs: Prayer as the Breath of the Body**

### **Introduction**

The lungs are hidden in the chest, but the body cannot live without them. A man may have eyes to see, ears to hear, a mouth to speak, hands to work, arms to carry, shoulders to bear, a back to stand, and a heart to beat, but if the lungs stop drawing breath, the body is in immediate trouble. Breathing is so constant that people often take it for granted until it becomes difficult. A man does not usually congratulate himself for breathing. He does not schedule applause for his lungs. He does not introduce them publicly or put their names on a sign. They work in secret, steadily, quietly, repeatedly, and vitally. That is a powerful picture of prayer in the body of Christ. Prayer is not always visible. Prayer is not always celebrated. Prayer is not always dramatic. But prayer is spiritual breathing. You may not always notice it when it is happening, but you will know something is wrong when it stops.

Prayer represents dependence, communion, unseen life, spiritual breath, intercession, and the constant drawing of strength from God. First Thessalonians 5:17 says, “Pray without ceasing.” That verse is not calling for religious theater or a monkish performance where a man never speaks to anyone but walks around mumbling pious phrases all day. It is speaking of a life of continual dependence upon God, a spirit that breathes toward heaven, a heart that remains open before the Lord, a believer who knows he cannot live, serve, preach, teach, endure, fight, love, or stand in his own strength. Prayer is the breath of dependence. A prayerless Christian may still have motion for a while, but he is living on stored oxygen, religious adrenaline, habit, personality, knowledge, and momentum. Sooner or later, the collapse comes. A body can move for a while without enough breath, but it cannot endure.

This essay is necessary because much of modern Christianity is active but breathless. There is preaching without prayer, planning without prayer, Bible study without prayer, ministry strategy without prayer, debate without prayer, service without prayer, singing without prayer, giving without prayer, and even doctrinal defense without prayer. Men have learned how to organize, produce, broadcast, market, schedule, design, promote, and argue, but many have forgotten how to breathe. The result is a body gasping under the weight of its own activity. The lungs teach us that hidden prayer is not a lesser ministry. Intercessors, prayer warriors, burden-bearing saints, shut-ins, elderly believers, quiet mothers, faithful fathers, unknown saints, and hidden servants who pray may be supplying more life to the work than the people standing in front of the crowd. The lungs are not public, but they are necessary. Prayer may be hidden, but without it the body becomes a corpse with a program.

## **Chapter 1: Prayer Is the Breath of Dependence**

Prayer begins with dependence. A man breathes because he cannot supply life from within himself. He must receive air continually. In the same way, the believer prays because he

cannot supply spiritual strength from himself. He needs God. That is basic Christianity, yet it is one of the first things the flesh forgets. The flesh loves self-sufficiency. It loves to say, “I know what to do. I have experience. I have doctrine. I have a plan. I have ability. I have resources. I have a platform. I have done this before.” Prayer says, “Lord, without thee I can do nothing.” That is not false humility. That is Bible truth. Jesus said in John 15:5, “for without me ye can do nothing.” Not less than you hoped. Not only small things. Nothing.

This is why prayerless activity is so dangerous. It looks like strength but reveals independence. A man may be busy for God while barely depending on God. He may prepare sermons, write essays, answer critics, organize ministries, counsel people, make plans, and defend doctrine while his prayer life is gasping like a man with a collapsed lung. The work may continue outwardly because habits and gifts can carry a person for a while. But the inward life weakens. The words become dry. The spirit becomes sharp. The burden becomes mechanical. The service becomes restless. The preacher can still speak, but the breath is gone. The teacher can still explain, but the dependence is gone. The worker can still labor, but the communion is gone. That is a frightening condition.

Prayer puts the member back in his place under the Head. It reminds the eye that seeing danger is not enough without God’s wisdom. It reminds the mouth that speaking truth is not enough without God’s power. It reminds the hand that working is not enough without God’s blessing. It reminds the shoulder that bearing weight is not enough without God’s sustaining grace. It reminds the heart that charity must be shed abroad by the Holy Ghost. Prayer is the body saying, “Lord, we are not self-existing. We are not self-sustaining. We are not self-directing. We need thee.” A body that breathes prayer is a body that remembers its dependence.

## **Chapter 2: Prayer Is Hidden, but It Is Not Small**

The lungs are hidden, but they are not minor. That truth needs to be nailed down. Hidden does not mean unimportant. Prayer is often invisible to men, but it is mighty before God. Some of the most important work done in the body of Christ may never be seen on a platform, recorded in a video, written in a book, or noticed by a crowd. An elderly saint praying alone in a room may be doing more eternal business than a room full of religious managers drafting strategies without God. A mother praying over her children may be doing deeper work than anyone sees. A shut-in saint who cannot travel, teach, preach, or serve publicly may still be breathing life into the body through prayer. The lungs are hidden in the chest, but their hidden work sustains visible movement.

This should encourage believers who feel useless because they cannot do what others do. Not every member can preach. Not every member can teach. Not every member can travel,

organize, write, lead, sing, debate, build, give large amounts, or carry visible responsibilities. But many can pray. And prayer is not a consolation prize for people who cannot do “real ministry.” Prayer is ministry. Epaphras is remembered in Colossians 4:12 as one “always labouring fervently for you in prayers.” Notice that wording: labouring fervently. Prayer is labor. It is not laziness in religious posture. It is not doing nothing. It is wrestling, interceding, bearing burdens before God, pleading for saints, asking for wisdom, seeking mercy, and standing in the gap. God calls that labor.

The hidden nature of prayer also tests motive. Some service is public, and public work brings public temptations. But prayer often happens where only God sees. That makes it purifying. A man who only serves where he is seen may not pray much where he is hidden. Prayer reveals whether a man wants God or merely wants religious usefulness. It is hard to impress a crowd in secret. It is hard to build a brand in the prayer closet. It is hard to pose before men when the door is shut and the Father sees in secret. That is why prayer is so essential. It pulls the believer away from religious performance and back into communion with God. The lungs do not care who is watching. They breathe because life depends on it.

### **Chapter 3: Prayerless Preaching Is Breathless Noise**

Preaching without prayer is dangerous because truth can be spoken in the energy of the flesh. A man may have a Bible, an outline, a strong voice, correct doctrine, and bold language, but if he is prayerless, something is missing. The words may be right, but the breath is wrong. Preaching is not merely delivering information. It is handling the words of God before souls who need light, correction, warning, comfort, and truth. That kind of work requires dependence. Paul asked the saints to pray for him, “that utterance may be given unto me” and that he might speak boldly as he ought to speak. If Paul wanted prayer for his preaching, some modern loudmouth with a microphone has no business thinking he can do without it.

Prayerless preaching tends to become either dry, proud, harsh, or theatrical. It may become dry because the preacher is dealing with truth as material rather than as the living words of God. It may become proud because knowledge without prayer puffs up. It may become harsh because the preacher has not been softened before God. It may become theatrical because, lacking spiritual breath, he tries to manufacture force through personality, volume, humor, emotion, or performance. None of that can substitute for prayer. A sermon prepared only in the head may reach heads. A sermon prepared with the Book open and the heart bowed before God is more likely to reach conscience.

This does not mean prayer replaces study. Some lazy men use “prayer” as an excuse for poor preparation, sloppy doctrine, and spiritualized ignorance. That is not the answer

either. The preacher must study and pray. He must rightly divide and depend. He must prepare the message and prepare the man. A man who studies without prayer may become cold. A man who prays without study may become shallow. The mouth needs the lungs. The lungs do not replace the teeth that chew the strong meat, but they supply breath to the body while the work is done. The body needs preaching with breath in it: Scripture-filled, truth-governed, prayer-soaked, and dependent on God.

#### **Chapter 4: Prayerless Planning Produces Fleshly Machinery**

Prayerless planning is one of the great sins of religious work. Men plan because planning is necessary, but prayerless planning turns ministry into machinery. Calendars, schedules, strategies, budgets, designs, systems, meetings, and goals all have their place, but if they are not submitted to God, they can become the gears of a machine with no breath in it. Proverbs 3:5-6 says, “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him.” That includes ministry ways. That includes church decisions. That includes family leadership. That includes business, writing, teaching, travel, outreach, and service. Acknowledging God is not a decorative prayer before men do what they already decided. It is dependence.

The danger of planning is that it can make men feel in control. A well-organized body can still be prayerless. A well-funded ministry can still be prayerless. A well-produced event can still be prayerless. A well-written lesson can still be prayerless. A well-managed church can still be prayerless. The machine may run smoothly while the lungs are barely working. That is when success becomes deceptive. If the event happened, the crowd came, the money arrived, the post spread, the message was delivered, and the schedule worked, men may assume God blessed it. But outward success is not always spiritual health. The tower of Babel was organized too. Flesh can build impressive things. The question is whether the work is breathing dependence upon God.

Prayerless planning also produces panic when plans fail. A praying body knows that God is above the plan. A prayerless body worships the plan and collapses when it changes. When prayer governs planning, interruptions can be received with wisdom, delays can be endured, closed doors can be accepted, and unexpected burdens can be brought to God. But when planning governs prayer, prayer becomes a rubber stamp. The body says, “Lord, bless what we have already decided.” That is backwards. The lungs breathe before the body runs. Prayer should not be the last-minute emergency oxygen after the flesh has exhausted itself. It should be the breath behind the whole movement.

#### **Chapter 5: Prayerless Bible Knowledge Becomes Dry and Proud**

Bible knowledge is necessary, but Bible knowledge without prayer can become dry, proud, and dangerous. A man can know many facts about Scripture and still have little communion with God. He can know dispensational charts, textual issues, doctrinal categories, prophecy, typology, history, and arguments against false systems, yet barely pray. That kind of knowledge can puff up. It can make a man correct but cold, sharp but unbroken, informed but unspiritual. The Bible is not given merely to stock the mind with ammunition. It is given to reveal God, correct the heart, furnish the man of God, and bring the believer into obedient fellowship with the Lord.

Prayer keeps knowledge from becoming mere information. When a man studies prayerfully, he is not just collecting material. He is submitting himself to light. He reads and says, "Lord, show me. Correct me. Cleanse me. Teach me. Give me wisdom. Help me live this. Help me speak this rightly. Keep me from pride." That kind of Bible study breathes. It has life in it. The man is not standing over the Book as its master. He is kneeling under the Book as its student. Prayerless knowledge often makes a man act like the Bible is his tool. Prayerful knowledge reminds him that he is under the Bible's authority.

This matters especially for those who defend truth. It is possible to become so busy exposing error that prayer dries up. A man can spend hours studying Romanism, Calvinism, charismatic confusion, modern versions, cults, liberalism, and false doctrine, while spending little time breathing before God. Then his discernment becomes sour. His words become cutting in the wrong way. His heart becomes suspicious. His charity weakens. He may still be right about many errors, but he becomes wrong in spirit. Prayer keeps the defender dependent, humble, clean, and burdened. The body needs knowledge, but it needs knowledge with breath in it.

## **Chapter 6: Intercessors Keep Life Moving Through the Body**

Intercession is one of the great lung functions in the body. An intercessor breathes before God on behalf of others. He prays for the weak, the lost, the preacher, the teacher, the children, the sick, the grieving, the tempted, the confused, the backslidden, the workers, the leaders, the marriages, the missionaries, the ministries, and the saints under pressure. Much of that work may never be known publicly, but it matters deeply. Samuel said in 1 Samuel 12:23, "God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you." That is a staggering statement. He viewed failure to intercede as sin. That alone should rebuke our casual attitude toward prayer.

The body often underestimates intercessors because they are not always visible. The preacher may be heard, but who prayed for the message? The missionary may be sent, but who prayed through the danger? The child may be rescued from rebellion, but who wept

before God? The discouraged saint may be strengthened, but who prayed when nobody else knew? The church may survive a season of attack, but who was breathing intercession in secret? Eternity may reveal that many visible victories were sustained by hidden lungs. The world honors the visible arm swinging the sword, but God may reveal the old saint in the corner praying as the one who kept breath in the battle.

Intercession also joins members together. When one member prays for another, it acknowledges that we are not isolated parts. The burden of one becomes the concern of another. Prayer carries members before God when hands cannot reach them, arms cannot hold them, and mouths cannot speak to them. A saint can pray for someone across the world. A mother can pray for a child in another state. A church can pray for a missionary in danger. A believer can pray for a friend who will not listen to counsel. Prayer reaches where the body cannot physically go because God is not limited by distance. The lungs breathe for the body, and intercession keeps spiritual life moving where human strength cannot.

### **Chapter 7: The Body Collapses When It Stops Breathing**

A body can move for a while on adrenaline, but without breath it will collapse. That is true physically, and it is true spiritually. A prayerless believer may operate for a while on personality, habit, knowledge, discipline, excitement, or pressure from others. A prayerless ministry may run for a while on money, organization, talent, branding, and momentum. A prayerless church may continue for a while on tradition and activity. But eventually the lack of breath will show. Weariness deepens. Flesh takes over. Unity weakens. Discernment dulls. Pride grows. Charity cools. The words become dry. The work becomes heavy. The body begins to gasp.

The collapse may not happen all at once. Sometimes breathlessness shows up gradually. Less joy. More irritation. Less patience. More criticism. Less dependence. More self-confidence. Less tenderness. More machinery. Less worship. More performance. Less spiritual power. More noise. A body that is not breathing may still be moving, but movement is becoming strain. That is when the warning must be heard: return to prayer. Not as a program. Not as a performance. Not as a slogan. As breath. Get back to breathing before God. Get back to secret prayer. Get back to asking, seeking, knocking. Get back to confessing dependence. Get back to interceding for saints. Get back to praying over the Book, the work, the family, the lost, the weak, and the next step.

The Lord Jesus Himself prayed. That should settle the matter. If the sinless Son of God prayed, what kind of fool thinks he can serve without prayer? Christ prayed early. He prayed alone. He prayed under pressure. He prayed before major moments. He prayed for His own. He prayed in Gethsemane. He prayed from the cross. The Head breathed prayer, and the

body has no right to hold its breath. The servant is not greater than his Lord. Prayer is not weakness. Prayer is sanity. Prayer is the body admitting that life comes from God, strength comes from God, wisdom comes from God, fruit comes from God, and without Him we can do nothing.

## **Conclusion**

The lungs teach us that prayer is not optional decoration in the Christian life. Prayer is breath. It is dependence. It is unseen life. It is the body drawing upon God rather than suffocating in its own activity. You may not always notice breathing when it is happening, but you know something is wrong when it stops. The same is true of prayer. A believer, church, family, or ministry may continue moving for a time without much prayer, but the breathlessness will eventually show. Religious adrenaline can only carry the body so far. Without prayer, preaching dries, planning becomes machinery, knowledge becomes proud, service becomes weary, and discernment becomes harsh. The body must breathe.

This should honor the hidden saints who pray. Not every vital member stands in front of a crowd. The lungs are hidden in the chest. Intercessors may never preach a sermon, write a book, lead a public ministry, or become known, yet they may keep life moving through the work in ways only God sees. The praying mother, the elderly saint, the shut-in believer, the burdened father, the quiet intercessor, the unknown friend who calls names before the throne—these are not minor members. They are spiritual lungs in the body. The body needs them desperately. The Judgment Seat of Christ may reveal that some of the greatest victories were carried not by the loudest mouths, but by the hidden lungs that kept breathing before God.

So let the lungs breathe. Let prayer return to its rightful place, not as a ritual, not as religious filler, not as a formal opening before flesh takes over, but as the breath of the body. Let preachers pray before they preach. Let teachers pray before they teach. Let workers pray before they work. Let planners pray before they plan. Let Bible students pray before they study. Let defenders of truth pray before they contend. Let families pray, churches pray, ministries pray, saints pray, and intercessors keep breathing life into the work. A body can move for a while on adrenaline, but without breath it will collapse. The body of Christ needs lungs that will not stop praying.

## Introduction

The blood is one of the most vital pictures in the body because life is in the blood. Leviticus 17:11 says, “For the life of the flesh is in the blood,” and while that verse is dealing directly with the sacrificial system under the law, the principle reaches deep into the whole testimony of Scripture. Blood speaks of life, sacrifice, cleansing, redemption, purchase, forgiveness, and access to God. A body may have eyes, ears, hands, feet, lungs, bones, heart, and shoulders, but if the blood is gone, the body dies. The blood reaches every member. It does not flow only to the public members, the strong members, the gifted members, the admired members, or the visible members. It flows through the whole body. The eye does not live by one blood and the foot by another. The hand does not have a superior bloodline to the feeble member. The mouth does not receive better life than the hidden part. One blood supplies the whole body. That is a tremendous picture of the body of Christ, because every saved member lives by the same blood: the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This essay must be deeply doctrinal because the blood of Christ is not a side issue, a symbolic decoration, or an old-fashioned preaching phrase to be replaced by cleaner theological language. The blood is central to redemption. Ephesians 1:7 says, “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.” Colossians 1:14 says, “In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.” First Peter 1:18-19 says we were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, “but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” That is not religious poetry. That is doctrine. Redemption is through His blood. Forgiveness is through His blood. Purchase is through His blood. Peace is made through the blood of His cross. Cleansing is by the blood. Access is by the blood. The body of Christ must never become so refined, scholarly, respectable, or modern that it becomes embarrassed by the blood that bought it.

The blood also humbles every member in the body. No member has a superior source of life. The preacher is not saved by better blood than the quiet servant. The teacher is not cleansed by better blood than the struggling saint. The scholar is not washed by better blood than the simple believer who can barely explain doctrine but trusts Christ. The strong member is not bought by better blood than the feeble member. The public member is not redeemed by a higher sacrifice than the hidden member. Every saved sinner in the body stands on the same ground: guilty in Adam, ruined by sin, unable to save himself, redeemed by Christ, washed in His blood, sealed by the Spirit, and placed into the body by God. That truth cuts the throat of religious pride. If the same blood bought us all, no

member has any business looking down on another as though his life came from a nobler fountain. The blood of Christ is the common life of the body.

## **Chapter 1: The Life Is in the Blood**

Leviticus 17:11 says, “For the life of the flesh is in the blood.” That verse explains why blood is central in Scripture. Blood is not treated lightly by God because blood is tied to life. When blood is shed, life has been given. When sacrifice is offered, blood speaks of a life laid down. From Genesis forward, blood begins to testify. Abel’s blood cried from the ground after Cain murdered him. The blood of animals covered Adam and Eve’s nakedness when God clothed them with coats of skins. The Passover lamb’s blood marked the houses in Egypt, and judgment passed over where the blood was applied. Under the law, the altar smoked with sacrifices, and blood was sprinkled, offered, and carried according to God’s command. All of it was preaching ahead toward the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

The body analogy makes the point vivid. Blood is not optional. A body may look healthy outwardly, but if the blood is corrupt, poisoned, lost, or cut off from a member, death begins working. In the same way, religion without the blood may have ceremony, morality, beauty, philosophy, tradition, history, architecture, scholarship, and emotional experience, but it does not have divine life. A bloodless religion is a corpse in formal clothing. It may smell like incense, sound like choir music, and shine with stained glass, but if it has no blood redemption, it is dead. God’s dealing with sin has always required blood because sin costs life. Hebrews 9:22 says, “and without shedding of blood is no remission.” That verse cannot be improved by modern taste. It stands like a stone wall against every bloodless gospel man has invented.

This is why the blood of Christ must remain central in preaching. Some men want to speak of Christ only as a teacher, example, reformer, martyr, prophet, moral influence, social revolutionary, or spiritual guide. That is not the gospel. Christ did teach, and He is our example in many ways, but He came to die. He came to give His life a ransom for many. He came as the Lamb without blemish and without spot. His blood was not an unfortunate detail in a tragic death; it was the appointed price of redemption. The life is in the blood, and the life of the body of Christ comes through the shed blood of the Saviour. Take away the blood, and you take away redemption. Take away redemption, and you have no body of Christ at all.

## **Chapter 2: The Blood Redeems the Body**

Redemption means purchase, deliverance, and release through a price paid. The Bible says plainly that this redemption is through the blood of Christ. Ephesians 1:7 says, “In whom

we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.” That verse is a fortress. It tells us where redemption is found: in Christ. It tells us how redemption was accomplished: through His blood. It tells us what redemption includes: the forgiveness of sins. It tells us the measure of it: according to the riches of His grace. That leaves no room for sacramental purchase, human merit, church membership purchase, law-keeping purchase, penance purchase, suffering purchase, or religious performance purchase. The price was blood, and the blood was Christ’s.

First Peter 1:18-19 drives the nail deeper by saying we were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from our vain conversation received by tradition from our fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ. Silver and gold may impress men, but they cannot buy a soul out of sin. Religious tradition may impress families, cultures, and denominations, but it cannot redeem. Good intentions cannot redeem. Tears cannot redeem. Baptismal water cannot redeem. Church rituals cannot redeem. A priest’s words cannot redeem. A sinner needs a price paid that God accepts, and God accepted the blood of His Son. That is why the blood is precious. It is not precious because men sentimentalize it. It is precious because God required it, Christ shed it, justice accepted it, grace applies it, and sinners are redeemed by it.

The body of Christ must understand that every member has been bought. Acts 20:28 speaks of “the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” That purchase destroys all claims of self-ownership. The eye belongs to Christ. The mouth belongs to Christ. The hands belong to Christ. The feet belong to Christ. The heart belongs to Christ. The feeble members belong to Christ. If the body was purchased with His blood, then no member has the right to use himself as though he belongs to himself. First Corinthians 6:19-20 says, “ye are not your own” and “ye are bought with a price.” That is practical doctrine. Redeemed members should live as purchased members. The blood that saves also claims ownership.

### **Chapter 3: The Blood Cleanses Every Member**

The blood does not merely purchase; it cleanses. First John 1:7 says, “the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” That is a word a guilty sinner needs: cleanseth. Sin stains. Sin defiles. Sin corrupts. Sin marks the conscience. Sin makes men unfit for God’s presence. Religion may scrub the outside, but it cannot cleanse the stain before God. Moral reform may change some habits, but it cannot wash the record. Emotional sorrow may feel deep, but tears are not blood. A guilty sinner needs cleansing from God, and the Bible says the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin. Not some sin. Not respectable sin. Not pre-conversion sin only. All sin.

This cleansing humbles every member because every member needed it. The preacher needed cleansing. The teacher needed cleansing. The child needed cleansing. The elderly saint needed cleansing. The former drunk, the former Pharisee, the former churchgoer, the former atheist, the former moralist, the former idolater, the former hypocrite, and the former religious performer all needed the same blood. Nobody entered the body of Christ clean by nature. Nobody was born into Adam with a spotless record. Nobody joined Christ's body because God found him naturally acceptable. Every saved member is a washed member. That means no Christian has the right to speak as though his salvation began with his own superiority. It began with his sin and Christ's blood.

The cleansing blood also gives hope to struggling saints. A believer may stumble, grieve, fail, and feel defiled by sin, but the answer is not to run away from God in despair. The answer is to come into the light and confess sin before the God who has already provided cleansing. First John 1:9 speaks of confession and God's faithfulness and justice to forgive and cleanse from all unrighteousness. That does not mean a saved man gets resaved every time he confesses. It means fellowship is restored on the basis of the same righteous provision: Jesus Christ the righteous and His blood. The body must never preach grace in a way that excuses sin, but it must also never preach holiness in a way that hides the fountain of cleansing from a wounded believer. The blood cleanseth.

#### **Chapter 4: The Blood Makes Peace and Gives Access**

Colossians 1:20 says Christ made peace "through the blood of his cross." Peace with God is not made through human diplomacy. It is not made through religion trying to negotiate terms. It is not made through man promising to do better. It is not made through ceremonies, sacraments, or self-improvement. Peace is made through the blood of His cross. That means the hostility caused by sin is not settled by ignoring sin, minimizing sin, or redefining sin. It is settled by sacrifice. God does not make peace by pretending justice does not matter. He makes peace through the cross where justice and mercy meet in the blood of Christ.

The blood also gives access. Hebrews 10:19 says believers have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." Under the old system, access was restricted, veiled, mediated through priesthood, and marked by repeated sacrifices. But the believer now has access by the blood of Jesus. That is a staggering privilege. The saved sinner does not crawl toward God hoping a religious official will open the door. He comes by the blood. He does not need Mary, a priest, a saint, a sacrament, a shrine, or a church hierarchy to give him access to the Father. The blood of Jesus Christ is sufficient. The veil is rent. The way is open. The believer can come boldly unto the throne of grace.

This access belongs to every member of the body. The preacher does not have better access than the quiet widow. The educated man does not have better access than the simple saint. The strong member does not have better access than the feeble member. The public teacher does not have better access than the hidden intercessor. All come by the blood. That should revolutionize how believers view prayer, worship, and fellowship with God. We do not come because we feel worthy. We do not come because our week was impressive. We do not come because our doctrine makes us superior. We come because the blood has opened the way. That is the confidence of the body.

## **Chapter 5: The Blood Unites What Men Divide**

The blood of Christ is the common ground of every saved member in the body. First Corinthians 12 says by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, bond or free. The distinctions of earthly identity, background, status, education, ability, personality, wealth, culture, and visibility do not determine the spiritual life of the body. The blood does. Every member redeemed by Christ shares the same Saviour, the same sacrifice, the same cleansing, the same access, and the same life in Him. That does not erase all functional differences, but it destroys all spiritual boasting. The eye and the foot are different, but the same blood supplies them. The mouth and the hidden member differ in function, but the same blood purchased them. The strong and the feeble differ in ability, but the same blood cleansed them.

This should rebuke the divisions men create out of pride. Some divide over class. Some over education. Some over race, nationality, background, income, personality, church tradition, or ministry visibility. Men love to rank themselves. They love to find some reason to look down on another member. But the blood preaches against that pride. If Christ shed His blood for that member, who are you to treat him as common? If Christ purchased that soul, who are you to despise him? If Christ cleansed that believer, who are you to act like your background makes you nobler in the body? The ground is level at the cross, not because all men are equally impressive, but because all men are equally needy and Christ's blood is equally sufficient.

The blood also rebukes personality cults in the body. A gifted preacher is not saved by celebrity blood. A famous teacher is not redeemed by public-platform blood. A scholar is not cleansed by academic blood. A faithful grandmother praying alone is not washed in lesser blood. The same blood bought them all. That should keep public members humble and hidden members encouraged. A man's gift may differ. His reward may differ according to faithfulness. His responsibility may differ. His function may differ. But his redemption rests on the same blood. No member has the right to act like he belongs to a higher class of redeemed sinner. The body has one bloodline, and it runs through Calvary.

## **Chapter 6: The Blood Warns Against Religious Pride**

Religious pride is one of the ugliest sins because it uses the things of God to exalt the flesh. A man can become proud of doctrine, proud of separation, proud of knowledge, proud of his ministry, proud of his Bible position, proud of his service, proud of his sacrifices, proud of his experiences, proud of his church, proud of his suffering, and even proud of preaching grace. That is a nasty trick of the flesh. The blood of Christ cuts it down. The blood says, “You were guilty. You were helpless. You needed a substitute. You could not cleanse yourself. You could not redeem yourself. You could not purchase yourself. You were bought by Another.” That is not a message that leaves room for strutting.

Paul said in Galatians 6:14, “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” That is the right glory. Not in the flesh. Not in religious pedigree. Not in accomplishments. Not in human wisdom. Not in denominational superiority. Not in personal sacrifice. In the cross. The cross humiliates man and exalts Christ. The blood declares that sin was so serious that nothing less than the death of the Son of God could satisfy divine justice. It also declares grace so rich that the Son of God willingly shed His blood to save the ungodly. A man who understands that has no business walking around like salvation was God recognizing his potential.

Religious pride also shows up when one member forgets that another member was bought by the same Saviour. It is easy to become impatient with weak saints, struggling saints, ignorant saints, wounded saints, and slow-growing saints. Correction may be needed. Rebuke may be needed. Instruction may be needed. But contempt is never needed. The blood forbids contempt. If Christ loved that member enough to shed His blood for him, treat him carefully. That does not mean tolerating sin or excusing error. It means even correction must be governed by the fact that the person is precious to Christ. Do not use the blood as an excuse for compromise, but do not forget the blood while claiming to defend truth.

## **Chapter 7: The Blood Keeps the Body Alive Until Glory**

The blood in a physical body continually supplies life. It carries oxygen, nourishment, cleansing, and strength throughout the members. Spiritually, the blood of Christ is not a temporary truth a believer graduates from after salvation. The redeemed life remains grounded in that blood until glory. Revelation 1:5 says Christ “washed us from our sins in his own blood.” Revelation 5 shows heaven singing of the Lamb who was slain and redeemed by His blood. That means the blood will still be the song of heaven. Nobody gets to heaven and says, “I moved past the blood into deeper things.” The deepest things in eternity still bring us back to the Lamb slain.

The body must keep preaching the blood because every generation needs it. Children need to hear it. Sinners need to hear it. Saints need to hear it. The proud need to hear it. The broken need to hear it. The religious need to hear it. The dying need to hear it. A church that stops preaching the blood may still speak of God, Jesus, love, community, justice, mission, values, and spirituality, but it has abandoned the fountain. Bloodless preaching may be acceptable to refined ears, but it has no saving power. The old hymn was right to ask, "What can wash away my sin?" and the Bible answer is still the same: nothing but the blood of Jesus.

The blood also keeps the body looking forward. The redeemed body is not finished yet in practical experience. We still await the redemption of the body. We still groan in mortal flesh. We still fight sin, weakness, death, grief, and corruption. But the price has been paid. The purchase is settled. The same Christ who bought the body will complete what He began. The blood is the guarantee that God did not begin a cheap work. He paid the highest price. He will not abandon what He purchased. Every member, from the strongest to the weakest, can rest in that. The body lives by blood now and will sing of the blood forever.

## **Conclusion**

The blood teaches us that the life of the body is not found in talent, visibility, education, strength, personality, tradition, or human worthiness. It is found in the Lord Jesus Christ, who shed His precious blood for sinners. The eye, the hand, the foot, the heart, the lungs, the shoulders, the back, the feeble members, and the hidden members all live by the same blood. No member has a superior source of life. No member was redeemed by a better sacrifice. No member was cleansed by a higher fountain. The body of Christ has one bloodline, and it runs through Calvary. That truth should humble the proud, comfort the weak, steady the struggling, and unite the body around the Saviour who purchased it.

The blood redeems, cleanses, makes peace, gives access, unites the body, and rebukes religious pride. It declares that sin is too serious for human works and grace is too rich for human boasting. It tells the sinner that forgiveness is possible. It tells the saint that cleansing is available. It tells the weak member that he is not second-class. It tells the strong member that he has nothing to glory in but the cross. It tells the whole body that Christ owns what He bought. The church is not a religious club held together by preference. It is a purchased body held by a crucified and risen Head.

So let the blood stay central. Let no preacher become too polished to preach it. Let no teacher become too academic to defend it. Let no believer become too familiar with it to worship over it. Let no religious system replace it with rituals, works, sacraments, or traditions. Let no proud member forget that he was washed by the same blood as the

weakest saint beside him. The body lives because the Saviour bled. One life flows through every member, and that life is grounded in the precious blood of Christ. The body of Christ must never be ashamed of the blood that bought it, cleansed it, united it, and will be praised by the redeemed for ever.

## **16 of 32: One Body - Many Members - The Bones: Doctrine as the Structure of the Body**

### **Introduction**

The bones are the structure of the body. They are not usually the first thing a person notices, but without them the body collapses into a shapeless mass. A body without bones may still have skin, blood, warmth, movement, and sound for a little while, but it cannot stand upright, walk straight, carry weight, fight properly, or function with strength. The bones give frame, order, stability, and support to everything else. That is a perfect picture of doctrine in the body of Christ. Doctrine is not a side issue for cold intellectuals, argumentative preachers, dusty theologians, or men who like to split hairs for sport. Doctrine is the skeleton of Christianity. It gives structure to faith, direction to love, stability to service, strength to worship, and shape to obedience. Remove doctrine, and Christianity does not become warmer and more loving. It becomes spiritual jelly with religious vocabulary.

The modern religious crowd has trained people to be suspicious of doctrine. They say things like, "Doctrine divides," "We just need Jesus," "Let's not get bogged down in theology," "Love is what matters," and "I don't care about doctrine, I care about relationship." It sounds humble to people who do not know their Bible, but it is actually foolish. The "Jesus" they claim to love is only known through doctrine. The "love" they talk about must be defined by doctrine. The "relationship" they claim to have must be governed by doctrine. The gospel itself is doctrine. The deity of Christ is doctrine. The blood atonement is doctrine. The resurrection is doctrine. Salvation by grace through faith is doctrine. Eternal security is doctrine. The body of Christ is doctrine. The difference between Israel and the church is doctrine. The authority of the words of God is doctrine. A man who says he wants Christianity without doctrine is like a man saying he wants a body without bones. He may think that sounds soft and gentle, but it is really just a collapse waiting to happen.

This essay must make the case that the body of Christ must be framed by sound words, right division, biblical authority, and settled truth. Love needs bones, or it turns into jelly. Zeal needs bones, or it runs wild. Worship needs bones, or it becomes emotion with music.

Service needs bones, or it becomes activism. Unity needs bones, or it becomes compromise. Discernment needs bones, or it becomes suspicion. Preaching needs bones, or it becomes noise. Prayer needs bones, or it becomes mysticism. Charity needs bones, or it becomes sentimental weakness. The bones may not always be seen, but they are always necessary. The body of Christ needs doctrine because doctrine is the structure that allows the body to stand, walk, work, fight, and grow under the Head, the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **Chapter 1: Doctrine Gives the Body Structure**

The first purpose of bones is structure. They give the body shape. Without bones, the body has no frame, no form, no uprightness, and no ability to stand. Doctrine does the same thing spiritually. It gives form to Christian truth. It tells us who God is, who Christ is, what sin is, what salvation is, what the gospel is, what the church is, what the believer's standing is, what the future holds, and how the saved man is to walk. Doctrine is not an accessory attached to Christianity after the fact. It is the structure by which Christianity is understood. A person who claims to love God while despising doctrine is claiming to love someone while refusing to know who He is, what He said, what He did, and what He requires.

Second Timothy 1:13 says, "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." That phrase "form of sound words" is bone language. Sound words have form. They are not shapeless emotional impressions. They are not vague spiritual feelings. They are not religious fog. God gave words, and those words have shape, meaning, order, and structure. The believer is not told to hold loosely to a general mood. He is told to hold fast the form of sound words. That means doctrine must be preserved, believed, taught, repeated, defended, and lived. A Christianity that loses the form of sound words loses its skeleton.

This is why the attack on doctrine is so deadly. It does not merely remove a few technical details. It dissolves the structure of the body. If a man is unclear on salvation, he will confuse grace with works. If he is unclear on the blood, he will drift into religion. If he is unclear on the body of Christ, he will confuse the church with Israel. If he is unclear on right division, he will mix passages that God separated. If he is unclear on the authority of Scripture, he will become his own final authority. If he is unclear on eternal security, he will live under fear and performance. If he is unclear on sanctification, he will confuse liberty with license or holiness with bondage. Doctrine gives structure. Without it, every part of the Christian life starts sagging.

## **Chapter 2: Sound Doctrine Keeps the Body Upright**

A body needs bones to stand upright. Likewise, the believer needs sound doctrine to stand in truth. Ephesians 4:14 says that God gave ministry gifts so believers would “henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine.” That verse shows the danger of doctrinal weakness. The spiritually childish are tossed around. They are carried by winds. One year they are chasing signs. The next year they are chasing scholarship. Then they are chasing Hebrew roots. Then Calvinism. Then Catholic mysticism. Then deliverance ministries. Then prosperity preaching. Then universalism. Then Torah observance. Then some internet prophet with a ring light and a fever dream. Why? No bones. No structure. No settled doctrine.

Sound doctrine gives the believer backbone. It enables him to stand when error blows. A man grounded in the gospel of the grace of God does not panic when someone twists James, Matthew 24, Hebrews 6, or Revelation to steal his assurance. A man grounded in right division does not lose his footing every time someone drags a tribulation passage into the church age and tries to make it contradict Paul. A man grounded in the authority of the King James Bible does not tremble every time a scholar says, “A better rendering would be.” A man grounded in the deity of Christ does not get impressed by cults that use Bible language while denying the Son. Sound doctrine gives the body the ability to stand upright instead of being blown around like a cheap tent in a thunderstorm.

