

House of God

The Mission of the Church Part 02
Selected Passages 5-18-2014

Summary: You are a unique body part as determined by your spiritual gift, which is a stewardship of grace. You need to come to church to get the various forms of grace you need, and to dispense your form of grace. As His household we function not only as stewards, but as children, looking to Him as our Father (trusting in His love, trusting His providence, fearing Him and obeying Him), and we interact with one another as siblings, servants, and slaves.

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Introduction

We are in the midst of a study on what the Bible says about the mission of the church. What is the church? And what are we supposed to be doing? And how does God want us to do it? When you ask the question, “What is a church?” the main way the Bible answers that question is with various metaphors. And the metaphor that comes up the most in the Bible compares the church to a body – we are the body of Christ. And each of us is a body part.

NOS

“If that’s what I am, I think I need an adrenaline rush or something. Maybe an energy drink.”

Energy drinks have been kind of a fad lately, and there is a popular one that’s called NOS. That name is an abbreviation for nitrous oxide, which is used by drag racers to get an extreme power boost in a

race. A shot of nitrous into the engine and BOOM – huge burst of power. So they make that the name of the energy drink to give the impression that this drink will give you a big surge of strength. How would you like to have a spiritual shot of NOS? Last week we found that the backbone of everything we do at church is the carrying out of the “one-another” commands. (Love one another, instruct one another, bear one another’s burdens, etc.) When you do that you function like an artery that supplies the rest of the body with spiritual nourishment that enables us to grow to maturity so that we can do the work of Christ in this world, which is the work of dispensing His fullness – every good thing Christ has to offer. And I ended that sermon with the comment that Scripture teaches how you can become supercharged with massive power from the Holy Spirit in your one-another’s ministry at church so that your ministry is ultra-effective. It will turn the grace flowing from Christ through you to the church from a garden hose to a fire hose.

That happens any time there is what the Bible calls a “manifestation” of the Holy Spirit. “Manifestation” means He is very clearly and very obviously the one acting. The Holy Spirit blows into a church and awesome, life-altering power is exerted.

Now, depending on your church background, there are all kinds of different ideas that might be in your mind when you think of the manifestation of the Spirit. But if we want to just set all that aside and focus just on exactly what the Bible says, it is not very hard because there is only one place in the Bible that mentions the manifestation of the Spirit. It is 1 Corinthians 12:7.

1 Corinthians 12:7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

And in the verses that follow, you have a long discussion of spiritual gifts. Every single one of you who is a believer has a spiritual gift. And when you use that gift, that is a manifestation of the Holy Spirit. That is your shot of nitrous.

Now for some of you, that might be a big letdown.

“What? You paint this picture of this awesome, powerful, massive boost of power from the Holy Spirit, and it turns out all you’re talking about is me using my gift? I use my gift all the time and there’s no earth-shaking power. Nobody’s life is changed. As far as I can tell, hardly anything happens at all.”

I think people think that way because they don’t understand the difference between powerful and spectacular. People think something has to be a spectacle in order to be powerful. So if they saw a bunch of angelic figures floating around up by the ceiling in a worship service, they think that is awesome power. But if some one just gets saved by the power of the gospel – goes from being spiritually dead to being alive to God – ho hum. If someone gets up out of a wheelchair and walks, that is big-time power. But if a marriage goes from husband and wife fighting and being selfish to becoming one flesh like the relationship between Christ and the church – that is just ordinary. They think miracles are greater displays of power than the normal things God does in the church on a daily basis. We need to get all that kind of thinking out of our head and just believe God’s Word when it tells us what real power is.

John 1:8 The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.

When the Holy Spirit works, it is invisible. But it is powerful. Whenever a servant of the living God uses his or her spiritual gift in ministry, supernatural power from the Holy Spirit is unleashed.

And everyone has a different gift, which means each one of you is a different body part in the body of Christ.

Romans 12:4 Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, 5 so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. 6 We have different gifts, according to the grace given us.¹

He makes the exact same point again in 1 Corinthians 12. Last week I told you, when you think of the church as the body of Christ, think arteries and hands. Arteries to remind you of Ephesians 4:16 –

¹ See also 1 Cor.12:14-19.

each one of us is a joint of supply – supplying the rest of the body with spiritual nutrition. We do that through the one-anothers. And the more we do that, the more the body reaches greater maturity, which means we have more of the fullness of Christ to dispense.

