

THE CENTRAL LINE OF THE BIBLE

(Lord's Day—First Morning Session)

Message Seven

The Consciousness of the Body of Christ

Scripture Reading: 1 Cor. 12:26-27; 2 Cor. 11:28-29; Col. 2:19; Rom. 12:4-5, 15; Phil. 1:8

- 1 Cor 12:26 And whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with *it*; or one member is glorified, all the members rejoice with *it*.
- 1 Cor 12:27 Now you are the Body of Christ, and members individually.
- 2 Cor 11:28 Apart from the things which *have not been mentioned, there is this*: the crowd of *cares* pressing upon me daily, the anxious concern for all the churches.
- 2 Cor 11:29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is stumbled, and I myself do not burn?
- Col 2:19 And not holding the Head, out from whom all the Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the joints and sinews, grows with the growth of God.
- Rom 12:4 For just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function,
- Rom 12:5 So we who are many are one Body in Christ, and individually members one of another.
- Rom 12:15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep.
- Phil 1:8 For God is my witness how I long after you all in the inward parts of Christ Jesus.

I. According to the teaching of the Bible and our spiritual experience, there is something called the consciousness of the Body of Christ—1 Cor. 12:26-27; 2 Cor. 11:28-29:

- 1 Cor 12:26 And whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with *it*; or one member is glorified, all the members rejoice with *it*.
- 1 Cor 12:27 Now you are the Body of Christ, and members individually.
- 2 Cor 11:28 Apart from the things which *have not been mentioned, there is this*: the crowd of *cares* pressing upon me daily, the anxious concern for all the churches.
- 2 Cor 11:29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is stumbled, and I myself do not burn?
- A. As members of the Body of Christ, we need to have the consciousness of the Body and a feeling for the Body—1 Cor. 12:26-27; Phil. 1:8.
- 1 Cor 12:26 And whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with *it*; or one member is glorified, all the members rejoice with *it*.
- 1 Cor 12:27 Now you are the Body of Christ, and members individually.
- Phil 1:8 For God is my witness how I long after you all in the inward parts of Christ Jesus.
- B. In order to live the Body life, we need to be conscious of the Body of Christ—Rom. 12:4-5, 15.
- Rom 12:4 For just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function,
- Rom 12:5 So we who are many are one Body in Christ, and individually members one of another.
- Rom 12:15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep.

II. The consciousness of the Body of Christ is the sense of Christ's life within us—Col. 3:4, 15; Rom. 8:2, 6, 10-11; 12:4-5:

- Col 3:4 When Christ our life is manifested, then you also will be manifested with Him in glory.
- Col 3:15 And let the peace of Christ arbitrate in your hearts, to which also you were called in one Body; and be thankful.
- Rom 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death.
- Rom 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.

- Rom 8:10 But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness.
- Rom 8:11 And if the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.
- Rom 12:4 For just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function,
- Rom 12:5 So we who are many are one Body in Christ, and individually members one of another.
- A. The mystical Body of Christ is formed by Christ as life in each of us, mingled with us—Col. 3:4; 2:19:
- Col 3:4 When Christ our life is manifested, then you also will be manifested with Him in glory.
- Col 2:19 And not holding the Head, out from whom all the Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the joints and sinews, grows with the growth of God.
1. If we are still living in our own life, we cannot know this life that mingles with us to form the Body of Christ—Matt. 16:24; 1 Cor. 2:14; 3:1-3; 12:12-27; Eph. 4:13-16.

Matt 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.

1 Cor 2:14 But a soulish man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him and he is not able to know *them* because they are discerned spiritually.

1 Cor 3:1 And I, brothers, was not able to speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to fleshy, as to infants in Christ.

1 Cor 3:2 I gave you milk to drink, not solid food, for you were not yet able *to receive it*. But neither yet now are you able,

1 Cor 3:3 For you are still fleshly. For if there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly and do you not walk according to *the manner of man*?

1 Cor 12:12 For even as the body is one and has many members, yet all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also is the Christ.

