

# The Body of Christ

## What is a Church? Part 1 Ephesians 1:22-23

Summary: The structure of this church will be dictated by the principles we discover in this study. The church is the body of God's redeemed people (locally and universally). God's purposes for the Church are seen in the five main metaphors: Body, Wife, Family, Temple, and Priesthood. As His body we are the physical representation of Christ in this world. He accomplishes His work of filling the world with fullness through us (we are the great expression of the glory, power and presence of God). This happens when the body builds itself up with the goal of maturity as each part does its work ministering to one another. (So second hour will be designed for that.) Unlike the false gods, Jesus relates to us as our Head. He is not only remote and transcendent; He is also nearby and He has made us as closely related to Him as a body is to its head. Jesus only uses His body for great things. Trust Him to coordinate His body.

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## Introduction

I am curious to know what people look for in a church, but that is a matter of curiosity only. It has nothing to do with what kind of church this church is going to be. When it comes to deciding how this church is going to be run and what our purpose and structure and main emphases are going to be, the only question that matters to me is not, "What do all the people look for in a church?" but "What does *God* look for in a church?"

Every church has to decide which things it is going to emphasize and where its energy and resources are going to go. Should we just try to get as large as possible, and have that be our highest priority? Should we focus mainly on missions? Community service? Education? Youth programs? Prayer? And how are we going to decide how much of each thing to do so we don't get out of balance and neglect something that is important? Some churches answer those questions by simply reverting to tradition. Others conform to the hobbyhorses of the preaching pastor so that whatever is most important to him becomes the church's highest priority. Still others take a poll and find out what the majority of the people want.

We are not going to do any of that. Instead we will study what God says a church is supposed to be like, and then we are going to set up every part of the church - the worship service, the leadership, the youth group, the nursery - every aspect of every ministry in the church will be designed around accomplishing what Scripture says are the purposes of the Church.

So what are the purposes of the church? Before answering that question we should first be clear about exactly what the church is.

## The definition of the Church

The simple definition is that the word "church" (*ekklesia*), in the New Testament, refers to God's people. The word literally means "gathering" or "assembly," but in the New Testament it has a technical use that refers to God's redeemed people.

Sometimes it is used in a universal way, to refer to all redeemed people everywhere in the world. In that sense there is only one Church. That is how it is used, for example, in the book of Ephesians. Christ is the head of *the* Church (singular), not the churches (1:22). In ch.5 it says Christ died for the Church, and the Church submits to Him. When we use the word "church" that way it is customary to capitalize it. It is also called the Universal Church or the invisible Church. (That term is used because you can't tell by looking if someone is a member of the Universal Church. No one can walk into a church building with 300 people and know which people are redeemed and which are not.)

Another way the Bible uses the term “church” is to refer to individual, local assemblies. Frequently the word appears in the plural. In Acts 15:41, for example, it says Paul was strengthening all the churches in Syria and Cilicia – all the individual fellowships. In Acts 14 it says they appointed elders in *every* church.

So sometimes it refers to all believers everywhere; other times it refers to a local assembly. But one thing the word never refers to in the Bible is a building. When we refer to a building as being a church we are not using Biblical terms. The same goes for when we use the word “church” to refer to the leadership. The church is not the leadership or the staff. It is the people.

## The purposes of the Church

So now that we know what a church is, back to our question – what is the purpose of the church? The Bible answers that question by means of several metaphors. The Church is compared to a vine or a field or a building or a body or a bride, etc. Of all those metaphors, five of them are repeated several times and are highlighted in Scripture as especially important. And so we are going to do a careful expository study of the passages that teach about those five descriptions of what the Church is supposed to be like.

The five metaphors that teach us about the Church are as follows.<sup>1</sup> The Church is...

- 1) **The Body of Christ** (seven places – Ro.12:5, 1 Cor.6:15,16; 12:27, Eph.1:23, 4:12, 5:23,30, Col.1:24)
- 2) **The Wife/Bride of Christ** (six places - Eph.5, 2 Cor.11:2, Mt.9:15, Jn.3:29, Rev.19:7, 21:2)
- 3) **The Family/Household of God** (three places - 1 Pe.4:17, 1 Tim.3:15, Heb.3:6,)
- 4) **The Temple of the Holy Spirit** (four places - 1 Pe.2, Eph.2:21, 1 Co.3,6, 2 Cor.6:16), and
- 5) **A holy Priesthood** (three places - 1 Pe.2:5,9, Rev.1:6, 5:10).