And think of hands to remind you of Ephesians 1:23 – Jesus does His work in this world the same way we do – through His body. His work is to fill all things with His fullness (a lot of the good things He has to offer), and He does that through His body.

And now this gives us a third aspect to the body analogy. So the first part of the body to think of is arteries, the second is hands, the third – I can't tell you, because it's different for every person. Whatever your gift and calling is in the church, that is what body part you are. So arteries, hands, and then a blank for you to fill in - whatever unique part of the body you happen to be. And that is determined by your spiritual gift.

If we had to come up with a name for it, we could use the word that Paul uses there in verse 6 – **grace**.

Romans 12:6 We have different gifts, according to the grace given us.

We see the same thing in Ephesians 4.

Ephesians 4:7 to each one of us a grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.

So let's talk for a minute about grace.

Grace

The Effects of Grace

Supreme Importance

Grace is the key to everything in the Christian life. Grace was what gave Paul such amazing success in his ministry.

1 Timothy 1:14 The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly

Paul was arguably the most successful missionary and preacher who ever lived. What was the secret to his amazing success? Very simple - lots and lots of grace. And that is the secret he passed on to Timothy.

2 Timothy 2:1 You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

That is all you need. If you want to train up a great man of God, teach him how to get grace.

When we need something from God - anything, what does Hebrews 4:16 tell us to do? Approach the throne of what? Grace. And in Hebrews 12:15 we are told, **See to it that no one misses the grace of God**. That is one thing you can *not* afford to miss out on. That is why over and over the writers of the New Testament keep saying, "Grace to you," in their letters. Grace to you, grace and peace to you, the grace of Christ be with your spirit - you know how many times that is repeated in the New Testament? I counted 34. Paul says it, Peter says it, John, the writer of Hebrews, it is in the book of Revelation. It is not just one writer's style - you see it in 17 different New Testament books. They all agree that if you are going to ask God for one thing, ask for grace. There is nothing you need more.

Godliness

Is there anybody here who wouldn't mind having more self-control – so that you could do a better job at saying *no* to ungodliness and worldly passions? According to Titus 2:12, the thing that enables you to say *no* to sin is ... grace. Grace gives you self-control. So, how much would you pay for an ounce of grace? What would that be worth to you? In 2 Corinthians 9:, grace makes you **abound in every good work**. And in 2 Corinthians 1:12 grace results in greater holiness and sincerity. In 2 Corinthians 8:1-9 we

read about how the people were going through extreme suffering, but they were able to be happy anyway by giving their money away to other poor people. And the thing that enabled them to get happiness from that was grace. Several passages talk about how grace has a strengthening effect on your heart, so you have the power and strength to handle suffering and accomplish great things (Heb.113:9, 1 Cor.15:10, Acts 20:32).

Satisfaction

How valuable is this stuff? 2 Corinthians 12:9 teaches that grace satisfies some of the deepest cravings and longings that you have, so that you become content and happy and satisfied even while undergoing painful suffering.

Encouragement and Hope

In 2 Thessalonians 2:16 it says that through grace you get encouragement and hope.

Salvation

What if you have a friend or loved one who is lost, and you share the gospel with them but they just won't accept it? What is the key to bringing them to salvation? Grace (Eph.2:8, Tit.2:11).

Grace is pretty amazing stuff isn't it? And the best thing about it is it's not really stuff. It is not some kind of substance God gives you. Grace is the very favor of God. That is probably the most basic definition of the Greek word – favor. Grace is having God smile on your life – that is why it has so many amazing effects. I asked what you would pay for an ounce of it, but we know you can't get it with money. It's not for sale. So how do you get it?

Stewards in the Household

Grace Management

1 Peter 5:10 Just as each of you has received a gift, use it to serve others, as good stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

Here the image is a little different. Instead of an artery or body part, you are a steward. Paul's favorite metaphor for the church was a body. Peter prefers the analogy of a household. The church is not only the body of Christ; it is the household of God. A steward in a household was the person who decides who got which supplies and how much and when. It was his decision. If the steward decides not to distribute any food tonight, everyone in the household goes hungry. He was in charge of distribution.