This is why preaching doctrine is not optional. Some churches are all emotion and no structure. They can shout, sing, cry, dance, entertain, and motivate, but the people cannot stand when doctrine is tested. Others are all tradition and no Bible structure. They can repeat what their denomination taught them, but they cannot prove it from the Book. Others are all activism and no doctrinal bones. They are busy doing things but do not know why they are doing them or whether God even commanded them. Sound doctrine keeps the body upright. Without it, the body may have energy, but it has no stability. It may have motion, but it has no posture. It may have noise, but it cannot stand.

### **Chapter 3: Right Division Is the Alignment of the Bones**

Bones must be aligned properly. A bone out of joint or set crooked can cause pain, weakness, deformity, and limited movement. That is exactly what happens when Bible doctrine is not rightly divided. Second Timothy 2:15 commands the believer to study to shew himself approved unto God, “rightly dividing the word of truth.” The word of truth must be divided rightly because God did not give every command, promise, covenant, sign, ordinance, and prophecy to the same people under the same program for the same purpose. Mix what God separated, and the bones go out of joint. The body may still move, but it moves painfully and crookedly.

Right division aligns the doctrine. It distinguishes Israel from the church, law from grace, the kingdom gospel from the gospel of the grace of God, the rapture from the second coming, the Judgment Seat of Christ from the Great White Throne, justification before God from justification before men, salvation from discipleship, standing from state, the church age from the tribulation, and earthly promises from heavenly position. These are not needless technicalities. They are structural alignments. Get them wrong, and the body limps. A man who cannot rightly divide will stumble through the Bible constantly creating contradictions where God made distinctions. He will use Matthew to undo Paul, Hebrews to rob assurance, James to corrupt grace, and Revelation to terrify the body of Christ with passages aimed at tribulation saints. That is not deep Bible study. That is a theological chiropractor nightmare.

Right division also protects the body from false systems. Romanism thrives by mixing works, sacraments, priesthood, and Israel's earthly patterns into the simplicity of Christ. Calvinism creates confusion by forcing philosophical systems onto Scripture and blurring plain invitations, human responsibility, and God's dealings. Charismatic confusion often drags signs and wonders connected with Israel and the apostolic foundation into a disorderly modern circus. Hebrew roots error pulls Gentile believers back toward law and ordinances that were never their standing in Christ. Works-salvation teachers raid tribulation and kingdom passages to corrupt Paul's gospel. Right division keeps the bones aligned. Without it, the body twists itself into confusion and then calls the limp "mystery."

#### **Chapter 4: Doctrine Gives Strength to Love**

Love needs doctrine. Without doctrine, love becomes shapeless sentiment. People say, "Just love," as if love defines itself. It does not. The world has a thousand counterfeit loves. It calls lust love, tolerance love, compromise love, affirmation love, silence love, and emotional softness love. The Bible defines love by truth. First Corinthians 13:6 says charity "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth." That means love has bones. It has structure. It does not collapse into every feeling that wants to be accepted. It stands upright because truth gives it shape. Love without doctrine is not stronger. It is weaker. It cannot tell the difference between mercy and compromise, patience and cowardice, kindness and flattery, peace and surrender.

Doctrine also protects love from becoming cruel in the other direction. Sound doctrine teaches that believers are members one of another, bought by the blood of Christ, saved by grace, accepted in the Beloved, and called to charity. A man who truly understands doctrine should not become a loveless machine. If his doctrine produces nothing but pride, suspicion, harshness, and contempt, he has either not understood it rightly or has not let it govern his heart. The bones must support the heart, not replace it. A skeleton without a

heart is still dead. Doctrine gives love structure, and charity gives doctrine warmth in practice. The body needs both.

This balance is desperately needed among Bible believers. Some Christians are so afraid of cold doctrine that they run into warm error. Others are so afraid of sentimental compromise that they become cold and hard. The Bible gives neither. It gives sound doctrine in charity. It gives truth in love. It gives strong bones and a beating heart. Doctrine tells love what is true, holy, right, and pleasing to God. Love motivates doctrine to serve, edify, warn, and restore. A body with no bones collapses. A body with only bones is a skeleton. God designed the body with both structure and life. Love needs bones, and doctrine needs charity.

### **Chapter 5: Doctrine Protects the Body From Confusion**

Confusion is one of the devil's favorite tools. God is not the author of confusion, but religious systems often are. Confusion multiplies when people do not know doctrine. They cannot tell salvation from service, baptism from regeneration, church tradition from biblical authority, emotional conviction from the Spirit's work, Israel's covenants from the body's heavenly standing, or temporary signs from permanent truth. A confused body is easy to manipulate. If people do not know what God said, where He said it, to whom He said it, and how it applies, then any smooth talker can move them around with a handful of verses and a confident voice.

Doctrine protects the body by defining truth clearly. Titus 1:9 says the bishop must hold fast the faithful word "that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers." Sound doctrine is not just for private study. It is for exhortation and defense. It builds up the saints and answers those who oppose. A church weak in doctrine cannot effectively protect its people from gainsayers. It may have nice people, warm music, sincere intentions, and busy programs, but when false doctrine walks in with a Bible under its arm, the people are exposed. Sincerity is not a shield. Emotion is not a sword. Sound doctrine is needed.

This is why the modern hatred of doctrine is so dangerous. The moment a church says, "Doctrine is not important; relationships are what matter," it has hung a welcome sign for confusion. Relationships must be governed by truth. Unity must be governed by truth. Worship must be governed by truth. Service must be governed by truth. Without doctrine, everyone does what is right in his own eyes and then calls the confusion "freedom." The body of Christ needs settled truth because unsettled people are easily carried away. Doctrine is not the enemy of spiritual life. It is the structure that keeps spiritual life from being twisted, exploited, and scattered.

## **Chapter 6: Doctrine Gives the Body Strength to Fight**

Bones give the body strength to fight. A body without bones cannot wield a sword, hold a shield, stand in armor, or resist a blow. The Christian life is warfare, and the body of Christ cannot fight with jelly for a skeleton. Jude 3 says to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” That faith is a body of truth. It must be contended for because enemies attack it. False teachers corrupt the gospel. Bible correctors undermine the words of God. Religious systems add works to grace. Liberal unbelief denies miracles, judgment, inspiration, and the authority of Scripture. Cults twist Christ. Mystics replace doctrine with experiences. The body must fight, and doctrine gives it the structure to fight.

Ephesians 6 shows the believer standing in armor, and every piece is connected to truth, righteousness, the gospel, faith, salvation, the word of God, and prayer. That is doctrine in motion. A man cannot fight spiritual warfare with vague feelings. He needs truth buckled on. He needs righteousness. He needs the gospel. He needs the shield of faith. He needs the helmet of salvation. He needs the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. A doctrine-hating Christianity is defenseless. It may talk about love, but it cannot identify enemies. It may talk about unity, but it cannot distinguish the body from the world. It may talk about Jesus, but it cannot defend who He is. It may talk about grace, but it cannot protect the gospel from corruption.

This does not mean every fight is wise or every fighter is spiritual. Some men love controversy because their flesh enjoys the noise. That is not the same as contending for the faith. The body needs bones, not clubs made from bones. Doctrine gives strength to fight, but the Head must direct the fight and charity must govern the motive. Still, the answer to fleshly fighting is not doctrinal weakness. It is sanctified strength. The body must be strong enough to resist error and humble enough to fight under Christ’s authority. A boneless body cannot fight. A proud skeleton without a heart is not healthy either. The goal is a living body with strong doctrine, warm charity, and clean obedience.

## **Chapter 7: Doctrine Must Be Held Fast Until the End**

Bones do not come and go with the mood of the body. They remain as the frame. Doctrine must be held fast. Second Timothy 1:13 says to hold fast the form of sound words. Titus 1:9 says to hold fast the faithful word. Revelation repeatedly uses the language of holding fast in the messages to the churches. The Christian is not called to rent doctrine temporarily until the culture changes. He is called to hold it. That means doctrine is not to be revised every time scholarship shifts, society complains, feelings change, or religious trends move in another direction. The body must keep its bones.

Holding fast is especially important in a generation that thinks change is automatically progress. Not all movement is growth. Sometimes movement is decay. A body with deteriorating bones may still be moving, but it is becoming weaker. Churches that abandon doctrine often congratulate themselves for becoming more loving, relevant, thoughtful, or mature. In reality, they are losing structure. First they soften the authority of Scripture. Then they blur the gospel. Then they redefine sin. Then they compromise separation. Then they tolerate false teachers. Then they mock the people who warned them. Finally they collapse into the same world they were supposed to stand against. That is not growth. That is spiritual osteoporosis.

Holding fast does not mean refusing to learn. A believer should grow in understanding, correct mistakes, study deeper, and sharpen his handling of Scripture. But growth is not the same as surrender. A tree grows without uprooting itself every month. A body grows without discarding its skeleton. A Christian grows by being more deeply established in truth, not by becoming less certain of everything God made clear. The body of Christ needs saints who can hold fast sound words in faith and love, rightly divide the Book, stand on biblical authority, and refuse to trade bones for jelly just because the age prefers soft religion.

## **Conclusion**

The bones teach us that doctrine is the structure of the body. Without bones, the body collapses. Without sound doctrine, Christianity collapses into emotionalism, tradition, entertainment, activism, mysticism, and confusion. Doctrine is not a side issue for cold intellectuals. It is the skeletal frame that allows the body to stand, walk, work, fight, and grow. The body needs the form of sound words. It needs right division. It needs settled authority. It needs truth that does not bend every time culture blows on it. A boneless Christianity may look soft and loving for a moment, but it cannot stand upright.

This also means the modern hatred of doctrine must be rejected. Anyone who says doctrine does not matter has already made a doctrinal statement, and a bad one. The gospel is doctrine. The blood is doctrine. The resurrection is doctrine. The deity of Christ is doctrine. Salvation by grace is doctrine. Eternal security is doctrine. The body of Christ is doctrine. The authority of Scripture is doctrine. Right division is doctrine. Love itself must be defined by doctrine. Remove doctrine, and you do not get purer Christianity. You get a shapeless religious mass that can be molded by whoever presses hardest.

So let the bones be strong. Let the body be framed by sound words, strengthened by right division, settled under biblical authority, and stable in truth. Let love have bones so it does not become jelly. Let zeal have bones so it does not become chaos. Let worship have bones so it does not become emotional fog. Let unity have bones so it does not become

compromise. Let service have bones so it does not become activism without truth. The body of Christ needs a heart that beats with charity, but it also needs bones that stand with doctrine. A body without bones may have warmth, movement, and noise for a little while, but it cannot stand upright. Sound doctrine is not optional. It is the structure God gave the body so it can stand under the Head, walk in truth, and endure until the Lord comes.

## **17 of 32: One Body - Many Members - The Joints: Every Joint Supplieth**

### **Introduction**

The joints are where members meet, connect, bend, coordinate, and move together. A body with bones but no healthy joints would be stiff, painful, awkward, and nearly useless. The bones give structure, but the joints allow movement. The hand may be strong, the arm may be powerful, the shoulder may bear weight, and the back may stand firm, but if the joints are locked, swollen, dislocated, or diseased, the body cannot function smoothly. That is a powerful picture of connection in the body of Christ. The body does not consist of isolated members lying in a pile, each boasting of its own function while refusing to work with the others. The body is “fitly joined together.” It is compacted. It is supplied. It is connected under the Head. The members are distinct, but they are not independent. The eye needs the hand. The hand needs the arm. The arm needs the shoulder. The foot needs the ankle. The whole body requires connection if it is going to move with order and strength.

Ephesians 4:15-16 says we are to “grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth according to the effectual working in the measure of every part maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.” That verse is loaded. The body grows up into Christ. The body is joined together from Christ. The body is compacted by what every joint supplies. Every part has a measure. The result is increase and edifying in love. That is not religious machinery. That is living coordination. The joints do not replace the Head. They do not become the body. They do not exist for themselves. They help members supply one another in proper connection so the whole body can grow. A joint is not glamorous, but if it fails, everyone feels it. A bad joint can make strong members useless because connection has become painful.

This essay will focus on believers who help other members work together, ministries that connect one part of the body to another, and the need for unity without uniformity. It will also expose the difference between biblical unity and ecumenical compromise. That distinction matters. The body is joined by truth in Christ, not by pretending doctrinal

differences do not matter. A joint is not a rubber band tying anything to anything. It is a God-designed connection in the body under the authority of the Head. True unity is not everyone throwing doctrine in a ditch so they can hold hands around a campfire and sing about love. True unity is the members functioning together under Christ according to truth. The body needs healthy joints, but it does not need artificial connections that attach Christ's body to error, darkness, and religious corruption. There is a difference between a joint and a chain.

## **Chapter 1: The Body Is Fitly Joined Together**

Ephesians 4 says the whole body is "fitly joined together." That phrase deserves careful attention. The body is not thrown together carelessly. It is not a random pile of parts. It is fitly joined. That means the connections have order, purpose, design, and suitability. God knows where members belong, how they supply, where they connect, and what each part contributes. The body of Christ is not built by chaos, competition, personality cults, or religious scrambling. It is joined together under the Head. The Head gives the body its direction, and the joints allow the members to move in connection rather than isolation. When the body is fitly joined, one member's strength helps another member's weakness, one member's supply meets another member's need, and the whole body grows.

This is important because Christians can become isolated even while claiming to believe in the body. Some isolate because of pride. They think they do not need anyone. Some isolate because of hurt. They have been wounded and now do not want connection. Some isolate because of suspicion. They see dangers everywhere and eventually detach from every joint. Some isolate because of laziness. They do not want responsibility. Some isolate because of self-importance. They want to be connected only if they can control the connection. But a body made of isolated members is not functioning properly. A hand detached from the wrist may still look like a hand, but it cannot serve the body. Connection matters.

Being fitly joined does not mean every member does the same thing. The joints do not erase distinction. They coordinate distinction. That is the difference between biblical unity and forced uniformity. A healthy body does not require the hand to become a foot or the eye to become an ear. It requires the members to function in their place under the Head, properly connected to one another. In the body of Christ, unity does not mean every believer has the same gift, same personality, same measure of maturity, same burden, same style, or same role. It means all the members are joined in Christ, governed by His words, and supplying one another in love. The body is not uniform like bricks in a wall. It is unified like members in a living organism.

## **Chapter 2: Joints Are Places of Supply**

Ephesians 4:16 says the body is compacted “by that which every joint supplieth.” That is a remarkable phrase. Joints are not merely places of contact; they are places of supply. In the spiritual body, connection is not meant to be empty association. It is meant to supply something. A healthy joint helps life, strength, coordination, and usefulness move through the body. Some believers have a joint-like ministry because they connect people, needs, gifts, and opportunities in a way that helps supply flow. They may not always be the most visible members, but they are often the ones who know who needs encouragement, who can help with a certain task, who should talk to whom, who has a burden, who has an ability, who needs prayer, and where support is needed.

The body suffers when joints do not supply. If believers gather but do not edify, connect but do not strengthen, speak but do not help, associate but do not serve, then the joint is not functioning. Fellowship becomes social contact without spiritual supply. That is not the Ephesians 4 picture. Biblical fellowship is not merely standing in the same room, eating the same food, liking the same songs, or belonging to the same group. It involves supply. A word of exhortation supplies courage. A prayer supplies support. A correction supplies protection. A gift supplies need. A visit supplies comfort. A teaching supplies understanding. A connection between two members supplies opportunity. The joint is healthy when the body receives something useful through it.

This also means every joint must beware of becoming a blockage instead of a supply. A diseased joint can hinder movement. A carnal connector can spread gossip, suspicion, bitterness, or confusion instead of strength. Some people connect members in the wrong way. They carry tales from one person to another. They create alliances, factions, and whisper networks. They become social joints of disease rather than spiritual joints of supply. A healthy joint says, “How can I help this member strengthen that member under Christ?” A diseased joint says, “How can I keep people connected to my opinions, offenses, and influence?” The body needs joints that supply grace and truth, not joints that spread inflammation.

### **Chapter 3: Joints Allow Movement Without Losing Structure**

Bones give structure, but joints allow movement. Without joints, the body becomes stiff. Without bones, the body collapses. The two must work together. This is another powerful lesson for the body of Christ. Doctrine gives structure, and biblical connection allows practical movement. A church or ministry with doctrine but no healthy joints may become stiff, cold, rigid in the wrong ways, relationally painful, and unable to move well. On the other hand, a group with connection but no doctrine becomes loose, unstable, and easily twisted. The body needs both bones and joints. It needs settled truth and healthy cooperation.

This balance corrects two extremes. Some people use doctrine as an excuse to avoid meaningful connection. They are so afraid of compromise that they become isolated, suspicious, and unable to work with anyone unless that person agrees with them on every detail exactly as they phrase it. That is not discernment. That is stiffness. A stiff body may have bones, but it cannot move. Other people use connection as an excuse to ignore doctrine. They say, "Let us all work together," while brushing aside serious differences about salvation, Scripture, Christ, the gospel, and the church. That is not unity. That is looseness. A loose body without structure cannot stand. Biblical joints operate between sound bones.

Movement requires flexibility, but flexibility must not mean compromise. A knee bends so the body can walk, but it does not bend backward any way it wants without injury. A joint has a proper range of motion. That is a useful analogy. In the body of Christ, there are areas where patience, liberty, personal growth, preference, timing, and practical wisdom allow flexibility. But there are also places where the body must not bend: the gospel, the deity of Christ, the blood atonement, the authority of Scripture, salvation by grace through faith, and the essential doctrines of the faith. Healthy joints know how to move without dislocating the body. They know how to cooperate without compromising truth.

#### **Chapter 4: Unity Is Not Uniformity**

The body is unified, but it is not uniform. That distinction must be understood. Uniformity says everyone must look alike, speak alike, serve alike, think with the same level of maturity, have the same burden, use the same methods, and function in the same visible way. Unity says the members are different but joined under one Head. The hand is not the eye, yet both belong to the body. The foot is not the ear, yet both serve the same body. The heart is not the bones, yet both are necessary. The body of Christ does not require every member to become a duplicate of another member. It requires every member to function under Christ in truth and love.

This is where some churches and ministries go wrong. They confuse unity with personality cloning. Everyone is expected to sound like the leader, think in the leader's categories, carry the leader's burdens, imitate the leader's style, and treat any difference in function as a threat. That is not the body. That is a religious factory stamping out identical parts. God did not set the members that way. He made eyes, ears, mouths, hands, feet, hearts, lungs, bones, joints, and feeble members. A healthy body allows different members to supply different things without treating every difference as rebellion. A teacher may not function like an encourager. A prayer warrior may not function like an evangelist. A detailed servant may not function like a burden-bearing shoulder. That is not disorder. That is design.

At the same time, unity is not an excuse for everyone to do whatever seems right in his own eyes. The members are different, but they are joined under the same Head. They must be governed by the same Book, the same gospel, the same Spirit, and the same Lord. A foot cannot wander into sin and say, "I am just different." A mouth cannot teach false doctrine and say, "Do not force uniformity." A hand cannot refuse service and say, "This is my individuality." Diversity of function is not rebellion against truth. Biblical unity has room for different members, but no room for another head. Christ rules the body. Unity exists in Him, not in self-expression.

## **Chapter 5: Biblical Unity Is Not Ecumenical Compromise**

Ecumenical compromise is one of the devil's counterfeit joints. It tries to connect what God has not joined. It tells people to ignore doctrine for the sake of visible unity. It says Romanism, Protestantism, liberalism, sacramentalism, charismatic confusion, works-based religion, Bible correction, and grace truth can all be joined together as long as everyone uses the name of Jesus and acts charitable. That is not Ephesians 4 unity. That is a religious Frankenstein stitched together from dead parts. The body of Christ is joined by truth in Christ, not by pretending error is harmless. A joint connects members of the body. It does not connect the body to a corpse.

Ephesians 4 itself forbids this false unity because the same passage that speaks of the body being joined also speaks of unity of the faith and knowledge of the Son of God, no more being tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine, and speaking the truth in love. Doctrine is in the passage. Truth is in the passage. Growth into Christ is in the passage. The unity of Ephesians 4 is not unity at the expense of doctrine. It is unity built on doctrine, governed by truth, and directed toward Christ. The modern ecumenical crowd loves the word unity but hates the boundaries that make unity biblical. They want a body with no bones and joints connecting everything to everything. That is not a body. That is a pile of religious tissue.

The body of Christ must reject both sectarian pride and ecumenical compromise. Sectarian pride refuses fellowship with faithful members over carnal preferences, personality differences, or man-made standards. Ecumenical compromise joins hands with serious error and calls it love. Both are wrong. The body should gladly recognize saved members who stand in the truth, even when they differ in function, personality, maturity, or secondary matters. But the body must not pretend that all who say "Lord, Lord" are sound members of Christ's body in practice and doctrine. There is a difference between receiving a weak brother and embracing a false gospel. There is a difference between patience with growth and partnership with corruption. Healthy joints know the difference.

## **Chapter 6: Dislocated Joints Cause Pain**

A dislocated joint is painful because something that should be connected properly has been forced out of place. In the body of Christ, dislocation happens when relationships, roles, responsibilities, or connections are twisted out of biblical order. A member tries to function where God did not place him. A leader acts like the Head. A helper becomes a controller. A teacher refuses correction. A weak member is forced to carry weight he cannot bear. A private offense becomes a public faction. A doctrinal disagreement is handled through gossip instead of Scripture. The joint slips, and the body hurts.

Dislocated joints can happen through pride. Pride refuses proper connection because it wants superiority. It can happen through bitterness. Bitterness pulls away and stiffens the connection. It can happen through fear. Fear refuses to trust any other member. It can happen through bad doctrine. Bad doctrine connects things God separated and separates things God connected. It can happen through sin. Sin always affects fellowship. It can happen through poor communication. Many unnecessary pains in the body come from assumptions, silence, and half-truths traveling where honest words should have gone. When joints are dislocated, movement becomes painful and limited.

The cure is not to pretend the pain is not there. A dislocated joint must be set right. That may hurt at first, but it is necessary for healing. In the body of Christ, this may require confession, correction, forgiveness, clarification, repentance, doctrinal adjustment, restored communication, proper boundaries, or removal from a wrong connection. Not every connection should be maintained. Some connections are diseased. But right connections should be restored when possible. The goal is not mere comfort. The goal is health. The body moves best when the joints are in place under the Head.

## **Chapter 7: Every Joint Must Supply According to the Head**

Ephesians 4 says the whole body grows up into Christ the Head, and from Him the whole body is joined and compacted. That means the joints do not operate independently. They receive their purpose from the Head. A believer who helps connect members must do so under Christ's authority. That means truth must govern connection, charity must govern tone, humility must govern service, and edification must govern the goal. The joint is not there to build a personal network, gather influence, spread information, or keep people dependent on itself. It is there to supply what helps the body increase unto edifying of itself in love.

This is especially important for connectors, organizers, counselors, helpers, and bridge-builders in ministry. Their role can be very valuable, but it can also become dangerous if not surrendered to Christ. A person who knows many people's needs, weaknesses, burdens,

and details must be trustworthy. He must not traffic in information. He must not use connection as power. He must not manipulate members by controlling communication. He must not become a hallway through which gossip travels. A healthy joint supplies life and coordination. A diseased joint supplies pain. The difference is whether the member is under the Head and governed by the Book.

When every joint supplies rightly, the whole body is edified. The hand is helped by the arm. The foot receives direction. The shoulder coordinates with the back. The heart sends charity into the labor. The mouth speaks truth into the connection. The eye warns where danger appears. The weak are supported. The strong are kept humble. The hidden are not forgotten. The work moves without unnecessary stiffness, division, or confusion. That is the beauty of Ephesians 4. The body does not grow by one celebrity member doing everything. It grows as every part works in its measure and every joint supplies what it should under Christ.

## **Conclusion**

The joints teach us the necessity of connection in the body of Christ. A body with bones but no healthy joints becomes stiff, painful, and ineffective. Likewise, believers may have sound doctrine and individual gifts, but if they cannot connect, cooperate, communicate, supply, and move together under Christ, the body suffers. Joints are not flashy, but they are essential. They are where members meet, where movement is coordinated, where supply passes, and where the body learns to function as one body with many members. The eye cannot work alone. The hand cannot work alone. The foot cannot work alone. The shoulder cannot carry alone. The body must be fitly joined together.

But the joints also teach discernment. Biblical unity is not uniformity, and it is not ecumenical compromise. Unity does not require every member to look and function alike, but it does require submission to the same Head and the same truth. The body is joined by Christ and His words, not by ignoring doctrine. A joint connects members of the body; it does not attach the body to false gospels, corrupt systems, or spiritual deadness. The modern unity crowd often wants connection without truth, while the stiff sectarian crowd often wants truth without healthy connection. The Bible gives us something better: truth in love, sound doctrine with supply, members connected under the Head.

So let the joints be healthy. Let believers who connect others do so with humility, honesty, charity, and biblical wisdom. Let the body reject gossip, faction, stiffness, dislocation, and counterfeit unity. Let every joint supply what God intended, not inflammation, not poison, not confusion, but strength, coordination, and edification. The body of Christ grows as every part works in its measure and every joint supplies under the authority of the Head. A

joint is not the whole body, but without healthy joints, the body becomes stiff and painful. The Lord designed His body to be fitly joined together, and the body is healthiest when its connections are governed by truth, supplied by grace, and directed toward edifying itself in love.

## **18 of 32: One Body - Many Members - The Feet: Beautiful Feet That Carry the Gospel**

### **Introduction**

The feet are among the lowest members of the body, but they carry the body forward. They do not usually receive the honor given to the face, the mouth, the eyes, or the hands, but let the feet fail and the whole body quickly learns humility. A man may have a sharp eye, a strong arm, a clear mouth, a warm heart, a straight back, and sound bones, but if his feet will not move, he remains stuck where he is. The feet bear the weight of the body against the ground. They walk through dust, mud, stone, heat, cold, weariness, and distance. They do not merely admire the road. They take it. That is a fitting picture of gospel witness and the Christian walk. The eye may see the lost, the heart may care for the lost, the mind may understand the gospel, the mouth may be able to preach the gospel, and the hands may prepare materials for the gospel, but sooner or later the feet have to go. A gospel that never moves toward sinners remains locked inside the body like medicine in a bottle with the cap welded shut.

Romans 10:15 says, “And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace and bring glad tidings of good things!” Notice what the Holy Ghost calls beautiful. Not polished feet. Not pampered feet. Not comfortable feet. Not feet resting on a religious ottoman while discussing evangelism as a theory. Beautiful feet are feet that carry glad tidings. The beauty is not in the appearance of the member, but in the message it bears and the obedience that carries it. Feet are beautiful when they go where the good news needs to go. That may be across an ocean, across a street, across a room, across a workplace, across a family table, across a prison floor, across a hospital hallway, across an online conversation, or across the awkward distance between silence and witness. The feet represent movement under the command of the Head.

This essay will honor soul winners, missionaries, street preachers, faithful witnesses, tract passers, personal workers, Bible teachers, parents teaching children, saints speaking to neighbors, and ordinary believers who go where the need is instead of just talking about it from a comfortable chair. It will also deal with the Christian walk, because the same feet

that carry the gospel can damage the testimony if they walk into places where the Head never sent them. Feet can go to the lost with good tidings, or they can wander into sin, compromise, worldliness, and foolish associations. Feet can stand in truth, or they can run to mischief. Feet can walk by faith, or they can walk after the flesh. Beautiful feet are not beautiful because they are close to the ground. They are beautiful because they obey the Head, carry the gospel, and walk worthy of the Lord.

## **Chapter 1: The Feet Carry What the Mouth Confesses**

The mouth may confess Christ, but the feet often determine whether that confession reaches anyone outside the comfortable circle. There are believers who can talk about evangelism, preach about evangelism, debate methods of evangelism, quote verses about evangelism, and criticize churches for not evangelizing, yet their own feet never seem to move toward a lost man. That is a strange contradiction. The mouth says the gospel is urgent, but the feet say, “Not urgent enough for me to go.” The heart says souls matter, but the feet stay planted in convenience. The mind knows hell is real, Christ died for sinners, and the gospel is the power of God unto salvation, but the feet remain glued to the floor by fear, laziness, indifference, or comfort. That is not how a healthy body functions.

Romans 10 lays out a chain that should sober every believer. “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?” “And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?” “And how shall they hear without a preacher?” “And how shall they preach, except they be sent?” The gospel must be heard, and for it to be heard, someone must bring it. God can use public preaching, private witnessing, written words, printed Scripture, missionary labor, street work, personal conversation, family instruction, or even a simple invitation to read the Bible, but the truth must move toward the sinner. A closed mouth is bad enough, but motionless feet make it worse. The feet carry the witness into the world where lost men actually are.

This does not mean every believer has the same manner, calling, opportunity, courage, or field. Not everyone is a foreign missionary. Not everyone is a street preacher. Not everyone has the same bold personality. Not every saint can travel. Some are limited by age, health, responsibilities, or season of life. But every believer should ask honestly, “Are my feet available to the Lord?” The issue is not whether every foot walks the same road. The issue is whether the feet obey the Head. One member may go to a foreign field. Another may witness at work. Another may speak to family. Another may hand out Scripture. Another may support missionaries. Another may carry the gospel through writing. Another may pray and encourage those who go. But the body as a whole must not become a stationary monument to truth. It must move.

## **Chapter 2: Beautiful Feet Are Beautiful Because of the Message**

The Bible calls the feet beautiful because they bring good tidings. The beauty is not physical. It is functional. Feet that have walked dusty roads, stood on street corners, entered hospitals, crossed dangerous fields, climbed apartment steps, stood at doors, or carried Bibles into hostile places may not look beautiful to the world. They may be tired, scarred, worn, and unpolished. But heaven calls them beautiful if they carry the gospel of peace. That corrects the worldly idea of beauty. God sees beauty in obedience. Men admire polish. God honors purpose. Men notice presentation. God sees faithfulness. Men may look at a humble witness and see nothing impressive, but God sees feet carrying glad tidings to a sinner who needs Christ.

The message makes the feet beautiful because the gospel is beautiful. A sinner is lost, guilty, dead in trespasses and sins, unable to redeem himself, and headed for judgment. Then the gospel comes: Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried, and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. Redemption is through His blood. Forgiveness is by grace. Salvation is offered freely to the ungodly who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. That is good tidings. That is not moral improvement advice. That is not religious membership recruiting. That is not sacramental bondage. That is not philosophy. That is not political reform. That is not self-esteem therapy. That is the announcement that God has provided a Saviour and that eternal life is in His Son. Feet carrying that message are beautiful because the message is glorious.

This should rebuke believers who are ashamed of simple gospel witness. The world may mock it. Religious intellectuals may try to complicate it. Cults may corrupt it. Formalists may replace it with ceremony. Modern churches may soften it into vague inspiration. But the gospel remains the good news sinners need. A believer should never be embarrassed to carry it. The feet do not have to be famous to be beautiful. They do not have to walk onto a platform. They do not have to cross an ocean. They become beautiful when they carry Christ's message faithfully to the place God sends them. A tract handed with prayer, a Bible verse spoken with courage, a testimony given plainly, a sermon preached on a street, a missionary crossing borders, a father teaching a child the gospel—all of those can be beautiful feet when the message is Christ.

## **Chapter 3: The Feet Must Go Where the Need Is**

The feet teach movement toward need. It is easy to see need from a distance and talk about it. The eyes can see it. The heart can feel something about it. The mouth can discuss it. But the feet have to close the distance. The good Samaritan did not merely see the wounded man and form an opinion. He came where he was. That is often the difference

between religious talk and practical ministry. Feet go where comfort would rather not go. They go to the lost, the poor, the broken, the confused, the sick, the forgotten, the hostile, the indifferent, and the inconvenient. The gospel does not spread by believers sitting forever in safe rooms discussing how dark the world is. Somebody has to walk into the darkness with light.

This is especially true in evangelism. Lost people are often not going to wander into a Bible-believing assembly and ask for a sermon on substitutionary atonement. Some will, but many will not. They must be reached where they are. In Acts, the gospel moved. It went from Jerusalem to Judaea, Samaria, and the uttermost part of the earth. Paul went into synagogues, marketplaces, cities, homes, prisons, and public places. He reasoned, preached, testified, and carried the message. The book of Acts is not a record of saints sitting still while the world came to them. It is a record of the word of God moving through men who went.

The feet must also go where need is inside the body. Not every step is toward an unbeliever. Sometimes the feet must carry a saint to visit the sick, encourage the discouraged, help a widow, restore a fallen brother, strengthen a weak member, or stand beside someone in grief. The body is damaged when members see needs but never move toward them. “Somebody should help” is often the language of feet that do not want to move. Many times the “somebody” is the person who saw the need. The feet ask, “Lord, where wouldst thou have me go?” and then they move. Ministry becomes real when the feet take compassion out of theory and carry it into contact.

#### **Chapter 4: The Feet Must Walk Worthy of the Gospel**

The feet do not only represent going with the gospel; they also represent the Christian walk. Ephesians 4:1 says to “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.” Colossians 1:10 says to “walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.” First Thessalonians 2:12 says to “walk worthy of God.” Those verses matter because the body’s testimony can be damaged when the feet walk into places where the Head never sent them. A believer may speak truth with his mouth, but if his feet are constantly carrying him into sin, worldliness, foolishness, and compromise, his testimony becomes confusing. The walk matters. The gospel is not proven false by a believer’s bad walk, but a bad walk can make people despise the message he claims to carry.

Feet can betray the mouth. The mouth may say, “I love Christ,” while the feet walk willingly into places of lust, drunkenness, corruption, dishonesty, and rebellion. The mouth may say, “I believe the Bible,” while the feet run with those who mock it. The mouth may say, “I am separated unto God,” while the feet keep returning to the same old filth. The mouth may

say, “I care about souls,” while the feet never leave the circle of comfort. Proverbs 6 speaks of “feet that be swift in running to mischief.” The Bible understands that feet can serve sin as well as righteousness. The member must be yielded to God.

This does not mean a believer must hide from sinners to keep clean. Christ ate with publicans and sinners, but He did not join their sin. Paul went into dark places with light, not to become darkness. There is a difference between feet going where the Head sends them for ministry and feet wandering where the flesh sends them for pleasure. The Christian must learn that difference. A man cannot justify every worldly association by calling it outreach. Sometimes it is just compromise wearing a tract in its pocket. Beautiful feet carry good tidings under Christ’s command. Dirty feet wandering after the flesh damage the body’s testimony.

### **Chapter 5: The Feet Must Stand After They Have Gone**

Feet are for going, but they are also for standing. Ephesians 6 speaks repeatedly of standing in spiritual warfare: “having done all, to stand.” The feet must be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. That means gospel-bearing feet also need stability. A witness who goes but cannot stand will be moved by pressure, fear, opposition, ridicule, or temptation. The body needs feet that not only move toward the lost but also stand firm in truth when the ground gets rough. Going without standing becomes unstable activism. Standing without going becomes stationary orthodoxy. The feet must do both.

Standing matters because gospel witness brings resistance. The world does not always welcome truth. Religious people may oppose it. Family may misunderstand it. Friends may mock it. Strangers may reject it. False teachers may attack it. The flesh may get embarrassed by it. The devil hates it. If the feet are not planted in the gospel and the word of God, they will retreat when opposition comes. Some people are willing to go as long as the road is smooth, but beautiful feet often get dusty, bruised, and tired. The question is not whether the path is easy. The question is whether the Head sent the feet there.

Standing also means remaining faithful after results are not immediate. Feet can get discouraged when they have gone, witnessed, invited, preached, prayed, and labored, yet little visible fruit appears. But the servant is called to faithfulness. Paul planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. The feet must not quit simply because they do not control the harvest. Some seed takes time. Some witness is rejected now but remembered later. Some conversations seem fruitless but become nails in the conscience. Some mission fields are hard. Some families resist for years. Feet must stand. They carry the gospel, leave the increase with God, and keep moving as He leads.

### **Chapter 6: The Feet Must Be Washed From the Dust of the Road**

In John 13, the Lord Jesus washed the disciples' feet. That scene has many layers, but one practical lesson is clear: feet pick up defilement from the road. The believer who walks through this world needs cleansing in daily fellowship. The feet may belong to the body, but they still contact the ground. They walk through a dirty world. Dust clings. Weariness gathers. The Christian walk requires regular cleansing by the word of God and confession before the Lord. A saved man does not need to be born again again, but he does need his walk cleaned. Fellowship must be maintained.