1 Cor 12:13 For also in one Spirit we were all baptized into one Body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and were all given to drink one Spirit.

1 Cor 12:14 For the body is not one member but many.

1 Cor 12:15 If the foot should say, Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body, *it is not that* because of this it is not of the body.

1 Cor 12:16 And if the ear should say, Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body, *it is not that* because of this it is not of the body.

1 Cor 12:17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were the hearing, where would the smelling be?

1 Cor 12:18 But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, even as He willed.

1 Cor 12:19 And if all were one member, where would the body be?

1 Cor 12:20 But now the members are many, but the body one.

1 Cor 12:21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

1 Cor 12:22 But much rather the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.

1 Cor 12:23 And those *members* of the body which we consider to be less honorable, these we clothe with more abundant honor; and our uncomely *members come to* have more abundant comeliness,

1 Cor 12:24 But our comely *members* have no need. But God has blended the body together, giving more abundant honor to the *member* that lacked,

1 Cor 12:25 That there would be no division in the body, but *that* the members would have the same care for one another.

- 1 Cor **12:26** And whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with *it*; or one member is glorified, all the members rejoice with *it*.
- 1 Cor **12:27** Now you are the Body of Christ, and members individually.
- Eph **4:13** Until we all arrive at the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, at a full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,
- Eph **4:14** That we may be no longer little children tossed by waves and carried about by every wind of teaching in the sleight of men, in craftiness with a view to a system of error,
- Eph **4:15** But holding to truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ,
- Eph **4:16** Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and *through* the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.
2. The Bible and our experience prove that, although each one of us is a member of the Body of Christ, the life in each one of us is not a *member* life but a *Body* life—1 John 5:11-12; Rom. 12:4-5.
- 1 John **5:11** And this is the testimony, that God gave to us eternal life and this life is in His Son.
- 1 John **5:12** He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.
- Rom **12:4** For just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function,
- Rom **12:5** So we who are many are one Body in Christ, and individually members one of another.
3. In the Body of Christ, when one member is joined to the Body or is having fellowship with the Body, his life is the life of the Body, and the life of the Body is his life—1 John 1:1-3.
- 1 John **1:1** That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life
- 1 John **1:2** (And the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and report to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us);
- 1 John **1:3** That which we have seen and heard we report also to you that you also may have fellowship with us, and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.
4. This life mingles with us to become the Body of Christ—Rom. 8:10; 12:4-5.
- Rom **8:10** But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness.
- Rom **12:4** For just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function,
- Rom **12:5** So we who are many are one Body in Christ, and individually members one of another.
- B. Concerning the consciousness of the Body of Christ, we need to begin with the sense of the divine life within us—8:6:
- Rom **8:6** For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.
1. This sense originates from the Spirit of God and from God's life in our spirit—vv. 2, 10.
- Rom **8:2** For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death.
- Rom **8:10** But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness.

2. The divine life within has feelings, and our regenerated spirit also has feelings—vv. 6, 16; 2 Cor. 2:13.
 - Rom 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.
 - Rom 8:16 The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God.
 - 2 Cor 2:13 I had no rest in my spirit, for I did not find Titus my brother; but taking leave of them, I went forth into Macedonia.
3. This sense is called the sense of life, and it is also the consciousness of the Body of Christ—Rom. 12:15; 1 Cor. 12:26-27.
 - Rom 12:15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep.
 - 1 Cor 12:26 And whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with *it*; or one member is glorified, all the members rejoice with *it*.
 - 1 Cor 12:27 Now you are the Body of Christ, and members individually.
4. If we exercise this sense, it will cause us to be conscious of matters related to the Body—Rom. 12:15.
 - Rom 12:15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep.
5. If we cultivate this sense, it will enable us to detect problems in the Body.
6. If we exercise this sense often and if we love the Lord and care for the church, this sense will become the sense, the consciousness, of the Body—2 Cor. 11:28-29.
 - 2 Cor 11:28 Apart from the things which *have not been mentioned, there is this*: the crowd of *cares* pressing upon me daily, the anxious concern for all the churches.
 - 2 Cor 11:29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is stumbled, and I myself do not burn?
- C. Because of self-consideration and love for our particular work, our inner sense is suppressed; this shows that our sense of being in the Body is not adequate and that we still remain in ourselves—Phil. 2:21.
 - Phil 2:21 For all seek their own things, not the things of Christ Jesus.
- D. If we have the sense of the Body, when others suffer or are blessed, we will identify with them and feel the same hardship or blessing—1 Cor. 12:26-27.
 - 1 Cor 12:26 And whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with *it*; or one member is glorified, all the members rejoice with *it*.
 - 1 Cor 12:27 Now you are the Body of Christ, and members individually.