Balanced Diet

If you can imagine a household where one steward was in charge of the meat, another was in charge of bread, another doled out the water, another fruits, etc., so to get everything you need to stay alive you have to get around to a variety of stewards. You cannot live on a diet of only carrots, or only oranges - not even only ice cream. They are all under one big category (food), and yet the various different kinds of food have different purposes and different effects on your body and serve different purposes in keeping you alive. But instead of having one steward in charge of all the food, the church is like a household where there is a different steward in charge of each kind of food.

And one of those stewards is you. In this household, you are a steward of something. There is something that God has for His people that you personally are in charge of distributing. You are the manager of that resource, and you decide who gets it and how much and when.

“What is the resource?”

Look at the text again.

Shades of Grace

1 Peter 5:10 Just as each of you has received a gift, use it to serve others, as good stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

Usually when you hear a sermon on stewardship, it is about being a good steward of your money. But this passage is about being a good steward of God's grace. There are a lot of different forms of grace. Some of them keep people's hope strong. Other forms of grace are designed to help people overcome sins of the flesh. Still other forms are what you need to improve your worship. Other forms help with prayer, other forms increase love, or enable people to recover from failure, or to have success in ministry, etc. All these different forms of grace, but only one of them is the kind that flows through your particular spiritual gift.

That is one reason why you need to come to church – so you can get all the forms of grace you need.

Come and Get It!

Sometimes people ask, "Why do I need to come to church? I have a Bible. I have the Holy Spirit. I can listen to a sermon on TV and sing praise songs with a CD in my home. Why do I need to go to church?" There are two very important reasons why you need to come to church. One is this - You need to come here to receive all the various forms of grace you need. The grace you need for greater self-control, for strength, for holiness, for every single thing you need in your Christian life. There are forms of grace that you need that you cannot get unless you are around a wide enough variety of grace dispensing stewards in the household of God.

"But why can't I just get grace from God on my own – by myself in the comfort of my own home?"

Why wouldn't that work? Same reason it wouldn't work if you called your kids for dinner and one of them yelled down from his room, "I'm comfortable up here in my room. Mom, just bring dinner up and serve it to me in my bedroom." That wouldn't work in your household and it doesn't work in God's household either. God has decided how He wants to distribute the various forms of grace you need, and He chose to do so through the various spiritual gifts of the people at church.

So, one gift is the gift of encouraging. We are all commanded to encourage, but some of you are a lot better at it than others. In order to grow spiritually like God wants you to grow, you are going to need the grace that comes from those people who are good at encouraging. Another is serving. Another is mercy - helping people who are in trouble. Another is giving. We are all called to give generously, but some are gifted at that. And another is helping – just helping the people with the other gifts do their job. Another is leadership. Every one of us needs that grace to function as a body. Another is teaching. We all need that. If you are one of those people who says, "I don't need any preachers or books or commentaries - just me and the Holy Spirit" – that is like a person who has a rich uncle who mails him a bunch of money every week. But he is starving to death because he never goes to the mailbox. He says, "I don't need mailboxes or postmen or any of that garbage - all I need is my rich uncle." Your rich uncle has all you need, but if he chooses to deliver it to you through the mail, and you refuse his means of delivery, then you don't get it.

Come and Give It!

So one reason you need to come to church is to get the grace you need. The Holy Spirit has laid out a spread and is calling up to your room, "Dinner's ready. Come and get it!" And it won't work for you to yell back, "I don't feel like driving to church. Just serve it up to me in my room."

Another reason is you need to come here to dole out the form of grace you are in charge of distributing. Maybe you don't feel like you need any grace on a particular Sunday. You are doing just fine on your own, you need no help, no edification from anyone, no ministry of spiritual gifts to you, you are totally self-sufficient. You would be wrong, but even if it were true and you didn't need any grace at all,

you still need to come to church and carry out the one-anothers using your spiritual gift because even if you don't need grace – we do! We all need the form of grace God has made you a steward of.

There is a certain flow of grace that we can only get from you – no other source. If you have the gift of compassion, then it is your responsibility to distribute that to the church – in the way that only you can do it. If you stay home one Sunday, nobody gets that particular form of grace that day. They might get compassion from some other people, but not the particular kind God has given you to distribute. If you go ahead and come but you keep to yourself the whole time you are here – again, we all get deprived. It is totally up to you how much of that grace gets distributed and to whom. You are the managing steward.