This is important for those who go into the world with the gospel. Witnessing to sinners does not make a man immune to the world's dust. Ministry can expose a believer to filth, rejection, discouragement, anger, temptation, pride, and weariness. A street preacher can become harsh. A missionary can become weary. A soul winner can become mechanical. A witness can become discouraged. A servant can pick up dust from the road. The feet need washing. Time in the Book, prayer, confession, fellowship with the Lord, and honest examination keep the walk clean. If the feet are never washed, the dirt of the road starts affecting the whole body.

The Lord washing feet also teaches humility. The Head of the body stooped to wash the feet of His disciples. That ought to kill religious pride in any member. If Christ stooped to wash feet, no believer is too important to serve lowly needs. Foot ministry is humble ministry. Gospel witness often requires humbling yourself before people who may not appreciate it. Serving saints may require doing tasks beneath your pride. Walking with God requires admitting when your feet are dirty. The Lord does not despise humble service. He modeled it. The body needs clean feet, and sometimes it needs members willing to help wash the dust from one another's walk through biblical correction, restoration, and care.

## **Chapter 7: The Feet Follow the Head, Not the Flesh**

The feet must be governed by the Head. That is the controlling truth. Feet do not have the right to choose their own path independently. Proverbs 3:6 says, "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." The Lord directs the path. The feet obey. When the feet follow the flesh, they lead the body into trouble. When the feet follow fear, they avoid needed obedience. When the feet follow pride, they walk into self-display. When the feet follow greed, they chase profit. When the feet follow lust, they enter corruption. When the feet follow bitterness, they run toward strife. But when the feet follow the Head, they carry the body where Christ wants it to go.

This is why walking language is so common in the New Testament. Walk in the Spirit. Walk in love. Walk circumspectly. Walk worthy. Walk honestly. Walk by faith. Walk not as other Gentiles walk. The Christian life is not only a position in Christ; it is a walk through time. A

man's steps matter. His habits matter. His direction matters. His associations matter. His choices matter. Where his feet go reveals what is governing him. A believer cannot claim to be following Christ while continually walking in the paths of the old man. If the Head says one thing and the feet go another way, the body is out of order.

Following the Head also means being willing to go when He sends. Some feet are dirty because they went where the flesh sent them. Other feet are clean but disobedient because they refused to go where Christ sent them. There is such a thing as respectable disobedience. The feet never went to the bar, the brothel, or the crooked deal, but they also never went to the neighbor, the mission field, the hurting saint, the hospital room, the street corner, or the person needing a witness. Avoiding obvious sin is not the same thing as obeying the Lord's call to go. Beautiful feet are obedient feet. They do not merely avoid wrong roads. They walk the right ones.

## **Conclusion**

The feet teach us that the body must move. A body with eyes, ears, mouth, heart, bones, hands, and lungs still needs feet to go. The gospel is not meant to remain trapped in comfortable rooms, doctrinal discussions, private notebooks, and safe circles. It must be carried. Beautiful feet are beautiful because they bring glad tidings of good things. Soul winners, missionaries, street preachers, faithful witnesses, parents teaching children, saints speaking to neighbors, workers handing out Scripture, and ordinary believers who move toward need are performing precious work in the body. They may be lowly members, but they carry the message forward.

The feet also teach us that the Christian walk matters. The same member that carries the gospel can damage the testimony if it walks into places where the Head never sent it. The body's witness is affected by its walk. Feet must walk worthy of the Lord, stand in the gospel, be washed from the dust of the road, and follow the Head rather than the flesh. Going and walking belong together. It is not enough to preach with the mouth if the feet contradict the message. It is not enough to stand in doctrine if the feet refuse to move toward sinners. The body needs faithful movement and clean testimony.

So let the feet be beautiful in God's sight. Let them carry good tidings, walk by faith, stand in truth, avoid the paths of mischief, and go where the Head sends them. Let the eye see the lost, the heart care for the lost, the mouth preach to the lost, the hands prepare for the work, and the feet carry the body toward the need. Let no believer be content to discuss the road forever while refusing to take a step. Beautiful feet are not beautiful because they are polished. They are beautiful because they obey Christ and carry the gospel of peace to those who need to hear it.

## **19 of 32: One Body - Many Members - The Knees: The Body Bowed Before God**

### **Introduction**

The knees are not the most celebrated members of the body, but they reveal something very important about the condition of a man. A stiff knee can keep a body from bowing, kneeling, rising, walking properly, and moving with humility. The knees are where the body bends. They are not mainly for display. They are not like the face, which men notice first, or the hands, which men see working, or the mouth, which men hear speaking. The knees often do their most important work in secret. They bend when nobody is watching. They bow when there is no audience. They carry the body downward before God and help lift it back up to walk. That makes the knees a tremendous picture of prayer, humility, worship, submission, reverence, and surrender. A body that will not bend the knee is a body in rebellion. A Christian who will not bow before God may still talk, work, preach, debate, organize, and serve outwardly, but there is something stiff and dangerous inside him.

The Bible gives us men whose knees mattered. Daniel's knees mattered when a king's decree tried to stop prayer. Daniel 6:10 says that when Daniel knew the writing was signed, "he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime." There is backbone and knees together. He stood before men because he kneeled before God. Paul's knees mattered when he said in Ephesians 3:14, "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." The Lord Jesus Christ Himself kneeled in prayer in Luke 22:41. One day every knee will matter, because Philippians 2:10 says, "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow." The knees teach a private present duty and a public future certainty. The believer should bow willingly now because the rebel will bow necessarily later.

This essay will expose the proud, stiff, self-sufficient spirit that refuses to bow. The world admires men who stand tall in self-confidence, but the Bible shows that a man is never stronger than when he is rightly bowed before God. A strong Christian is not one who never kneels. A strong Christian is one who knows exactly where to kneel and before whom. He will not bow to idols, popes, systems, devils, traditions, crowds, pressure, fear, or the demands of a wicked age, but he will bow before the Lord. The knees are the member that rebukes arrogance. They bring the body low before God so the man can walk upright before men. They teach that humility is not weakness, prayer is not helplessness, worship is not emotionalism, and submission is not slavery. The body of Christ needs knees that bend before the Head.

### **Chapter 1: The Knees Teach the Body to Bow**

The first lesson of the knees is simple: the body was made able to bow. God built into the frame of a man the capacity to bend downward. That physical ability carries spiritual meaning throughout Scripture. Bowing is not always merely posture, and a man can kneel outwardly while his heart stands proud as a peacock, but posture still teaches something. The knees bring the body low. They confess that the man is not the highest authority in the room. They show reverence, dependence, supplication, and surrender. The proud flesh hates that. The flesh wants to stand on its own terms, lift its chin, stiffen its neck, and announce its independence. The knees say, "Get down." That is a needed sermon to the whole body.

A body that cannot bend is in trouble. A man with stiff knees struggles to move properly. A soul with stiff spiritual knees struggles to worship properly. The Bible often links rebellion with stiffness. Israel was called stiffnecked because they resisted God. A stiff neck will not bow, and stiff knees will not kneel. That is the posture of rebellion. The sinner refuses to bow to Christ as Saviour. The religious man refuses to bow to the authority of Scripture. The proud believer refuses to bow to correction. The self-sufficient worker refuses to bow in prayer. The ambitious leader refuses to bow under the Head. The knees expose whether a man is truly yielded or merely religious.

Bowing before God is not weakness. It is sanity. The creature bows before the Creator. The sinner bows before the Saviour. The servant bows before the Lord. The member bows before the Head. The child bows before the Father. The redeemed man bows before the One who bought him. A man who refuses to bow before God is not strong. He is confused about his size. The knees teach proportion. They remind the body that God is high, holy, eternal, omnipotent, righteous, merciful, and worthy, while man is dust, breath, weakness, and dependent life. The knees put the body where the soul ought to be: low before God, dependent upon grace, and ready to obey.

## **Chapter 2: Daniel's Knees Show Courage Before Men**

Daniel 6 gives one of the greatest pictures of holy knees in the Bible. The decree was signed. No man could ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days except the king. The trap was set. Daniel knew it. He understood the danger. He knew the lions were not imaginary. Yet Daniel 6:10 says he went into his house, his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, and "he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime." Notice that last phrase. He did not start praying to make a scene. He continued praying because prayer was already his habit. The crisis did not create his knees. It revealed them.

Daniel's knees show that true courage before men often begins with humility before God. Daniel could stand against the king's decree because he was already bowed before the King of heaven. That is the order. Men who will not kneel before God usually fold before men. They may talk tough, but when pressure comes, their self-confidence melts. Daniel did not need to make a public speech about bravery. He simply kept his prayer life. His knees were more dangerous to Babylon than the king realized. A praying man who fears God more than lions is not easy to control.

This matters in a day when pressure is placed on believers to stop praying, stop speaking, stop believing, stop standing, and stop obeying Scripture. The world does not always demand that you deny God outright. Sometimes it simply tells you to keep your faith private, silent, harmless, and subordinate to the king's decree. Daniel's knees answer that. He did not bow to pressure because he had already bowed to God. The body of Christ needs Daniel knees: knees that keep praying when the decree is signed, knees that do not change direction because the culture threatens, knees that keep their windows open toward God's promises, knees that teach the rest of the body that submission to God is the foundation of courage before men.

### **Chapter 3: Paul's Knees Show Burden for the Saints**

Paul's knees mattered too. In Ephesians 3:14, Paul says, "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." That statement comes in the middle of tremendous doctrine. Ephesians is full of high truth: election in Christ, redemption through His blood, the sealing of the Spirit, the body of Christ, Jew and Gentile reconciled in one body, the mystery revealed, and the unsearchable riches of Christ. Yet Paul does not treat doctrine as something that floats above prayer. Doctrine drives him to his knees. The more he understands the riches of God's grace and the greatness of the mystery, the more he bows in prayer for the saints. That is healthy doctrine. It produces worship, intercession, and burden.

Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3 is not shallow. He prays that the saints would be strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in their hearts by faith, that they would be rooted and grounded in love, able to comprehend with all saints the breadth, length, depth, and height, and know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. That is not a casual prayer over a meal. That is a burden. Paul bows his knees because he wants the body strengthened inwardly. He knows doctrine must become spiritual reality in the saints. He knows truth must reach the inner man. He knows the body needs more than information. It needs strengthening by God.

This teaches that knees are not only for personal need; they are for intercession. The body of Christ needs members who bow for other members. Some saints may never preach publicly, but they can bow their knees for preachers. Some may never travel as missionaries, but they can bow for missionaries. Some may never teach large groups, but they can bow for those being taught. Some may not be physically strong, but they can bow for the weak. Intercessory knees may be hidden, but they are powerful. The body is healthier when members are not merely talking about one another, criticizing one another, and comparing one another, but bowing before God for one another.

#### **Chapter 4: Knees Reveal Private Submission Before Public Service**

The knees often do their best work in private. That is important because private posture before God shapes public service before men. A man may stand in a pulpit, behind a desk, on a street corner, in a classroom, in a home, or before a crowd, but if he does not know how to bow privately, his public standing becomes dangerous. Public service without private submission breeds pride. A preacher who does not kneel may become a performer. A teacher who does not kneel may become a scholar in his own eyes. A leader who does not kneel may become a little pope. A worker who does not kneel may become resentful. A fighter who does not kneel may become cruel. Knees keep public service low before God.

The Lord Jesus warned against praying to be seen of men. That does not mean all public prayer is wrong. It means prayer must not become performance. The knees belong first in the secret place. There, a man is not impressing an audience. He is before God. There, he admits weakness. There, he confesses sin. There, he asks for wisdom. There, he lays down burdens. There, he gets corrected by the Book. There, the Head deals with the member. Many public failures began with private knees that stopped bending. A man may keep his outward form for a while, but if private submission dries up, the danger is already growing.

Private knees also expose self-sufficiency. It is possible to be so busy serving that prayer becomes an afterthought. That is a warning sign. The body may be moving, but it is not bowing. A believer who does not pray is effectively saying, whether he means to or not, "I can handle this." But he cannot. He cannot preach rightly, teach rightly, serve rightly, love rightly, fight rightly, lead rightly, parent rightly, or suffer rightly without God. The knees bring the body down to receive help before the body tries to move. A Christian who kneels privately is not wasting time. He is acknowledging the only source of strength.

#### **Chapter 5: Knees Teach Worship and Reverence**

The knees are closely connected to worship and reverence. Psalm 95:6 says, "O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker." Worship is not casual familiarity with God as though He were a buddy on equal terms. He is Father, yes. He is

gracious, yes. He invites us to come boldly to the throne of grace, yes. But boldness is not arrogance, and access is not irreverence. The saved man comes by the blood, but he still comes before God. The knees remind the body that God is holy, high, and worthy of reverence. Worship without reverence becomes shallow emotionalism. Reverence without access becomes fear without fellowship. The Bible gives both: bold access and bowed reverence.

Modern Christianity often lacks reverence because it has lost the sense of God's holiness. Everything becomes casual, cute, entertaining, therapeutic, and man-centered. Songs sound like romantic jingles. Sermons sound like motivational talks. Prayer sounds like a man giving God advice. Worship spaces feel like stages for religious entertainment. The knees rebuke that. Kneeling before the Lord our maker reminds the body that worship is not about showcasing talent, stirring emotion, or satisfying personal preference. It is about God. He is the object. He is the audience that matters. He is worthy. The body bows because God is God.

Reverence also protects doctrine from becoming mere debate. A man can discuss God while having no fear of God. That is a dangerous thing. The knees bring theology into worship. The more a man sees truth rightly, the more he should bow. The deity of Christ should bow him. The blood of Christ should bow him. The grace of God should bow him. The judgment of God should bow him. The authority of Scripture should bow him. If doctrine makes a man arrogant but never reverent, something has gone wrong in the handling of truth. The body needs knees so knowledge becomes worship and worship remains governed by truth.

## **Chapter 6: Knees Must Bow to God Alone**

The knees teach submission, but they also teach refusal. The believer bows to God, and because he bows to God, he must not bow to idols. This is the lesson of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. The king made an image and commanded all to bow. They refused. Their knees were not for Nebuchadnezzar's idol. That is just as important as Daniel's knees in prayer. A strong Christian is not one who never kneels. A strong Christian knows where to kneel and where not to kneel. He bows before God, but he will not bow before the image, the system, the crowd, the tradition, the pope, the celebrity, the political idol, the cultural pressure, or the devil's threats.

The world is always building images and demanding knees. Sometimes the image is religious. Sometimes it is political. Sometimes it is cultural. Sometimes it is intellectual respectability. Sometimes it is money. Sometimes it is reputation. Sometimes it is fear of man. The command may not be phrased as "fall down and worship," but the pressure is the

same: bend here, compromise here, be silent here, approve this, accept that, deny what God said, soften the truth, adjust your Bible, join the crowd, protect your place. The knees must answer, “No.” Knees that have bowed before God are strengthened to refuse false worship.

This is especially needed in spiritual leadership and ministry. A preacher must not bow to donors. A teacher must not bow to scholars. A father must not bow to culture. A mother must not bow to the world’s view of children. A witness must not bow to fear. A Bible believer must not bow to the modern version crowd. A saved man must not bow to works religion. Submission to God produces holy stubbornness against everything that competes with God. The knees are not spineless. They are selective. They bend before the Lord so the back can stand before the world.

### **Chapter 7: Every Knee Will Bow to Jesus Christ**

Philippians 2:9-11 says that God hath highly exalted the Lord Jesus Christ and given Him a name above every name, “That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,” of things in heaven, things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. That is the future of every creature. Every knee will bow. Every tongue will confess. The atheist’s knee will bow. The pope’s knee will bow. The king’s knee will bow. The scholar’s knee will bow. The devil’s knee will bow. The mocker’s knee will bow. The self-righteous religionist’s knee will bow. The celebrity’s knee will bow. The rebel’s knee will bow. No knee will remain stiff forever.

That truth should put steel in the believer’s soul. The world may look powerful now. Wicked men may mock Christ now. Religious systems may exalt themselves now. False teachers may deceive many now. Governments may rage now. Sinners may scoff now. But the end is already written. The crucified, risen, exalted Lord Jesus Christ will receive universal acknowledgment. The question is not whether a man will bow. The question is whether he will bow now in faith and worship, or later in judgment and terror. The saved man bows willingly now because grace has opened his eyes. The rebel will bow later because glory will force reality upon him.

This also humbles the believer. If every knee will bow to Christ, then no member of the body has any business demanding ultimate allegiance to himself. The preacher’s knee will bow. The teacher’s knee will bow. The father’s knee will bow. The leader’s knee will bow. The strongest member’s knee will bow. The whole body bows before the Head. Christ alone is worthy of final submission, worship, and glory. The knees of the body should already be practicing what the universe will one day be forced to do: bow before Jesus Christ and confess that He is Lord.

## **Conclusion**

The knees teach the body humility, prayer, worship, submission, reverence, and courage. They are not the most visible members, but they reveal a great deal about the inward condition of a man. A body that will not bend the knee is a body in rebellion. A Christian who will not bow before God may still appear busy and strong, but he is stiff in the wrong place. Daniel's knees mattered because they showed prayer under pressure. Paul's knees mattered because they showed doctrinal burden for the saints. The Lord's own knees in prayer show that dependence is not weakness. The knees are where the body learns to be low before God so it can stand upright before men.

The knees also teach discernment in submission. The believer is not called to bow to everything. He bows to God and refuses idols. He bows before the Lord and stands against the image. He bows before Scripture and refuses the traditions of men when they contradict the Book. He bows before Christ and refuses the pressure of culture, fear, religious systems, and false authority. True humility before God produces holy backbone before men. The man who kneels in the secret place is harder to bend in the public place. That is not contradiction. That is Bible strength.

So let the knees bend where they should. Let the body bow before God in prayer, worship, reverence, confession, dependence, and surrender. Let proud knees be broken before they are forced down in judgment. Let stiff knees become praying knees. Let private knees strengthen public testimony. Let the saints remember that one day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. A strong Christian is not one who never kneels. A strong Christian is one who knows exactly where to kneel and before whom. The body of Christ needs knees that bow before the Head.

## **20 of 32: One Body - Many Members - The Skin: Sensitivity, Covering, and Wounds**

### **Introduction**

The skin is one of the most sensitive members of the body because it is the part that often meets the outside world first. It feels heat, cold, pressure, pain, touch, injury, irritation, and danger before many deeper parts of the body ever know what happened. A man can close his eyes, stop his ears, hold his tongue, and fold his hands, but his skin is still exposed to the world around him. It is a covering, a boundary, a warning system, and a contact point. It protects what is inside while feeling what is outside. That makes the skin a powerful picture of spiritual sensitivity in the body of Christ. Some believers are especially able to notice

wounds, pressure, grief, coldness, danger, infection, hardness, and spiritual irritation before others do. They feel what is wrong in a room. They sense when a member is hurting. They notice when charity is cooling. They detect when harshness is scraping against weak saints. They feel the bruise before the rest of the body admits there was a blow.

This kind of sensitivity is often mocked by stronger, rougher, or less perceptive members. Some people think sensitivity automatically means weakness. They assume that if a believer feels deeply, notices pain, grieves easily, or is bothered by spiritual coldness, he must be soft, emotional, unstable, or unfit for serious work. That can be true when sensitivity is fleshly, self-centered, easily offended, and ruled by emotion rather than Scripture. But it is not always true. A body without feeling is not strong. It is endangered. If a man cannot feel pain, he can burn his hand, cut his foot, bruise his flesh, crush a limb, or damage himself without realizing it. Pain is not always the enemy. Sometimes pain is the warning that keeps the body alive. In the same way, the body of Christ needs members who can feel spiritual injury before the whole body is infected, hardened, or wounded beyond easy repair.

This essay must distinguish between spiritual sensitivity and fleshly oversensitivity. The body does not need members who turn every small touch into a mortal wound, every correction into abuse, every disagreement into betrayal, and every strong word into personal persecution. That kind of oversensitivity is not discernment. It is self-occupation. But the body also does not need calloused members who cannot feel anything unless the bone is sticking out. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 12:26, "And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it." That verse assumes feeling. It assumes connection. It assumes that pain in one place should register in the whole body. The skin teaches us that sensitivity, covering, contact, protection, and wounds all matter. A healthy body is neither hysterical nor numb. It feels rightly, covers wisely, protects faithfully, and treats wounds before they turn septic.

## **Chapter 1: The Skin Feels What Touches the Body**

The skin is where the body meets the world. It senses contact. It feels the pressure of what touches it. This is a necessary function because the body must know what is happening at its boundaries. If something is too hot, the skin warns. If something is sharp, the skin warns. If something is cold, the skin warns. If pressure is too heavy, the skin warns. Spiritually, some members function in a similar way. They are sensitive to what is touching the body of Christ. They notice worldly influence creeping in. They feel when false doctrine begins to scrape against truth. They sense when the spirit of a ministry is becoming harsh, cold, proud, theatrical, or carnal. They detect grief in a member's face before others ask a question. They can tell when something is off, not because they are mystical, but because

they are paying attention with a tender conscience and a Bible-shaped sense of what is healthy.

This kind of sensitivity can be a mercy from God. A church or ministry full of hard, rough, calloused people may be able to fight, argue, build, and push forward, but it may also injure its own members without noticing. The skin slows the body down enough to say, “That hurts.” “That is too hot.” “That is too sharp.” “Something is pressing too hard.” “There is a wound here.” “This member is suffering.” That warning should not be despised. Pain signals are not rebellion. They may be God’s way of alerting the body that something needs attention. A believer who feels spiritual injury early may save the body from greater damage if the warning is handled biblically.

At the same time, the skin must interpret contact rightly. Not every pressure is danger. Not every heat is destruction. Not every cut is fatal. Not every uncomfortable touch is abuse. The skin is useful because it senses, but the mind must interpret what is sensed. Spiritually sensitive believers must bring their perceptions under Scripture. It is not enough to say, “I feel something is wrong.” The question becomes, “What does the Bible say? Is this true danger, personal discomfort, past hurt being triggered, pride being crossed, or actual injury to the body?” Sensitivity is valuable when governed by truth. Ungoverned sensitivity can make the whole body jump at shadows.

## **Chapter 2: A Body Without Feeling Is in Danger**

A body that cannot feel pain is not strong; it is in danger. Pain may be unpleasant, but it is a gift when it warns of harm. A man who cannot feel a burn may leave his hand in the fire. A man who cannot feel a wound may ignore infection. A man who cannot feel pressure may damage tissue without realizing it. Numbness can look like toughness for a while, but it is dangerous. The same is true spiritually. A believer, church, or ministry that no longer feels grief over sin, sorrow over wounded saints, alarm over false doctrine, concern over coldness, or conviction over disobedience is not mature. It is numb.

Spiritual numbness often comes from repeated exposure without response. A man hears truth and refuses to obey until conviction dulls. A church tolerates sin until it stops blushing. A ministry becomes used to harshness until wounded people seem like the cost of doing business. A believer watches corruption so long that it no longer grieves him. A teacher handles sacred truth so casually that he no longer trembles at God’s word. The skin has become calloused. Some call that maturity. It may be death creeping into the nerves. The Bible speaks of people past feeling in Ephesians 4:19. That is not a compliment. A conscience that cannot feel is a terrible thing.

The body of Christ must beware of bragging about numbness. Some people boast that nothing bothers them. They are proud that they never cry, never grieve, never feel tenderness, never sense injury, never get disturbed by spiritual coldness, and never take pain seriously. That may sound tough to the flesh, but it is not necessarily godly. The Lord Jesus Christ was not numb. He wept. He was moved with compassion. He groaned. He grieved. He felt. He could rebuke with fire and still weep over Jerusalem. The measure of strength is not the inability to feel. The measure is feeling rightly under God and still obeying the Father. A body without feeling is not strong. It is sick.

### **Chapter 3: Spiritual Sensitivity Is Different From Fleshly Oversensitivity**

Spiritual sensitivity and fleshly oversensitivity are not the same thing. Spiritual sensitivity is governed by Scripture, charity, discernment, humility, and concern for the body. Fleshly oversensitivity is governed by self, pride, fear, past wounds, insecurity, and emotional reaction. Spiritual sensitivity says, "Something may be harming the body; let us examine it by the word of God." Fleshly oversensitivity says, "I feel hurt, therefore someone must be guilty." Spiritual sensitivity cares about truth and health. Fleshly oversensitivity cares about personal comfort and emotional control. One is a gift to the body. The other can become a burden to the body.

Fleshly oversensitivity is common because the flesh loves to make self the center. It turns correction into rejection, disagreement into hatred, plain preaching into personal attack, and necessary boundaries into cruelty. It is easily offended, quick to accuse, slow to examine itself, and often impossible to satisfy. A person ruled by fleshly oversensitivity can make everyone walk on eggshells while calling it compassion. That is not spiritual skin. That is inflamed tissue. The body cannot function if every movement causes an overreaction. Sometimes the problem is not that the body is being injured; sometimes the skin is diseased and misreading normal contact as harm.

But the abuse of sensitivity must not make the body despise true sensitivity. Some wounds are real. Some harshness is real. Some pressure is too much. Some warnings are valid. Some members are being neglected. Some words do cut too deeply. Some correction is done in pride. Some leaders do crush the weak. Some churches do become cold. Some ministries do become rough. Some believers do suffer quietly while louder members say, "Stop being sensitive." The answer is not to mock all pain or validate all pain. The answer is to judge righteous judgment. The body must learn to ask, "Is this pain a faithful warning, or is it flesh reacting?" That requires Scripture, patience, prayer, and honesty.

### **Chapter 4: The Skin Provides Covering and Protection**

The skin is not only sensitive; it covers and protects. It is a boundary between what is inside and what is outside. It helps keep harmful things out and protects tender parts from exposure. Spiritually, the body needs covering in a biblical sense. Not the covering of authoritarian control, priestcraft, or man-made hierarchy, but the covering of charity, discretion, protection, modesty, and wise care. First Peter 4:8 says, “charity shall cover the multitude of sins.” That does not mean hiding wickedness that must be judged. It means love does not needlessly expose, parade, and broadcast every failure, weakness, and wound. Skin covers what does not need to be publicly exposed.

This is desperately needed because some people treat exposure as though it is always spiritual. It is not. There are times to expose sin, false doctrine, wolves, hypocrisy, and corruption. The Bible commands that in proper contexts. But there are also times to cover a repentant brother, protect a wounded saint, preserve dignity, and avoid turning private weakness into public entertainment. A body with no skin would be grotesque. Everything tender would be exposed to dirt, infection, and injury. A church or ministry with no discretion becomes equally grotesque. Every wound is displayed. Every weakness becomes discussion. Every private struggle becomes material. That is not discernment. That is indecency.

Covering also protects the weak from unnecessary harm. A sensitive member may notice that someone is bruised and quietly shield him from further damage. A wise believer may know enough about a situation to pray and help without spreading it. A mature saint may cover a young believer’s clumsy mistake while correcting him privately. A father or mother may protect a child’s dignity while teaching truth. This is skin ministry. It covers without compromising. It protects without lying. It keeps harmful things out and tender things from needless exposure. The body needs members who know the difference between necessary exposure and charitable covering.

## **Chapter 5: Wounds in One Member Affect the Whole Body**

First Corinthians 12:26 says, “And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it.” That is body doctrine. It means the suffering of one member should not be treated as irrelevant by the rest. If the foot is wounded, the whole body adjusts. If the hand is burned, the whole body reacts. If the skin is cut, the immune system responds. The body does not say, “That is just the foot’s problem.” It knows better. In the body of Christ, when one member is hurting, the rest should care. This is not emotionalism. This is Bible.

The problem is that many Christians have become skilled at ignoring pain that is not their own. If they are comfortable, they assume the body is healthy. If their ministry is thriving, they ignore the wounded member nearby. If their doctrinal circle is strong, they dismiss the

struggling saint as weak. If they are not personally bleeding, they conclude there is no wound. That is not how a body works. A healthy body responds to pain signals wherever they appear. The strong should not despise the weak. The visible should not ignore the hidden. The mouth should not talk over the wounded. The hands should not keep working as though nothing happened when a member is suffering. One member's wound matters.

This does not mean the whole body must be controlled by every pain. A body must learn to distinguish between a serious wound, a minor bruise, and a false alarm. But once real suffering is recognized, the body should respond. Prayer, comfort, correction, restoration, practical help, protection, and patient presence may all be needed. Sometimes the wounded member needs mercy. Sometimes he needs truth. Sometimes he needs both. What he does not need is contempt. A body that despises its wounds will eventually become infected. A body that cares for wounds can heal.

## **Chapter 6: Pain Can Be a Warning From God**

Pain is not always the enemy. Sometimes pain is the messenger that something needs attention. Physically, pain can drive a man to remove his hand from fire, clean a wound, rest an injury, or seek help. Spiritually, pain can do the same. Conviction is painful, but it can lead to repentance. Grief is painful, but it can reveal love. Reproof is painful, but it can restore wisdom. A wounded conscience is painful, but it may keep a man from hardening himself further. The pain of seeing sin in the body may move saints to prayer, correction, and cleansing. Pain can be mercy when it wakes the body up.

This is why believers should not automatically numb every pain as quickly as possible. The modern world wants relief without repentance, comfort without correction, and sedation without surgery. Many Christians do the same spiritually. If preaching hurts, they change preachers. If doctrine convicts, they change interpretations. If reproof stings, they accuse the messenger. If guilt rises, they distract themselves. But some pain should be listened to before it is silenced. The question is not merely, "How do I stop hurting?" The question is, "Why does this hurt, and what does God want exposed, corrected, healed, or strengthened?"

Of course, not all pain is righteous. Some pain comes from pride being crossed. Some comes from selfish expectations. Some comes from old wounds being touched by innocent words. Some comes from the flesh hating truth. That is why pain must be examined by Scripture. But when pain is a true warning, ignoring it is foolish. If a church feels the pain of division, do not merely cover it with activity. If a believer feels the pain of conviction, do not drown it in entertainment. If a ministry feels the pain of prayerlessness,

do not solve it with more machinery. If a relationship feels the pain of bitterness, do not pretend time alone will heal it. Pain can be the warning that keeps the body alive.

## **Chapter 7: The Skin Must Remain Tender Without Becoming Thin**

The body needs skin that is tender enough to feel and strong enough to protect. Skin that is too hard becomes calloused and insensitive. Skin that is too thin becomes easily torn and inflamed. Spiritually, this balance is essential. The believer should be tender toward God, sensitive to sin, responsive to suffering, aware of wounds, and careful with weak members. But he must not be so thin-skinned that he cannot receive correction, endure hardship, handle strong truth, or survive misunderstanding. Tenderness is biblical. Fragility ruled by self is not.

Tenderness comes from humility and fellowship with God. A tender believer trembles at the word, grieves over sin, cares about people, and notices spiritual injury. Thin-skinned fragility comes from self-focus. It constantly asks, “How did that affect me? Did they notice me? Did that offend me? Did they say it the way I wanted?” The first serves the body. The second makes the body serve its sensitivities. A healthy skin member must keep tenderness from turning into tyranny. Sensitivity should help the body, not control it through emotional pressure.

The Lord Jesus Christ again gives the perfect pattern. He was tender toward the broken and fearless before the proud. He felt grief, compassion, weariness, sorrow, and agony, yet He was not ruled by hurt feelings. He could be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, yet He never allowed human rejection to turn Him from obedience. That is the balance the body needs. Tender but not fragile. Sensitive but not self-absorbed. Protective but not controlling. Able to feel wounds without worshipping pain. Able to endure hardness without becoming hard. The skin must remain living, healthy, and under the Head.

## **Conclusion**

The skin teaches the body of Christ the value of sensitivity, covering, contact, protection, and wounds. It is the part of the body that often feels injury first, and that feeling should not be despised. A body without feeling is in danger. It can burn, cut, bruise, and damage itself without realizing it. In the same way, a church, ministry, family, or believer that no longer feels grief over sin, concern for wounded members, alarm over false doctrine, or conviction from the word of God is not strong. It is numb. The body needs spiritually sensitive members who can notice wounds, pressure, danger, grief, coldness, and infection before the damage spreads.

But sensitivity must be governed by Scripture. Fleshly oversensitivity is not the same as spiritual sensitivity. The body does not need members who turn every correction into

abuse, every disagreement into hatred, and every discomfort into persecution. Nor does it need calloused members who mock all pain and crush the weak. It needs healthy skin: tender enough to feel, strong enough to protect, humble enough to be corrected, discerning enough to judge pain rightly, and charitable enough to cover what should not be needlessly exposed. Pain must not rule the body, but neither should pain be ignored when it is telling the truth.

So let the skin do its work. Let the body feel when one member suffers. Let it cover with charity where covering is righteous. Let it expose infection where exposure is necessary. Let it protect tender parts from needless injury. Let it distinguish between true wounds and fleshly reactions. Let it stay tender before God without becoming thin-skinned before men. Pain is not always the enemy. Sometimes pain is the warning that keeps the body alive. A healthy body is not numb, and a spiritual body should not be either.

## **21 of 32: One Body - Many Members - The Stomach: Digesting the Word of God**

### **Introduction**

The stomach is not usually praised like the eye, heard like the mouth, seen like the hands, or noticed like the feet, but the body depends on it every day. The stomach receives food, breaks it down, processes it, and prepares nourishment to be distributed for strength, energy, repair, and growth. A man can have teeth that chew, a tongue that tastes, and a mouth that receives, but if the stomach cannot digest, the body will weaken. Food that is tasted but not digested does not strengthen the body. Food that is swallowed too quickly can choke or trouble the body. Food that is rotten, poisoned, or useless can corrupt the body. That is a fitting picture of the believer's relationship to the word of God. The Bible is not merely something to be tasted for a pleasant thought, collected for argument, quoted for reputation, or swallowed in chunks to impress people. It must be received, meditated upon, rightly divided, believed, applied, and turned into spiritual strength.

The Bible repeatedly speaks of God's words as food. Jeremiah said in Jeremiah 15:16, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart." Job said in Job 23:12, "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food." The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 4:4, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Peter speaks of the sincere milk of the word. Hebrews speaks of strong meat. Ezekiel was told to eat the roll. John ate the little book. The Bible is not presented as a religious decoration for the shelf. It is bread, milk, meat, honey, and nourishment for the inner man. A Christian who neglects the word of God

is spiritually starving no matter how active, emotional, religious, or entertained he may be. A body cannot live on air, and a believer cannot live on spiritual fumes.

This essay will deal with the stomach as a picture of spiritual digestion. Some Christians taste truth but never digest it. They enjoy a verse for a moment, a sermon for a day, a quote for a post, or a thought for a conversation, but it never becomes strength. Others swallow more than they can process and then become puffed up with undigested knowledge. They have information sitting in them like a heavy meal that never becomes energy, humility, holiness, charity, wisdom, or service. Still others feed constantly on spiritual junk food: motivational crumbs, religious sweets, emotional snacks, doctrinal cotton candy, and internet leftovers from teachers who could not rightly divide a sandwich. The body of Christ needs members who can receive Scripture deeply, process it rightly, reject poison, avoid junk food, and help turn the words of God into strength for daily Christian living. The stomach is hidden, but without spiritual digestion, the body weakens no matter how much food passes through the mouth.

## **Chapter 1: The Word of God Is the Believer's Food**

The first truth is that the word of God is food for the believer. Jesus said man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. That statement was spoken in answer to the devil's temptation, and it shows that physical bread is not enough for man. A man has a body, but he also has a soul and spirit. Bread may keep the body alive for a season, but the words of God feed the inner man. That means Scripture is not optional for spiritual health. It is not dessert after the "real" business of life. It is not a hobby for people who like theology. It is necessary food. A believer who treats the Bible as occasional seasoning instead of daily nourishment will eventually show signs of spiritual malnutrition.

Job understood this when he said he esteemed the words of God's mouth more than his necessary food. That is strong language. Necessary food is not luxury food. It is not cake, candy, or garnish. Necessary food is what keeps a man alive. Job said God's words were more important than that. This rebukes the casual attitude many have toward Scripture. They will not miss meals, but they will miss the Book. They feed the flesh three times a day and starve the inner man for weeks, then wonder why temptation overpowers them, prayer dries up, doctrine becomes foggy, and the world starts looking attractive again. A starving soul will eventually start eating garbage. If the believer does not feed on the words of God, he will feed on something else.

