

KNOWING THE BODY

Everyone who wants to engage in spiritual warfare must first know the Body. No individual believer can fight with the enemy; it takes the whole Body. This Body is formed by Christ as life in each of us, mingled with us. Everyone who is saved is a member of the Body of Christ.... Each member shares in common the same life together with all the other members, that is, the life of the entire body. For example, an ear, unless it has been cut off, shares the same blood which flows through the eye, the nose, and the whole body. Similarly, in the Body of Christ, when one member is joined to the Body or having fellowship with the Body, his life is the life of the Body, and the life of the Body is his life. It is this life which joins us together to become the Body of Christ; or, to say it more precisely..., it is this life which mingles with us to become the Body of Christ.

We cannot, however, experience this before the difficulties of the self have been entirely dealt with. Only when our flesh has been dealt with, the self-opinion has been broken, and the natural life has been smashed, shall the life within cause us to realize that we are simply members of the Body and that the life in us cannot be independent. Hence, this life requires us to have fellowship with all other members and be joined to them, and it also brings us into that fellowship and the experience of being joined together. We shall now consider the matter of knowing the Body from several aspects, beginning with God's plan.

I. GOD'S PLAN

There are five points in God's plan:

- a) God desired to **work Himself into man and unite Himself with man** so that man would resemble Him.
- b) God is **in His Son**. Therefore, when He wanted to work Himself into man, He wanted to work His Son into man; when He wanted man to be united with Himself, He wanted man to be united with His Son.
- c) The people whom God wanted to be united with His Son are the **brethren of His Son**, those who share the sonship with His Son and together with His Son express Him.
- d) This group of people is the **Bride of His Son**, a part of His Son, taken out from His Son.
- e) This Bride not only comes out from His Son, but is presented to His Son to become the **Body of His Son**. When this Body appears, the plan of God has been fulfilled.

To put it quite simply, the plan of God is to have a Body for His Son, and this Body is the Church. The Church is the Body of Christ; it is the sole object of God's plan. God's creation is for this; His redemption is for this; His work throughout all generations is for this. When this purpose has been accomplished, the Body of Christ will appear, the Bride will appear,

and the brethren will appear... His goal reached, and His plan fulfilled. Thus if we want to know the Body, we must know the plan of God.

II. GOD'S CREATION AND GOD'S REDEMPTION

We have already said that God's heart desire is to get a group of people who will have His life and express Him. For this purpose He brought His creation into being. But when God created man, He did not create many men, but only one— Adam. Since the beginning of history, the number of human beings is countless, but since they have all come out from Adam, in God's sight there is only one man... Therefore, from the creation till now, in God's eyes there is only one other man besides Christ. In order to complete His purpose and fulfill His plan, **God created only one man**. His desire was **to impart Himself to one corporate man and to express Himself through this one corporate man**. This same principle also holds true in the creation of woman. In the creation, God made only one woman – Eve. We know that Eve represents the Church. He made only one man, which means that He desires only one corporate man to become His image. He created only one woman, which means that God desires only one corporate man, which is the Church, to become the Bride of Christ. In His redemption, His thought is still only one. [F]rom God's standpoint, He never saves individually. When He saves, He redeems the whole church. [For example], when the entire house of Israel came out from Egypt, the lamb was eaten and the blood applied at the same place and at the same time. Then at the same time and at the same place they passed through the Red Sea. From our limited viewpoint, some ate the meat and applied the blood at one place, while others ate the meat and applied the blood several hundred houses away. When passing through the Red Sea, some were in the front of the procession, and others were in the rear of the procession; they may have been thousands of feet and many minutes apart. But in God's view point, they ate the meat and applied the blood simultaneously in Rameses; and their passage through the Red Sea was also a simultaneous act. Similarly, in our understanding, salvation takes place earlier or later, here or there; but with God a thousand years is as one day (2 Pet. 3:8). Therefore, in the eternal view of God, we are all saved at one time. **He did not save us one by one, individually; He saved us corporately, as one man.**

IV. IN CHRIST

After we were redeemed into Christ, **our position in Christ is still one**. In ourselves we are many, but **in Christ we are only one**. In Christ there is only one Church. In Christ there is one mystical Body... **The spiritual meaning of the Body is one**. Whenever we as Christians are not one, we are not in the Body, and we demonstrate that we have not seen what the Body is...