Stewardship Matters

"So what if one of the stewards is unfaithful? Suppose the guy in charge of the cereal isn't doing his job? What if he only shows up at church once every six weeks or so? And when he does, he keeps to himself. Then what? Does God let all the children just go without? Or will God bypass that person and supply us with that form of grace through some other means?"

If God bypassed the person and supplied that grace another way, then our stewardship would be a farce. It would be meaningless. Nobody's ministry would matter, because God would just make it happen whether the person was faithful or not. But Scripture is clear that our stewardship is not a farce. It is a real stewardship which means if you withhold your grace, we all go without. That is why there are sick, dying churches. That is why there are some churches where there is a famine of God's Word. The Word of God is not faithfully preached or taught. In other churches there is a famine of compassion. Some churches get into trouble because they have no discernment. And in other churches there is very little encouragement. In others hospitality is lacking, and in others there is hardly any peacemaking. Some have a lack of leadership, others a lack of service, others a lack of mercy, or wisdom or passion or love. I have never been in a church in my life where every single steward is faithfully doling out the form of grace they are called to give out as stewards. I know that because every church I have ever been a part of has had me in it. And I am constantly falling into the sin of unfaithfulness in various areas where God has called me to be steward of some portion of His grace and I have dropped the ball. So yes, God will allow great harm to come to the church if the stewards are not faithful to distribute their grace. This is a very important responsibility.

Matthew 24:45 Who then is the faithful and wise slave, whom the master has put in charge of the slaves in his household to give them their food at the proper time? 46 It will be good for that slave whose master finds him doing so when he returns.

Implication – it will not be so good for those servants who are not found doing that when Jesus returns.

Understand the Value of Your Gift

When you come to church and give someone a word of encouragement, or a loving rebuke, or you pray for someone - I hope you don't just think of that in naturalistic terms. I hope you don't think of it as just being nice to someone, or that the results of that are limited to what you can see with your eyes. There is a certain thing that person needs to survive and flourish spiritually, it is called grace, and there are unique forms of it that are only released through your gift every time you attempt to do the one-anothers. Lots of people can encourage, but no one does it quite the way you do it. We can all pray for one another, but no one prays quite the way you pray. They don't think of the same things you think of to ask God for. When you use your spiritual gift in ministry, universe-dwarfing power flows through you. The Spirit of the living God is at work!

The church cannot afford to go without anyone's gift. That is just stated flat out in 1 Corinthians 12

1 Corinthians 12:21 The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!"

I think the biggest hindrance to ministry in the Church is probably the lack of appreciation most people have for the value of their gift. Think of how much fun it would be if God gave you a million dollars to just give away to anyone you wanted to give it to. God has given us each not cash, but a checkbook that we can use to draw out of His unlimited account of grace. God has given you a spiritual gift, which is a debit card that draws on the account of a grace Billionaire, and He has told you, "Here, use this card to get some gifts for your brothers and sisters. No limit." Do not ever slander the Holy Spirit by disparaging the gift He gave you.

How to Discover Your Gift

And if you don't know what your gift is, we talked about how to discover your gift in part 2 of the "What is a Church" series. So I won't go into detail now. I will just say this – it is not rocket science. God has no reason to hide it from you. If you don't know what your gifts are, that is probably a sign that you just haven't done a wide enough variety of ministries. If you just keep serving in whatever area you can, and you keep an eye open for those aspects of those jobs that come a little easier to you, eventually you will get a feel for what you are good at and not good at.

Children in the Household

God as Father

So what is the church? We are the body of Christ, and we are the household of God. What does it mean to be God's household? Peter draws out the stewardship analogy, but there is more to it than that. Another reason we are called God's household (family) is to remind us that we are to relate to God as our Father, and to one another as siblings – like a family.

Trust His Providence with Gratitude

So if we ask the question of our identity as a church – what are we? – One answer is we are a group of people who look to God as our Father. That means we honor Him, obey Him, and submit to His sovereign plan. Instead of rejecting the hard events in our lives that God sends our way with complaining or grumbling or anger or discontent (or reject His plan in advance by worrying), we are submissive to His providence, which can be seen in our gratitude.

Ephesians 5:20 giving thanks always for everything to God the Father

Trust Him for Our Needs

Another aspect of looking to God as our Father is depending on Him to supply all our needs. Children look to their dad for provision, protection, guidance and care. And the church is a special group of people who look to God for all that. No one else in the world can do that – only us.