Jeremiah said God's words were found, and he did eat them. That is more than hearing. That is more than glancing. That is receiving the words inwardly. He did not merely admire

the food on the table. He ate it. That is the difference between owning a Bible and being nourished by it. Many people have Bibles in their homes, on their phones, in their churches, and in their hands, but the words are not being eaten. They are available, but not received. They are near the mouth, but not in the inner man. The stomach teaches that food must be taken in. The word of God must be read, heard, believed, pondered, and received as the very nourishment of the soul.

## **Chapter 2: Tasting Is Not the Same as Digesting**

There is a difference between tasting food and digesting it. A man can taste something sweet on his tongue and still receive no lasting strength from it. Many Christians treat Scripture this way. They taste truth. They enjoy a verse, a phrase, a sermon clip, a devotional line, a powerful quote, or a stirring thought. For a moment, it affects them. They say amen, feel encouraged, post it, repeat it, maybe even get emotional over it. But it never gets digested. It never reaches the inner man in a way that changes thinking, strengthens faith, corrects conduct, produces obedience, or increases endurance. It remains a taste, not nourishment.

This is one of the dangers of the short-attention religious age. People consume Bible snippets the way children lick frosting. A verse here, a quote there, a reel, a clip, a slogan, a sentence, a meme, a quick devotional, and then on to the next thing. There is nothing wrong with a short statement if it is true, but spiritual health cannot be built on crumbs alone. The stomach needs real food, and the soul needs sustained engagement with Scripture. Read the passage. Study the context. Compare Scripture with Scripture. Think on it. Pray over it. Apply it. Let it correct you. Let it settle into your bones. Truth that is merely tasted may please the tongue, but truth that is digested strengthens the man.

The Lord warned about hearers who receive the word with joy but have no root. That is tasting without depth. They are moved at first, but when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, they are offended. Why? No digestion. No inward strengthening. No root. The truth stayed near the surface. This explains many temporary bursts of zeal. A man hears something powerful, gets excited, talks strongly for a season, and then fades when the cost appears. He tasted, but did not digest. The body of Christ needs more than tasters. It needs digesters. It needs saints who do not merely enjoy the flavor of truth, but let the word of God become strength, conviction, wisdom, and obedience.

## **Chapter 3: Meditation Is Spiritual Digestion**

Meditation is one of the chief ways the believer digests Scripture. Psalm 1 describes the blessed man whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law doth he meditate day and night. Meditation is not emptying the mind like heathen mysticism. Biblical meditation

is filling the mind with God's words and turning them over with reverence, attention, and faith. It is chewing again inwardly. It is considering what God said, how it connects, what it exposes, what it teaches, what it requires, what it promises, and how it applies. The stomach does not receive food and instantly make it strength. There is a process. Meditation is part of that process.

This is where many believers are weak because they read too quickly and think too little. They may read a chapter, close the Bible, and immediately forget what they saw. They checked a box, but the food was not processed. Meditation slows the soul down long enough for truth to work. A verse may need to be read again. A phrase may need to be compared. A doctrine may need to be traced. A rebuke may need to be received. A promise may need to be believed. A warning may need to be taken seriously. A command may need to be obeyed. Meditation is how Scripture moves from the page into the conscience and from the conscience into the life.

Meditation also protects against shallow and careless interpretation. A man who does not meditate often grabs a verse quickly and runs with it before he understands it. He swallows without digesting and then gets spiritual indigestion. He may apply Israel's promises to the church wrongly, confuse law and grace, turn tribulation passages into church-age doctrine, or use poetic expressions as though they erase plain doctrinal statements elsewhere. Meditation forces a man to slow down before he speaks. It asks, "Who is speaking? To whom? In what context? Under what dispensation? What is the immediate meaning? How does it compare with Paul's doctrine for the body of Christ? What truth applies, and how?" That is spiritual digestion. It turns Bible reading from snacking into nourishment.

#### **Chapter 4: Undigested Knowledge Puffs Up**

Some Christians swallow more than they can digest. They consume sermons, books, debates, charts, doctrines, controversies, histories, textual arguments, prophecy studies, and theological systems faster than their character can process them. The result is not strength but swelling. First Corinthians 8:1 says, "Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth." Knowledge itself is not the enemy. Ignorance is not spirituality. The problem is knowledge that remains undigested by humility, prayer, obedience, and charity. Undigested food can make a stomach bloated and uncomfortable. Undigested knowledge can make a believer proud, argumentative, and spiritually unhealthy.

This is common among those who discover strong doctrine. A man learns right division, eternal security, the difference between Israel and the church, the errors of Rome, the corruptions of modern versions, the dangers of Calvinism, charismatic confusion, prophecy distinctions, and a dozen other important truths. Good. He needs truth. But if

that knowledge is not digested into humility, worship, patience, charity, and service, he becomes a swollen stomach. He can talk doctrine all day but cannot handle correction. He can identify error but cannot comfort a wounded saint. He can refute false systems but cannot control his tongue. He knows more than he can live. That is not maturity. That is spiritual bloating.

Digested knowledge becomes strength. Undigested knowledge becomes pride. The difference is seen in fruit. Does the truth make a man more obedient, more stable, more prayerful, more discerning, more charitable, more useful, more reverent, and more anchored in Christ? Or does it make him more arrogant, harsh, restless, suspicious, and eager to display himself? The same doctrine can strengthen one man and puff up another depending on whether it is digested. The body needs members who can process truth deeply enough that it becomes strength for the whole body, not just ammunition for the ego.

## **Chapter 5: The Body Must Reject Spiritual Junk Food**

The stomach must be careful about what it receives. Not all food is nourishing. Some food is junk. Some is spoiled. Some is poison. The spiritual body has the same problem. Much of what passes for Christian teaching today is spiritual junk food. It may taste good, but it does not strengthen. Motivational preaching with a few Bible phrases sprinkled on top is junk food. Emotional hype without sound doctrine is junk food. Religious entertainment that excites but does not edify is junk food. Soft devotionals that never correct, warn, or teach doctrine can become junk food if they replace the real meal. A steady diet of spiritual snacks leaves believers weak.

Doctrinal poison is worse. Poison may be mixed with something that tastes pleasant, but it harms the body. False gospels are poison. Works salvation is poison. Sacramentalism is poison. Bible correction is poison. Prosperity preaching is poison. Mystical experiences exalted above Scripture are poison. Calvinistic fatalism that twists the character of God and the plain invitations of Scripture is poison. Roman tradition placed over the words of God is poison. Hebrew roots bondage that drags church-age believers under law is poison. Universalism, liberalism, and denial of hell are poison. The body must have enough discernment to know that not everything labeled Christian belongs in the stomach.

A believer must therefore learn to examine spiritual food before swallowing it. Acts 17:11 praises the Bereans because they searched the Scriptures daily whether those things were so. That is how the stomach should work. Do not swallow everything because it comes from a popular teacher. Do not receive something because it sounds emotional, scholarly, ancient, or loving. Search the Scriptures. Rightly divide. Test the doctrine. Ask what gospel

is being preached, what Bible is being honored, what Christ is being presented, what authority is final, and what fruit the teaching produces. A healthy stomach rejects what would harm the body. The body of Christ needs spiritual digestion strong enough to refuse junk food and vomit out poison.

### **Chapter 6: Digested Truth Becomes Strength for Daily Living**

The goal of eating is not merely eating. The goal is nourishment, strength, growth, repair, and energy for living. The goal of Bible study is not merely accumulating information. The goal is to be strengthened in the inner man, furnished unto good works, corrected, instructed, established, and made useful to God. Second Timothy 3:16-17 says all Scripture is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. Notice the movement. Scripture enters, teaches, reproves, corrects, instructs, and furnishes. That is digestion producing strength.

When truth is digested, it changes daily living. Grace becomes humility and assurance. The blood becomes worship and confidence. Eternal security becomes rest and gratitude, not license. Right division becomes clarity and stability. Prophecy becomes hope and sobriety. Rebuke becomes repentance. Doctrine of the body becomes charity toward members. Teaching on the tongue becomes restraint. Teaching on prayer becomes dependence. Teaching on the feet becomes witness. If truth never affects conduct, it has not been digested properly. The stomach may be full, but the body remains weak.

Digested truth also gives endurance. A believer who has fed deeply on Scripture has reserves when trouble comes. In hardship, promises remembered become strength. In temptation, warnings remembered become guardrails. In grief, doctrine remembered becomes comfort. In conflict, truth remembered becomes steadiness. In confusion, right division remembered becomes clarity. In failure, grace remembered brings restoration. This is why daily nourishment matters before the crisis. A man cannot expect strength in battle if he has been spiritually starving for months. The body needs food before the strain comes. Digested truth becomes strength when the body must stand.

### **Chapter 7: Mature Members Help Feed the Body**

A healthy stomach does not exist for itself alone. It helps nourish the whole body. Likewise, mature believers who can receive, digest, and process Scripture should help feed others. This includes preachers, teachers, parents, writers, counselors, disciplers, and ordinary saints who share truth wisely. The body needs members who can take in the word of God deeply and then help others receive nourishment from it. Not everyone can digest the same amount at the same speed. Mature members can help break down truth, explain it, apply it,

and serve it in a way that strengthens babes, steadies the weak, and challenges the growing.

This requires patience and wisdom. A mature believer must not dump everything he knows on a babe and then blame the babe for choking. Nor should he keep people on milk forever because he is afraid meat may upset them. Feeding the body requires discernment. Give milk where milk is needed. Give meat where meat is due. Give correction where correction is necessary. Give comfort where comfort is needed. Give warning where danger is present. Good spiritual feeding is not random. It is governed by Scripture, the condition of the hearer, and the goal of edification. A stomach that digests well helps the whole body receive strength.

Those who feed others must also keep feeding themselves. A teacher who stops receiving nourishment eventually serves leftovers. A preacher who stops digesting Scripture becomes repetitive, dry, mechanical, or dependent on old meals. A parent who does not feed on the Book will struggle to feed children well. A counselor who is not nourished by Scripture may drift into human wisdom. The body needs feeders, but feeders must remain hungry for the word themselves. The stomach must keep receiving and processing, or the supply weakens. Mature members never graduate from eating the words of God. They simply learn to digest more deeply and share more wisely.

## **Conclusion**

The stomach teaches us that the word of God must be received, digested, processed, and turned into strength. It is not enough to taste truth for a moment, collect information for pride, or swallow doctrines without meditation and application. The Bible is food for the inner man. Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. A believer who neglects Scripture starves himself. A believer who merely snacks on devotional crumbs remains weak. A believer who swallows poison endangers himself. The body needs real nourishment from the Book.

Spiritual digestion involves meditation, study, right division, prayer, obedience, and application. Truth must move from the page to the mind, from the mind to the heart, from the heart to the life, and from the life into service. Undigested knowledge puffs up, but digested truth strengthens. The goal is not to know more merely so a man can talk bigger. The goal is to be furnished unto good works, strengthened against temptation, steadied in suffering, clarified in confusion, corrected in error, and made useful in the body of Christ. The stomach takes food and turns it into strength. The believer must take Scripture and let it become spiritual life in practice.

So let the body feed wisely. Let it reject spiritual junk food, doctrinal poison, religious snacks, and shallow substitutes. Let it hunger for the sincere milk, chew the strong meat, meditate on the words of God, and digest truth deeply. Let mature members help feed others without pride and without watering down the meal. Let the body stop confusing information with nourishment and start asking whether the truth has become strength. The stomach is hidden, but the whole body depends on it. The body of Christ needs saints who can digest the word of God and help turn it into strength for daily Christian living.

## **22 of 32: One Body - Many Members - The Bowels: Mercy in the Inward Parts**

### **Introduction**

The word “bowels” sounds strange to modern ears because people have been trained to think of it only in a crude physical sense, but the King James Bible uses the word with tremendous spiritual force. In Scripture, the bowels often speak of the inward parts, the deep seat of compassion, affection, mercy, tenderness, pity, and heartfelt concern. Modern readers may pass over the word because it does not sound polished, but the Holy Ghost was not trying to impress a classroom full of delicate religious professors. He was showing us that real mercy is not shallow, cosmetic, sentimental, or merely polite. It comes from deep within. It is not a painted smile on the face while the heart remains cold. It is not a religious handshake with no inward care. It is not saying “I’ll pray for you” while feeling absolutely nothing for the person in front of you. The bowels represent deep mercy in the inward parts, the kind of compassion that moves a man from the inside before it ever reaches his words, hands, or feet.

This is a needed study because the body of Christ does not only need eyes that discern, mouths that preach, tongues that are bridled, teeth that chew doctrine, hands that work, arms that carry, shoulders that bear weight, backs that stand, hearts that beat with charity, lungs that pray, blood that gives life, bones that structure doctrine, joints that connect, feet that go, knees that bow, skin that feels, and stomachs that digest. The body also needs bowels of mercy. It needs merciful members who care deeply, refresh the saints, respond to suffering, and keep the body from becoming hard, cold, mechanical, and cruel. A body can have doctrine and still become harsh. It can have separation and still become proud. It can have discernment and still become suspicious. It can have zeal and still become rough. It can have truth and still forget how to pity. The bowels of mercy remind us that truth should not make a man less human. It should make him more like Christ.

But let this be said clearly: biblical mercy is not weakness, compromise, or emotional softness that throws doctrine out the window. Mercy does not mean tolerating false doctrine. Mercy does not mean refusing to rebuke sin. Mercy does not mean pretending wolves are wounded sheep. Mercy does not mean excusing rebellion because confrontation feels uncomfortable. Biblical mercy still has truth in it. Colossians 3:12 says, “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies.” Notice that mercy belongs with holiness, not against it. The body needs mercy that is holy, tender, truthful, patient, and Christlike. This essay will rebuke the cold, hard, loveless brand of religion that can win an argument and lose a wounded soul, while also rejecting the sentimental counterfeit that calls compromise compassion. The bowels of mercy are not a surrender of truth. They are truth with inward pity, doctrine with tenderness, correction with grief, and service with real affection.

### **Chapter 1: The KJV Word “Bowels” Teaches Deep Inward Mercy**

The King James Bible uses the word “bowels” in a way that modern readers should not rush past. Philippians 1:8 says, “For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.” That is not a cold statement. That is not Paul saying he had a professional ministry interest in the Philippians. He longed after them in the bowels of Jesus Christ. His affection for the saints was not shallow. It was deep, inward, Christ-shaped affection. The word reaches down beneath outward manners and public language into the inward parts of the man. It speaks of compassion that is felt, not merely performed. Paul did not treat saints like names on a mailing list, numbers on a report, or tools for his ministry. He loved them deeply in Christ.

Colossians 3:12 tells believers to put on “bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering.” That list matters. Bowels of mercies are connected with kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. These are not decorations for weak Christians who cannot handle doctrine. These are garments for the elect of God, holy and beloved. The command assumes that a saved person must actively put on mercy. The flesh does not naturally do this. The flesh is selfish, impatient, hard, vindictive, proud, easily irritated, and often more interested in being right than being merciful. God tells the believer to put on bowels of mercies because the body needs members clothed with inward compassion.

First John 3:17 also uses this language sharply: “But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?” That verse is not sentimental. It is a rebuke. A man can shut up his bowels of compassion. He can see need and close himself inwardly. He can have the means to help and choose hardness. He can protect his comfort by locking the door of mercy. John says that raises a serious question about the love of God dwelling in

him. The bowels are the inward door of compassion. When a believer keeps that door shut against real need, something is wrong. The KJV word is powerful because it refuses to let compassion remain a surface-level slogan. It presses the issue inward.

## **Chapter 2: Mercy Is Not Weakness**

Mercy is often misrepresented by both sides. The sentimental crowd treats mercy as weakness, softness, compromise, and refusal to judge anything. The harsh crowd then reacts by treating mercy as suspicious, as though tenderness automatically means doctrinal rot. Both are wrong. Mercy is not weakness. God is merciful, and God is not weak. The Lord Jesus Christ was merciful, and He was not weak. He had compassion on multitudes, touched lepers, wept at graves, received sinners, restored the fallen, and cared for the weak, but He also rebuked Pharisees, drove out moneychangers, warned of hell, exposed hypocrisy, and spoke with absolute authority. Mercy and strength are not enemies in Christ.

Biblical mercy is strength stooping to help misery. It is not moral surrender. It is not doctrinal cowardice. It is not the refusal to call sin sin. Mercy sees need, guilt, weakness, suffering, and helplessness, and moves with compassion under the authority of truth. When the Lord had compassion, He did not become less holy. When He received sinners, He did not become soft on sin. When He forgave, He did not deny righteousness. Mercy flows from the character of God, and God's mercy is never unholy. Therefore, if a man claims mercy while rejecting truth, he is not practicing Bible mercy. He is practicing sentimental rebellion with a gentle tone.

The body of Christ must recover this balance. There are times when mercy speaks softly, and there are times when mercy speaks plainly. There are times when mercy covers, and there are times when mercy confronts. There are times when mercy carries the weak, and there are times when mercy rebukes the stubborn so they do not destroy themselves. A parent who lets a child run into the street because correction feels harsh is not merciful. A preacher who lets people believe a false gospel because doctrine divides is not merciful. A friend who never warns another friend about sin is not merciful. Mercy is not weakness. Mercy is truth moved by compassion for the good of the soul.

## **Chapter 3: Truth Without Mercy Becomes Cold and Cruel**

While mercy is not weakness, truth without mercy becomes cold and cruel. A man can have the right doctrine and a wrong inward spirit. He can know the gospel, rightly divide Scripture, defend the King James Bible, expose false systems, and answer opponents with precision, yet still lack bowels of mercy toward hurting saints. That is a serious problem. Truth was never meant to turn a man into a stone statue with a Bible under its arm. The

word of God should cut sin, yes, but it should also produce compassion, patience, humility, and care. A man who becomes less merciful the more Bible he learns has digested something improperly. The Book did not fail him. His heart failed to receive it rightly.

There is a cold brand of religion that can win an argument and lose a wounded soul. It knows how to correct, but not how to restore. It knows how to expose, but not how to heal. It knows how to rebuke, but not how to weep. It knows how to define grace, but not how to show it. It knows how to preach against sin, but not how to help the sinner get back up after repentance. It knows how to defend truth, but not how to refresh the saints. That kind of religion may sound strong, but it is missing inward mercy. It has bones, perhaps, but no bowels. It has structure, but no tenderness in the inward parts.

Paul's ministry was not like that. He could rebuke sharply, but he also had deep affection. He warned with tears. He longed after saints. He spoke of being gentle among the Thessalonians, even as a nurse cherisheth her children. He travailed in birth again over the Galatians. He carried the care of the churches. That is not a man playing religious tough guy for applause. That is a man with doctrine and bowels. The body of Christ needs that same combination: truth strong enough to stand and mercy deep enough to care. If a man's truth never bends him toward the hurting, he may be using truth to protect himself from love.

#### **Chapter 4: The Bowels of Mercy Refresh the Saints**

Philemon 1:7 says, "For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother." That is a beautiful statement. Philemon refreshed the bowels of the saints. He was the kind of man whose love gave inward relief to others. Saints were refreshed by him, not drained, used, crushed, or ignored. That is a high compliment. Some people enter a room and take all the air out of it. Others enter and refresh the saints. Some always bring pressure, criticism, suspicion, and strife. Others bring steadiness, warmth, prayer, help, and mercy. Philemon was a refreshing member in the body.

The body needs refreshing members because ministry, warfare, life, and suffering can leave saints weary. Not every believer needs a debate every time you see him. Not every wounded saint needs a lecture as his first medicine. Not every struggling brother needs a hammer in the face. Sometimes saints need refreshing. They need encouragement, prayer, a kind word, a practical help, a visit, a reminder of God's grace, a quiet act of support, or a believer who cares enough to notice. Refreshing does not mean flattering. It means

supplying relief and encouragement in truth. A cold cup of water in Christ's name still matters.

The ability to refresh others usually comes from inward mercy. A man who cares only about himself does not refresh anyone. A man obsessed with being right in every conversation does not refresh anyone. A man who treats every weakness as an inconvenience does not refresh anyone. Mercy notices the burden. Mercy sees the tired eyes. Mercy hears the strain behind the words. Mercy remembers that saints are not machines. A refreshing believer is not necessarily the most gifted, most educated, or most visible member. He is one who carries inward compassion and lets it move through words and actions. The body needs members who refresh the bowels of the saints.

### **Chapter 5: Mercy Responds to Need, Not Merely to Sentiment**

Mercy is not merely feeling bad. It responds to need. First John 3:17 does not rebuke the man for failing to feel an emotion; it rebukes him for seeing his brother have need, having this world's good, and shutting up his bowels of compassion from him. The issue is practical. He saw need. He had means. He shut up compassion. That is where many fail. They may feel a brief moment of pity, but they do not open the inward door enough to act. Biblical mercy moves. It gives, helps, visits, speaks, prays, carries, comforts, and responds according to wisdom. Mercy that never reaches the hands may just be sentiment.

The good Samaritan is a classic picture of mercy in motion. He saw the wounded man, had compassion, went to him, bound up his wounds, poured in oil and wine, set him on his own beast, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. That is not vague emotional concern. That is costly, practical mercy. He did not merely say, "That is terrible." He did not form a committee to discuss roadside violence. He did not walk by with a theological explanation for why the man should have been more careful. He responded. Mercy saw, felt, moved, and helped. The body of Christ needs that kind of mercy.

But mercy must still be wise. Responding to need does not mean enabling sin, rewarding laziness, or becoming manipulated by every emotional appeal. The Bible also teaches responsibility, correction, discernment, and order. A man who refuses to work should not eat. A divisive person must be dealt with. A false teacher must not be supported. Mercy must not become foolishness. Yet wisdom must not become an excuse for coldness. Some people hide greed, selfishness, and indifference behind the word discernment. They always have a reason not to help. They always know why someone else's need is not their problem. First John 3:17 cuts through that. If the need is real, the means are present, and the brother is before you, shutting up compassion is a serious matter.

### **Chapter 6: Mercy Must Distinguish Between Wounded Sheep and Wolves**

The bowels of mercy are necessary, but mercy must have discernment. The body of Christ must distinguish between wounded sheep and wolves. A wounded sheep needs mercy, care, truth, restoration, and protection. A wolf needs resistance. If a believer treats wolves with the tenderness owed to wounded sheep, the flock suffers. If he treats wounded sheep with the severity owed to wolves, the sheep suffer. Mercy without discernment endangers the body. Discernment without mercy wounds the body. The Lord expects better than both errors.

Some people are genuinely weak, confused, wounded, immature, fearful, or struggling. They may say things poorly. They may ask clumsy questions. They may come out of bad doctrine slowly. They may need repeated instruction. They may need patience. They may fall and need restoration. Galatians 6:1 says that if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual should restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself. That is bowels of mercy. The spiritual man does not restore with pride, contempt, and a smirk. He restores with meekness, remembering he too could be tempted. Mercy is essential in restoration.

But other people are not wounded sheep. They are wolves, gainsayers, deceivers, railers, manipulators, and corrupt teachers. The Bible does not command the body to treat them like bruised reeds while they devour the flock. Titus says their mouths must be stopped. Romans says mark and avoid those who cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine. Mercy toward the flock may require firmness toward the wolf. That is not contradiction. It is righteous care. Bowels of mercy must be attached to eyes that discern, bones that hold doctrine, and a mouth that can speak truth. Mercy is not blind. It is compassionate according to truth.

## **Chapter 7: Christ Is the Pattern of Perfect Mercy**

The Lord Jesus Christ is the pattern of perfect mercy. He is not sentimental, and He is not cruel. He is full of grace and truth. He had compassion on the multitudes because they fainted and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd. He touched lepers when others recoiled. He received sinners without approving sin. He wept at Lazarus' grave. He restored Peter after a shameful fall. He invited the weary and heavy laden to come unto Him. At the same time, He rebuked hypocrisy, warned of judgment, cleansed the temple, exposed false religion, and never compromised the truth. In Christ, mercy and holiness are perfectly joined.

This matters because every form of mercy in the body must be measured by Christ. The world's mercy is often rebellion against God's truth. Religious harshness is often rebellion against Christ's compassion. Christ corrects both. He shows that mercy can be tender

without being permissive, strong without being harsh, holy without being cold, and truthful without being cruel. If a believer wants to know what bowels of mercy look like, let him look at Christ dealing with sinners, sufferers, disciples, hypocrites, and enemies. He never mishandled a wounded soul, and He never protected a wolf at the sheep's expense. That is perfect mercy.

The body receives mercy from Christ before it ever shows mercy to others. Every saved member is a debtor to mercy. We were not redeemed because we were impressive. We were not forgiven because we were worthy. We were not washed because we were clean. We were not placed in the body because God found us naturally desirable. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us" — that is the testimony of the saved. A man who has received mercy should be careful about becoming merciless. The blood that bought us and the grace that saved us should put bowels of mercy in us toward others. Christ is the fountain, pattern, and measure of mercy in the body.

## **Conclusion**

The bowels teach us that mercy must be deep, inward, and real. The King James Bible's language is not crude filler. It is powerful truth. Bowels of mercies speak of compassion in the inward parts, affection that moves from within, tenderness that is more than surface politeness, and concern that does not shut itself up against real need. The body of Christ does not only need fighters, watchmen, preachers, teachers, workers, and defenders. It needs merciful members who can refresh the saints, respond to suffering, restore the fallen, help the needy, and care deeply without abandoning truth. A body with no bowels of mercy becomes hard, cold, and cruel.

But mercy must remain biblical. It is not weakness. It is not compromise. It is not refusing to rebuke sin, mark false doctrine, or resist wolves. Biblical mercy rejoices in truth. It is holy, discerning, practical, and Christlike. It distinguishes between wounded sheep and wolves, between real need and manipulation, between covering with charity and hiding corruption. Mercy that abandons truth becomes sentimental treason. Truth that abandons mercy becomes cold brutality. The body needs both: eyes to discern, bones to stand, and bowels of mercy to care.

So let the body put on bowels of mercies. Let hard saints be softened without becoming weak. Let tender saints be strengthened without becoming cold. Let the wounded be cared for, the needy helped, the repentant restored, the weary refreshed, and the saints treated as blood-bought members of Christ's body. Let truth make us more like Christ, not less human. The Lord Jesus was never soft on sin, but He was full of compassion. If the body is to reflect the Head, it must learn mercy in the inward parts.

## **23 of 32: One Body - Many Members - The Mind: Let This Mind Be in You**

### **Introduction**

The mind is one of the great battlegrounds of the Christian life. A man does not usually fall into error, sin, bitterness, pride, fear, lust, compromise, or rebellion without something first happening in the mind. Thoughts are not harmless little birds fluttering through an empty sky. They can become seeds, arguments, strongholds, imaginations, excuses, suspicions, philosophies, idols, and eventually actions. The body of Christ cannot operate properly when its members think carnally, emotionally, politically, traditionally, or according to the course of this world. If the mind is darkened, the eyes will not see clearly. If the mind is confused, the mouth will speak uncertainly. If the mind is proud, the hands will serve selfishly. If the mind is fearful, the feet will hesitate. If the mind is worldly, the heart's affections will be pulled downward. The mind affects the whole body because it is where truth is considered, doctrine is understood, judgment is formed, and obedience is either submitted to or resisted.

Romans 12:2 says, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." That verse does not present Christianity as mindless emotionalism. It does not say, "Be transformed by having a religious feeling." It does not say, "Be transformed by copying church culture." It does not say, "Be transformed by tradition." It says the renewing of your mind. The saved man still has to learn how to think like a redeemed man. He has to stop letting the world press him into its mold. He has to stop reasoning from the old man, the old fears, the old lusts, the old pride, the old wounds, and the old systems. The mind must be renewed by the word of God. A believer who never lets Scripture change how he thinks will eventually carry old thinking into new doctrine and make a mess of both.

Philippians 2:5 says, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." That is the great positive command. The mind of Christ is not merely knowing facts about Christ. It is having the attitude, judgment, humility, obedience, and surrender that marked Him. The mind of Christ bows to the Father's will. It does not exalt self. It does not grasp for reputation. It does not use truth for vanity. It does not think like the world. It humbles itself and becomes obedient. This essay will focus on biblical thinking, rightly divided judgment, sober-mindedness, and the need to bring imaginations into captivity. It will also warn against two opposite ditches: anti-intellectual emotional Christianity that thinks ignorance is spirituality, and proud scholarship that thinks learning gives a man the right to correct God's words. A renewed mind is not empty-headed, and it is not high-minded. It bows to the Book and thinks under the authority of Christ.

## **Chapter 1: The Mind Must Be Renewed by the Word of God**

The mind must be renewed because salvation does not automatically erase every wrong pattern of thinking a man learned from the world, the flesh, religion, family, education, culture, trauma, pride, and sin. A saved man has a new nature, but he still has to learn how to think in line with the words of God. Romans 12:2 connects transformation to the renewing of the mind. That means the Christian life involves more than avoiding outward sins. It involves the replacement of old thinking with Bible thinking. The world has trained men to think about success, identity, love, authority, morality, truth, suffering, money, relationships, and purpose in ways that are crooked from the start. The Book must straighten the mind.

Renewal is not a one-time emotional moment. It is a continual process of bringing thoughts under the authority of Scripture. A believer reads the Bible and discovers that God's thoughts are not his thoughts. He learns that what he called strength may be pride, what he called love may be compromise, what he called freedom may be bondage, what he called fairness may be rebellion, what he called wisdom may be fear, and what he called humility may be unbelief. The word of God exposes the old thinking and supplies new thinking. It teaches the mind how to judge. It tells the believer what matters, what does not matter, what is eternal, what is temporary, what is clean, what is corrupt, what is grace, what is law, what is truth, and what is deception.

This is why Bible reading without mental submission does little good. A man can read Scripture while still defending his old categories. He can let the words pass before his eyes while refusing to let them correct his judgments. The mind must not stand over the Bible as a critic. It must sit under the Bible as a student. The renewed mind says, "If the Book crosses me, the Book is right. If the Book corrects my tradition, the Book is right. If the Book exposes my emotion, the Book is right. If the Book overturns my system, the Book is right." That is how renewal begins. Not by using Scripture to decorate old thinking, but by letting Scripture replace old thinking.

## **Chapter 2: The Mind Must Not Be Conformed to This World**

Romans 12:2 begins with the negative command: "And be not conformed to this world." The world has a mold. It presses men into its shape through education, entertainment, media, politics, fashion, philosophy, fear, social pressure, technology, ambition, and constant repetition. The world tells men what to love, what to hate, what to laugh at, what to fear, what to chase, what to tolerate, what to despise, and what to call normal. A believer who is not actively renewing his mind will be passively conformed. Nobody has to work hard to become worldly. Just drift. The current will carry you.

Worldly thinking is not limited to obvious sin. Many Christians think they are not worldly because they avoid a few outward vices, while their minds are still conformed to the age. They think politically before they think biblically. They think economically before they think eternally. They think emotionally before they think doctrinally. They think tribally before they think spiritually. They think in terms of image, platform, comfort, rights, victimhood, success, resentment, and self-expression because that is how the world trained them to think. Then they bring that thinking into Christianity and wonder why the body is confused. A worldly mind can quote verses while still judging everything by the world's categories.

The body of Christ must resist this conformity by submitting thought to Scripture. The world says self is central. The Book says Christ is preeminent. The world says truth is flexible. The Book says God's words are settled. The world says love affirms everything. The Book says charity rejoiceth in the truth. The world says identity is self-created. The Book says the believer is in Christ. The world says suffering is meaningless unless avoided. The Book says suffering can work patience, experience, hope, and glory to God. The world says death is the end or a vague mystery. The Book says absent from the body, present with the Lord for the saved, and judgment for the lost. The renewed mind refuses the world's mold and receives God's frame.

### **Chapter 3: The Mind of Christ Is Humble and Obedient**

Philippians 2:5 says, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." The passage that follows does not describe Christ showing off knowledge, demanding reputation, or exalting Himself in pride. It describes humility and obedience. Though He was in the form of God, He made Himself of no reputation, took upon Him the form of a servant, was made in the likeness of men, humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. That is the mind of Christ. A Christian mind is not merely a mind that knows doctrine. It is a mind brought low under God's will. It is a mind that does not worship reputation. It is a mind that obeys.

This rebukes proud knowledge. Some men think having a doctrinal mind means being able to win arguments, name errors, explain systems, and correct opponents. Those things may have their place, but the mind of Christ is not pride with Bible verses. The mind of Christ is humble. It does not use truth to build a throne for self. It does not demand to be seen. It does not grasp after reputation. It does not become offended when service is lowly. It obeys the Father. If a man's doctrine makes him more arrogant, more self-important, more impatient, and more addicted to being right in public, he may have knowledge, but he is not showing the mind of Christ.

This also rebukes self-protective disobedience. Christ humbled Himself and became obedient unto death. The renewed mind does not ask first, “How will this affect my comfort, reputation, convenience, or control?” It asks, “What hath God said?” A mind governed by Christ is willing to obey even when obedience costs. It can serve without applause, forgive without keeping a shrine to the injury, speak truth when fear whispers silence, remain silent when pride wants to answer, and take the lower place when the flesh wants the chief seat. The mind of Christ is not merely correct. It is submitted.

#### **Chapter 4: The Mind Must Bring Imaginations Into Captivity**

Second Corinthians 10:5 says we are to cast down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. That is warfare language. The mind is a battlefield, and thoughts can rebel against Christ. Imaginations are not harmless when they exalt themselves against God’s truth. They must be cast down. High things must be brought low. Thoughts must be taken captive. A believer cannot allow every fear, suspicion, lust, fantasy, philosophy, accusation, resentment, and proud argument to wander freely through his mind like it owns the place. The mind belongs to Christ.

Imaginations are powerful because they build unreal worlds and then demand that the heart live in them. Fear imagines disasters that have not happened. Lust imagines pleasures God forbids. Bitterness imagines motives it cannot prove. Pride imagines superiority. Envy imagines that God has been unfair. Suspicion imagines betrayal in every silence. False doctrine imagines contradictions in Scripture because it refuses right division. Worldly philosophy imagines man as the measure of all things. These imaginations must not be entertained as honored guests. They must be judged by the Book. A thought that exalts itself against God must be arrested.

Bringing thoughts into captivity requires active obedience. It is not enough to say, “I cannot help what I think.” A bird may fly over your head, but you do not have to let it build a nest in your hair. Thoughts may arise, but they must be examined. Is this true? Is this pure? Is this biblical? Is this proud? Is this fear talking? Is this lust talking? Is this bitterness talking? Is this tradition talking? Is this the world’s reasoning? Does this obey Christ? The renewed mind learns to interrogate its own thoughts under Scripture. That is not madness. That is spiritual discipline. The body of Christ needs members whose minds are not open fields for every imagination, but guarded ground under the authority of Christ.

#### **Chapter 5: The Mind Must Be Sober, Not Emotion-Driven**

The New Testament repeatedly commands sobriety of mind. A sober mind is clear, watchful, controlled, serious where seriousness is needed, and not drunk on emotion,

novelty, panic, or fantasy. Emotional Christianity is dangerous when it makes feeling the final authority. Some people judge truth by what moves them, what excites them, what comforts them, what offends them, what gives them chills, or what makes them cry. That is not spiritual judgment. Emotions are real, but they are not final authority. A man can feel deeply and still be wrong. He can feel peace while walking into deception. He can feel disturbed because truth crossed his flesh. Feelings must be governed by Scripture.

Anti-intellectual emotional Christianity often acts as though thinking is suspicious. It says, “Do not study too much; just love Jesus.” That sounds pious until you realize the Bible commands study, doctrine, understanding, judgment, and renewed thinking. Loving Jesus includes keeping His words. A mindless Christianity is vulnerable to every spirit that can produce a feeling. If a man will not think biblically, he can be manipulated by music, atmosphere, tears, testimonies, dreams, visions, and emotional pressure. The devil does not mind religion that bypasses the renewed mind. He can steer that crowd with a tambourine and a sad story.