## The Body of Christ

One thing to avoid is just thinking up a bunch of spiritual illustrations about a body and saying, “That’s the role of the Church.” That is not the way to interpret a metaphor in Scripture. A metaphor only means what the context calls for it to mean. The proper approach is to examine each passage where the image of the body of Christ is used and discern what God is trying to tell us by calling us His body.

## The body is the physical presence of the person

**Col.1:24 Now I rejoice in my sufferings for you, and I am completing in my flesh what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for His body, that is, the church.**

When Paul suffered for us he was suffering for Christ.

What happens to the body happens to the person. So when Paul does something for the Church (such as enduring suffering), he is doing that for Jesus, because when you do something for someone’s body, you are doing it for that person. The body is the physical presence of the person. Your body is not you. From the day you die until the resurrection you will be separated from your body, but *you* will still exist during that time. So your body is not you. There is a you that is distinct from your body.

However your body is very, very closely related to you? The only way anyone can ever see you is by seeing your body. If they are looking at your physical presence then they are looking at you. If they hurt your physical body, they hurt you. If they feed your physical body they are feeding you. That relationship between you and your body is the way God wants us to think about the relationship between the Church and Jesus Christ. The Church is the physical presence of Jesus Christ in this world.

So what happens to the Church happens to Jesus. The way people think about us is the way they think about Him. The way they treat us is the way they treat Him. When Paul persecuted the Church he was persecuting Jesus Himself. In Acts 9 Paul was in the process of killing as many Christians as he could,

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<sup>1</sup> There are other metaphors, but those are the most prominent and frequent in the New Testament.

until Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus –

**Acts 9:4 Falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"**

Paul did not even believe that Jesus was alive at that time. But by persecuting the Church that is exactly what Paul was doing, because the Church is the physical presence of Christ in this world.

For most Christians this concept of the church being the body of Christ is nothing new. But ask yourself, is it obvious from your life and from your thoughts and affections that you believe it? The last time you drove to church on a Sunday morning, in your mind and your heart were you coming to the actual, physical presence of Jesus Christ? Was your attitude in the car on the way pretty much the same as it would have been if 2000 years ago you were heading into Galilee to go spend a couple hours with Jesus?

I worry about people who claim to be Christians and claim to love the Lord but they can't stand the Church. The way you feel about the Church is the way you feel about Christ. A person who claims to love Jesus Christ but who despises Christ's body is kidding himself. And the person who is unloving toward the Church but who claims to love Jesus is kidding himself. Jesus talks about those people in Mt.25 and says that those folks are going to be surprised on Judgment Day.

**Mt.25:34-46 "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. <sup>35</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink...**

**<sup>40</sup> "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'**

Jesus is not talking about helping the needy in general; he specifies His brothers in particular. Of course we should act in loving, compassionate ways toward all people, but this passage is talking specifically about the way you treat the Church. The way you treat the Church is the way you treat Jesus – good or bad. In the verses that follow Jesus applies the same principle to people who thought they loved Jesus but who did not love the Church.

**<sup>41</sup> "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. <sup>42</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, <sup>43</sup> I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.' <sup>44</sup> "They also will answer, 'Lord, when?...**

**<sup>45</sup> "He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' <sup>46</sup> "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."**

Your attitude toward the Church is not a light matter.

I had to repent this week for the cavalier way I have tended to think of the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. In my head I know it is His body, yet still I mostly act and think and feel as though it were simply a group of Christians organized in a certain way. What awe and reverence and fear and unspeakable joy I would have on the way to church if I really believed it was His physical presence! What sacrifices I would make for the Church, and what eagerness and joy I would have in making them! What love and affection I would have for her! What zeal I would have in serving her!

You might be thinking, *It is a lot harder to love the Church than to love Christ. Christ is perfect; the Church is not.* That is true. Jesus Christ has never mistreated you and never sinned against you. The Church probably has. Many of you have suffered horrible things at the hands of various churches where you have been. Some of you have been unjustly run out of a church, or you have been lied about in a church gossip chain, betrayed by friends or leaders in a church, ripped off by greedy people in a church, neglected, marginalized, mistreated, disrespected, snubbed, falsely accused, or lied to by people in a

church. Someone said the Church is like Noah's Ark – if it weren't for the storm outside you wouldn't be able handle the stench inside.