1 John 3:1 Behold! how great a love the Father has given us, that we should be called God's children. And we are!

He has given us that privilege, and He is glorified and honored when we look to Him to supply our needs. So if we are going to fulfill our responsibility as God's family – His household, we are going to have to be a church devoted to prayer. We are going to have to be a group of people devoted to crying out to God for the things we need. And the #1 thing we see being asked for in the Bible from God the Father is... grace. A church is a group of people who cry out to God to supply them with grace.

Trust Him to Love Us

And when we do that, we trust Him to answer those prayers with whatever is best for us. That is another part of looking to God as Father – trust. As His children we trust Him to love us as a father. Most

of the time in the New Testament, Jesus is the object of our trust, but there are passages that speak of trusting the Father, and those passages focus mainly on trusting Him to love us with the emotions a father has for his kids. When you have a crisis and are in distress, God wants you to think of Him as being like a human father feels when he sees that his little 2-year-old's finger has been slammed in a door and the child is screaming in pain. If you don't think God has those kinds of emotions toward you when you are in pain, you have progress to make in the area of trust.

Siblings in the Household

Love His Children

Another aspect of what it means to relate to God as our Father is to love one another as siblings. That is why of all the "one-another" commands, love one another is the one repeated 16 times in the New Testament.

Romans 15:5 Now may the God of endurance and encouragement grant you agreement with one another, according to Christ Jesus, ⁶ so that you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ with a united mind and voice. ⁷ Therefore accept one another, just as Christ also accepted you, to the glory of God

We glorify the Father when we have agreement with one another with a unified mind and voice and accept one another. The word **accept** means to reach out and pull someone close to you. That is part of the definition of what a church is.

And notice it does not say to worry about whether people are loving or accepting you. There are so many people who seem to think that is their role in the church – to make sure people are welcoming them and loving them and accepting them. Any time you find yourself falling into self-pity over how people are failing to love you properly, that is a flashing red light on the dash of your soul. Something is way off in your perspective. So often we fall into what I call the "Well, what about John?" syndrome. Remember in John 21 when Jesus told Peter, "You're going to suffer for Me and be crucified." And Peter said, "What about John?" And Jesus basically said, "Don't worry about John. You let Me worry about John - you follow Me." I think there are some people who read about the seven churches in Revelation 2-3 and you ask, "Where are you in that passage?" and they think they are the one walking among the lampstands whose job it is to critique all the churches – especially policing how everyone is doing at loving and welcoming and accepting them. The fact is, it is none of my business how well other people are doing at loving me. My concern is whether I am loving and accepting those people around me and drawing them into my circle of love.

And that is especially important when we have differences with one another. The world loves those who love them. They love their friends and people who are agreeable. But our love for one another goes way beyond that. We love anyone who loves Christ because they love Christ. We might disagree on some points of doctrine or practice, but even in the midst of our differences, we are to have a unified attitude and purpose and direction. And that will only happen when we genuinely love one another. That is why Sam's sermon from two weeks ago is so important – we must have reconciled relationships within the household of God if we are going to honor God as our Father because you are never on good terms with the Father when you are fighting with one of His kids. Hostility between brothers is a stench in heaven and it so utterly contaminates our worship that Jesus gives reconciliation the utmost urgency – even to the point of saying, "Leave your gift there on the altar and go be reconciled because I'm not interested in your worship until you've done what you can to make things right with your brother."

Justify One Another

"I'm fine with loving most of the people, but there are certain ones that just really make it hard. Do I have to love and accept them too?"

Especially them! That is what makes us different from the world. And if you want to know how to do that, just do it the same way God does it - justification. Do you know what justification is? Justification is the reason a holy God can love sinful people. God not only loves us, but He loves us with the same love He has for His own perfect Son. How can He do that? Jesus is so much better than us, so much easier to love – how can God love us *just as much* as He loves Jesus?