But sober-mindedness does not mean emotional deadness. The Bible is full of joy, grief, fear of God, compassion, zeal, and rejoicing. The issue is order. Emotions should respond to truth, not rule over truth. The heart should burn because the Scripture is opened, not because manipulation is working. The believer should weep over what God calls grievous, rejoice in what God calls true, fear what God calls dangerous, and love what God calls lovely. A sober mind does not deny feeling. It governs feeling under the Book. The body needs members who can think clearly when the room is emotional, judge biblically when pressure rises, and remain steady when feelings shift.

## **Chapter 6: The Mind Must Avoid Proud Scholarship**

On the other side of emotional anti-intellectualism is proud scholarship. This is the fellow who thinks learning gives him authority over the words of God. He knows enough Greek to correct a translation, enough Hebrew to unsettle a congregation, enough manuscript theory to make himself dangerous, and enough academic vocabulary to hide unbelief behind sophistication. He approaches the Bible like a professor grading a student’s paper. That is not a renewed mind. That is a high thing exalting itself against the knowledge of God. Learning is not evil, but learning that refuses to bow to God’s preserved words is pride dressed in a cap and gown.

The renewed mind is not afraid of study. It should study. It should read, compare, examine, reason, define terms, understand history, and handle Scripture carefully. But it studies as a servant, not as a judge. It does not think scholarship is the Head of the body. Christ is the Head. It does not think academic consensus is final authority. Scripture is final authority. It

does not think complexity is superior to clarity. God can speak plainly. It does not think the Bible needs rescuing by men who do not believe it. The renewed mind can use tools without becoming ruled by tools. It can learn without worshipping learning.

Proud scholarship often produces doubt rather than faith. It unsettles plain believers by telling them the words are uncertain, the text is questionable, the translation is inadequate, the doctrine is more complicated than it appears, and only trained experts can really know what God said. That spirit is poison to the body. God did not leave His church dependent on unbelieving academics to reconstruct His voice. A renewed mind receives the Book with reverence, studies it diligently, rightly divides it faithfully, and refuses to let proud men rob it of confidence. The mind must be sharp, but it must be bowed. A sharp mind that will not bow is just a polished rebel.

### **Chapter 7: The Mind Must Think as a Member of the Body**

The renewed mind does not think like an isolated individual detached from the body. It understands membership. Romans 12 speaks of the renewing of the mind and then immediately deals with sober judgment, not thinking more highly than one ought, and the many members in one body. That connection is important. A renewed mind thinks soberly about itself. It does not imagine itself to be the whole body. It does not despise other members. It does not envy other members. It does not measure itself by fleshly comparison. It thinks according to the measure of faith God has dealt. The mind must be renewed not only in doctrine about God, but in judgment about self.

A carnal mind in the body produces comparison, competition, suspicion, pride, envy, and bitterness. It thinks, "Why am I not noticed? Why is he used? Why does she have that gift? Why do they get attention? I have no need of them. They have no need of me. I am greater. I am nothing." All of that is crooked thinking. The renewed mind says, "God set the members. Christ is the Head. I am a member. Others are members. My function is not their function. Their usefulness does not erase mine. My usefulness does not make me independent." That is healthy body thinking.

This kind of thinking produces humility and service. The renewed mind uses doctrine to edify, not to dominate. It uses judgment to discern, not to despise. It uses understanding to help, not to show off. It thinks about what is good for the body, not merely what exalts the self. It asks how truth can be applied to strengthen saints, warn sinners, protect the weak, honor Christ, and build up the work. A mind surrendered to Christ becomes a blessing to the body because it thinks under the Head and for the good of the members.

### **Conclusion**

The mind teaches us that the Christian life is not mindless. The body of Christ cannot operate properly when its members think according to the world, the flesh, tradition, emotion, fear, politics, or pride. Romans 12 commands transformation by the renewing of the mind. Philippians 2 commands the mind of Christ. Second Corinthians 10 commands imaginations to be cast down and thoughts brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. That is serious warfare. The mind must be trained by Scripture, governed by sound doctrine, disciplined by truth, humbled under Christ, and guarded against every high thing that exalts itself against God.

The renewed mind avoids two ditches. It rejects anti-intellectual emotional Christianity that treats thinking, doctrine, study, and judgment as enemies of spirituality. That path leaves people vulnerable to every feeling, spirit, manipulation, and religious performance. It also rejects proud scholarship that exalts learning over the Book and treats God's words as material to be corrected by human experts. A renewed mind is neither empty nor arrogant. It studies, but it bows. It reasons, but under Scripture. It judges, but with humility. It thinks deeply, but not independently of Christ.

So let this mind be in the body which was also in Christ Jesus. Let the mind be renewed by the Book, separated from the world's mold, sober against emotional manipulation, humble against pride, and obedient against rebellion. Let every imagination be brought into captivity. Let every doctrine be judged by Scripture rightly divided. Let every member think soberly about himself and charitably about the body. A renewed mind bows to the Book and thinks under the authority of Christ. Without that, the body becomes confused, emotional, worldly, proud, or unstable. With it, the body can stand, discern, obey, and grow up into the Head in all things.

## **24 of 32: One Body - Many Members - The Face: The Countenance of a Christian Testimony**

### **Introduction**

The face is often the first thing people see before they know anything else about a man. Before they hear his doctrine, before they understand his convictions, before they watch his hands work, before they see his knees bow, before they learn his heart, they see his face. The face communicates. It shows expression, countenance, identity, sorrow, joy, anger, seriousness, compassion, hardness, fear, pride, peace, and sometimes hypocrisy. A man can say one thing with his mouth and say another thing with his face. He can preach grace with a scowl that looks like he gargled vinegar for breakfast. He can speak of joy while

looking like he was baptized in pickle juice. He can tell sinners about the love of Christ while his countenance says he would rather swat them than win them. The face matters because testimony is not only what a man says; it is also what people see in the spirit, bearing, attitude, and expression that accompanies his words.

The face represents testimony, countenance, identity, expression, and public witness. In the body of Christ, the face is what the world often encounters first. The world may not understand our dispensational distinctions, our defense of the King James Bible, our doctrine of eternal security, our right division, our position on prophecy, or our rejection of man-made religion. But the world can often read whether a man is proud, bitter, harsh, joyful, sober, compassionate, fake, angry, or real. That does not mean the world always judges rightly. The world misread Christ, lied about Paul, hated the prophets, and will call good evil and evil good. We are not called to let the world define our testimony. But we are called to consider what we are displaying. A believer can hold right doctrine and still display a wrong spirit. He can be right in his Bible position and wrong in his countenance. He can defend truth while wearing a face that makes truth look like it curdled in his soul.

This essay will not promote fake religious smiles, polished public images, staged spirituality, or the modern ministry-branding nonsense where everyone learns how to look warm for a camera while rotting behind closed doors. The Bible is not calling for performance. The face should reflect reality, not manufacture it. A painted smile over a wicked heart is not testimony; it is theater. A polished image hiding private corruption is hypocrisy with good lighting. But the answer to fake sweetness is not sour holiness. The face of the body should reflect truth, joy, seriousness, compassion, reverence, and holiness. Men may read your countenance before they ever read your tract. They may see your spirit before they understand your sermon. The face is not the heart, but it often gives the world a glimpse of what is happening inside. The body of Christ needs a face that does not lie, does not perform, and does not misrepresent the Head.

## **Chapter 1: The Face Often Speaks Before the Mouth**

The face can speak before the mouth ever opens. A raised eyebrow, a hard stare, a warm smile, a look of disgust, a weary expression, a compassionate glance, or a proud smirk can communicate volumes. That is why countenance matters. Genesis 4 shows Cain's countenance falling before he murdered Abel. God asked him, "Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?" The face was telling the truth about the heart before the hand committed the crime. Cain's face revealed anger, envy, and inward rebellion. A man's countenance can expose what his mouth has not yet confessed. The face often becomes the billboard of the inward man.

This applies directly to Christian testimony. A believer can say, “I love souls,” while looking at sinners with contempt. He can say, “I love the brethren,” while his expression toward weaker saints says, “You disgust me.” He can say, “I rejoice in the Lord,” while his face advertises misery as though Christianity were a lifelong funeral procession. He can say, “The Bible is my joy,” while acting like the Book has only made him angry, suspicious, and impossible to be around. The face may not tell the whole story, and some people naturally have more serious expressions than others, but the principle remains: what people see in us often prepares them either to hear or resist what we say.

The mouth should not have to constantly apologize for the face. If a believer is serious, let it be holy seriousness, not bitterness. If he is bold, let it be righteous boldness, not arrogance. If he is joyful, let it be real joy, not plastic performance. If he is grieved, let it be godly grief, not perpetual sourness. The face cannot replace doctrine, but it can either adorn or distract from doctrine. Titus 2:10 speaks of adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour. That adornment is not vanity. It is conduct and testimony that make the truth honorable. A countenance governed by Christ can help adorn the message. A rotten countenance can make good doctrine look like bad fruit.

## **Chapter 2: A Sour Countenance Can Misrepresent Sound Doctrine**

There is a strange disease among some Bible believers where they think looking miserable is proof of seriousness. They have sound doctrine in the head, a preserved Bible in the hand, and a permanent thundercloud over the face. They preach grace like they are mad God offered it. They defend the blood like they have no joy in being washed by it. They talk about eternal security while looking like they lost their own assurance in a dark alley somewhere. That is not spirituality. It is a bad advertisement. Sound doctrine should not make a man sour. It should make him stable, sober, thankful, joyful, and bold. If truth has only made a man harsh, bitter, and unpleasant, something is wrong in the digestion.

This does not mean the Christian must walk around with a grin pasted on his face like a religious salesman. There is a time to weep. There is a time to mourn. There is a time to be grave. There is a time to rebuke. There is a time when the face should show sorrow, anger at evil, burden, seriousness, or holy fear. The Bible does not command the saints to become grinning mannequins. The problem is not seriousness. The problem is sourness mistaken for sanctification. A grave countenance before sin is not the same as a bitter countenance toward life. A sober face under burden is not the same as a proud face that despises everyone else.

A sour countenance can drive people away from truth before they understand it. Again, the world may reject truth even when it is presented with perfect grace. Christ Himself was

rejected. But we must not add needless offense by making the truth look ugly through our spirit. The cross is offensive enough. The Bible is sharp enough. Hell is serious enough. Sin is ugly enough. We do not need to add carnal harshness, personal bitterness, and constant irritation to the message and then pretend the only reason people object is because they hate truth. Sometimes they may hate truth. Sometimes they may also be reacting to the fact that the messenger looks like truth has made him miserable. The face should not contradict the joy of salvation.

### **Chapter 3: A Fake Religious Face Is Hypocrisy**

If a sour countenance is one danger, a fake religious face is another. Some people learn how to smile, speak warmly, pose publicly, and project kindness while the inward condition is rotten. That is not Christian testimony. That is image management. The Pharisees were experts at religious appearance. The Lord Jesus called them whited sepulchres, beautiful outward, but within full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. That is the danger of a polished face with a corrupt heart. A man can look spiritual, gentle, humble, peaceful, and compassionate while hiding pride, lust, manipulation, greed, unbelief, cruelty, or false doctrine. The face can be used as a mask.

Modern ministry culture has made this worse. Cameras, platforms, branding, public personas, smiling thumbnails, polished interviews, staged vulnerability, and carefully crafted "authenticity" can turn the face into a marketing tool. People learn how to look humble without being humble, look compassionate without helping anyone, look joyful without holiness, and look spiritual without submission to the Book. That kind of face may fool men for a while, but it does not fool God. First Samuel 16:7 says, "for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart." God is not impressed by lighting, angles, tone, branding, or performance. He sees what is behind the face.

The answer is not to neglect public testimony, but to make sure the public face is connected to inward truth. The countenance should be the overflow of reality, not a substitute for it. If joy is real, let the face show it. If grief is real, let the face show it soberly. If compassion is real, let the face reflect it. If holiness is real, let the face carry clean seriousness. But do not paint a smile over corruption and call it testimony. God hates hypocrisy. The body of Christ should not be a theater troupe rehearsing expressions. It should be a living body whose face reflects inward life under the Head.

### **Chapter 4: The Face Should Reflect Joy in the Lord**

The Christian life should have joy in it. Not the shallow joy of entertainment, not the emotional high of religious hype, not the fake joy of a forced smile, but real joy in the Lord. Nehemiah 8:10 says, "for the joy of the LORD is your strength." Philippians is full of

rejoicing, and Paul wrote it from prison. That means joy is not dependent on easy circumstances. The saved man has reasons for joy that the world cannot touch. He is redeemed by the blood, forgiven, justified, sealed, accepted in the Beloved, complete in Christ, promised eternal life, indwelt by the Spirit, given the words of God, and headed for glory. If that never touches his countenance, he ought to ask what has been sitting on his soul.

A joyful face can be a testimony. Ecclesiastes 8:1 says, “a man's wisdom maketh his face to shine, and the boldness of his face shall be changed.” There is something about truth received rightly that affects the countenance. Stephen’s face was seen as it had been the face of an angel when he stood before the council. Moses’ face shone after being with God. Now, those were unique biblical events in their own contexts, but they illustrate a principle: what a man has been with shows up. A man who has been with God, fed on the Book, rested in grace, and walked in fellowship should not always look like he has been chewing gravel.

This joy must be balanced with seriousness. Christian joy is not clownishness. It is not making light of sin, hell, suffering, or judgment. A joyful believer can still be sober. He can smile with grace and still warn with tears. He can rejoice in salvation and still grieve over the lost. He can have peace in Christ and still carry burdens. The face should not be a carnival mask. It should reflect the real joy of a man who knows Christ is risen, the Book is true, sin has been paid for, and the end is already settled. The body’s face should show that truth has not merely informed us; it has given us joy.

## **Chapter 5: The Face Should Reflect Compassion and Holiness**

The face should reflect compassion. When the Lord Jesus saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion. That compassion was not hidden behind a cold religious expression. People came to Him. Sinners, sick people, grieving people, parents, outcasts, and desperate souls approached Him. That does not mean He was soft on sin. It means His holiness was not cold. His truth did not make Him less approachable to the broken. The body of Christ should learn from the Head. If the face of the body constantly communicates contempt, disgust, superiority, and irritation, wounded people may assume there is no mercy among us before they ever hear the gospel.

Compassion in the face matters especially when dealing with the weak, confused, young, wounded, and fearful. A strong believer can forget how intimidating truth can feel to someone just waking up to it. A new believer may be nervous. A struggling saint may already feel ashamed. A grieving person may barely be holding together. A child may be watching the face of a parent or teacher to learn what God is like. If all they see is

impatience, hardness, and irritation, the testimony is damaged. A compassionate countenance can help open a door for truth. It says, "I am not your enemy. The Book may cut, but the purpose is healing." That matters.

But the face should also reflect holiness. Compassion without holiness becomes softness. Holiness without compassion becomes severity. The Christian countenance should not look worldly, seductive, vain, arrogant, or careless. There should be something clean about it. Not fake piety. Not monkish gloom. Not a theatrical "holy face." But a countenance shaped by reverence for God. A believer should not wear sin lightly. He should not laugh at filth like the world. He should not look entertained by evil. His face should show that some things still grieve him, some things still matter, and God is still holy. The body needs a face that can show both compassion and holiness because Christ has both.

### **Chapter 6: The Face of the Body Is Its Public Testimony**

The body of Christ has a public testimony. The world sees something before it understands everything. It sees how believers treat one another, how they speak, how they respond under pressure, how they handle disagreement, how they endure suffering, how they deal with sinners, how they carry joy, how they show reverence, and how they present the truth. The face is a picture of that public testimony. Matthew 5:16 says, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." There is something men can see. That seeing does not save them by itself, but it matters. Public testimony should not be ignored.

This does not mean the body should become obsessed with public relations. The world will hate true Christianity. If the body obeys Christ, preaches the gospel, holds Scripture, and refuses compromise, it will be misunderstood, slandered, mocked, and rejected. The goal is not to make the world like us. The goal is to avoid giving unnecessary occasion for reproach through hypocrisy, cruelty, foolishness, sourness, vanity, or inconsistency. If men reject us for Christ, so be it. If they reject us because we have behaved like proud fools, shame on us. The face of the body should be clean even when hated.

A good public testimony requires consistency between what we say and what we show. If we preach grace, we should show gratitude. If we preach holiness, we should show cleanness. If we preach charity, we should show love. If we preach truth, we should show honesty. If we preach the body of Christ, we should show care for members. If we preach eternal life, we should show hope. If we preach judgment, we should show sobriety. The face of the body should not be a contradiction. Men may read our countenance before they read our tract. They may see our spirit before they hear our doctrine. That places responsibility on every member.

## **Chapter 7: The Face Must Be Turned Toward Christ**

The face must ultimately be turned toward Christ. Second Corinthians 3:18 says, “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory.” That is the key to a right countenance. The face is changed by what it beholds. If a man constantly beholds the world, his face will begin to carry the world’s anxieties, lusts, pride, and cynicism. If he constantly beholds error without returning to Christ, his face may harden into suspicion. If he constantly beholds himself, his face will reflect vanity or misery. But if he beholds the Lord in the mirror of the word, he is changed. The face should reflect time spent before Christ.

This is why testimony cannot be manufactured from the outside in. A believer cannot simply decide to “look more Christian” as though changing facial posture fixes the heart. The face must be turned toward the Lord. Get in the Book. Pray. Confess sin. Rejoice in the blood. Remember grace. Think on glory. Serve others. Walk in the Spirit. Let charity govern truth and truth govern charity. As the inward man is dealt with, the outward testimony changes. A face that has been with God may not always be smiling, but it will be different. There will be something steadier, cleaner, humbler, more sober, more joyful, and more real about it.

The face turned toward Christ will also avoid both performance and sourness. It will not need to fake spirituality for men because it is living before God. It will not need to cultivate gloom to prove seriousness because it has real reverence. It will not need to look proud to show conviction because it is secure in truth. It will not need to smile falsely to appear loving because charity is real. The face turned toward Christ becomes a testimony not because it is staged, but because it is being changed. The body of Christ needs its face turned toward the Head, beholding Him and reflecting Him as truth works inwardly.

### **Conclusion**

The face teaches us that public testimony matters. People often see the face before they know the heart, hear the doctrine, or watch the hands work. A believer can say right words with a wrong spirit, hold sound doctrine with a sour countenance, and preach grace while looking like grace never did him any good. That should not be. The face is not the whole man, but it often reveals something about the man. The body of Christ should not misrepresent its Head through needless harshness, bitterness, pride, gloom, or contempt. Truth should make the countenance cleaner, steadier, more joyful, more compassionate, and more reverent.

At the same time, the body must beware of fake religious faces. A polished image can hide inward corruption. A smile can become a mask. A public ministry persona can become a

costume. God is not fooled by outward appearance. He looks on the heart. The face should reflect reality, not performance. The answer to sour Christianity is not staged sweetness. The answer is inward fellowship with Christ, truth received rightly, charity at work, sin confessed, joy restored, and holiness reflected honestly. The face must not lie. It must not perform. It must not advertise a condition that does not exist.

So let the face of the body be turned toward Christ. Let it reflect truth without cruelty, joy without foolishness, seriousness without sourness, compassion without compromise, and holiness without hypocrisy. Let men see a testimony that does not contradict the message. Let the countenance of the saints adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour. Men may read your face before they read your tract. They may see your spirit before they hear your sermon. The body's public testimony matters because the face is often the first witness people encounter. Let that witness be clean, honest, joyful, sober, compassionate, and governed by the Head.

## **25 of 32: One Body - Many Members - The Nose: The Savor of Christ and the Smell of Corruption**

### **Introduction**

The nose is a strange member to preach about until you begin to see how often the Bible deals with savor, smell, fragrance, sacrifice, corruption, and things that are sweet or foul before God. The nose represents discernment by savor. It detects what may not yet be visible to the eye, audible to the ear, or obvious to the hand. Something can look right and still smell wrong. Something can be dressed up, decorated, perfumed, polished, and religiously packaged, and still carry the odor of corruption underneath. A corpse in a suit is still a corpse. Rotten meat under spices is still rotten. False doctrine with soft music behind it is still false doctrine. Pride with Bible words in its mouth is still pride. Compromise wearing a smile is still compromise. The nose teaches the body that there are spiritual conditions a discerning member may detect before everybody else understands why something is wrong. Some things just stink, no matter how much perfume religion sprays on them.

Paul uses this language in 2 Corinthians 2:14-16 when he says, "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life." That is deep language. Truth has a savor. Christ has a

savor. The knowledge of God has a savor. The testimony of a faithful servant has a savor before God, and that savor affects different people differently. To the saved, the gospel is life. To the lost, it is death. The same message that smells like life to one man smells like death to another because the condition of the hearer is different. The nose, then, gives us a way to speak about spiritual discernment that is not merely intellectual, but perceptive. It knows when something is clean, sweet, sacrificial, corrupt, rotten, fleshly, or foul.

This essay will show that the body of Christ needs members who can detect corruption early. It needs saints who can smell the odor of false doctrine before the whole body is sick. It needs believers who can detect pride when it is still wearing a humble voice, compromise when it is still calling itself charity, worldliness when it is still calling itself relevance, and fleshly entertainment when it is still calling itself worship. But this study must also warn against becoming a professional fault-finder, a religious bloodhound who smells smoke even when there is no fire, a man who confuses suspicion with discernment and cynicism with spirituality. The nose is useful when it discerns real savor. It becomes a problem when it is inflamed, diseased, or addicted to searching for stink. The body needs a clean nose, not a proud one. It needs discernment by savor under the authority of Scripture, not a fleshly appetite for smelling rot everywhere.

## **Chapter 1: The Bible Speaks of Savor Before God**

The language of savor runs through Scripture, especially in connection with sacrifice. In the Old Testament, offerings are repeatedly called a “sweet savour” unto the Lord. That phrase is not accidental. It teaches that acceptable sacrifice rises before God in a way pleasing to Him. The issue is not that God needs physical smell as man does. The language communicates divine acceptance, satisfaction, and pleasure in what is offered according to His word. When Noah offered burnt offerings after the flood, Genesis 8:21 says, “And the LORD smelled a sweet savour.” That is a remarkable statement. Judgment had fallen, the earth had been cleansed by flood, and sacrifice rose from the altar. The sweet savor was connected with blood, offering, obedience, and God’s acceptance.

This prepares the Bible reader for the sacrifice of Christ. Ephesians 5:2 says, “Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.” There is the final, perfect, acceptable offering. Christ’s sacrifice is the sweetsmelling savour before God. Not our works. Not our religion. Not our sincerity. Not our rituals. Not our self-improvement. The sacrifice of the Son of God is what satisfies the Father. That means anything truly acceptable in the believer’s life must be connected to Christ, offered through Christ, and governed by Christ. Spiritual savor begins with the Saviour. The sweetest smell in the universe is not human religion; it is the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

This matters because men often try to perfume what God has not accepted. Cain brought an offering, but it was not accepted as Abel's was. Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire, and God judged it. Saul kept the best of the sheep and oxen under the excuse of sacrifice, but God called his rebellion witchcraft. Religion can smell impressive to men and stink before God. A large offering, a polished service, a beautiful ceremony, an emotional song, a grand building, a dramatic prayer, or an ancient tradition may carry no sweet savor before God if it is not according to truth. The nose of the body must learn to ask not, "Does this impress men?" but "Does this smell like obedience to God?"

## **Chapter 2: The Savor of Christ Follows the Faithful Witness**

Paul says God "maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place." That means the faithful witness carries a savor. The knowledge of Christ is not odorless. It makes an impact. When truth is preached, Christ is exalted, the gospel is declared, and the servant walks in sincerity before God, there is a spiritual savor present. To some, it is the smell of life. To others, it is the smell of death. That explains why the same gospel can draw one sinner and enrage another. It explains why one person hears the blood of Christ and rejoices, while another recoils. It explains why one saint loves sound doctrine and another finds it offensive. The problem is not with the savor of Christ. The problem is with the condition of those smelling it.

This should encourage faithful witnesses. If the truth is rejected, it does not always mean the messenger failed. Sometimes the savor of Christ exposes death in the hearer. The gospel is life to those who believe, but it is death to those who reject it because it testifies against them. A man preaching Christ crucified should not expect every nose to enjoy the smell. The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God. The preaching of the cross is foolishness to them that perish. A lost religious man may prefer the smell of incense, ceremony, philosophy, moral reform, or tradition because the savor of Christ crucified offends his pride. Let him be offended. The message must remain.

But the witness must make sure the smell is truly Christ and not his own flesh. Some people offend others and then claim they are carrying the savor of Christ, when in reality they are carrying the odor of pride, cruelty, foolishness, or arrogance. The cross is offensive enough without adding body odor from the old man. If a man is rejected for preaching Christ, so be it. If he is rejected because he behaves like an obnoxious fool, that is another matter. The faithful witness should smell of Christ: truth, holiness, grace, blood, righteousness, humility, charity, and boldness. The smell of the flesh should not be mistaken for the savor of Christ.

## **Chapter 3: False Doctrine Has a Smell**

False doctrine has a smell. It may be hard to define at first, but a spiritually trained nose can detect when something is off. The words may sound close. The preacher may use Bible phrases. The music may be emotional. The atmosphere may be warm. The argument may be polished. The people may be sincere. But underneath it there is a smell: man exalted, Christ reduced, the gospel blurred, the Bible corrected, grace mixed with works, Israel confused with the church, the flesh entertained, the Spirit imitated, tradition enthroned, or experience elevated above Scripture. Something stinks. The body needs members who can detect that before the poison spreads.

This is not mystical guesswork. Discernment by savor must be trained by Scripture. Hebrews 5:14 says those of full age have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Notice the word “senses.” Spiritual maturity trains perception. The believer who has handled sound doctrine, studied the Book, rightly divided the word of truth, and tasted the good word of God becomes more sensitive to error. A man familiar with real currency can often spot a counterfeit quickly. A man familiar with fresh bread can smell mold. A man familiar with the gospel of grace can smell works creeping in. A man familiar with the authority of the Book can smell Bible correction even when it is wrapped in academic language. A man familiar with true worship can smell fleshly entertainment pretending to be spiritual.

False doctrine often tries to cover its smell with perfume. It uses words like love, unity, grace, depth, scholarship, ancient faith, Spirit-led, revival, community, justice, humility, and mystery. But perfume does not change rot. Rome can perfume works salvation with centuries of ceremony, but it still stinks. Liberalism can perfume unbelief with compassion, but it still stinks. Charismatic disorder can perfume fleshly excitement with talk of the Spirit, but it still stinks. Bible correction can perfume doubt with scholarship, but it still stinks. Legalism can perfume bondage with holiness, but it still stinks. Antinomianism can perfume looseness with grace, but it still stinks. The nose must learn to smell beneath the label.

#### **Chapter 4: Pride, Compromise, and Flesh Have Their Own Odor**

Doctrine is not the only thing with a smell. Pride has a smell. Compromise has a smell. Fleshly entertainment dressed up as worship has a smell. A proud man may use humble words, but pride leaks out. It smells in the way he must always be central, always be praised, always be consulted, always be right, always be beyond correction. He may speak of serving God, but the odor of self comes through. He may quote Bible verses, but the smell of ambition is in the room. Pride can wear a suit, carry a Bible, and say “to God be the glory,” while making sure everyone knows whose ministry, whose insight, whose sacrifice, and whose greatness is on display.

Compromise also has a smell. It often begins with a change in tone before it becomes an open denial. The preacher who once spoke plainly starts softening everything. The church that once stood clearly starts avoiding certain passages. The ministry that once warned about error starts partnering with it for “influence.” The believer who once cared about separation starts calling worldliness “outreach.” Something smells different. Maybe the words have not fully changed yet, but the odor has. Compromise loves to burn incense over its cowardice and call it wisdom. But the nose can often detect the shift before the mouth admits it.

Fleshly entertainment dressed up as worship has a smell too. It smells like performance, sensuality, emotional manipulation, celebrity spirit, atmosphere-building, and man-centered excitement. True worship exalts God, submits to truth, and carries reverence. Fleshly entertainment tries to produce spiritual feelings without spiritual substance. It may use Bible words, but the odor is stage smoke, vanity, and emotional control. Again, the nose must not be governed by personal preference. Not every song you dislike is fleshly. Not every style difference is corruption. But some things really do smell like the flesh, no matter how many religious labels are sprayed over them. The body needs members with enough trained discernment to say, “That is not the savor of Christ.”

## **Chapter 5: Sweet Savor Comes From Sacrifice, Prayer, Charity, and Obedience**

Not everything the nose detects is corruption. The body must also learn to recognize what smells sweet before God. Genuine sacrifice has a sweet savor. When a believer gives himself in service to Christ, not for applause, not for self-glory, not for leverage, but out of love and obedience, there is something sweet about it. Paul speaks in Philippians 4:18 of the gift sent to him as “an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.” That means practical giving and support can have a sweet savor before God when done rightly. A quiet gift, a faithful service, a hidden sacrifice, a burden carried for Christ—all of it may rise sweetly before the Lord.

Prayer has a sweet savor. Revelation connects prayers with incense imagery. A praying saint may not be seen by men, but heaven notices. There is something sweet about a believer bowing before God in dependence, interceding for others, confessing need, seeking wisdom, and breathing spiritual life into the work. Prayerless activity may smell like sweat and machinery. Prayerful service carries a different savor. You can often tell when a ministry has been prayed over. There is a humility, a seriousness, a dependence, a cleanness in it that cannot be manufactured by planning alone. The nose can detect the difference between fleshly adrenaline and prayerful breath.

Charity, humility, and obedience also carry a sweet savor. A humble saint who serves without demanding recognition smells different from a self-promoter. A merciful believer who refreshes the saints smells different from a cold critic. A faithful worker who obeys quietly smells different from a performer. A church that loves truth and loves the saints smells different from a doctrinal machine grinding people into powder. The body should not only be good at smelling rot. It should be able to recognize the sweet savor of Christlike service. Discernment sees good and evil. A nose that only smells corruption may not be healthy. It may be infected with cynicism.

### **Chapter 6: The Nose Must Not Become a Professional Fault-Finder**

The nose is useful, but it can become diseased. Some people are not discerning; they are suspicious. They do not detect corruption; they assume it. They smell smoke where there is no fire, poison where there is no bottle, and rot where there is only something unfamiliar to them. They become professional fault-finders. They sniff every sentence, every motive, every tone, every ministry, every brother, every church, every disagreement, and every act of service until they convince themselves something must be wrong. That is not spiritual perception. That is an inflamed nose attached to a proud heart.

A fault-finding spirit can masquerade as discernment. It sounds bold. It talks about purity. It warns constantly. It is always “concerned.” But the fruit is suspicion, division, weariness, and fear. True discernment protects the body. False discernment poisons it. True discernment is governed by Scripture. False discernment is governed by instinct, trauma, preference, bitterness, and pride. True discernment can identify what is sweet as well as what stinks. False discernment only knows how to accuse. A man who can never smell anything sweet in God’s people may have the wrong problem in his nose. The stink may be closer than he thinks.

The body must test its spiritual nose by the Book. If you think something smells wrong, ask why. Is there Scripture? Is there doctrine? Is there fruit? Is there evidence? Is there a pattern? Is the issue real, or is it preference? Is it corruption, or is it immaturity? Is it compromise, or is it a difference in function? Is it false doctrine, or is it clumsy wording? Is it flesh, or is it simply not your style? A clean nose can answer these questions with humility. A proud nose refuses examination because it enjoys being the one who “smelled it first.” The body needs discernment, not paranoia. It needs perception, not constant accusation.

### **Chapter 7: The Nose Must Be Cleansed by the Savor of Christ**

The nose must stay close to the savor of Christ if it is going to discern properly. A man who spends all his time smelling corruption can become corrupted by the occupation. If all he

studies is false doctrine, scandal, compromise, hypocrisy, cults, apostasy, and spiritual rot, his sense of smell may become dominated by death. He may begin to expect stink everywhere. The remedy is not to ignore corruption. The remedy is to return constantly to Christ. The believer must be familiar with the sweet savor of the Saviour, the sacrifice of Christ, the truth of the gospel, the beauty of holiness, the cleanness of Scripture, and the fragrance of grace.

This is why worship, prayer, Scripture, and fellowship with healthy saints matter. They recalibrate the spiritual senses. The nose needs to remember what clean smells like. It needs to smell the sweetness of the blood of Christ, the mercy of God, the joy of salvation, the beauty of humility, the comfort of prayer, the nourishment of sound doctrine, and the charity of the saints. Otherwise, discernment can become spiritually morbid. A man who only smells garbage may become a garbage expert, but that does not mean he is healthy. The body needs members who can smell corruption because they know the savor of Christ, not because they are addicted to decay.

The ultimate question is whether the body carries the savor of Christ. Do our words smell like Christ? Does our doctrine smell like Christ? Does our service smell like Christ? Does our worship smell like Christ? Does our correction smell like Christ? Does our separation smell like Christ? Does our charity smell like Christ? Does our witness smell like Christ? This does not mean everyone will like the smell. Paul said the same savor is life to some and death to others. But before God, the body should be a sweet savor of Christ. That is the goal. Not merely smelling out corruption, but manifesting the savor of His knowledge in every place.

## **Conclusion**

The nose teaches the body of Christ a creative but necessary lesson: some things have a savor. Truth has a savor. Christ has a savor. Sacrifice has a savor. Prayer, charity, humility, and obedience carry a sweet smell before God. But false doctrine, pride, compromise, fleshly entertainment, religious performance, and spiritual corruption stink no matter how much perfume is sprayed over them. The body needs members who can detect corruption early, not by mystical guesswork or personal preference, but by senses exercised through the word of God. A healthy nose can warn the body before the poison spreads.

But the nose must also be warned. Discernment can become fault-finding if it is not governed by Scripture and charity. A professional critic who smells smoke where there is no fire is not helping the body. He is making it nervous, suspicious, and divided. True discernment can smell what is sweet as well as what is rotten. It can identify the savor of Christ in humble service, sincere prayer, sacrificial giving, faithful witness, and sound

doctrine. A nose that only detects stink may not be mature. It may be diseased. The body needs a clean nose, not an inflamed one.

So let the nose be trained by Scripture and cleansed by the savor of Christ. Let it reject the perfume of false religion and detect the odor of corruption early. Let it also rejoice when it smells genuine sacrifice, prayer, humility, charity, and obedience. Let the whole body seek to be unto God a sweet savour of Christ. Some will smell life, and some will smell death, but let the savor be Christ, not flesh. The body of Christ should not stink of pride, compromise, and religious performance. It should carry the sweet savor of the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ in every place.

## **26 of 32: One Body - Many Members - The Neck: Submission to the Head or Stiff-Necked Rebellion**

### **Introduction**

The neck is a powerful member to study because it connects the head to the body. That alone makes it loaded with doctrine. A body may have a head, but if the neck is stiff, damaged, resistant, or unable to turn, the body cannot respond properly to the head's direction. The head may see danger, but the neck refuses to turn. The head may direct movement, but the neck resists. The head may call the body to bow, but the neck remains rigid. That is a tremendous picture of spiritual submission. Christ is the Head of the body, and the body is supposed to respond to Him. But when believers resist His authority, reject His correction, refuse His words, and stiffen themselves against His direction, they become stiff-necked. They may still talk about salvation. They may still claim to love Jesus. They may still attend church, defend doctrine, and use Bible language. But if the neck will not yield to the Head, the body is in rebellion.

The Bible repeatedly uses the language of a stiff neck to describe stubbornness, hardness, pride, rebellion, and resistance to God. Exodus 32:9 says, "I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people." Acts 7:51 says, "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost." That is not soft language. A stiff neck is not a small personality flaw. It is a spiritual condition. It is the condition of a man who will not bow, will not turn, will not yield, will not receive correction, and will not respond to God's command. The stiff-necked man may be religious, but he is not submissive. He may be active, but he is not obedient. He may know words, but he resists the Word. He wants God's benefits without God's authority, Christ as Saviour without Christ as Lord in practical

obedience, grace without correction, truth without submission, and blessing without bending.

This essay must expose the danger of believers who want to claim Christ while resisting Christ. Salvation is by grace through faith, not by works, and that must never be confused. A sinner is not saved by yielding enough, bowing enough, surrendering enough, or obeying enough. He is saved by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, trusting His blood, His death, burial, and resurrection. But after salvation, the saved man has no right to live as though the Head gives suggestions instead of commands. Submission to Christ is not bondage. It is health. A body that responds to the Head moves with life, order, and purpose. A stiff-necked body fights its own direction, injures itself, and resists the very One who knows where it should go. The neck teaches us that the body must stay flexible under Christ, not flexible toward error, but flexible toward obedience. It must bow where He commands, turn where He directs, and yield where His words correct.