What a profound contrast there is between the way we tend to talk about the Church and the way Jesus talks about it. To Him we are a beautiful, precious bride that fills Him with delight. We are the display of His infinite wisdom. We are the fullness of Christ. We are a holy nation and His Temple

**Zeph.3:17 The Lord will delight in you with gladness, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with shouts of joy.**

**Isa.62:5 as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you.**

If that is how God talked about Israel imagine how He feels about the Church, which is not only His bride but also His very body.

So if Jesus feels that way about the Church, how can we join by His side so our affections are like His? God can love sinful people with the same love He has for His own perfect Son because of *justification*.

Justification is God's act of considering us righteous because of the righteousness of Christ. He looks at us and sees sinless perfection because when He looks at us He sees Jesus' perfect righteousness that has been credited to our account. So if we want to learn to love the Church, we need to do the same thing. God credited justified the Church by crediting Jesus' righteousness to our account; so we need to do the same thing. You need to look at those people around you and credit Jesus' righteousness to their account, so when you look at us you see Christ. God justified us in His books; you should do the same in yours. Picture that person in your life who is a Christian, but who you really struggle to love or forgive, and justify that person! Credit his sins to Jesus' account and Jesus' perfection to his account.

This is an area where a lot of Christians probably have a lot of sin to confess with regard to their affections. Jesus Christ deeply, dearly, passionately, excitedly loves the Church, and many Christians don't love the Church at all.

So as the Body of Christ we represent Christ – we are His physical presence in this world. That is one point of significance Scripture teaches by that metaphor. Another one is this – your body is what you use to accomplish your work. All the work I do is carried out by my body. If I take out the trash, or turn the pages of a commentary, or hit some keys on my computer keyboard it is all done by my body. And yet it is correct to say that it was me who did it.

## **The body is what a person uses to accomplish his work**

As the physical presence of Christ in this world, the way Jesus presents Himself to this world is through us, the way He suffers is through us (we endure suffering on His behalf), and the main way He accomplishes His work in this world is through us.

And what is that work? What is it that the Lord is primarily doing in this world? One answer is in Eph.1:23.

**Eph.1:22-23 [God the Father] put everything under [Christ's] feet and appointed Him as head over everything for the church, <sup>23</sup> which is His body, the fullness of the One who fills all things in every way.**

The work Christ is doing in this world, the work that is being carried out by the Church is the filling of all things - filling with His fullness. So what is His fullness? This word translated fullness is used many times in the Greek Old Testament, and it always carries the idea of abundance.

**Ez.12:19 their land will be stripped of its fullness on account of the violence of all who live in it.**

It will be stripped of its abundance. It will be stripped of all the things that are good about it. So the

fullness of God is a lot of what God has to offer (which is grace). The fullness of God is a great or large or full experience of the attributes of God. It is an abundant expression of the glory and power and presence of God. That is the main work God is doing in this world.<sup>2</sup> And He accomplishes that work the same way you accomplish your work – with His body.

According to v.23, what is the fullness of Christ? The Church. We are His fullness. So God is making His wonderful abundance available to the world *through* the Church. He uses His body to get it done. We are the great expression of the glory, power and presence of God.

If you join the Army you are signing on to defend this country in war – as one part of a huge fighting machine. If you join an orchestra you are signing on to produce music – as one part of a musical ensemble. If you join a political party you are signing on to try to elect people who will represent that party's platform.

So what is our purpose? If you join Agape Bible Church what will you be signing on to do? You would be signing on to be one part of a fullness-dispensing machine. You would be signing on to function as a part of the great expression of the glory, power and presence of God. You won't be all that on your own (one soldier is not an army and one musician is not a symphony orchestra and one toenail can't take out the trash), but you will be part of a larger organism that has that function. The larger organism – the body – *can* carry out the task of dispensing the fullness of God. The body will be able to carry out the task of serving as the great expression of the glory, power and presence of God, *if* all the various body parts are doing their part.