III. The consciousness of the Body of Christ comes from the organic union with Christ, the enjoyment of Christ, and the living in the inward parts of Christ—Rom. 12:4-5; Col. 2:16-19; Phil. 1:8:

- Rom 12:4 For just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function,
- Rom 12:5 So we who are many are one Body in Christ, and individually members one of another.
- Col 2:16 Let no one therefore judge you in eating and in drinking or in respect of a feast or of a new moon or of the Sabbath,
- Col 2:17 Which are a shadow of the things to come, but the body is of Christ.
- Col 2:18 Let no one defraud you by judging you unworthy of your prize, in self-chosen lowliness and the worship of the angels, dwelling on the things which he has seen, vainly puffed up by his mind set on the flesh,
- Col 2:19 And not holding the Head, out from whom all the Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the joints and sinews, grows with the growth of God.
- Phil 1:8 For God is my witness how I long after you all in the inward parts of Christ Jesus.
- A. We may cultivate the consciousness of the Body of Christ by living in the organic union with Christ—Rom. 12:4-5:
 - Rom 12:4 For just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function,

- Rom 12:5 So we who are many are one Body in Christ, and individually members one of another.
1. Romans 12 speaks of the Body from the angle of the organic union, from the uniting life, from a life that unites us together, not only with Christ but with all the other members of Christ.
Rom 12 (be omitted)
 2. We are one Body in Christ, having an organic union with Him; this union makes us one in life with Christ and with all the other members of His Body—vv. 4-5:
Rom 12:4 For just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function,
Rom 12:5 So we who are many are one Body in Christ, and individually members one of another.
 - a. The Body is an organism produced by the union in life that we have in Christ; it is something that is held together in the organic union with Christ, and the actuality of the Body is the remaining in the organic union with Christ—John 15:1; Rom. 12:4-5.
John 15:1 I am the true vine, and My Father is the husbandman.
Rom 12:4 For just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function,
Rom 12:5 So we who are many are one Body in Christ, and individually members one of another.
 - b. If we would live in the reality of the Body of Christ, we need to live a grafted life; in the grafted life we no longer live by ourselves but allow the pneumatic Christ to live in us, and He causes us to become conscious of the Body of Christ—6:5; 11:17; Gal. 2:20.
Rom 6:5 For if we have grown together with *Him* in the likeness of His death, indeed we will also be *in the likeness* of His resurrection,
Rom 11:17 But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them and became a fellow partaker of the root of fatness of the olive tree,
Gal 2:20 I am crucified with Christ; and *it is* no longer I *who* live, but *it is* Christ *who* lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the *faith* of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.
- B. We may cultivate the consciousness of the Body of Christ by enjoying the all-inclusive Christ, who is the Head of the Body—Col. 2:16-19:
Col 2:16 Let no one therefore judge you in eating and in drinking or in respect of a feast or of a new moon or of the Sabbath,
Col 2:17 Which are a shadow of the things to come, but the body is of Christ.
Col 2:18 Let no one defraud you by judging you unworthy of your prize, in self-chosen lowliness and the worship of the angels, dwelling on the things which he has seen, vainly puffed up by his mind set on the flesh,
Col 2:19 And not holding the Head, out from whom all the Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the joints and sinews, grows with the growth of God.
1. The precious, all-inclusive Christ whom we enjoy is the Head of the Body—1 Cor. 10:3-4; John 20:22; Col. 1:18; 2:19:
1 Cor 10:3 And all ate the same spiritual food,
1 Cor 10:4 And all drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank of a spiritual rock which followed *them*, and the rock was Christ.
John 20:22 And when He had said this, He breathed into *them* and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit.