### **Chapter 1: The Neck Connects the Head to the Body**

The neck is the connection between the head and the body, and that makes it a fitting picture of responsiveness to Christ. The head directs, but the body must receive direction. The eyes may see what the head perceives, the mouth may speak what the head commands, the hands may work, the feet may walk, but the neck allows the head's direction to affect the whole body's posture and movement. If the neck is healthy, the body can turn quickly, bow reverently, look where it needs to look, and respond to danger or command. If the neck is stiff, the whole body becomes awkward and limited. Spiritually, a believer can confess Christ as Head and yet resist the very direction coming from Him. That is a neck problem.

Colossians 1:18 says Christ "is the head of the body, the church." That means the body does not own itself, direct itself, define itself, or govern itself independently. It receives direction from Him. The issue is not whether Christ knows what to do. The issue is whether the members will yield to Him. The Head is never confused, blind, foolish, late, or uncertain. He does not need the body's permission to command. He does not need human tradition to improve His direction. He does not need scholarship to correct His words. He does not need the culture to update His will. The Head is right. The question is whether the neck will turn, bow, and respond.

This is why a stiff neck is such a dangerous thing. It creates a practical disconnect between the Head and the body. A man may know doctrine in his mind, but his will is rigid. He may hear Scripture in his ears, but he will not bend. He may speak Christ's name with his mouth, but he will not yield to Christ's words. That kind of disconnect is common. People

want the comfort of belonging to Christ without the correction of being governed by Christ. They want the Head for salvation, but not for daily direction. The neck exposes that hypocrisy. If Christ is the Head, the body must be connected to Him in obedience, not merely in profession.

## **Chapter 2: The Bible's Stiff-Necked Language Exposes Rebellion**

The Bible's use of "stiffnecked" language is severe because God takes stubborn resistance seriously. Israel was repeatedly called stiffnecked because they resisted God's commands, rejected His words, provoked Him with idols, and refused correction despite repeated warnings. A stiff neck is a posture of rebellion. It refuses to bend. It refuses to turn. It locks itself in its own direction and dares God to move it. That is why the word fits so well. The problem is not ignorance only. It is stubbornness. A stiff-necked person may know what God said and still refuse it. He may be corrected and still harden himself. He may see the consequences and still continue.

Acts 7:51 is one of the sharpest uses of the term. Stephen tells the religious leaders, "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost." Notice who he is speaking to: religious men. Men with Scripture, temple history, national privilege, ceremonies, and religious identity. Yet they were stiffnecked. That is a warning. Religious background does not cure a stiff neck. Bible knowledge does not automatically cure it. Public position does not cure it. A man can be religious to the bone and still resist the Holy Ghost. He can honor prophets in history while rejecting the truth those prophets preached. He can boast in the Bible while resisting the Bible when it touches his sin, system, or pride.

This language must be applied carefully but directly. A saved man can still behave stiff-neckedly in practice. He can resist correction from Scripture. He can refuse to forgive. He can reject plain doctrine because it crosses tradition. He can stiffen against rebuke because pride hates being wrong. He can refuse to turn from a habit because the flesh enjoys it. He can resist the Head's direction in service, prayer, witness, giving, separation, or humility. The stiff-necked spirit says, "I will not bend." God says that is rebellion. A soft neck is not weakness. It is teachability. A stiff neck is not strength. It is stubborn sin.

## **Chapter 3: A Stiff Neck Will Not Bow**

One of the first signs of a stiff neck is refusal to bow. The knees may bend outwardly, but the neck can still remain inwardly rigid. A man may go through religious motions, but his will is not humbled before God. He will not bow to Scripture. He will not bow to correction. He will not bow to the Head's authority. He may bow before public opinion, money, comfort, tradition, family pressure, or his own ambitions, but not before the Lord where it

costs him something. That is backwards. The believer should bow before God and stand before everything else. A stiff-necked Christian often does the opposite: he bends easily to the world and stiffens against the Book.

Bowing is not about earning salvation. It is about rightful submission to the One who bought us. First Corinthians 6:19-20 says, “ye are not your own” and “ye are bought with a price.” If a man is bought with the blood of Christ, he does not own his neck. He does not own his plans, his body, his mind, his mouth, his habits, his gifts, or his future. He belongs to Christ. That truth should bring the neck down. The redeemed man should be able to say, “Lord, Thou hast the right to correct me. Thou hast the right to direct me. Thou hast the right to stop me. Thou hast the right to send me. Thou hast the right to change my course.” That is not bondage. That is reasonable service.

The stiff neck refuses that posture because pride hates surrender. It says, “I will listen as long as I agree. I will obey as long as it fits my plan. I will receive correction as long as it does not embarrass me. I will follow Christ as long as He does not cross my preference.” That is not submission. That is negotiation. The Head does not negotiate with the body for permission to be Head. A healthy neck bows because it understands authority. The body of Christ needs members who can bow quickly before God instead of forcing the Lord to break them through chastening. Hebrews 12:6 says, “For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.” Stubborn saints should remember that God’s love includes chastisement. Better to bow than to be bent by discipline.

#### **Chapter 4: A Stiff Neck Will Not Turn**

The neck is also made to turn. When the head directs the body to look another way, the neck should respond. Spiritually, this speaks of repentance, correction, adjustment, and willingness to change direction under God’s word. A stiff-necked man will not turn. He may be headed toward trouble, but he keeps looking straight ahead. He may be warned, but he refuses to change course. He may be shown Scripture, but he locks himself into his own way. Proverbs 29:1 says, “He, that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.” That verse should make any stubborn man tremble. Repeated reproof with continued neck-hardening leads to disaster.

Turning is not always dramatic. Sometimes the Lord directs a believer to turn from a sinful habit, a foolish association, a wrong attitude, a bad doctrine, a harsh spirit, a lazy pattern, a prayerless routine, a worldly appetite, or a prideful reaction. The issue may not look large to others, but the principle is large. Will the neck turn when the Head directs? A teachable believer can say, “I was wrong. The Book corrected me. I need to change.” A stiff-necked

believer says, “I have always done it this way. I do not care what you show me. I know what I meant. I am not changing.” That is dangerous ground.

The body as a whole also needs this. Churches, ministries, families, and movements can become stiff-necked. They keep doing what they have always done because pride will not admit that something needs correction. They preserve traditions even after Scripture exposes them. They continue methods that produce damage because changing would require humility. They ignore warnings because the warning came from someone they do not respect. A body that cannot turn under the Head will eventually injure itself. Flexibility toward Christ is health. Flexibility toward sin is compromise. The body must learn the difference. It should be immovable in truth and quick to turn in obedience.

### **Chapter 5: A Stiff Neck Will Not Receive Correction**

Correction is one of the great tests of the neck. Anyone can claim humility until rebuked. Anyone can speak of being teachable until the Bible crosses his favorite idea. Anyone can say Christ is Head until the Head says something the member does not like. Second Timothy 3:16 says all Scripture is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. If a believer loves doctrine but hates reproof and correction, he is trying to eat only the parts of Scripture that flatter him. The Book is not merely there to inform us. It is there to correct us. A stiff neck hates that.

Correction may come through private reading, preaching, counsel, a faithful friend, a spouse, a parent, a child, a critic, or even an enemy who accidentally tells the truth. The source must be judged by Scripture, but the heart must remain humble enough to ask, “Is there truth here?” A stiff-necked man does not ask that. He attacks the messenger, shifts the subject, brings up someone else’s fault, explains his motives, claims persecution, or hides behind doctrine. He cannot simply say, “That is right. I need to get right.” That inability is a sign of spiritual stiffness. A neck that cannot receive correction will eventually become a source of pain to the whole body.

Receiving correction is not weakness. It is wisdom. Proverbs repeatedly honors the man who hears reproof. A wise man loves the one who rebukes him rightly. That is not natural. That is spiritual. The flesh wants to be praised, not corrected. But the body cannot grow if members refuse correction. The eye must be corrected when it sees wrongly. The mouth must be corrected when it speaks wrongly. The hands must be corrected when they work wrongly. The feet must be corrected when they walk wrongly. The neck must be soft enough to receive that correction from the Head. A body that resists correction is a body inviting injury.

### **Chapter 6: Submission to the Head Is Health, Not Bondage**

The stiff-necked man thinks submission is bondage. He hears obedience and imagines chains. He hears authority and imagines oppression. He hears correction and imagines cruelty. That is because the flesh wants independence from God. But submission to Christ is not bondage. It is health. A body that responds to its head is not enslaved by the head; it is alive and functioning. The hand is not oppressed because the head tells it not to touch fire. The feet are not enslaved because the head tells them not to step off a cliff. The mouth is not abused because the head tells it not to swallow poison. The Head's authority protects the body.

Christ's commands are not the commands of a tyrant. They are the direction of the Saviour who loved us and gave Himself for us. He bought the body with His own blood. He knows the end from the beginning. He knows what sin does. He knows where error leads. He knows how the body functions best. When He commands, He is not stealing life. He is directing life. The world says freedom is doing whatever you want. The Bible shows that true freedom is being delivered from sin to serve God. A neck that yields to Christ is not less free. It is free from the misery of fighting its own Head.

This truth is needed because even saved people can resent authority. They may obey outwardly while inwardly stiffening. But the Christian life is not improved by resisting Christ. Every time a believer refuses the Head, he injures himself. Every time he yields, he walks in health. Submission to Christ brings order to the mind, restraint to the tongue, purpose to the hands, direction to the feet, humility to the knees, charity to the heart, and stability to the body. The Head is not the enemy of the members. The Head is the life, direction, and authority of the body. Submission is sanity.

## **Chapter 7: The Neck Must Stay Flexible Toward God and Firm Against Error**

The neck must be flexible in the right direction and firm in the right direction. A healthy believer is not stiff against God and flexible toward the world. He is flexible toward God and firm against error. That balance is crucial. Some people call themselves "open-minded," but they are open to every corruption and closed to Scripture. Others call themselves "firm," but they are firm in pride, tradition, and personal preference rather than truth. The Bible position is better: bow quickly to God, refuse firmly what opposes Him. The neck bends before the Head and stiffens against the devil's yoke.

This is where many fail. They are stubborn about things God never commanded and flexible about things God clearly said. They will fight over preferences, personalities, traditions, styles, and pet opinions, but they bend like wet cardboard when the gospel, the Bible, holiness, separation, or Christ's authority is at stake. That is not conviction. That is crookedness. A good neck knows where to bend and where not to bend. Daniel bent his

knees to God but not to the king's decree. The three Hebrews refused to bow to the image but were not rebellious troublemakers in every ordinary duty. The Lord Jesus submitted perfectly to the Father but never bent to Satan. That is the pattern.

The body of Christ needs necks like that. Believers should be teachable, correctable, humble, and responsive to Scripture. They should be willing to change when the Book proves them wrong. They should bow before Christ quickly. But they should not bend to false doctrine, religious tyranny, man-made tradition over Scripture, cultural pressure, fear, or compromise. The neck connects the body to the Head. If it is stiff toward Christ, the body suffers. If it is loose toward error, the body is endangered. Health is submission to the Head and firmness against anything that would pull the body away from Him.

## **Conclusion**

The neck teaches us the seriousness of submission. It connects the head to the body, and when it is healthy, the body can turn, bow, respond, and move under direction. When it is stiff, the whole body suffers. Christ is the Head of the body, and no member has the right to resist Him. A stiff neck will not bow, will not turn, will not yield, and will not receive correction. The Bible's stiff-necked language is not mild. It describes stubborn rebellion, resistance to God, and a heart hardened against truth. That spirit must be exposed and rejected wherever it appears, whether in a lost religious man or a saved believer acting carnally.

Submission to Christ is not bondage. It is health. The Head knows where the body should go, what it should avoid, what it should receive, what it should reject, and how it should function. The body is not oppressed by obeying the Head. It is protected, guided, nourished, corrected, and directed. The believer who resists Christ's authority is not free; he is fighting the very One who bought him. The saved man should bow quickly, turn quickly, receive correction humbly, and yield to Scripture without demanding that God negotiate with his pride.

So let the neck be softened toward God and firm against error. Let it bow before Christ and refuse idols. Let it turn when the Book corrects. Let it receive reproof without hardening. Let it connect the whole body to the direction of the Head. A stiff-necked body injures itself by resisting its own Lord. A submitted body moves with life, order, and purpose. The neck is not there for rebellion. It is there for connection, submission, and response. Christ is the Head, and the body is healthy only when the neck yields to Him.

## **27 of 32: One Body - Many Members - The Nerves: Warning Signals in the Body**

### **Introduction**

The nerves are the warning system of the body. They are not the bones that give structure, the blood that carries life, the lungs that breathe, the heart that beats, the hands that work, or the feet that go, but without nerves the body is in grave danger. Nerves tell the body when something is wrong. They report heat, pain, pressure, injury, danger, and damage. They are not enemies because they cry out when the hand touches fire. They are not troublemakers because they send pain when the foot steps on glass. They are not negative because they alert the body that a wound has opened, a bone has been struck, or infection may be present. Their function is not to annoy the body, but to protect it. Pain signals are unpleasant, but they are often mercy. A body that cannot feel warning signals may seem calm for a while, but it is in danger of burning, cutting, breaking, and destroying itself without knowing it.

In the body of Christ, there are members who function like nerves. They detect danger quickly. They sense pressure before others name it. They notice doctrinal drift, moral compromise, relational tension, spiritual coldness, pride in leadership, worldliness creeping into worship, false charity replacing truth, harshness replacing mercy, or wolves moving near the flock. They may not always be the most visible members, and they may not always know how to explain what they are sensing at first, but they often feel the danger before the rest of the body reacts. Sometimes those members are dismissed as negative, alarmist, overreactive, divisive, or difficult. Sometimes they may indeed be reacting in the flesh. But sometimes they are the very warning system God is using to alert the body before damage spreads. The body would be foolish to cut off its nerves because pain is uncomfortable.

This essay will defend the value of warning members while also warning those members not to become frantic, bitter, suspicious, or impossible to comfort. Nerves are useful when governed by truth. But nerves that fire constantly can wear the body down. A healthy nervous system alerts the body to real danger. A diseased nervous system screams when nothing is wrong, makes normal movement painful, and exhausts the whole frame. That is true spiritually. The goal is not panic. The goal is protection. The body does not need numbness, and it does not need hysteria. It needs spiritually alert members whose warnings are measured by Scripture, governed by charity, submitted to the Head, and aimed at the body's health. A faithful nerve does not cry wolf for attention. It sounds the alarm when the wolf is near, and it does so because the body matters.

### **Chapter 1: Nerves Are Not the Enemy Because They Report Pain**

The first thing to understand is that the nerve is not the enemy because it reports pain. If the hand touches a hot stove, the pain signal is not the problem. The heat is the problem. If the foot steps on a nail, the pain is not the enemy. The nail is the enemy. If the body feels pressure, tearing, burning, or injury, the nerve is simply carrying a message that something needs attention. A foolish man might hate the pain and wish the signal would stop, but a wise man asks why the pain is there. In the same way, when a spiritually sensitive member warns of danger, the body should not immediately attack the messenger. It should examine whether the warning is true.

This is necessary because many churches and ministries have a habit of punishing the person who notices trouble first. Someone says, “This doctrine is drifting.” Someone says, “This leader is becoming controlling.” Someone says, “The worship is becoming fleshly.” Someone says, “The gospel is being blurred.” Someone says, “This relationship is turning bitter.” Someone says, “The spirit of this place has changed.” And instead of examining the warning by Scripture, people say, “Why are you so negative?” That is like punching the nerve because the stove is hot. It is childish. A healthy body does not hate its warning system. It listens, tests, and responds rightly.

Of course, not every pain signal is accurate in interpretation. Sometimes a person feels danger because of past wounds, personal bias, fear, pride, or misunderstanding. But the possibility of false alarms does not mean all alarms should be ignored. The body must learn righteous judgment. First Thessalonians 5:21 says, “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” That applies to warnings too. Prove them. Test them. Compare them with Scripture. Look for evidence. Examine fruit. Seek wise counsel. But do not despise the warning merely because it is uncomfortable. Pain is not always the enemy. Sometimes pain is the messenger God uses to keep the body from greater harm.

## **Chapter 2: Warning Members Often Feel Danger Early**

Some members in the body seem to feel danger before others do. They may notice a shift in doctrine before it is openly stated. They may sense spiritual coldness before attendance drops. They may detect pride before public abuse appears. They may feel the pressure of compromise before the official statement changes. They may recognize manipulation before others realize they are being managed. They may see that a “minor” change in language is actually the beginning of a major doctrinal slide. These members can be frustrating to those who want everything to remain calm, but early warning is often a gift. A smoke alarm is annoying when it screams, but it is better than waking up after the house is gone.

Paul had this kind of warning burden. In Acts 20:29-31, he warned the Ephesian elders that grievous wolves would enter in, not sparing the flock, and that men would arise from among themselves speaking perverse things. Then he said, “Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.” Paul did not treat warning as negativity. He treated it as ministry. He warned because he cared. He warned because danger was real. He warned before the wolves had finished their work. That is nerve ministry: warning with tears before the wound becomes fatal.

The body needs members who can feel these things early, especially in an age where corruption often enters gradually. Error rarely announces itself with a trumpet. It begins with softening a phrase, changing emphasis, avoiding certain doctrines, platforming questionable voices, tolerating small compromises, replacing prayer with production, replacing preaching with conversation, replacing holiness with relevance, or replacing charity with cowardice. By the time everyone agrees something is wrong, much damage may already be done. Warning members are useful because they may feel the first pressure. They are not always easy to hear, but sometimes they are necessary to protect the body from slow decay.

### **Chapter 3: The Alarm Must Be Governed by Scripture**

Warning members must be governed by Scripture. Pain signals are useful, but they must be interpreted rightly. A believer cannot simply say, “I feel something,” and make that feeling final authority. The Bible is the authority. The Book judges the alarm. Spiritual awareness must bow to the word of God. Otherwise, warning becomes emotional reaction, personal suspicion, or spiritualized anxiety. A man may feel uneasy because something is truly wrong. He may also feel uneasy because his pride was crossed, his preference was ignored, his past wound was touched, or his imagination is running wild. Therefore, the alarm must be brought under Scripture.

This means warning members should learn to ask careful questions. What doctrine is at stake? What Scripture is being violated? What pattern is appearing? What fruit is being produced? Is this a clear danger, a possible concern, or merely a personal discomfort? Is this a wolf, a weak sheep, an immature brother, a clumsy phrase, a bad method, or a serious corruption? Has the issue been confirmed, or is it rumor? Is the warning motivated by love for the body, or by bitterness toward a person? These questions do not weaken discernment. They purify it. A warning that cannot endure biblical examination should not be treated as prophecy from the nerves.

Scripture-governed warning also knows proper proportion. Not every problem requires the same alarm. A house fire and a burnt piece of toast both involve smoke, but they do not require the same response. Some believers treat every issue like a five-alarm fire. A bad sentence, a weak illustration, a questionable association, a personality difference, a small mistake, a personal preference, and an actual false gospel all receive the same volume of panic. That wears the body down. The Bible teaches judgment, proportion, patience, and order. The alarm must match the danger. A faithful nerve reports accurately; it does not exaggerate to be heard.

#### **Chapter 4: The Body Must Not Become Numb to Warnings**

While warning members must be careful, the body must also guard against numbness. Numbness feels peaceful, but it can be deadly. If a body stops feeling pain, it may continue damaging itself without resistance. Spiritually, a church or ministry can become numb through repeated exposure to compromise, sin, false doctrine, harshness, or worldliness. At first, something troubles the conscience. Later, it becomes normal. At first, the body reacts. Later, it shrugs. That is how corruption settles in. The alarm goes off long enough, people get tired of hearing it, and instead of addressing the danger, they remove the batteries.

Numbness can come from fear of conflict. People do not want trouble, so they train themselves not to notice danger. It can come from loyalty to personalities. They do not want to believe a leader, teacher, friend, or institution could be wrong, so they ignore warning signs. It can come from comfort. They do not want the inconvenience of correction. It can come from doctrinal laziness. They do not know enough Bible to recognize the danger. It can come from spiritual weariness. They are tired of battles and just want quiet. But quiet is not always peace. Sometimes quiet is the silence before collapse.

The body of Christ must remain sensitive to proper warnings. When Scripture is being undermined, feel it. When the gospel is being blurred, feel it. When sin is being tolerated, feel it. When the weak are being crushed, feel it. When pride is rising, feel it. When prayer is dying, feel it. When charity is cooling, feel it. When wolves are circling, feel it. The answer is not panic, but neither is it numbness. A healthy body does not ignore its nerves. It gives attention where attention is due, so the whole body may be protected and restored.

#### **Chapter 5: Nerves That Fire Constantly Can Wear the Body Down**

A diseased nervous system can make life miserable. If the nerves fire constantly, even normal touch can become painful. The body becomes exhausted by alarms that never stop. Spiritually, some warning members become like that. They are always alarmed.

Always suspicious. Always detecting danger. Always troubled. Always warning. Always seeing hidden motives. Always predicting collapse. Always finding a wolf, even if it turns out to be a tired sheep with a bad haircut. That is not health. Constant alarm can wear the body down until people stop listening even when a real warning comes. The boy who cried wolf eventually taught the village to ignore him.

This often happens when a warning member becomes bitter or fearful. Perhaps he has seen real damage before. Perhaps he warned once and was ignored. Perhaps he was hurt by false doctrine, spiritual abuse, or betrayal. Those experiences can sharpen discernment, but they can also inflame the nerves. The person begins to interpret every situation through old pain. Every leader looks dangerous. Every difference smells like compromise. Every silence feels like rejection. Every mistake becomes proof of corruption. The warning may be sincere, but sincerity does not make it accurate. Pain that is not healed can turn the nerve into a constant siren.

The warning member must therefore learn rest, humility, and self-examination. He must ask God to keep him from becoming frantic, bitter, and impossible to comfort. He must spend time not only studying error, but beholding Christ. He must remember that the body needs warnings, but it also needs encouragement, nourishment, prayer, charity, and peace. A nerve that never stops firing does not protect the body better. It exhausts it. The goal is not to make everyone anxious. The goal is to protect the body under Christ. That requires accuracy, timing, tone, and submission to the Head.

## **Chapter 6: Warning Must Be Joined to Tears, Not Pride**

Paul warned with tears. That phrase in Acts 20 should govern every warning ministry. Warning is not entertainment. It is not an opportunity to show off discernment. It is not a stage for a man to prove he smelled danger before everyone else. It is not a weapon for settling personal scores. Warning should carry burden. If a man is always happiest when he has something to expose, something is wrong in him. If he enjoys the fall of others, enjoys saying “I told you so,” enjoys embarrassing the confused, and enjoys presenting himself as the only one awake, he may have nerves, but they are attached to a proud heart.

Tears do not mean weakness. They mean the warning is connected to love. Paul could be sharp. He could rebuke. He could name names. He could withstand Peter to the face. He could wish troublemakers were cut off. But he could also weep. That is the balance. A faithful warning member may have to speak plainly, even sharply, but the motive should be protection and restoration, not self-exaltation. The body needs watchmen, not vultures. A watchman warns because he wants the city spared. A vulture circles because it feeds on death. The difference matters.

Warning with tears also changes how the body hears the alarm. A warning given with evident burden, Scripture, patience, and care is easier to receive than one hurled with contempt. That does not guarantee people will listen. Many refused the prophets, Stephen, Paul, and Christ Himself. But the messenger must keep his own spirit clean. If the alarm is true, let it be sounded. But let it be sounded by a member who cares about the body, not by a man using danger to build his own importance. The goal is not panic. The goal is protection. The heart behind the warning matters.

## **Chapter 7: The Nerves Must Submit to the Head**

The nerves must submit to the Head. That is the final safety. A nerve does not govern the body. It reports to the head, and the head directs the response. Spiritually, warning members must remember that Christ is the Head, not their alarm. A warning is not automatically a command to act in whatever way the warning member demands. The concern must be brought to Christ, judged by Scripture, weighed with wisdom, and handled in order. If the nerves try to rule the body, the body becomes driven by pain rather than governed by the Head. Pain is a messenger, not a king.

Submitting to the Head means prayer. When a warning member senses danger, he should not run first to gossip, accusation, public alarm, or panic. He should go to God. Pray. Search the Scripture. Ask for wisdom. Examine motives. Seek proper counsel when needed. Follow biblical order. There may be times for public warning, but not every concern begins there. Some matters should be handled privately. Some require patient teaching. Some require direct rebuke. Some require separation. Some require waiting for clarity. The Head knows how the body should respond. The nerve must not outrun Him.

Submitting to the Head also means trusting Christ with the body. Warning members can become anxious because they feel responsible to keep everything from danger. There is a real responsibility, but it is not infinite. Christ loves His body more than any member does. He is not asleep. He is not ignorant. He is not dependent on one nervous member to save the church single-handedly. Sound the alarm when truth requires it. Warn in love. Stand in doctrine. But do not carry the burden as though you are the Head. The nerves serve best when they report faithfully and submit fully to Christ's direction.

## **Conclusion**

The nerves teach us that warning signals are necessary in the body. Pain is not always the enemy. Sometimes pain is the mercy that keeps the body from greater harm. In the body of Christ, some members detect danger early. They sense doctrinal drift, moral compromise, relational tension, spiritual coldness, pride, worldliness, and wolves creeping in. Those members should not automatically be dismissed as negative or troublesome. A body that

hates its warning system is inviting injury. Warnings should be tested by Scripture, but they should not be despised merely because they are uncomfortable.

The nerves also teach warning members to be careful. A useful alarm can become constant noise if it is not governed by truth. Nerves that fire constantly can wear the body down. Suspicion is not discernment. Panic is not protection. Bitterness is not watchfulness. A warning must be measured by Scripture, proportioned to the danger, joined to charity, and submitted to the Head. The body needs watchmen, not professional fault-finders. It needs alarms that protect, not sirens that never stop screaming.

So let the nerves function rightly. Let the body remain sensitive without becoming frantic, alert without becoming suspicious, responsive without becoming panicked, and protected without becoming numb. Let warning members speak with Scripture, tears, humility, and courage. Let the body test the warning instead of attacking the nerve. Let every alarm be brought under the authority of Christ, the Head of the body. The goal is not panic. The goal is protection. A healthy body feels danger, responds wisely, and keeps moving under the Head.

## **28 of 32: One Body - Many Members - The Immune System: Fighting Spiritual Infection**

### **Introduction**

The immune system is one of the body's great defensive operations. It identifies what does not belong, responds to invasion, fights infection, attacks disease, and protects the health of the whole body. A body with no immune system is not loving, broad-minded, tolerant, or mature. It is dying. It may appear calm for a little while because nothing is resisting the infection, but that calm is not health. It is collapse in slow motion. The same is true in the body of Christ. A church, ministry, family, or believer that refuses to resist false doctrine, sin, corruption, leaven, wolves, and spiritual infection is not more gracious than the Bible. It is less obedient. Modern religion has trained people to think all spiritual defense is unloving, all rebuke is harsh, all separation is pride, all warning is divisive, and all doctrinal purity is legalism. That is nonsense. A body that refuses to fight infection is not kind. It is suicidal.

The immune system represents discernment in action. The eyes may see danger, the nose may smell corruption, the nerves may send warning signals, the skin may feel injury, and the bones may provide doctrinal structure, but the immune system responds when something foreign, corrupt, or dangerous enters the body. It is not enough to notice

disease. The body must fight it. Paul did not tell believers merely to study false doctrine as an academic subject. He told them to rebuke, reprove, mark, avoid, withdraw, purge out leaven, reject heretics after proper admonition, stop the mouths of deceivers, and have no fellowship with unfruitful works of darkness. That is immune system language. It is not meanness. It is health. It is not hatred. It is protection. It is not cruelty. It is obedience when governed by truth and charity.

This essay must be strong because the hour demands it. Not everything that enters the body belongs there. Not every teacher carrying a Bible is safe. Not every doctrine that uses Jesus' name is true. Not every spirit that produces emotion is the Holy Spirit. Not every man who talks about love has charity. Not every call for unity comes from God. Not every correction is cruelty. Not every separation is pride. The body needs an immune system because there are infections that will spread if they are not resisted. But this essay must also warn against the diseased counterfeit: carnal cruelty, pride, suspicion, self-appointed heresy hunting, and men who seem to enjoy attacking more than protecting. A healthy immune system fights infection. An unhealthy immune system attacks the body itself. The goal is not to become a religious autoimmune disease. The goal is to protect the body under the Head, with truth, charity, wisdom, and obedience.

### **Chapter 1: A Body That Refuses to Fight Infection Is Dying**

A physical body that does not resist infection is in danger, no matter how peaceful it looks on the outside. Infection does not need permission to spread. It does not care about sentimental speeches. It does not stop because the body wants unity among all cells. It multiplies. It weakens. It poisons. It consumes. A healthy body responds. Fever, inflammation, white blood cells, antibodies, and defensive operations may be uncomfortable, but they are signs that the body is resisting what does not belong. Likewise, a healthy spiritual body must resist what corrupts. False doctrine, tolerated sin, pride, leaven, compromise, and wolves do not remain politely contained because believers wish to avoid conflict. They spread unless addressed.

The modern religious crowd often treats resistance as the problem. If someone warns about false doctrine, they accuse him of being divisive. If someone rebukes sin, they call him unloving. If someone separates from corrupt fellowship, they call him proud. If someone insists on sound doctrine, they call him narrow. But the Bible never presents refusal to fight infection as virtue. Paul told Timothy to "reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." He told Titus to rebuke certain men sharply, that they may be sound in the faith. He told the Corinthians to purge out leaven. He told the Romans to mark and avoid those causing divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine. Those commands

are not suggestions for unkind personalities. They are part of the body's spiritual immune system.

A body that refuses correction may seem peaceful temporarily, but that peace is counterfeit. It is the peace of a hospital room after the monitor has gone flat. Real health sometimes involves conflict. A surgeon cutting infection from a wound is not being cruel. A shepherd driving off a wolf is not being negative. A father warning his child away from poison is not being divisive. A preacher exposing a false gospel is not being mean. The question is not whether defense is always comfortable. It is whether it is biblical, necessary, and rightly handled. A body that will not fight infection is not loving. It is dying while congratulating itself for being agreeable.

## **Chapter 2: False Doctrine Is Spiritual Infection**

False doctrine is not merely an intellectual mistake. It is infection. It enters the body through teaching, influence, books, sermons, music, traditions, online content, friendships, schools, and religious systems. It may begin small, like leaven, but it works through the lump. Galatians 5:9 says, "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." That was written in a context dealing with doctrinal corruption around law and grace. A little works-righteousness, a little circumcision requirement, a little addition to grace, and the gospel is endangered. False doctrine does not have to deny every truth to be deadly. It only has to corrupt the essential truth it touches.

This is why the body must not be casual about doctrine. A false gospel is not a harmless difference of opinion. It is soul-destroying corruption. A Bible-corrupting spirit is not harmless scholarship. It undermines confidence in the words of God. A Christ-dishonoring doctrine is not merely an alternative viewpoint. It attacks the Head. A works-based system is not simply a stricter form of Christianity. It corrupts grace. A mystical movement that elevates experiences over Scripture is not merely a different worship style. It introduces strange fire. False doctrine works like infection because it alters how members think, believe, speak, worship, serve, and treat one another. If left alone, it spreads beyond the original point of entry.

The immune system must identify false doctrine by Scripture, not by personality or preference. Some men call everything false doctrine that does not match their personal habits, favorite phrases, or church culture. That is not health. That is confusion. The measuring line is the Book rightly divided. Does the teaching preserve the gospel of the grace of God? Does it honor the blood of Christ? Does it confess the biblical Christ? Does it submit to the authority of Scripture? Does it rightly divide Israel and the church, law and grace, salvation and service, standing and state? Does it produce obedience to Christ or

bondage to men? False doctrine must be judged by the words of God, not by emotional reaction. But once the Book exposes infection, the body must not pretend it is health.

### **Chapter 3: Sin and Leaven Must Be Dealt With**

The immune system does not only fight false doctrine; it also fights moral corruption. First Corinthians 5 is a plain chapter that many modern Christians would like to cut out of the Bible with a butter knife. A man was in open fornication, and the Corinthian church was puffed up instead of mourning. Paul told them to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved, and then said, “Purge out therefore the old leaven.” That is strong language. Paul did not say, “Celebrate your inclusive atmosphere.” He did not say, “Do not judge.” He did not say, “Let love cover this while the man continues.” He said purge out the leaven.

Leaven spreads. Tolerated sin in the body teaches other members that sin is not serious. It dulls conviction. It weakens testimony. It encourages hypocrisy. It confuses babes. It hardens the guilty. It gives enemies occasion to blaspheme. This does not mean every private struggle should be dragged into public shame. It does not mean repentant believers should be crushed. It does not mean church discipline is a weapon for proud men. But open, unrepentant sin that affects the body must be dealt with biblically. Refusing to do so is not mercy. It is negligence. The body cannot call infection “grace” and expect health.

At the same time, dealing with sin must aim at restoration where possible. Second Corinthians shows the danger of overdoing sorrow once repentance has occurred. The goal of discipline is not to destroy a repentant saint but to protect the body, honor Christ, and bring the sinner to repentance. A healthy immune response fights infection without destroying healthy tissue. A spiritual body must do the same. It must not tolerate leaven, but it also must not become cruel toward those who repent. The immune system must be strong enough to purge corruption and wise enough to receive restored members in charity.

### **Chapter 4: Wolves Must Be Marked, Not Entertained**

The body of Christ is not only threatened by internal weakness but also by wolves. Paul warned in Acts 20 that grievous wolves would enter in, not sparing the flock. Wolves are not merely confused sheep. They are predators. They feed on the flock. They use spiritual language, charisma, emotion, manipulation, and sometimes Bible verses to gain entrance and influence. A wolf may look respectable, loving, intelligent, humble, or gifted, but his fruit is destruction. The body must learn to identify wolves and not confuse them with weak saints needing patience. A wounded lamb needs care. A wolf needs resistance.

Romans 16:17 says, “mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.” That is immune system doctrine. Mark

and avoid. Not platform and promote. Not debate forever. Not invite to the conference for balance. Not pretend the differences do not matter. Mark and avoid. Titus 3:10 says, "A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject." That is not popular language, but it is Bible. The body must know when continued engagement is no longer edification but exposure to infection. Some mouths must be stopped. Some influences must be rejected. Some fellowship must end.

This is where sentimental Christianity becomes dangerous. It wants to treat wolves like misunderstood brothers. It says, "We just need more dialogue." Sometimes dialogue is appropriate with the confused, the ignorant, the sincere learner, or the weak brother. But a wolf does not need endless dialogue. He needs to be kept from the flock. Mercy to wolves often becomes cruelty to sheep. If a shepherd lets a wolf stay near the lambs because he wants to appear gracious, he is not loving the lambs. The body needs an immune system that can distinguish between a brother to restore and a predator to resist.

## **Chapter 5: Biblical Correction Is Not Carnal Cruelty**

The fact that the body needs defense does not give men permission to be cruel. Biblical correction is not carnal cruelty. Reproof, rebuke, marking, withdrawing, and purging leaven are Bible commands, but they must be carried out under the Head, according to Scripture, with clean motives. A man can use the right command in the wrong spirit. He can claim to defend the body while feeding his pride. He can rebuke sharply because the Bible permits sharp rebuke in certain cases, but inwardly he may enjoy hurting people. That is not spiritual health. That is the flesh using the immune system like a club.

Correction must be governed by truth and charity. The Bible says to restore one overtaken in a fault in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself. It says to instruct those that oppose themselves with meekness. It says to reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. Those words matter. Longsuffering and doctrine. Meekness and truth. Sharp rebuke where needed, but not fleshly rage. The immune system must fight disease, but it must not attack the body for sport. A man who enjoys exposing, humiliating, condemning, and casting away people should examine whether he is protecting the body or feeding a cruel appetite.