When someone walks through the church doors on Sunday morning they should walk right into the middle of the fullness of God. That is our responsibility. When people come into this church our main goal is not that they feel welcome (although that should result if we do realize our goal); our main goal is not that they enjoy the experience or that they decide to come back or they are impressed with us; our main goal is that they experience a whole lot of the grace God has to offer.

People should not be able to experience more of the fullness of God in their prayer closet (or anywhere else) than they experience at Agape Bible Church because the Church *is* the fullness of God. If someone attends this church and does not experience a great measure of the fullness of God - more than they experience anywhere outside the church, then either we have failed miserably in our task or we are succeeding in providing the fullness of God but that person, for whatever reason, is not receiving it (maybe they come in with a selfish attitude or some other sinful attitude that prevents them from experiencing God's presence and receiving God's grace in any great way.) But if the person is open to it and seeking it and they can not get it here, that means we are failing in our task enormously.

God expects this from us. In fact, He expects it to take place in such extreme measures, that we put on a clinic for all the awesome, mighty rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, displaying how amazing God's wisdom is.

**Eph.3:10-11 His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, 11 according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

So how does all that happen? What specifically do you as an individual need to do to do your part to see to it that we don't fail at this? Answering that question in detail is going to be our focus in the next lesson. For now let's look at one important principle.

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<sup>2</sup> He is glorifying Himself by filling this world with His fullness – filling it up with things that are good about Him. God is the one who fills all things in every way. That means whatever quality and degree of abundance something has, it has because God has filled it with that. There is no other source of fullness. If anything has any good qualities – any beauty, importance, meaning, usefulness, purity, righteousness, significance, loveliness - any quality at all, it can only come from the one who fills all things in every way that they are filled. And thousands of things all around us are filled with lots and lots and lots of really good qualities. According to Ps.33:5 and 119:64 the earth is already full of His love to one degree. Everywhere you look you see marvelous things. That just struck me the other day when I was driving home praying and Ps.33:5 popped into my head. "The earth is full of Your unfailing love" – and I looked around and realized everything I saw was full of goodness. The first thing I saw was snow. And I thought for a long time about the dozens of things that are wonderful about snow. Snow is an amazing thing. It is good for the earth, it is beautiful, it is fun (we use it for all kinds of recreation). It gives you all kinds of different good emotions when it is gently falling with great big flakes, or when it is a blizzard outside and you feel so warm and cozy in your house; it is great for packing and throwing at people. It is good for slushies, snow cones, making homemade ice cream, snow caves, snowmen. It is full of all kinds of goodness that reflects the way God is. And then I realized everywhere I looked I saw other things that were just as good. The fields, the grass the trees, the creek, the lake, the mountains, the sky, the clouds, the moon, the sun, the air, the people, the ground - the whole earth really is filled full of goodness from God. But they aren't as good as they could be. There are a whole lot of things in this world that are messed up in the extreme. And the main work of Christ is the filling of this world with more and more of His fullness.

## To do the work the body must be mature

If you want to know exactly how the Lord Jesus Christ expects His body to function, take a careful look at 1 Cor.12 and Eph.4. Both passages are very straightforward and easy to understand. We will start with Eph.4.

**Eph.4:11-16 It was he who gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to equip the saints for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup> until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. <sup>14</sup> Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. <sup>15</sup> Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. <sup>16</sup> From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.**

One of the sad trends of our day is the movement away from mutual edification as a central function of the church. Many preachers are now actually preaching against that. They are saying, “We can’t become ingrown. Our main focus is *outreach*. The church’s job is not to minister to itself, but to reach the world.”

One of the hottest trends today is the missional church movement. And there are a lot of really good things that are coming from that movement. But many in that movement have fallen into this error. One of their brochures contrasts the old, ineffective, institutional way of running a church with the new, missional way. And one of the contrasts was this: In the old, institutional way the church existed for the benefit of the members. But in the new missional way the church exists to go out into the world - you only come to church to refuel – but the real ministry takes place out there in the world. And amazingly, they list Eph.4:11-16 as a proof text for this! That passage says exactly the opposite. By far most of the ministries the Bible calls the Church to do are ministries in the Church to the Church and Eph.4 is no exception. It is all about ministry by the church in the church to the church.