He does it by crediting Jesus' perfect righteousness to our account, and crediting all our sins to His account. That is justification. So if God sees my sin, and it makes Him mad, all that anger was taken out on Jesus on the cross. And if God sees Jesus' perfect holiness and righteousness and is pleased, He credits that to my account so He is that pleased with me. We all understand that God does that; what we sometimes forget is that we are to do it too. We want to have the same attitudes and outlook that God has, right? His way of thinking and feeling about things is the best possible way, so we want to follow that. So when someone in the church does something to hurt you or anger you, Jesus says, "Just put that on My tab." If a believer deserves to be punished for something they did to you – was Jesus punished for that sin on the cross? Yes. Was that punishment adequate? Or is there still some portion of the price left to be paid? Are you going to be the one to tell Jesus, "All that agony You went through – it was inadequate to cover this particular offense"? If the cross was enough to satisfy the wrath of God it should be plenty to satisfy us. Those hard-to-love people – we need to justify them in our books the same way God did in His books. Credit their sins to Jesus and credit Jesus' righteousness and goodness to them.

Slaves in the Household

One final point of significance to this household metaphor: we are not only children in this household, but we are also servants. When Jesus tells a parable about what the church is like, whenever it is a parable about a household, we usually end up being the servants in the parable. Peter's whole analogy of us being stewards in the household came from Mathew 24:45, where we find that stewards are slaves.

Matthew 24:45 Who then is the faithful and wise slave, whom the master has put in charge of the slaves in his household to give them their food at the proper time? 46 It will be good for that slave whose master finds him doing so when he returns.

In the parable of the unmerciful servant in Mathew 18, we are pictured as fellow servants who must forgive one another because of how much our Master has forgiven us. In the parable of the wedding banquet in Mathew 22 we are pictured as the servants who were sent out to compel people to come in so the house would be full. In the parable of the talents and the parable of the minas, we are servants who must put the resources under our stewardship to work for the profit of the master.

Understanding that we are slaves in our Master's household is crucial for maintaining the right attitude about service. I think the church in our culture has just kind of conveniently forgotten this because we have such an aversion to the concept of slavery, and as a result we have developed some twisted ideas about serving in the church. For example, the twisted idea that serving in the church is voluntary. That one is WAY off. People think serving is optional, and so when they do serve they think they need to have some kind of recognition or thanks. You hear all the time, people say, "No one appreciates what I do, so why even bother?" Why bother? Because you are a slave in God's household and it is your duty to serve whether people appreciate it or not.

Luke 17:7 "Suppose one of you had a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Would he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, 'Come along now and sit down to eat'? 8 Would he not rather say, 'Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink'? 9 Would he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? 10 So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.' "

This is why I am not crazy about the term “volunteer” when it comes to ministries in the church. Slaves don’t volunteer. They are ordered to do a task, and they just hope they can do it well enough to be acceptable in the sight of the master.

Now, is this all there is to our relationship with God – a slave/master relationship? No. We have seen we are also sons and daughters. Jesus even calls us His friends, and makes the point that the friendship imagery is even more profound than the servant metaphor (Jn.15:15). The relationship we have with God is complex, and requires lots of different analogies to see the various facets of it. But one facet that comes up again and again is the slavery one.

Matthew 20:26 whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

So we are not only Christ’s slaves, but we are to think of ourselves as everyone’s slave in the church.

2 Corinthians 4:5 For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake.

Conclusion

What does it mean to be the body of Christ? First think arteries – supplying the rest of the body with grace by carrying out the one another. Then think of the fill-in-the-blank – whichever unique body part you are as determined by your spiritual gift. That is where the grace *really* flows like a surge of adrenaline. And when that happens, and the body is built up, then we can function as Christ’s hands and feet – doing His work in this world. And His work is dispensing His fullness – all the wonderful things He has to offer, to the world. That is the body analogy.

What about the household of God analogy? That metaphor teaches us that in order for us to function as a church we must look to Him as our Father, trusting in His love, trusting His providence, fearing Him and obeying Him. And we interact with one another as siblings, stewards, servants, and slaves.

Those are our responsibilities as His body and His household – what about as His bride? What does it mean for us to function as Christ’s bride? That is where we will pick it up next time.

Benediction - 1 Thessalonians 3:12,13 May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. 13 May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.

Application Questions (James 1:25)

- 1) What are your gifts? (And for those who don’t know – if someone put a gun to your head and demanded that you guess which things you are good at, what would you say?)
- 2) Which do you find harder to remember: “I need to go to church because I need grace” or “I need to go to church because I’m responsible to dispense grace”?
- 3) Do our cultural attitudes make it difficult for you to embrace your role as a slave in God’s house (thinking service is optional, requiring recognition or gratitude, feeling demeaned by serving others, etc.)?