The difference between correction and cruelty is often seen in the goal. Biblical correction seeks repentance, purity, protection, restoration, and obedience to Christ. Carnal cruelty seeks superiority, revenge, control, humiliation, and self-importance. Biblical correction grieves when sin must be dealt with. Carnal cruelty enjoys the show. Biblical correction uses Scripture carefully. Carnal cruelty uses verses as stones. Biblical correction distinguishes wolves from weak sheep. Carnal cruelty treats everyone as prey. The body

needs correction, but it does not need butchers pretending to be surgeons. The knife must be in the hand of one submitted to the Head.

## **Chapter 6: A Diseased Immune System Attacks the Body Itself**

There is another danger: the immune system can become diseased and begin attacking the body itself. Physically, that kind of disorder can be devastating. Spiritually, a believer or group can become so obsessed with fighting infection that they begin treating healthy members like enemies. They become professional heresy hunters with no charity, no patience, no proportion, no joy, and no ability to edify. They suspect everybody, mark everybody, attack everybody, and finally stand alone claiming they are the only healthy cell left. That is not discernment. That is an autoimmune disorder in the body of Christ.

This spirit often begins with real concerns. Maybe the person saw genuine compromise. Maybe he escaped a false system. Maybe he warned others and was ignored. Maybe he has been hurt by corrupt leadership or doctrinal poison. Those experiences can make a person alert, but they can also make him suspicious. If not governed by Scripture and charity, discernment curdles into paranoia. The man begins seeing infection in every difference, every weakness, every immature phrase, every method he dislikes, and every member who does not share his exact emphasis. He mistakes constant attack for faithfulness. He becomes impossible to comfort because peace feels like compromise to him.

The body must reject that counterfeit. The immune system exists to protect the body, not devour it. Discernment should produce health, not endless suspicion. Marking a wolf is not the same as biting every sheep. Purging leaven is not the same as scraping every crumb off the table with a chainsaw. Rebuking sin is not the same as crushing the repentant. The body needs a strong immune system, but it must be a healthy one. It must fight real infection, not imaginary enemies. It must be guided by the Head, not driven by bitterness.

## **Chapter 7: The Immune System Must Remain Under the Head**

The immune system must remain under the Head, because Christ alone rules the body. Defense is necessary, but defense must be obedient defense. The Head determines what is disease and what is health. The Book defines truth and error. The Spirit applies Scripture rightly. The body does not get to invent its own diseases based on tradition, preference, personality, fear, or pride. A healthy immune response begins with submission to Christ. If the Head says something is leaven, purge it. If the Head says restore the repentant, restore him. If the Head says mark and avoid, mark and avoid. If the Head says be patient with the weak, be patient. If the Head says receive one another, receive. The immune system is not autonomous.

This means the body must be careful with authority. Some leaders use “purity” as an excuse to control people. They mark anyone who questions them, call every disagreement rebellion, and use discipline to protect their own throne. That is not Christ’s immune system. That is spiritual tyranny. Others refuse all correction because they fear abuse. That is not health either. The answer to abusive discipline is not no discipline. The answer is biblical discipline under Christ. The Head’s commands must not be rejected because men have misused them. Reproof, rebuke, withdrawal, marking, and purging leaven are still Bible. They must simply be handled in obedience rather than ego.

A healthy immune system under the Head protects the body and preserves its mission. It keeps the gospel clear, the doctrine sound, the fellowship clean, the weak protected, the wolves resisted, the leaven purged, and the repentant restored. It does not exist to create a culture of fear. It exists so the body can live, grow, serve, and glorify Christ. Spiritual health is not passive. It requires resistance to what kills and nourishment of what gives life. The immune system serves the body best when it is strong, discerning, humble, proportionate, and governed by Christ.

## **Conclusion**

The immune system teaches the body of Christ that defense is not optional. A body that refuses to fight infection is not loving. It is dying. False doctrine, sin, leaven, wolves, corruption, and spiritual infection must be identified and dealt with according to Scripture. Paul commanded believers to reprove, rebuke, mark, avoid, withdraw, reject, stop mouths, and purge out leaven when necessary. Those are not mean-spirited commands. They are spiritual health commands. A body that cannot resist infection will eventually be weakened, corrupted, and damaged.

But the immune system also teaches a warning against carnal cruelty. Biblical correction is not the same as fleshly harshness. Discernment is not suspicion. Marking wolves is not biting sheep. Purging leaven is not destroying repentant members. Defending doctrine is not an excuse for pride, bitterness, and self-appointed heresy hunting. An unhealthy immune system can attack the body itself, and some Christians have done exactly that under the banner of purity. The body needs defense, but it needs defense governed by truth, charity, meekness, proportion, and obedience to the Head.

So let the immune system function rightly. Let the body reject false doctrine, resist sin, purge leaven, mark wolves, restore the repentant, and protect the weak. Let it refuse the modern lie that all defense is unloving. Let it also refuse the carnal spirit that turns defense into cruelty. Not everything that enters the body belongs there. The body of Christ needs a healthy immune system because Christ’s body is worth protecting, His gospel is worth

defending, His words are worth preserving, His sheep are worth guarding, and His holiness is worth honoring.

## **29 of 32: One Body - Many Members - The Scars: Marks of Suffering and Proof of Battle**

### **Introduction**

The body of Christ is not a showroom mannequin with polished skin, painted features, and no history. It is a living body, and living bodies carry marks. A mannequin may look flawless because it has never fought, never bled, never fallen, never been corrected, never endured surgery, never stood in battle, never been wounded, and never healed. But a living body that has walked through war, labor, sorrow, service, betrayal, chastening, persecution, and spiritual conflict will not look untouched. It will have scars. Some scars come from open attacks. Some come from private grief. Some come from family wounds. Some come from ministry battles. Some come from failure and restoration. Some come from betrayal by people who were supposed to love. Some come from the painful surgery of God's correction. Some come from carrying burdens too long without help. Some come from standing in places where lesser men ran away. A scar is not always shame. Sometimes it is proof that a wound did not finish you.

The Bible does not present a painless faith. Paul said in Galatians 6:17, "From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." That was not religious poetry from a man who had lived a soft life behind a desk. Paul had been beaten, stoned, whipped, hunted, slandered, imprisoned, betrayed, misunderstood, wearied, burdened, and pressed beyond measure. His body carried marks. His ministry carried scars. His heart carried the care of all the churches. And yet those marks were not proof that God had abandoned him. They were proof that he had been in the fight. They were proof that following Christ had cost him something. They were proof that the gospel he preached was not a theory he discussed in comfort, but a truth for which he suffered. A scar can preach when the mouth is silent. It says, "I was wounded here, but I am still here."

The greatest example is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. After His resurrection, He did not appear as a vague spiritual idea, nor as a sanitized religious symbol with all evidence of suffering erased. He showed His hands and His side. John 20 records Him saying to Thomas, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands." The resurrected Christ still bore the marks of the crucifixion. That ought to settle forever the idea that scars are automatically disgrace. In His case, the wounds are glory. The marks are testimony. The scars declare redemption. If the Head of the body carries visible proof of suffering, then the

members should not despise one another because they carry marks from the road. The body should not shame scarred members. It should learn from them, honor what God brought them through, and remember that healed wounds can become witnesses to grace.

## **Chapter 1: Scars Prove There Was a Real Wound**

A scar begins with a wound. That sounds simple, but it matters. Some people want to rush past suffering and talk only about victory, as though acknowledging the wound somehow weakens faith. That is not Bible. A scar says something really happened. The cut was real. The blow was real. The fire was real. The surgery was real. The injury was not imaginary. In the body of Christ, many believers carry real wounds from betrayal, family sorrow, church trouble, spiritual warfare, grief, failure, rejection, abuse, disappointment, and years of hidden pressure. Telling them to “just get over it” is often the language of people who have never had to be sewn up in that place. Scars prove that pain was not theoretical.

The Lord does not require His people to pretend wounds were not wounds. David cried out in the Psalms with anguish. Jeremiah lamented. Paul spoke honestly of being troubled on every side, perplexed, persecuted, cast down, and pressed out of measure. The Bible is not a plastic religious sales brochure where everyone smiles through devastation and calls it faith. God allows His people to speak truthfully about sorrow, as long as they speak truthfully before Him. A scarred believer does not have to act like betrayal did not hurt, grief did not break something, persecution did not cost, or failure did not leave a mark. The wound was real. The scar admits it.

But a scar also says the wound is not bleeding like it once did. That is important. Some people do not have scars yet; they have open wounds. They are still bleeding, still infected, still tender, still needing care. The body should not treat an open wound like a healed scar. Open wounds need cleansing, truth, mercy, protection, and sometimes correction. A scar is different. It is healed tissue, but it still marks the place where pain entered. It may still ache in certain weather. It may still remind the body of what happened. But it is no longer bleeding out. That is one of the mercies of God: He does not merely acknowledge wounds; He can bring healing until the wound becomes a scar and the scar becomes a testimony.

## **Chapter 2: Scars Are Not Always Shame**

Some scars are shameful in their cause, but even those can become testimony to mercy when God heals and restores. Other scars are not shameful at all. They come from faithfulness, endurance, persecution, sacrifice, and battle. Paul’s marks were not marks of disgrace. They were marks of service. The soldier who returns from battle with scars is not mocked by men who understand war. The laborer with calloused and scarred hands is not ashamed before men who understand work. The mother with marks from childbirth and

sacrifice is not less honorable because love cost her body something. Likewise, believers who bear marks from standing for truth, carrying burdens, enduring persecution, surviving betrayal, and continuing after suffering should not be treated as damaged goods.

The devil loves to turn scars into shame. He points to the mark and says, “You are ruined. You are disqualified. You are ugly now. You are not what you used to be. People will never see you the same way. God cannot use you like before.” That is a lie. A scar may mean you are not untouched, but untouched is not the same as useful. In fact, some of the most useful saints in the body are scarred saints. They have been through enough to stop speaking in theories. They know what grief feels like. They know what betrayal does. They know how failure humbles. They know how correction burns. They know how grace restores. They know how the Lord sustains when human strength is gone. Their scars have made them less shallow and more able to help others.

This does not mean scars should be paraded for pity or used as an identity greater than Christ. Some people build a throne out of their wounds and make everyone bow before their pain. That is not healing. That is bondage. But neither should scars be hidden as though all suffering is disgrace. A healed scar can say, “God brought me through.” It can say, “This hurt, but Christ was faithful.” It can say, “I learned something here that comfort never taught me.” It can say, “Do not make the mistake I made,” or “Do not fear the battle I survived.” A scar under Christ’s authority becomes a witness, not a prison.

### **Chapter 3: The Resurrected Christ Still Showed His Wounds**

The wounds of the Lord Jesus Christ are the holiest scars in history. After His resurrection, He still showed His hands and side. He did not need to keep those marks because of weakness. He kept them as testimony. They identify Him as the crucified and risen Christ. They declare the price of redemption. They silence doubt. They show that resurrection did not erase the history of sacrifice; it glorified it. Thomas had said he would not believe unless he saw the print of the nails and thrust his hand into the side. The Lord answered by showing him the marks. The scars preached: the One who died is alive.

That truth is enormous for the body of Christ. The Head of the body is not a stranger to wounds. He was betrayed, mocked, struck, scourged, crowned with thorns, nailed to a cross, pierced, and buried. He knows what it is to suffer unjustly. He knows what it is to be rejected by His own. He knows what it is to have friends flee. He knows what it is to be misunderstood, lied about, hated without a cause, and wounded in obedience. Therefore, no scarred member of His body comes to a scarless Head who cannot understand. Hebrews says we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our

infirmities. The scarred believer comes to the wounded Saviour, and that changes everything.

The wounds of Christ also keep our scars in perspective. His wounds are redemptive in a way ours never can be. We do not save anyone by our suffering. We do not atone for sin by our scars. We do not purchase redemption through our pain. Only His blood does that. But because His wounds purchased us, our wounds can be brought under His lordship and used for His glory. He can take what hurt us and make it serve. He can take what marked us and make it instructive. He can take what the devil meant for destruction and turn it into ministry. The scars of the Head give hope to the scars of the members.

#### **Chapter 4: Paul's Marks Were Proof of Battle**

Paul said, "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." That statement came from a man who had been through battle. Second Corinthians 11 reads like a war record: stripes, prisons, deaths oft, five times receiving forty stripes save one, thrice beaten with rods, once stoned, thrice shipwrecked, perils of waters, robbers, countrymen, heathen, city, wilderness, sea, false brethren, weariness, painfulness, watchings, hunger, thirst, fastings, cold, nakedness, and the care of all the churches. That was not a comfortable religious career. Paul paid dearly for the truth he preached. His body carried evidence that the gospel had enemies and that he did not run when they struck him.

This should rebuke the soft idea that faithfulness always looks polished, prosperous, comfortable, and applauded. Sometimes faithfulness looks scarred. Sometimes the man who has been faithful has fewer friends, more wounds, deeper lines on his face, and a history that cannot be summarized in a ministry brochure. The battle leaves marks. A preacher who has stood for truth may carry scars from slander. A missionary may carry scars from loneliness. A father may carry scars from family burdens. A mother may carry scars from silent sacrifice. A soul winner may carry scars from rejection. A saint who came out of false doctrine may carry scars from spiritual confusion and loss. Battle marks are not always visible, but they are real.

Paul's marks also gave weight to his words. He was not a pampered theorist telling others to suffer from a safe distance. He had suffered. He had endured. He had stayed faithful. When such a man speaks about grace, endurance, affliction, comfort, and glory, the words have blood in them. The body should learn from scarred members because they often possess a kind of wisdom unscarred talkers lack. They know what survives fire. They know what collapses under pressure. They know the difference between slogans and sustaining truth. The body should not despise them because they are marked. It should listen when those marks have been healed under Christ.

## **Chapter 5: Scars Can Make a Member Tender Toward the Wounded**

A scar can make a believer more merciful if it is healed rightly. A man who remembers pain may be slower to mock the hurting. A woman who has survived grief may know how to sit with someone who cannot speak. A believer who has been betrayed may know how to comfort another who feels abandoned. A saint restored after failure may know how to help another fallen believer without excusing sin or crushing repentance. Scars can teach tenderness. Second Corinthians 1 says God comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. That is scar ministry.

The body needs members like that. Some saints are not helped by lectures from people who have never bled in that place. They need truth, yes, but sometimes they need truth from someone whose voice carries the weight of having survived. A scarred member can say, "I know this hurts, but God can carry you." He can say, "Do not let bitterness take root; I know what that temptation feels like." He can say, "Repent and get up; failure is not the end if you bring it to the Lord." He can say, "You may not feel strong now, but grace is sufficient." Such words are not sentimental. They are earned through suffering and grounded in Scripture.

But scars can also make a person hard if not healed rightly. Pain can produce mercy, or it can produce suspicion. Betrayal can produce wisdom, or it can produce bitterness. Failure can produce humility, or it can produce self-pity. Persecution can produce boldness, or it can produce anger. The difference is whether the scar has been brought under Christ. An unhealed wound often infects others. A healed scar can help others heal. The body needs scarred members who let God turn suffering into ministry, not scarred members who make pain an excuse to wound everyone else.

## **Chapter 6: Scars Remind the Body That Healing Is Possible**

A scar is not merely a record of injury. It is evidence of healing. The wound did not remain open. The bleeding stopped. New tissue formed. The body survived. That is a message of hope. Some believers in the middle of suffering think they will never be whole again. They think the grief will always be as raw as it is today. They think the betrayal will always bleed. They think the failure will always define them. They think the ministry wound will never close. But scars testify that wounds can heal. They may leave marks, but they do not have to keep bleeding forever.

This does not mean healing is instant. Some wounds take time. Deep wounds often require cleansing, protection, rest, truth, confession, forgiveness, and patient care. Some require the painful removal of infection. Some require the Lord's chastening. Some require a long

season of learning how to walk again without favoring the injured place. The body should be patient with wounded members in the healing process. Do not demand that a deep wound become a neat scar overnight. At the same time, wounded members must not refuse healing because pain has become familiar. Christ is able to heal. Grace is not only for the day of salvation. It is for the long work of restoration.

Scars also remind us that healing does not always mean no memory. Some scars remain visible. Some ache when pressure changes. Some remind a person where he must be careful. That does not mean healing failed. It means history remains, but it no longer rules. A healed scar may warn a believer away from old dangers, deepen his compassion, and strengthen his testimony. God does not always erase the mark. Sometimes He redeems it. The body should make room for that. We do not need to pretend scars are not there. We need to see what God has done through them.

### **Chapter 7: The Body Should Learn From Scarred Members**

The body should not despise scarred members. It should learn from them. A scarred saint who has walked with God through suffering carries lessons that cannot be bought cheaply. He may know things about grace, endurance, forgiveness, spiritual warfare, prayer, betrayal, restoration, and hope that a smoother saint does not yet understand. That does not make him superior. It makes him useful in a particular way. A veteran of battle should not be worshipped, but neither should he be dismissed because he limps. Sometimes the limp is proof he survived something that would have killed a novice.

Scarred members can teach the body realism. They know the Christian life is not a picnic with hymns in the background. They know sin wounds, false doctrine destroys, people fail, churches can hurt, families can break hearts, and ministry can cost. But if they are healthy in Christ, they also know God is faithful, the Book holds, grace sustains, prayer matters, and the Lord can bring a man through. That combination is powerful. They are not naïve, but they are not hopeless. They do not sell fantasy, but they do not preach despair. They can tell the truth about the wound and the truth about the Healer.

The body should also learn how to honor scars without making idols of suffering. Some people want to turn scars into credentials that put them beyond correction. That is wrong. A scarred member still needs the Head, the Book, correction, charity, and fellowship. Pain does not make a man infallible. But scars can give a member a needed voice if they have been sanctified by truth. The body should listen wisely, comfort tenderly, and recognize that not all marks are shame. Some are proof of battle. Some are proof of survival. Some are proof that God can heal what the devil meant to destroy.

### **Conclusion**

The scars teach us that the body of Christ has a history. It is not a plastic religious display with no wounds, no battles, no grief, and no marks. It is a living body that has suffered, endured, been corrected, fought, failed, healed, and continued. Paul bore in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus. The risen Christ Himself showed His wounds. That means scars are not automatically shame. Sometimes they are testimony. Sometimes they are proof that the wound did not win. Sometimes they declare that God brought a man through what should have destroyed him.

This should comfort believers carrying scars from betrayal, ministry battles, family wounds, failures, persecution, grief, and spiritual warfare. Your scar may hurt. It may remind you of a hard chapter. It may mark a place where you were cut deeply. But under Christ, it does not have to define you as ruined. It can become part of your testimony to grace. A healed scar can make you wiser, gentler, stronger, more discerning, more patient, and more useful to others. The wound was real, but so was the healing. The battle was real, but so was the Lord's sustaining hand.

So let the body stop despising scarred members. Let it learn from those who have endured. Let it care for open wounds, honor healed scars, and refuse to shame what God has redeemed. Let scarred saints bring their marks under the authority of Christ instead of letting pain become bitterness. Let the Head, who still bears the marks of redemption, teach the members how suffering can be transformed into testimony. The body of Christ is not beautiful because it has never been wounded. It is beautiful because the Lord can heal wounds, preserve His members, and turn scars into proof that grace is stronger than what tried to destroy them.

## **30 of 32: One Body - Many Members - The Feeble Members: Necessary, Honored, and Not Forgotten**

### **Introduction**

Paul says something in 1 Corinthians 12 that ought to stop every proud mouth in Christianity. He says, "Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary." Not optional. Not decorative. Not sentimental extras. Not tolerated burdens. Necessary. That one word is a thunderclap against the celebrity spirit, the platform spirit, the talent-measuring spirit, the money-counting spirit, the charisma-worshipping spirit, and the religious pecking order that values people by how visible, loud, gifted, polished, impressive, or useful they appear to men. God looks at the body differently than men do. Men look for the strong arm, the sharp eye, the speaking mouth, the visible

face, the working hand, and the powerful shoulder. God looks at the feeble member and says, “Necessary.” That word should humble the strong, comfort the weak, and correct the whole body’s way of thinking.

The feeble members represent those who seem weak, unimpressive, limited, wounded, elderly, young, poor, struggling, quiet, socially awkward, physically restricted, emotionally tender, spiritually young, publicly unknown, or less outwardly useful. They may not preach. They may not lead. They may not write books. They may not stand behind a pulpit. They may not carry large public responsibility. They may not have money, influence, confidence, education, polish, or strength. They may be the elderly saint sitting quietly in the back, the young believer asking simple questions, the poor member who gives little but prays much, the wounded brother who can barely stand, the struggling sister who keeps showing up, the child learning the Scriptures, the quiet servant who never draws attention, the disabled saint who cannot do what others can, or the discouraged believer whose very presence teaches the body how to love. Men may overlook them, but God does not.

This essay must rebuke the modern religious habit of valuing members by visibility. Christianity has been infected with a celebrity scale of worth. If a man can speak, sing, influence, attract crowds, raise money, produce content, lead programs, build a following, or look good on a platform, people assume he is vital. If a member is weak, needy, quiet, limited, slow, wounded, or hidden, people may treat him as a burden. Paul’s doctrine burns that thinking to ashes. The body is not a talent show. It is not a corporation. It is not a stage production. It is not a marketing machine. It is a living body under Christ, and God has placed members in that body as it pleased Him. The feeble members are not forgotten by the Head. They are necessary, and the body must learn to bestow honor where men are tempted to withhold it.

## **Chapter 1: Paul Says the Feeble Members Are Necessary**

The word “necessary” is the heart of the matter. Paul does not say the feeble members are merely sweet to have around, useful for teaching sentimental lessons, or included so the strong can feel charitable. He says they are necessary. That means the body is incomplete in its practical function without them. God designed the body in such a way that the members which seem less impressive to men may be essential to the spiritual health of the whole. A feeble member may not carry the heaviest load, but he may teach the body patience. He may not speak publicly, but he may teach the body compassion. He may not lead, but he may teach the body humility. He may not produce visible results, but he may draw out charity in other members. In God’s design, that is not wasted.

This destroys the proud assumption that usefulness is measured only by output. The world measures a man by productivity, strength, influence, money, appearance, speed, efficiency, and public contribution. The body of Christ must not be conformed to that thinking. A member may be necessary not because he can do what others do, but because his presence requires the body to become more like Christ. Weakness can expose whether the strong are truly charitable. Limitation can reveal whether the body values people only for performance. Need can reveal whether love is real. A feeble member may become God's instrument to test the health of the whole body. That is necessary in a deeper way than men usually understand.

The strong should tremble before this truth. The eye has no right to say to the hand, "I have no need of thee," and the strong have no right to say to the feeble, "We have no need of you." God says otherwise. If God calls a member necessary, who is man to call him disposable? If Christ purchased that member with His blood, who is man to treat him as an inconvenience? If the Spirit placed that member in the body, who is man to push him into the corner because he does not shine? The proud Christian needs to learn the vocabulary of the Holy Ghost. The word is necessary.

## **Chapter 2: Feeble Does Not Mean Worthless**

The word "feeble" speaks of weakness in appearance, strength, or function, but it does not mean worthless. That distinction matters. A member may be feeble and still precious. A baby is feeble, but not worthless. An elderly saint may be physically weak, but not worthless. A wounded soldier may be unable to fight for a season, but not worthless. A struggling believer may need help, but not worthless. Weakness does not erase value. Limitation does not erase dignity. The body must stop confusing strength with worth. The blood of Christ, the placement of God, and membership in the body give the believer a dignity that public usefulness alone cannot measure.

This is especially important for saints who feel useless because they cannot do what others do. Some believers are painfully aware of their limitations. They look at the preacher and think, "I cannot speak like that." They look at the worker and think, "I cannot serve like that." They look at the strong and think, "I cannot carry like that." They look at the knowledgeable and think, "I cannot explain like that." Then they conclude they must not matter. That is false judgment. The foot should not say, "Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body." Paul already answered that. Different function does not mean no function. Feebleness in one area does not mean uselessness in the body.

The body needs to speak truth to feeble members without flattering them. We should not pretend weakness is strength in the same way. A feeble member may indeed be limited. He

may need help. He may not be able to carry certain burdens. He may require patience. But that does not make him worthless. In fact, God may use his limitation to display grace in a way strength cannot. Paul learned that Christ's strength is made perfect in weakness. That does not glorify weakness as an idol; it glorifies Christ as sufficient in weakness. The feeble member should not despise himself, and the strong member should not despise him either.

### **Chapter 3: Feeble Members Teach the Body Patience**

Feeble members teach the body patience because they often require time, care, repetition, gentleness, and endurance. A strong, efficient, fleshly-minded group may resent that. It wants everything fast, smooth, productive, and measurable. But the body of Christ is not a factory assembly line. It is a living body with living members, and some members require patient care. The young believer may need the same truth repeated. The wounded saint may need time to heal. The elderly member may move slowly. The struggling brother may need steady encouragement. The child may need teaching again and again. Feeble members slow the body down in ways that can be frustrating to pride, but sanctifying to charity.

Patience is not a small virtue. First Corinthians 13 says charity suffereth long. Colossians 3 connects bowels of mercies with longsuffering. First Thessalonians 5:14 says to "support the weak, be patient toward all men." That verse is not written for decorative religion. Supporting the weak requires patience. A body that has no time for the weak has no time for Bible charity. It may be efficient, but it is not Christlike. The Lord is patient with His people. Any honest believer knows God has repeated lessons to him many times. God has borne with his slowness, corrected his folly, restored his steps, and shown mercy when he should have known better. A man who has received that patience should be careful about refusing it to others.

Feeble members therefore become instruments of God to teach the body longsuffering. They expose whether the strong are truly serving or merely performing. It is easy to look charitable when helping costs nothing. It is easy to sound compassionate when the weak do not inconvenience us. But when patience is required, the truth comes out. Do we love members, or do we only love usefulness? Do we value people, or do we value smooth operation? Do we bear infirmities, or do we resent them? The feeble member may teach the whole body how little charity it actually has and how much it still needs to learn.

### **Chapter 4: Feeble Members Teach the Body Compassion**

The feeble members also teach compassion. A body with no weak members may become impressed with its own strength. It may become hard, proud, and efficient in a cold way.

Weakness in the body calls forth mercy. It reminds the strong that not everyone can carry the same load. Not everyone heals at the same speed. Not everyone speaks with the same confidence. Not everyone has the same health, background, family support, education, temperament, or experience. Compassion sees the member, not just the limitation. It asks, “How can this member be cared for, honored, strengthened, and included according to truth?”

The Lord Jesus Christ was moved with compassion. That is not weakness. That is divine character displayed in flesh. He did not despise the blind, lame, leprous, grieving, hungry, broken, or fearful. He did not treat need as an interruption to ministry. He often made the needy person the point of the moment. That should correct the body. Sometimes the feeble member is not in the way of ministry; he is the ministry. The child needing instruction, the elderly saint needing a visit, the wounded believer needing comfort, the poor member needing help, the confused saint needing patient teaching—these are not distractions from the body’s purpose. They are part of the body’s purpose.

Compassion must still be governed by truth. It is not compassionate to leave a weak member in sin, error, or bondage. It is not compassionate to enable irresponsibility or excuse rebellion under the label of weakness. But it is also not truthful to treat every weakness as rebellion. A bruised reed is not the same as a wolf. A babe is not the same as a deceiver. A wounded sheep is not the same as a proud rebel. The body needs compassion with discernment. Feeble members help teach that difference. They remind the body that mercy is not a doctrine to be admired from a distance, but a practice to be lived among real people.

## **Chapter 5: Feeble Members Rebuke the Celebrity Spirit**

The feeble members stand as a rebuke to the celebrity spirit in Christianity. Modern religious culture loves the visible, the talented, the charismatic, the attractive, the wealthy, the platformed, the polished, and the impressive. It measures value by followers, views, invitations, offerings, book sales, music streams, conference slots, and public applause. That spirit is worldly to the core. It is not the body of Christ thinking according to 1 Corinthians 12. Paul says God gives more abundant honor to the part which lacked. Men heap honor on the visible. God teaches the body to honor the overlooked. That is a direct contradiction of religious celebrity culture.

Celebrity Christianity is dangerous because it trains the body to value members by marketability. A preacher with charisma is honored more than a praying widow. A singer with talent is noticed more than a faithful nursery worker. A wealthy donor is treated with more care than a poor saint. A polished teacher is valued more than a quiet burden-bearer.

A platformed personality is defended more quickly than a wounded member. That is not the body functioning under Christ. That is a religious corporation deciding which parts produce the most visible return. Paul's doctrine rebukes that entire system. The feeble members are necessary.

The body must consciously resist this spirit. Honor the preacher where honor is due, but do not worship the mouth. Appreciate the teacher, but do not forget the feeble member. Thank the worker, but remember the elderly saint. Use gifts, but do not measure worth by gifts. A church that values only public usefulness becomes cruel without knowing it. A ministry that honors only talent becomes sick. God often hides some of His most precious work in members the crowd barely notices. The feeble member may never trend, but heaven sees him. The feeble member may never be invited to speak, but God uses him to teach the body what love actually is.

### **Chapter 6: Feeble Members Need Honor, Not Pity Alone**

Paul says the body bestows more abundant honor upon the parts that lacked. That means feeble members do not merely need pity. They need honor. Pity alone can become condescending. Honor recognizes dignity. The body should not look at the weak member and say, "Poor thing, we tolerate you." It should say, "You are part of the body. Christ bought you. God placed you. You are necessary. You have dignity here." That difference matters. Many feeble members already feel like burdens. They do not need the body to confirm that fear by treating them as projects rather than members.

Honor may be shown in many practical ways. Listening. Including. Visiting. Teaching patiently. Making room. Protecting from being overlooked. Speaking respectfully. Not mocking limitations. Not rushing the slow. Not embarrassing the weak. Not measuring everyone by the same visible output. Praying for them and with them. Allowing them to contribute where they can. Receiving from them the lessons God teaches through them. Honor is not flattery. It is biblical recognition of value. A feeble member may not be able to do what a strong member does, but he can still be honored as necessary.

This kind of honor also protects the body from partiality. James rebukes the spirit that gives a good seat to the rich man and neglects the poor. That spirit is alive and well in many forms. People may not say it openly, but they often honor those who can benefit them and neglect those who cannot. The feeble member exposes whether the body loves people for what they can give back. If a member cannot increase the budget, platform, reputation, efficiency, or visible strength of the group, will he still be honored? Paul says yes. God says yes. The body must say yes.

### **Chapter 7: Feeble Members Display the Grace of Christ**

Feeble members can display the grace of Christ in ways strong members cannot. Weakness makes room for grace to be seen. A struggling saint who keeps trusting God may preach endurance without a pulpit. An elderly believer who can do little but pray may show dependence better than the busy worker. A poor believer who gives with joy may rebuke the rich. A wounded member who forgives may display Christlikeness more deeply than a gifted speaker. A child who believes simply may shame adult pride. A quiet saint who remains faithful in obscurity may reveal a purity of service that the platformed man has never learned. Grace shines in weakness when the weakness is brought under Christ.

Paul learned to glory in infirmities, not because pain itself is pleasant, but because the power of Christ rested upon him. That is the key. The feeble member is not necessary because weakness is automatically holy. Weakness can become bitterness, self-pity, manipulation, or excuse-making if not brought under God. But weakness surrendered to Christ becomes a place where grace is displayed. The body sees that usefulness is not limited to human strength. It sees that Christ can sustain the limited, comfort the wounded, strengthen the trembling, and use the hidden. It sees that God's power is not dependent on the flesh's impressive qualities.

The feeble member also reminds the body of its own dependence. Strong members are not as self-sufficient as they think. Health can fail. Strength can diminish. Public usefulness can change. Youth passes. Money disappears. Platforms collapse. Voices weaken. Hands tremble. Backs bend. Every strong member is closer to feebleness than pride wants to admit. The feeble member is not a different species. He is a reminder that all members live by grace. The body should learn from him before it becomes him. And if it does become him, it should know there is still honor in Christ.

## **Conclusion**

The feeble members teach one of the most humbling truths in the doctrine of the body: those members which seem to be more feeble are necessary. That word should silence pride. Necessary. Not optional. Not decorative. Not disposable. Not merely tolerated. Necessary. The body of Christ is not measured by visibility, talent, money, charisma, platform, or applause. It is measured by God's design under the Head. The quiet, weak, wounded, elderly, young, poor, struggling, limited, and overlooked members matter deeply to God and should matter deeply to the body. Christ bought them with the same blood. God placed them in the same body. Paul called them necessary.

This truth rebukes the celebrity spirit that has infected modern Christianity. The body is not a stage where the impressive members perform and the weak are hidden in the shadows. It is a living organism where God gives honor according to His wisdom, often in direct

contradiction to man's preferences. The feeble member may teach patience, compassion, dependence, humility, mercy, and love in ways the strong member never could. The body that despises feeble members exposes its sickness. The body that honors them shows it is learning the mind of Christ.

So let the feeble members be remembered, honored, protected, included, and loved. Let the strong bear with them without pride. Let the visible make room for them without condescension. Let the body stop measuring worth by usefulness to a program and start measuring by God's placement and Christ's purchase. The feeble member may not shine before men, but he is necessary before God. And a body that forgets its necessary members has forgotten how the Head values His own.

## **31 of 32: One Body - Many Members - The Uncomely Parts: Honor Where the World Sees No Glory**

### **Introduction**

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:23-24, "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. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked." That is one of the great reversals in the doctrine of the body. Men naturally honor what is visible, polished, attractive, impressive, powerful, gifted, platformed, wealthy, and publicly successful. God looks at the body differently. He sees the hidden parts. He sees the parts men cover. He sees the members that do not receive public admiration. He sees the private burdens, quiet sacrifices, unnoticed ministries, shame-covered labors, and faithful obedience that never make it onto a platform. And God says He has tempered the body together in such a way that more abundant honor is given to the part which lacked. That should make every celebrity-minded Christian tremble and every hidden servant take courage.

The uncomely parts represent the ministries and members that are necessary but not celebrated. They are not the face everybody sees, the mouth everybody hears, the hands everybody notices, or the feet everybody praises for going. They may be the members who clean up after everyone leaves, care for sick family members, pray alone, give quietly, endure private grief, forgive unseen injuries, hold a marriage together in tears, raise children in obscurity, serve an elderly parent, support a ministry financially without recognition, counsel a broken saint in private, sit beside a hospital bed, cover a repentant

brother's shame, or carry burdens too delicate to explain. Their service is often covered, not because it is unimportant, but because it is too sacred, too private, too tender, or too unshowy for public display. The world sees no glory there. God does.

This essay must remind the body that God's scale of honor is not the world's scale. The world honors beauty, platform, polish, money, power, speed, talent, influence, applause, and public success. God honors faithfulness, humility, suffering, service, endurance, sacrifice, hidden obedience, and love done in secret. Some of the most valuable saints in the body will never trend, never headline a conference, never write a bestseller, never receive a public award, and never be called important by men. But the Judgment Seat of Christ will tell the truth. Many unknown saints may be revealed as having carried more weight, shown more charity, prayed more faithfully, served more purely, and honored Christ more deeply than famous men whose names filled the earth. The uncomely parts teach us that hidden does not mean worthless, covered does not mean shameful, and unnoticed does not mean unrewarded.

### **Chapter 1: God Gives Honor Where Men Withhold It**

The first lesson from the uncomely parts is that God gives honor where men often withhold it. Paul says God has tempered the body together, "having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked." That means God Himself compensates for the lack of visible admiration. Men naturally gravitate toward the comely parts. They notice what shines. They applaud what performs. They follow what impresses. They promote what benefits them. But God deliberately arranges the body so that parts lacking public honor receive more abundant honor in His reckoning. That is not sentimental talk. That is doctrine. God does not judge the body by the same shallow sight men use.

This should correct how believers view hidden service. If a member is not publicly admired, that does not mean God sees him as lesser. If a ministry is not platformed, that does not mean it is unimportant. If a sacrifice is covered and private, that does not mean it is forgotten. God is not limited to the public record. He sees the prayer closet. He sees the hospital room. He sees the kitchen table. He sees the late-night tears. He sees the quiet check written by a saint who had little. He sees the mother doing holy work while nobody calls it ministry. He sees the father bearing pressure while nobody asks how heavy it is. He sees the old saint who cannot do much outwardly but keeps praying. He sees what men ignore.