The Lord gave church leaders to the church (v.11). For what purpose? **to equip the saints (the Church) for works of service, so that the body of Christ (the Church) may be built up. <sup>13</sup> until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. <sup>15</sup> ... we (the Church) will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. <sup>16</sup> From him the whole body (the Church), joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.**

The final goal is for the body of Christ to reach maturity. The Lord gave gifts to the Church to equip the Church to minister to the Church within the Church, so that each part of the Church could do its work in order to grow the Church to full maturity as the body of Christ (evidently the Apostle Paul and the Holy Spirit are both heavily into that old, institutional method). You will find the same thing in I Cor.12 and most of the other major passages about the purpose of the Church.

Please understand I am not saying that outreach is unimportant. Outreach and evangelism and missions and reaching the lost are an incredibly important part of our task. But in order for it to be effective it has to be done in the way God prescribed. And the way God prescribed for that to be accomplished is as the work of the matured, built up, edified body of Christ. We are to do the work of Christ – filling this world with God’s goodness and grace. But in order for that to happen the body is going to have to follow the directions of the Head. And the Head of this body, Jesus Christ, has made it crystal clear that for us to effectively achieve what we are supposed to achieve – filling this world with the fullness of God - we must grow to maturity as a body. And that will happen when each part of the body works to build up the rest of the body.

### The one anothers

So what does all that mean for you? 1) Make sure you are doing the things that everyone is supposed

to be doing and 2) carry out your specific, unique calling. In the next lesson we will discuss how to know for sure what your unique calling is, but for now let's consider the first one.

There are some things that God has called every one of us to be doing and a great place to start is with all the one another commands. How can you build the body to maturity so we can accomplish our work and function as the fullness of Christ in this world? By carrying out the one anothers.

**Ro 12:10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.**

**Gal 6:2 Carry one another's burdens**

**Ro 15:7 Accept one another**

**Eph 4:2 Be patient, bearing with one another in love.**

**Gal 5:13-15 serve one another in love.**

**Ro 16:16 Greet one another**

**Jn 13:14 wash one another's feet.**

**Ro 1:11-13 Mutually encourage one another by your faith**

**Mk 9:50 be at peace with one another.**

**1Pe 3:8-9 live in harmony with one another**

**Ro 14:19 do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.**

**Php 4:2 agree with one another in the Lord.**

**Col 3:16 teach and admonish one another with all wisdom,**

**Ro 15:14 instruct one another.**

**1Th 5:11 build one another up**

**Heb 10:24-25 spur one another on toward love and good deeds.**

**25 do not give up meeting together but 1Th 4:18 encourage one another daily**

**Jas 5:16 confess your sins to one another and pray for one another**

**Eph 4:31-32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another**

**Col 3:12-13 Bear with one another**

**Eph 5:19 Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.**

**21 Submit to one another...**

That is a sampling. There are more.

I told you that this study of what God looks for in a church is going to shape everything about the structure of this church. We are not going to try to squeeze what we learn into the old wineskins of traditional structures. We want what we learn to define the structures of this church. So what is the church supposed to be doing? In huge measure it is the fulfillment of the one anothers. And that is why we are going to do what we do in the second hour. But instead of calling that our Sunday School hour we are going to call it our church family hour. And that will be a time when we will strive to carry out the one anothers.

The farther we get in this study the more we are going to see how central those one anothers are to the core of what the church is. And yet, our culture has developed a kind of Sunday morning gathering where very few of those can take place. You cannot sit there and confess your sins to one another and spur one another on to love and good deeds and bear one another's burdens while you sit in rows and listen to a sermon.

If it is true that God expects us, as a church, to function as the body of Christ, and if it is true that a huge part of functioning as the body of Christ involves carrying out the one anothers, then if all you do is come to church and listen to the preaching and then leave; you haven't been to church. However hard it is for you, realize that carrying out the one anothers is not something God has made optional for the Christian. God may or may not call you to Agape, but if He does, realize that He is calling you to do your part in the task of serving as the fullness of God in Denver. And a major part of your role in doing that is the carrying out of the one anothers.

## **The God who is a head to us!**

A good way to close this study is to focus on the wonderful goodness of our God. The highest goal I have in my preaching is to help people love God more. And we will love Him more when we start to see

and experience what is wonderful about Him. So let me show you one of those wonderful things so we can end this study with our thoughts and affections focused squarely on Him. Spend the week this week rejoicing and delighting in the God who relates to His people as a head to a body. That is a marvelous attribute of our blessed Lord.

