

Remnant Life Church
September 11, 2022
Our Church at 10 Years

Part 3

The Nature of The Church: The Body of Christ
I Cor 12:15-27

Last Sunday we began to examine three aspects of the nature of the church according to the Apostle Paul and how the structure of RLC is impacted by them

- The first is that the church is the People of God
- Another way to say that is that we are the people of God
 - The first group called the People of God were the Hebrews
 - From the line of Abraham and Isaac, Jacob was the father of the 12 sons who would become the 12 tribes of Israel
 - Israel was the name that God gave to Jacob after he wrestled with the angel and would not let him go until he received a blessing in **Genesis 32**
- While God identified the Hebrews as His chosen people, we too are a part of that group when we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior
 - The Bible tells us that we are grafted into the line of Abraham
 - This means that both Jew and Gentile are the people of God
 - It is also the reason why any and everyone is welcomed here at RLC

One final thing about being the People of God –

- God expected His people then, as He does today, to be His without reservation and without divided loyalty
 - Loyalty was a problem for the Israelites, however, as they continually strayed from worshipping God and God alone
 - You can read about this more in the book of Judges
 - As well as the reign of King Solomon
 - And to further set God's people apart there was a unique special brand, if you will
 - In the OT it was the requirement of every male to be circumcised
 - That was an outward, physical sign of divine ownership
 - Now, however, instead of the outward sign of the flesh required by the Mosaic covenant, we find under the new covenant that it is an inward circumcision of the heart
 - Paul writes of this in **Rom 2:29** - *A person is not a Jew (this word is used to mean the people of God) who is one only outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a person's praise is not from other people, but from God.*
 - This mean that, under the new covenant of Jesus Christ, being the people of God was no longer restricted to a national Israelite
 - Again, Paul writes in **Rom 9:6** - *It is not as though God's word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel.*

- What we see here, without hesitation, is that to know Jesus Christ, under the new covenant, means we are all the people of God
- **Rom 9:24** - *even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles*
- The reason so much of what we read regarding these things is found in Paul's letter to the Romans is that they were just like many of us
 - Unfamiliar with the Jewish culture
 - Not knowing how they could believe in and be loved by the 'God of the Jews'
 - But, perhaps most important of all, they needed to understand, just as we do today, that God loves all those who fear Him and call on His name through belief in His Son, Jesus Christ.

And so, the first nature of the church is that we are **the People of God**

The Body of Christ

- This identification of the church tells us that the church is the extension of God's activity in the lives of men
 - We see this first in the physical life that Jesus lived while on earth
 - His was the first visible physical embodiment of God's love for His creation
- The term 'Body of Christ' is used to describe both the world-wide church and the local presence including us here at Remnant Life
 - Paul writes in **Eph 1:22-23** regarding the universal church...
 - *And God placed all things under his (that's Jesus) feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.*
 - Then he writes in **I Cor 12:27** regarding the local church...
 - *Now you (Here Paul is directly addressing the church in Corinth) are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.*
- The image of the body of Christ also emphasizes the connectivity of the church
 - Herein lies a decision we made 10 years ago when we formed this church as a non-denominational gathering
 - Notice what I did not say
 - I did not say that we are anti-denominational
 - That is very different than non-denominational
 - As I shared with you last week, there have been some very beneficial and beautiful aspects of the Christian faith that have grown out of the differences of how we worship and our understanding of the Scriptures
 - However, I still contend that over the centuries too much emphasis and attention has been given to our differences rather than celebrating what unites us together
 - And what is it that unites us?
 - Being forgiven by a merciful God through the sacrifice made on our behalf by Jesus Christ
 - I think there is something all of us might notice immediately when we enter into heaven - the absence of sections

- There will be no Methodist section, or Baptist section, or Presbyterian section
- We will all be together, in one innumerable mass, on our faces before the throne of God in wonderful, all-consuming, rapturous worship.
- There will no longer be any time or interest in division or differences
- And my question will always be why is that we cannot experience that same unity today?
- Can you imagine the message that would be presented to the world if every single Christian proclaimed and focused on the same message of gratitude to God for His love and forgiveness, standing side-by-side, arm-in-arm, with each other?

Here is how the body of Christ is structured:

(And it is much simpler than what we have made it into today)

- Christ is the head of the church body
 - Paul writes in **Col 1:18** - *And he (that is Christ Jesus) is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.*
- And within that body, we the believers, are the individual members or parts
- Why is Jesus the head of the church body?
 - Again, Paul tells us in **Col 1:15-18** - *The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.*
 - And since we are all the parts of the body, we must recognize that there is an interconnectedness between all those who make up the church
 - Notice that it is not those who make up a church, but the church

READ – I Cor 12:15-27

There are certainly many aspects of these verses that we could look at in much more detail as we understand the majesty and divinity of Christ

- But I want us to just recognize three things because of who He is
 1. Each believer encourages and builds up the other
 - a. Again, what a picture and witness it would be to everyone you interact with if you never said anything negative about a fellow brother or sister in the Lord
 - b. Loving all those who attend RLC
 2. The body of Christ is to be characterized by genuine fellowship
 - a. This is exactly why our church service is structured the way that it is
 - b. Fellowship is spending time with each other
 - c. Yesterday's memorial service and talking with our people
 3. The church is to be a unified body
 - a. This must become more certain for the world-wide church

b. Become truer for the local churches as well

Paul knew what he was talking about when he emphasized these things to the new churches that were gathering

- The people in the church of Corinth were already debating one another
 - We read in **I Cor 1:10-17** that they were divided on which religious leader they should follow
 - Paul, Apollos, Cephus, Jesus –
 - You may not realize it but that is the birth of church cliques
 - Paul warned against them
 - Why?
 - Because they brought disunity and divided the people
- The church must become unified to stand united against the influence of the world and the schemes of the devil
- The church is the *Body of Christ*, it is the *People of God*, next week we will talk about how the church is also the *Temple of the Holy Spirit*