This truth also rebukes the proud members who think public honor equals divine approval. A man may be applauded by thousands and be little in God's eyes. Another may be ignored by nearly everyone and be precious in God's service. Visibility is not the same as

faithfulness. Popularity is not the same as spiritual weight. Talent is not the same as holiness. Influence is not the same as reward. God gives honor where men withhold it, and He may withhold honor where men lavish it. The body must learn to honor according to God's wisdom, not according to the world's spotlight.

## **Chapter 2: Hidden Service Is Still Holy Service**

Hidden service is still holy service when it is done unto the Lord. Colossians 3:23 says, "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men." That verse pulls ordinary, unseen, thankless work into the presence of God. Whatever ye do. That includes more than preaching, teaching, singing, leading, and public ministry. It includes cleaning, cooking, caregiving, preparing, organizing, praying, giving, comforting, correcting children, visiting the sick, helping the elderly, writing private encouragements, and doing necessary work nobody claps for. If it is done heartily as unto the Lord, it is not wasted. It has eternal significance because it is offered to Christ.

This matters because many hidden servants become discouraged. They think, "Nobody notices. Nobody thanks me. Nobody understands what this costs. Nobody knows how tired I am. Nobody sees how much of my life is spent doing things that disappear by tomorrow." A meal is eaten and gone. A room is cleaned and dirtied again. A child is taught and needs teaching again. A sick person is cared for and still needs care tomorrow. A private burden is carried and nobody hears about it. That kind of work can feel invisible. But God sees the heart, the labor, the sacrifice, the patience, and the motive. The hidden servant must learn to work before the eyes of Christ, not the applause of men.

Hidden service also purifies motive. Public ministry brings public temptations. Hidden service strips much of that away. When nobody sees, why keep serving? When nobody praises, why keep giving? When nobody knows, why keep praying? When nobody claps, why keep cleaning, helping, bearing, and caring? The answer reveals the motive. If the work is done for recognition, hiddenness will kill it. If the work is done for Christ, hiddenness becomes a sanctuary. The uncomely parts teach the body that some of the purest service may be the service done where only God is watching.

## **Chapter 3: Some Service Must Be Covered to Preserve Dignity**

The uncomely parts are not displayed publicly. They are covered. That covering is not contempt; it is care. In the body of Christ, some ministries and burdens are covered because public exposure would be improper, harmful, or dishonoring. Not all service should be advertised. Not all wounds should be displayed. Not all acts of mercy should become stories. Not all burdens should be turned into illustrations. Not all repentance

should be paraded. Not all private struggles should be made public for the sake of appearing transparent. There is a holy dignity in covering what should be covered.

This is desperately needed in a culture that turns everything into content. People are tempted to broadcast every act of service, every emotional moment, every private burden, every charitable deed, and every suffering saint as though nothing is real until it has been seen. That spirit can be wicked. The Lord warned in Matthew 6 against doing alms before men to be seen of them. Some mercy should happen quietly. Some giving should be secret. Some care should protect the dignity of the one helped. Some restoration should be covered with charity after truth has done its work. A body that exposes everything becomes grotesque. A body with proper covering is healthy.

Covering does not mean hiding wickedness that must be judged. That distinction is critical. There is a difference between covering a repentant brother's shame and covering a wolf's corruption. There is a difference between protecting privacy and enabling abuse. There is a difference between discretion and conspiracy. Biblical covering is governed by truth and charity. It protects what should not be needlessly exposed while refusing to shield active corruption that endangers the body. The uncomely parts teach us that honor sometimes looks like covering, not displaying. More abundant comeliness may be shown by guarding dignity rather than turning private things into public spectacle.

#### **Chapter 4: Unseen Burdens Often Carry Great Spiritual Weight**

Some of the heaviest burdens in the body are unseen. The public may see a believer sitting quietly, serving faithfully, or smiling politely, but they may know nothing of the weight being carried. A mother may carry concern for a child. A father may carry financial and spiritual pressure. A widow may carry loneliness. A caregiver may carry exhaustion. A preacher may carry grief over souls. A teacher may carry fear of mishandling the Book. A quiet saint may carry sickness, betrayal, depression, family trouble, or years of disappointment. The body often sees the outer surface and misses the hidden load. God sees the load.

Unseen burdens can produce deep spiritual fruit when carried before the Lord. They can teach dependence, patience, prayer, compassion, endurance, and humility. A person who has carried hidden weight may become more careful with others. He may stop assuming that a calm face means an easy life. He may learn to speak gently because he knows people are carrying things they have not explained. He may become less impressed with loud confidence and more sensitive to quiet faithfulness. Hidden burdens can make a saint deep if they do not make him bitter. They can make him merciful if they do not make him resentful.

The body should learn to bear one another's burdens without requiring every burden to become public. Galatians 6:2 says, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." Sometimes that means practical help. Sometimes prayer. Sometimes listening. Sometimes giving. Sometimes protection. Sometimes simply not adding weight through careless judgment. The uncomely parts remind us that not all significant burdens are visible, and not all faithful burden-bearers will explain what they carry. The body should be tender enough to honor hidden weight without prying into what God has not entrusted to public knowledge.

## **Chapter 5: The World's Honor System Is Upside Down**

The world's honor system is almost completely upside down. It honors the attractive, wealthy, famous, successful, loud, entertaining, and powerful. It values people by marketability. It asks, "How many follow you? How much money do you produce? How influential are you? How polished do you look? How impressive is your gift? How much attention can you draw?" That spirit has invaded much of Christianity. Churches and ministries often honor the same things the world honors, only with Bible words sprinkled on top. The talented performer is honored. The wealthy donor is honored. The platformed speaker is honored. The charismatic leader is honored. The hidden servant is used and forgotten.

Paul's doctrine demolishes that system. God gives more abundant honor to the part which lacked. That does not mean public gifts should be despised. A preacher who labors faithfully is worthy of honor. A teacher who handles the Book well should be valued. A leader who carries weight should be respected. But public function must not become the only measure of honor. The world already does that. The body of Christ must be different. It must see the old saint praying alone, the quiet servant cleaning up, the poor member giving sacrificially, the caregiver exhausted from hidden labor, the wounded believer still standing, and say, "There is honor here."

The Judgment Seat of Christ will overturn many human rankings. Some famous names may shrink when tested by fire. Some unknown names may shine. Some applauded works may burn. Some hidden works may remain. Some who received their reward before men may have little left. Some who served quietly unto Christ may receive open honor from the Lord Himself. That day should govern how we think now. Do not envy the visible. Do not despise the hidden. Do not measure value by applause. God's honor system is not upside down; ours is when it disagrees with His.

## **Chapter 6: Uncomely Parts Teach Humility to the Whole Body**

The uncomely parts teach humility because they remind the body that not everything valuable is attractive, visible, or publicly admired. They force the body to slow down and consider what God considers. They rebuke pride in appearance, platform, and giftedness. They teach the strong that they are not the whole body. They teach the visible that they depend on hidden service. They teach the honored that honor is a stewardship, not a right to boast. They teach the body that the members most likely to be overlooked by men may be deliberately honored by God.

This humility is necessary because the body can become vain. It can admire its own public face, its speaking mouth, its strong hands, its moving feet, and its impressive gifts, while forgetting the hidden parts that make health possible. A church may celebrate its preacher and forget its prayer warriors. A ministry may promote its public work and forget the workers who made it possible. A family may notice the breadwinner and forget the caregiver. A group may honor the one who speaks and forget the one who suffers quietly. The uncomely parts expose that pride. They ask, “Do you value what God values, or only what benefits your image?”

Humility also teaches members to accept hidden assignments without resentment. Not every role will be public. Not every obedience will be recognized now. Not every sacrifice will be understood. If God has placed a member in hidden service, that member must not despise the assignment. Hidden does not mean useless. Covered does not mean inferior. Uncomely in man’s eyes may carry abundant honor in God’s. The servant must learn to say, “Lord, if Thou seest, that is enough.” That is not easy, but it is holy. The body needs members humble enough to serve where God places them, even when the place is not admired by men.

## **Chapter 7: Christ Sees and Will Reward What Men Ignore**

The greatest comfort for the uncomely parts is that Christ sees. Men may ignore, forget, misunderstand, or undervalue hidden service, but the Head does not. Hebrews 6:10 says, “For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love.” That verse is a pillow for tired servants. God is not unrighteous to forget. Men forget because they are limited, distracted, selfish, or blind. God does not forget. Every cup of cold water given in His name, every prayer breathed in secret, every burden carried faithfully, every act of mercy done quietly, every sacrifice made for Christ, every hidden obedience—He sees it.

The Judgment Seat of Christ will reveal the truth. First Corinthians 3 speaks of work being tried by fire. Second Corinthians 5 reminds us that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. That day will not be judged by platform size, social recognition, human applause, or religious fame. It will be judged by the Lord who knows motives, truth,

faithfulness, sacrifice, and obedience. Many unknown saints may discover that heaven kept better records than earth. Many hidden labors may receive more honor than public performances. Many uncomely parts may be shown to have carried more spiritual weight than the parts everyone admired.

This future reward should strengthen hidden servants and sober public ones. If you are hidden, keep serving. Christ sees. If you are public, do not boast. Christ sees. If you are overlooked, do not despair. Christ sees. If men applaud you, do not live for it. Christ sees. If no one thanks you, do not quit. Christ sees. The Head knows every part of His body. He knows which members lacked honor here, and He knows how to give more abundant honor there. The uncomely parts should live with eternity in view. The world may see no glory now, but Christ will reveal what was precious to Him.

## **Conclusion**

The uncomely parts teach one of the deepest lessons in the body of Christ: God gives honor where the world sees no glory. Men honor beauty, polish, platform, money, power, talent, and public success. God honors faithfulness, humility, service, suffering, hidden obedience, and love done in secret. Paul says God has tempered the body together, giving more abundant honor to the part which lacked. That is not an accident. It is God's deliberate correction of human pride. The body must learn to value the hidden members, the private burdens, the covered service, the unseen sacrifices, and the saints who do work nobody claps for.

This rebukes the celebrity spirit that has infected so much of Christianity. The body is not a stage for impressive members while hidden members are used and forgotten. It is a living body under Christ, and every member is known to the Head. Some of the most valuable work may be done in prayer closets, sickrooms, kitchens, quiet offices, small homes, hospital chairs, private conversations, and lonely seasons of faithful obedience. Men may not see it. Men may not reward it. Men may not even understand it. But God sees. God remembers. God is not unrighteous to forget.

So let the body bestow honor where honor has been lacking. Let hidden servants be encouraged. Let public members be humbled. Let private sacrifices be treasured before God. Let the body stop measuring worth by visibility and start thinking according to Scripture. The uncomely parts are not shameful to Christ. They are covered with special care and promised more abundant honor in God's reckoning. The Judgment Seat of Christ will reveal many unknown saints who were far more valuable than the famous ones. Until then, let every hidden member keep serving unto the Lord, knowing that what men ignore, Christ sees.

## **32 of 32: One Body - Many Members - Fitly Joined Together Until the Body Edifies Itself in Love**

### **Introduction**

After walking through the members of the body one by one, the great lesson should now be impossible to miss: the body of Christ is not a pile of disconnected religious parts scattered across the floor, each bragging about its own importance and complaining about the place God gave it. It is a living body, designed by God, purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ, joined under one Head, supplied by every member, and built up in love. The eye needs the hand. The hand needs the foot. The mouth needs the heart. The tongue needs a bridle. The teeth need maturity. The arms need mercy. The shoulders need grace. The back needs endurance. The lungs need prayer. The bones need doctrine. The joints need truth. The feet need direction. The knees need humility. The skin needs sensitivity. The stomach needs digestion. The bowels need compassion. The mind needs renewal. The face needs testimony. The nose needs discernment. The neck needs submission. The nerves need balance. The immune system needs holy resistance. The scars need grace. The feeble members need honor. The uncomely parts need more abundant care. No member is everything, and no faithful member is nothing.

Ephesians 4:15-16 says, “But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth according to the effectual working in the measure of every part maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.” That passage is the grand conclusion to this entire series. The body grows up into Christ. The Head is Christ. The joining comes from Christ. The supply comes through every joint. Every part has a measure. The increase is not for vanity, fame, platform, applause, or religious empire-building. It is unto edifying itself in love. That means the body is not built by envy, pride, comparison, self-promotion, celebrity worship, doctrinal arrogance, sentimental compromise, or fleshly competition. It is built when every member takes its place under Christ and supplies what God gave it to supply.

This closing essay must bring the whole matter home. The body of Christ is healthiest when Christ has the preeminence, the Book has authority, the members have humility, doctrine has structure, charity has warmth, and every member serves according to God’s placement. The body is sick when the eye despises the hand, the hand envies the mouth, the foot feels worthless because it is not the eye, the strong trample the weak, the visible forget the hidden, and the feeble are treated like burdens instead of necessary members. The body is not a religious stage where the gifted perform and the rest applaud. It is not a corporation where people are valued by productivity. It is not a social club where

personality determines honor. It is a living body under a living Head. The final lesson is plain: no member is everything, no faithful member is nothing, and every member must function in humility, truth, charity, and obedience to Christ.

### **Chapter 1: The Body Is One, but the Members Are Many**

Paul's doctrine begins with a truth the flesh does not naturally like: the body is one, but the members are many. First Corinthians 12:12 says, "For as the body is one, and hath many members." That is the starting point. Unity does not erase distinction, and distinction does not destroy unity. The hand is not the eye. The foot is not the ear. The mouth is not the heart. The bones are not the blood. The lungs are not the stomach. The feeble members are not the strong members. Yet all belong to the body. This is God's answer to both pride and envy. Pride says, "Because I am gifted, visible, strong, or useful, I am more important than others." Envy says, "Because I am not gifted like that member, I do not matter." Paul cuts both down. The body is one, and the members are many.

This means the body cannot be understood by looking at one member in isolation. A mouth by itself is grotesque. A hand by itself is helpless. An eye by itself cannot move the body. A foot detached from the body cannot carry anything. Members are meaningful in connection. The preacher is not the body. The teacher is not the body. The prayer warrior is not the body. The giver is not the body. The suffering saint is not the body. The leader is not the body. Each has a place, but no member can rightly say, "I am the whole." That is why personality cults are so dangerous. Whenever a church or ministry begins to orbit one visible member as though that member carries the whole identity of the work, the body doctrine has been violated. Christ is the Head, not the platformed member.

At the same time, no faithful member should say, "I am nothing because I am not that." The foot should not deny its place because it is not the hand. The ear should not deny its place because it is not the eye. God did not make every member alike because sameness is not the design of the body. The quiet servant, the hidden intercessor, the feeble saint, the burden-bearing shoulder, the praying knees, the warning nerves, the merciful bowels, and the doctrinal bones all matter. The body's unity is not in every member doing the same thing. The unity is in every member belonging to Christ and functioning under the Head. The body is one, but the members are many, and that is God's wisdom.

### **Chapter 2: Christ Alone Is the Head**

The whole body must remain under the Head, and the Head is Christ alone. Colossians 1:18 says, "And he is the head of the body, the church." That means every member receives meaning, direction, authority, and purpose from Him. A body with no head is dead. A body with two heads is a monster. Much of modern Christianity is either dead because Christ is

not truly directing it, or monstrous because men have tried to share His place. Popes, priests, boards, celebrities, scholars, seminaries, denominations, traditions, councils, emotional experiences, political movements, and charismatic personalities all try to claim headship in practice. But the body of Christ has one Head. His name is the Lord Jesus Christ.

This truth humbles every member. The mouth may speak, but it does not rule. The eye may see, but it does not rule. The hand may work, but it does not rule. The shoulder may carry, but it does not rule. The joints may connect, but they do not rule. The immune system may defend, but it does not rule. The mind may think, but it does not rule independently. Every member must answer to Christ. That means the preacher must preach under Christ, the teacher must teach under Christ, the worker must work under Christ, the leader must lead under Christ, the strong must help under Christ, and the weak must trust under Christ. No member has the right to use its function as a throne.

Christ's headship also protects the body. If the body follows the Head, it will not be led by every impulse, emotion, trend, fear, or manipulative voice. The Head directs the feet where to walk, the mouth what to speak, the hands what to do, the knees where to bow, and the neck where to turn. When a member moves independently from the Head, disorder follows. A mouth not governed by Christ becomes poison. A hand not governed by Christ becomes selfish. A foot not governed by Christ walks into sin. A mind not governed by Christ becomes proud or worldly. A heart not governed by Christ loves wrongly. The body is only healthy when the Head has practical preeminence, not just doctrinal mention.

### **Chapter 3: Every Member Must Supply What God Gave It**

Ephesians 4 says the body grows according to "the effectual working in the measure of every part." That phrase matters. Every part has a measure. God does not demand that the foot supply what the eye supplies, or that the hand supply what the lungs supply, or that the feeble member supply what the shoulder supplies. But each member is responsible for its own measure. This destroys both pride and excuse-making. The proud member must not demand that every other member function like itself. The lazy member must not hide behind humility and refuse to function at all. Every part has something to supply according to God's design and measure.

This is where many believers need to stop comparing and start serving. Comparison is one of the great diseases of the body. The hand compares itself to the mouth and becomes bitter. The foot compares itself to the eye and becomes discouraged. The hidden member compares itself to the visible member and becomes resentful. The strong member compares itself to the weak member and becomes proud. None of that edifies the body.

Comparison turns members inward. Service turns members outward. The question is not, “Why am I not that member?” The question is, “Am I faithful in the measure God gave me?” The Judgment Seat of Christ will not ask whether the foot became an eye. It will judge whether the foot was faithful as a foot.

Supplying one’s measure also means the body needs participation, not spectatorship. Too many Christians treat the body like a theater. They come to watch the mouth, hear the singer, judge the leader, evaluate the teacher, criticize the workers, and then leave unchanged. That is not body life. Every member has a place. Some can pray. Some can give. Some can teach. Some can encourage. Some can help. Some can carry. Some can warn. Some can comfort. Some can write. Some can visit. Some can serve quietly. Some can simply remain faithful under suffering and teach the body endurance. The body is healthier when every member supplies what God gave it, not when a handful perform while the rest inspect them from the balcony.

#### **Chapter 4: The Visible Need the Hidden, and the Strong Need the Feeble**

One of the strongest lessons in the series is that the visible members need the hidden members, and the strong members need the feeble members. Men naturally think the opposite. They assume the hidden depend on the visible and the weak depend on the strong. That is true in one sense, but it is not the whole truth. The visible also depend on the hidden, and the strong are often sanctified by the weak. The mouth depends on the lungs for breath, the bones for structure, the heart for life, the stomach for nourishment, the knees for prayer, and the hidden organs for health. Public ministry often depends on private support that nobody sees. A preacher may be visible, but without praying saints, giving saints, serving saints, correcting saints, encouraging saints, and burden-bearing saints, his visible work weakens.

The strong need the feeble because feeble members teach patience, compassion, humility, gentleness, and dependence. A body made only of strong public members would likely become proud, harsh, competitive, and self-impressed. Feeble members slow the body down enough to teach love. They remind the body that people are not valuable only when they are productive. They expose whether charity is real. They reveal whether the strong are servants or showmen. Paul’s word “necessary” must never be forgotten. The feeble members are necessary, not because they can do everything, but because God uses them to complete what strength alone cannot supply.

The hidden members are also vital because they often carry the unseen life of the body. The lungs are hidden, but they breathe prayer. The heart is hidden, but it supplies charity. The blood is hidden, but it carries life. The stomach is hidden, but it digests nourishment. The

bowels are hidden, but they move with mercy. The uncomely parts are covered, but God gives them abundant honor. The world honors the face, the mouth, and the polished exterior. God honors hidden faithfulness. The body must learn to see by Scripture rather than by stage lights. Many who are first in men's eyes may be last in reward, and many unknown saints may shine when Christ reveals the truth.

### **Chapter 5: Truth and Love Must Work Together**

Ephesians 4 ties the body's growth to "speaking the truth in love" and "edifying of itself in love." This means truth and love must never be divorced. Truth without love becomes cold, harsh, proud, and mechanical. Love without truth becomes sentimental, weak, compromised, and shapeless. The body needs both. The bones of doctrine must support the heart of charity. The heart of charity must warm the bones of doctrine. The mouth must speak truth, but not as an excuse for cruelty. The heart must love, but not as an excuse for cowardice. The immune system must fight infection, but not become fleshly cruelty. The bowels must show mercy, but not protect wolves. The joints must connect, but not join truth to error. Biblical body life requires truth and love together.

This is where much of Christianity fails. Some are so afraid of cold doctrine that they run into warm error. Others are so afraid of sentimental compromise that they become doctrinal icicles. The Bible gives neither. Paul did not say to speak love without truth. He did not say to speak truth without love. He said, "speaking the truth in love." That one phrase rebukes the soft compromiser and the hard fighter. It tells the compromiser, "Speak the truth." It tells the fighter, "In love." It tells the body, "You need both or you will not grow rightly into Christ." Truth defines love. Love motivates truth to edify rather than merely win.

The body must therefore examine not only what it believes, but how it functions with what it believes. Does doctrine produce humility or arrogance? Does charity produce holiness or compromise? Does discernment produce protection or suspicion? Does correction produce restoration or humiliation? Does service produce edification or self-display? Does unity preserve truth or erase it? Does separation honor Christ or feed pride? These are heart questions and bone questions together. The body edifies itself in love when truth governs love and love governs the use of truth. Anything less will deform the body.

### **Chapter 6: Envy, Pride, and Self-Promotion Destroy Body Life**

The body is not built by envy, pride, comparison, or self-promotion. Those sins are body poisons. Envy says, "I resent your place because I wanted it." Pride says, "I am better because of my place." Comparison says, "I cannot be content unless I measure myself against you." Self-promotion says, "The body exists as a ladder for my importance." All four are destructive. They turn members against one another. They make gifts into weapons,

service into competition, visibility into currency, weakness into shame, and ministry into a stage. That is not the body of Christ functioning under the Head. That is Corinthian carnality wearing Christian vocabulary.

Envy makes the foot despise itself because it is not the hand. Pride makes the eye despise the hand because it thinks seeing is superior to working. Self-promotion makes the mouth speak not for edification, but for attention. Comparison makes hidden members resent visible members and visible members forget hidden members. The cure is to remember that God set the members in the body as it pleased Him. A member does not choose its own placement. It receives it. If God made you a hand, be a faithful hand. If He made you a foot, walk faithfully. If He made you a hidden supporter, support faithfully. If He gave you public responsibility, carry it humbly. The question is not whether men applaud your placement. The question is whether God is pleased with your faithfulness.

Self-promotion is especially dangerous in an age of platforms. Men can now market themselves as ministries, polish their image, gather followers, build a brand, and call it service. The body must be careful. Public usefulness is not evil, but public self-worship is. Christ must have the preeminence. If a man uses the body to exalt himself, he is out of order. If a member draws attention away from the Head to make himself central, he is dangerous. The body is not built when members compete for the spotlight. It is built when members serve under Christ, supply their measure, and point all honor back to the Head.

## **Chapter 7: The Body Edifies Itself in Love Until Christ Is Glorified**

The goal of the body's function is not mere activity. It is edification in love under Christ. Ephesians 4 says the body "maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." Edification means building up. The body is supposed to grow stronger, sounder, more stable, more loving, more useful, more mature, and more conformed to the Head. Every member's function should contribute to that. The eye's discernment should edify by warning and guiding. The mouth should edify by speaking truth in love. The hands should edify by serving. The lungs should edify by prayer. The bones should edify by doctrine. The immune system should edify by protecting purity. The feeble members edify by teaching patience and compassion. The hidden members edify by faithful unseen supply.

This means every member should ask, "Does my function build up the body?" Not, "Does it make me look important?" Not, "Does it prove I am right?" Not, "Does it give me influence?" Not, "Does it get attention?" But, "Does it edify?" A warning that protects edifies. A rebuke that restores edifies. A sermon that feeds edifies. A gift that supplies edifies. A prayer that strengthens edifies. A hidden sacrifice that sustains edifies. A word of comfort that lifts a weak saint edifies. Even a hard correction can edify if it is biblical and

rightly aimed. But self-display, gossip, suspicion, envy, pride, and vain talking do not edify, even when dressed in religious language.

The body edifies itself in love until Christ is glorified. He is the Alpha and Omega of the body's life. He purchased it with His blood. He placed the members by His wisdom. He supplies grace. He gives direction. He will judge the service of every member at the Judgment Seat of Christ. The final aim is not that the body admire itself, but that Christ be magnified in His body. When every member functions rightly, Christ gets the glory. When the strong serve the weak, Christ gets the glory. When the hidden serve without applause, Christ gets the glory. When doctrine stands and charity warms it, Christ gets the glory. When the body refuses envy, pride, and self-promotion, Christ gets the glory. That is the final purpose: the Head preeminent, the body edified, and God glorified.

## **Conclusion**

The series ends where it began: God set the members in the body as it pleased Him. That truth is simple enough for a child and deep enough to humble every proud saint. The body is not a man-made machine, a religious corporation, a popularity contest, a talent show, or a platform for ambitious personalities. It is a living body under Christ. No member is everything. No faithful member is nothing. The eye needs the hand. The hand needs the foot. The visible need the hidden. The strong need the feeble. The mouth needs the heart. The bones need the blood. The joints need the members. Every part must receive direction from the Head and supply what God gave it to supply.

The whole series has rebuked pride and envy from every angle. The eye must not despise the hand. The hand must not envy the mouth. The strong must not crush the weak. The feeble must not think themselves useless. The hidden must not think themselves forgotten. The visible must not think themselves superior. The mouth must speak truth in love. The heart must beat with charity. The bones must hold doctrine. The knees must bow. The feet must go. The immune system must defend without cruelty. The scars must testify to grace. The uncomely parts must receive more abundant honor. The body must learn to think like Scripture instead of like the world.

So let the body be fitly joined together. Let Christ be the Head in practice, not merely in doctrine. Let every member function with humility, truth, charity, and obedience. Let no member boast as though he were the whole body, and let no faithful member despair as though he were nothing. Let the body reject envy, pride, comparison, self-promotion, celebrity worship, and sentimental compromise. Let it grow up into Christ in all things. Let every joint supply, every part work in its measure, and the whole body edify itself in love. The body belongs to Christ, was bought by Christ, is directed by Christ, and will answer to

Christ. Therefore let Christ have the preeminence, and let every member serve until the whole body glorifies the Head who gave Himself for it.

### **Conclusion to the Series: One Body - Many Members**

After walking through all thirty-two lessons in the **One Body - Many Members** series, the truth should stand before us with more force than when we began: the body of Christ is not a pile of religious parts, a platform for the gifted, a stage for the visible, or a machine run by the loudest and strongest members. It is a living body under one Head, the Lord Jesus Christ. Every member has a place, every function has meaning, every hidden service is seen by God, every feeble member is necessary, and every visible member must remember that visibility is not superiority. Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 12 are not decorative church language. They are a doctrinal correction to pride, envy, comparison, neglect, and the celebrity spirit that so often creeps into Christianity. God set the members in the body as it pleased Him, and no member has the right to argue with His placement.

Through this series, we found that each member of the body teaches a different spiritual lesson. The eyes taught discernment. The ears taught hearing and correction. The mouth taught speaking truth in love. The tongue warned us about fire, poison, gossip, slander, and unbridled religion. The teeth taught us to chew strong meat. The hands taught service. The fingers taught precise hidden labor. The arms taught strength for the weak. The shoulders taught responsibility and hidden weight. The back taught endurance. The heart taught charity. The lungs taught prayer. The blood brought us back to redemption, cleansing, and the one life all believers have in Christ. The bones taught doctrine. The joints taught connection. The feet taught gospel witness and a clean walk. The knees taught humility and worship. The skin taught sensitivity. The stomach taught spiritual digestion. The bowels taught mercy. The mind taught renewed thinking. The face taught testimony. The nose taught spiritual savor. The neck taught submission. The nerves taught warning signals. The immune system taught defense against spiritual infection. The scars taught suffering, survival, and healed testimony. The feeble members taught necessity. The uncomely parts taught honor where men often see no glory. Finally, we saw the whole body fitly joined together, growing and edifying itself in love under Christ.

What we found is that the body needs all of it. It needs truth, but truth must have charity. It needs charity, but charity must rejoice in truth. It needs discernment, but discernment must not become suspicion. It needs warning, but warning must not become panic. It needs defense, but defense must not become cruelty. It needs mercy, but mercy must not

become compromise. It needs doctrine, but doctrine must not become a cold skeleton without a heart. It needs feeling, but feeling must not rule over Scripture. It needs strong members, but strong members must serve rather than strut. It needs feeble members, because God said they are necessary. It needs hidden members, because God sees what men ignore. This series taught us that imbalance in one area can injure the body, but when every member functions under Christ, the body becomes healthier, stronger, cleaner, more useful, and more loving.

This study also exposed how wrong the world's measurements are. The world honors the face, the platform, the talent, the money, the polish, the charisma, the influence, and the applause. God sees the praying lungs, the burdened shoulders, the faithful back, the hidden hands, the precise fingers, the scarred servants, the feeble members, and the uncomely parts that men pass by. The Judgment Seat of Christ will reveal many things that men never saw. Some who were famous may not have been as great as people thought. Some who were unknown may be honored far more than expected. That should humble every public member and encourage every hidden servant. Christ misses nothing. No prayer whispered in secret, no burden carried quietly, no wound endured faithfully, no service done unto Him, and no act of love performed in obscurity will be forgotten.

Going forward, this series should help us grow by teaching us to think like body members instead of isolated individuals. The eye must not despise the hand. The hand must not envy the mouth. The foot must not feel useless because it is not the eye. The strong must not crush the weak. The weak must not think they are disposable. The hidden must not believe they are forgotten. The visible must not believe they are superior. Every member should ask, "Am I functioning under the Head? Am I supplying what God gave me to supply? Am I building up the body, or am I feeding pride, envy, bitterness, and comparison?" That kind of self-examination can make us better servants, better encouragers, better witnesses, better teachers, better listeners, better burden-bearers, and better members of Christ's body.

The final lesson is simple but deep: **no member is everything, no faithful member is nothing, and Christ must have the preeminence in all things.** The body does not exist to showcase us. It exists to glorify Him. The mouth speaks for Him. The hands serve Him. The feet go for Him. The knees bow to Him. The mind thinks under Him. The heart loves through Him. The blood reminds us we were bought by Him. The scars testify that He can bring us through. The feeble members remind us that His strength is made perfect in weakness. The hidden members remind us that His eyes see what men overlook. If this series teaches us anything, it is that the body belongs to Christ, and every member should live, serve, speak, suffer, love, and labor with that truth in view.

So let this series not merely become a collection of essays. Let it become a correction in how we see the body of Christ. Let it make us more thankful for members we once overlooked. Let it make us more patient with the weak, more careful with our words, more faithful in prayer, more grounded in doctrine, more honest in testimony, more merciful toward the wounded, more discerning toward corruption, and more humble in whatever place God has given us. The body grows when every member does its part, when every joint supplies, when truth is spoken in love, when charity governs service, and when Christ directs the whole body as Head. That is how the body edifies itself in love. That is how we grow from here.

# ONE BODY - MANY MEMBERS

A 32-Part VerseQuest Study on the Body of Christ

**MAIN THEME**

- One body under one Head — Christ (Col. 1:18, "the head of the body")
- God set the members as it pleased Him (1 Cor. 12:18)
- Every member has a place, function, and measure (Eph. 4:16)
- No member is everything. No faithful member is nothing.

1 CORINTHIANS 12 • EPHESIANS 4:15-16

"But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him." — 1 Cor. 12:18 (KJV)

"But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." — Eph. 4:15-16 (KJV)

**VERSEQUEST MINISTRIES**

|                                            |                                                                                                 |                                                                                        |                                                                                                                |                                                                                             |
|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1 FOUNDATION</b>                        | <b>1 God Set the Members</b><br><i>Placed by God</i><br>1 Cor. 12:18 "God set the members"      | <b>2 The Head</b><br><i>Christ alone rules</i><br>Col. 1:18 "He is the head"           | <b>3 The Eyes</b><br><i>Vision and discernment</i><br>Heb. 5:14 "discern both good and evil"                   | <b>4 The Ears</b><br><i>Hear the Book</i><br>Rom. 10:17 "faith cometh by hearing"           |
| <b>2 SPEECH &amp; MATURITY</b>             | <b>5 The Mouth</b><br><i>Speak truth in love</i><br>Eph. 4:15                                   | <b>6 The Tongue</b><br><i>Small member, great fire</i><br>Jas. 3:5-6                   | <b>7 The Teeth</b><br><i>Chew strong meat</i><br>Heb. 5:14 "strong meat belongeth"                             | <b>8 The Hands</b><br><i>Do the work</i><br>Eccl. 9:10 "Whatsoever thy hand"                |
| <b>3 SERVICE &amp; STRENGTH</b>            | <b>9 The Fingers</b><br><i>Precise hidden service</i><br>Col. 3:23 "whatsoever ye do"           | <b>10 The Arms</b><br><i>Strength for the weak</i><br>Rom. 15:1 "bear the infirmities" | <b>11 The Shoulders</b><br><i>Bear the burden</i><br>Gal. 6:2                                                  | <b>12 The Back</b><br><i>Uneven endurance</i><br>1 Cor. 15:58 "stedfast, unmoveable"        |
| <b>4 LIFE &amp; SUPPLY</b>                 | <b>13 The Heart</b><br><i>Charity gives life</i><br>1 Cor. 13:2 "have not charity"              | <b>14 The Lungs</b><br><i>Prayer is breath</i><br>1 Thess. 5:17 "Pray without ceasing" | <b>15 The Blood</b><br><i>One life through Christ</i><br>Eph. 1:7 "redemption through his blood"               | <b>16 The Bones</b><br><i>Doctrine gives structure</i><br>2 Tim. 1:13 "form of sound words" |
| <b>5 WALK &amp; RESPONSE</b>               | <b>18 The Feet</b><br><i>Carry the gospel</i><br>Rom. 10:15 "How beautiful are the feet"        | <b>19 The Knees</b><br><i>Bow before God</i><br>Eph. 3:14 "I bow my knees"             | <b>20 The Skin</b><br><i>Sensitivity and wounds</i><br>1 Cor. 12:26 "one member suffer"                        | <b>21 The Stomach</b><br><i>Digest the word</i><br>Jer. 15:16 "I did eat them"              |
| <b>6 INWARD GRACE &amp; DISCERNMENT</b>    | <b>22 The Bowels</b><br><i>Mercy in the inward parts</i><br>Col. 3:12 "bowels of mercies"       | <b>23 The Mind</b><br><i>Renewed thinking</i><br>Rom. 12:2 "renewing of your mind"     | <b>24 The Face</b><br><i>Christian testimony</i><br>Matt. 5:16 "Let your light so shine"                       | <b>25 The Nose</b><br><i>Savour of Christ</i><br>2 Cor. 2:15 "a sweet savour"               |
| <b>7 SUBMISSION, WARNING &amp; DEFENSE</b> | <b>26 The Neck</b><br><i>Yield to the Head</i><br>Prov. 29:1 "hardeneth his neck"               | <b>27 The Nerves</b><br><i>Warning signals</i><br>Acts 20:31 "warn every one"          | <b>28 The Immune System</b><br><i>Fight spiritual infection</i><br>1 Cor. 5:7 "Purge out... leaven"            | <b>29 The Scars</b><br><i>Marks of battle</i><br>Gal. 6:17 "I bear in my body the marks"    |
| <b>8 HIDDEN HONOR &amp; BODY UNITY</b>     | <b>30 The Feeble Members</b><br><i>Necessary, not forgotten</i><br>1 Cor. 12:22 "are necessary" | <b>31 The Uncomely Parts</b><br><i>More abundant honour</i><br>1 Cor. 12:23-24         | <b>32 Fitly Joined Together</b><br><i>The body edifies itself in love</i><br>Eph. 4:16 "fitly joined together" |                                                                                             |

**KEY APPLICATIONS**

Find your God-given place

Submit to Christ the Head

Refuse envy, pride, and comparison

Honor the hidden and the feeble

Speak truth in love

Defend purity and sound doctrine

Edify the body in charity

**BOTTOM LINE**

God did not build His church as a stage for stars, but as a body for service. Every member matters. Christ must have the preeminence. The body grows when every part does its work and edifies itself in love.