V. IN THE HOLY SPIRIT, IN LIFE, IN FELLOWSHIP AND IN EXPERIENCE

In Christ we are one; moreover, in the Holy Spirit we are one. This oneness in the Holy Spirit is what we commonly call fellowship. **If we live in the Holy Spirit, we have this fellowship**, and we have this oneness, which is the reality of the Body. When we lose this fellowship in the Holy Spirit, we do not have this oneness, and we do not have the Body.... We have mentioned elsewhere that the life within us is not a divided life, but a complete life. Because of the fellowship in the Holy Spirit, **the life in each one of us is complete and undivided**. The life in me is the life in you and also the life in God. Therefore, **His life in all of us is one**... This oneness in life is the mystical Body of Christ. [Also], the fellowship we refer to here is fellowship in life. Since we are all one in life, the fellowship issuing from this life is one. Whenever there is oneness, there is fellowship. When there is no oneness, there is no fellowship. Therefore, **when we are in fellowship, we are one**... [I]n our experience we should also be one. If in our experience we are one, we are conscious of the oneness, and we touch the oneness; then we know the Body and live in the Body. [W]e must know that our knowledge and experience of this oneness are definitely related to our spiritual age. With the young and immature, their knowledge and consciousness of this oneness is superficial and light; with the experienced and mature, it is deep and weighty. The immature ones always feel different from others, but those who are deep in the Lord and developed in their spiritual experience feel no such difference. When we arrive at this fourth stage in our spiritual experience, there is no feeling of difference, but a spontaneous feeling of oneness with all. Knowing the Body is **not a doctrine....** Knowing the Body is the **result of many past experiences**. If we wish to know the Body and touch the reality of the Body in experience... [w]e must start from the experience of the clearance of the past and pass through the experiences of dealing with sin, the world, and the conscience, climbing diligently from one stage to the next. We must be severe with ourselves in learning the lessons one by one, especially in dealing with the flesh, the self, and the natural constitution.

IX. PROOFS THAT WE KNOW THE BODY

A. Being Unable to Be Individualistic

The first proof of knowing the Body is that we cannot be individualistic. Before one knows the Body, he is an individualist and can be individualistic. His life, his actions, his work, and his service are all individualistic. Not until he grows deeper in life and knows the Body to a certain extent does he see that being a Christian is a corporate matter and that he cannot go on without fellowship in the Body, nor can he depart from the coordination of the members. In the church life he can no longer serve alone. In the innermost part of his being, he feels that he needs to be a Christian together with others. Not only in great and important actions and work does he need the brothers and sisters, but even in Bible reading and prayer as well, he cannot do without other members. He cannot work without the coordination of

the brothers and sisters, and he cannot live without the support of the church. It is at this stage that he is being knit together spontaneously with all the saints to become one Body, no more to be separated. All those, therefore, who can still be individualistic do not know the Body, and **all those with a true knowledge of the Body definitely cannot be individualistic.**

B. Discerning Those Not in the Body

The second proof of our knowing the Body is the ability to discern whether others are in the Body or not. This discerning ability after one knows the Body is absolutely due to the extent of the deep degree of fellowship he has in the Lord. Our fellowship with the Lord grows in depth in proportion to our experience of life, beginning with the initial stage of our spiritual life and continuing through the fourth stage. The degree of depth of fellowship differs greatly as we progress in the experience of life. If one is in the Body, he is in fellowship; if one is not in the Body, he is not in fellowship. This implies that they do not see the Body and do not live in the Body. **Living in fellowship**, therefore, proves that we know the Body. If we really know the Body, we can ascertain whether others are in it or not.

C. Recognizing Authority

The third proof of our knowing the Body is the recognition of authority. Knowing the Body and recognizing authority are inseparable. If one recognizes authority, he cannot be an individualist. If he is still able to live as an individualist and feels that he can serve God alone without being coordinated with others, he demonstrates that he does not recognize authority, nor has he come to know the Body. Authority can only be manifested in the Body and in the coordination. [I]f we have seen that God wants a Body, and that we, being members of this Body, can never go on alone (for once we are alone we are disjointed), we will learn to recognize authority, keep our position in the Body, and coordinate with all the brothers and sisters.

What is authority? Authority is simply **the authority of Christ the Head**. [For example, in our physical body], the head is uppermost and is the authority of the whole body. Below the head are the arms, the trunk, and the legs. All the members follow a definite order; therefore, any member, unless it is detached, falls into such an order. [Similarly], when we speak of authority, we mean the authority of Christ manifested through the order of His Body... If we have been taught in our spirit and have been indeed led by God to recognize the flesh, if we have had self dealt with and the natural constitution broken, we will immediately recognize our own order when placed among brothers and sisters. It is just like a family, where brothers and sisters know their own order—who should submit to whom and who is the authority of whom. This kind of authority is not assumed nor is it by

election, but is the natural order in life, which Christ the Head has manifested in all the members of His Body.