Something that will make us love God more is if our eyes are opened to the beauty and goodness of this God who relates this way to His people: as a head to a body. The false gods of the world's religions relate to their people in impersonal, indirect, detached, distant ways. Think of the way people in our culture tend to conceive of God. In their darkened minds they have invented gods that are so remote there is no real difference between them and no God at all. They have imagined a god who lays no claim on their lives, who is not personal, to whom they are not accountable, who is never pleased or angered with them, who cares nothing for them, who pays no attention to them (in fact, who can't pay attention to them because he's not even a person), who provides only the most vague guidance, and who gives no more grace than a good luck charm. People in our culture worship gods who are not satisfying, who do not even promise to be satisfying, and who are not worth pursuing with all their heart. They worship gods who are not worthy of fear, nor are they worthy to be exuberantly, joyfully praised or desired. They worship gods whose presence is meaningless and not worth making any effort to pursue.

Contrast that with the Lord Jesus Christ. He relates to us as our Head. He is not only remote and transcendent. He is also nearby and He has made us as closely related to Him as a body is to its head. What a wonderful way He has chosen to guide us. He does not remain afar off, sending only vague impressions or leaving us to find our own way altogether. He is in us, united to us, connected with nerves and bone and connective tissue. He has not left us as a mob of people searching around for vague clues for what direction to take. The head directs and coordinates the body with incredibly detailed and specific direction and orchestration. Your brain does not send signals to your body parts that are indecipherable or vague. Neither does Christ lead His Church that way.

And think of what marvelous things are accomplished by a body when each part is responsive to the head. Human beings who have mastered control of their bodies have been able to achieve unbelievably wonderful things. How much greater must the things be that Christ has in mind to accomplish with His body? Rejoice in that! Take great delight in that! Delight in the fact that if we are only responsive to His guidance we will be part of grand, glorious purposes and eternally marvelous works – guaranteed!

The other night I just kind of flaked out and played a game of solitaire on my computer. My head gave signals to all the parts of my body to perform a task that was absolutely the epitome of meaninglessness and emptiness. But the Lord Jesus Christ never does that with His body. If we follow His direction I will never end up being used for a game of solitaire.

How's this for an amazing promise – any time you are doing what you should be doing - no matter what it is, remember to delight in the knowledge that the Head of this body never directs the body to idle, meaningless things. And so by doing that thing you are doing, you are involved in an eternally wonderful outcome.

What a wonderful promise, that I can just come to church, carry out my ministry, and then be able to rest in the full knowledge that my efforts are achieving eternally great ends! I saw a TV show a while back in which a man willingly sacrificed his life for the benefit of his country. He said he was glad to do it because his life would be given for a great purpose. But then just before he was to die he discovered that his death was not going to help his country at all. What darkness the world has to walk in! They have no idea what the ultimate outcomes of anything will be. They can give their lives for some seemingly wonderful cause, and then circumstances can change such that their life and death accomplished nothing.

Aren't you glad He hasn't left us in that kind of hopeless darkness? Doesn't it thrill you that He has promised and you can know with certainty that your work will matter? And far beyond that, doesn't it thrill you to know that as you do that work, the work itself can be intimate fellowship with Him if you only remember the marvelous truth that as you do each thing you know you should do, both the knowledge and the doing are His direct work in you, so that at those moments you are experiencing the presence of Almighty God!

Finally, I urge you to trust the Lord Jesus to coordinate His body. You are never closer to God than when you are trusting in, resting in, relying on, and delighting in one of His great and precious promises. That is what God loves more than anything. And His promise to be a head to the body is one of those great, precious promises. Trust in it! When you can't see how things fit together on the small scale or big



scale, be confident in His promise to be our Head. When He brings people to this church that it doesn't seem like we need, and when He does not bring us the people we think we do need, delight in the absolute promise that He is a Head to us and that He is coordinating perfectly. Sometimes the way He chooses to piece together a church doesn't seem quite right to us. But rejoice that you can bank on the fact that He knows what He's doing.

**1 Cor.12:11 All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.**

**Eph.4:7 But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.**

*Oh Lord, help us remember these things, and incline our affections such that it causes great delight in us every day.*