- Col 1:18 And He is the Head of the Body, the church; He is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;
- Col 2:19 And not holding the Head, out from whom all the Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the joints and sinews, grows with the growth of God.
- a. What we enjoy of Christ is actually something of Him as the Head; thus, when we enjoy Christ, we hold Him as the Head—vv. 10, 16-17.

Col 2:10 And you have been made full in Him, who is the Head of all rule and authority.

Col 2:16 Let no one therefore judge you in eating and in drinking or in respect of a feast or of a new moon or of the Sabbath,

Col 2:17 Which are a shadow of the things to come, but the body is of Christ.
 - b. The enjoyment of Christ causes Him to be our Head subjectively and experientially—Eph. 3:8, 17; 4:15.

Eph 3:8 To me, less than the least of all saints, was this grace given to announce to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel

Eph 3:17 That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love,

Eph 4:15 But holding to truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ,
2. When we enjoy Christ, He, the Head, causes us to become conscious of the Body—Col. 2:19; 3:15:
- Col 2:19 And not holding the Head, out from whom all the Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the joints and sinews, grows with the growth of God.
- Col 3:15 And let the peace of Christ arbitrate in your hearts, to which also you were called in one Body; and be thankful.
- a. The more we enjoy Christ, the more we will realize experientially that the Christ we enjoy is the Head of the Body.
 - b. This realization will make us conscious of the Body and cause us to love all the members of the Body—vv. 12-14.

Col 3:12 Put on therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, inward parts of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, long-suffering;

Col 3:13 Bearing one another and forgiving one another, if anyone should have a complaint against anyone; even as the Lord forgave you, so also *should* you *forgive*.

Col 3:14 And over all these things *put on* love, which is the uniting bond of perfectness.
3. The Christ we enjoy is the Head who causes us to be conscious of the Body; therefore, the issue of enjoying Christ and holding Him as the Head is that we have the consciousness of the Body of Christ—2:16-19.
- Col 2:16 Let no one therefore judge you in eating and in drinking or in respect of a feast or of a new moon or of the Sabbath,
- Col 2:17 Which are a shadow of the things to come, but the body is of Christ.
- Col 2:18 Let no one defraud you by judging you unworthy of your prize, in self-chosen lowliness and the worship of the angels, dwelling on the things which he has seen, vainly puffed up by his mind set on the flesh,
- Col 2:19 And not holding the Head, out from whom all the Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the joints and sinews, grows with the growth of God.
- C. We may cultivate the consciousness of the Body of Christ by living in the inward parts of Christ—Phil. 1:8; Col. 3:10-12, 15; Philem. 7, 12, 20:

Phil 1:8 For God is my witness how I long after you all in the inward parts of Christ Jesus.
 Col 3:10 And have put on the new man, which is being renewed unto full knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,
 Col 3:11 Where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all and in all.
 Col 3:12 Put on therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, inward parts of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, long-suffering;
 Col 3:15 And let the peace of Christ arbitrate in your hearts, to which also you were called in one Body; and be thankful.
 Philem 7 For I had much joy and encouragement over your love, because the inward parts of the saints have been refreshed through you, brother.
 Philem 12 Him I have sent back to you—him, that is, my very heart—
 Philem 20 Yes, brother, may I have profit from you in the Lord; refresh my inward parts in Christ.

1. Paul took the inward parts of Christ Jesus as his own inward parts in caring for the church—Phil. 1:8:

Phil 1:8 For God is my witness how I long after you all in the inward parts of Christ Jesus.

 - a. Paul took care of the Body of Christ by taking Christ's feeling as his own feeling—cf. Acts 9:4-5.

Acts 9:4 And he fell on the ground and heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?

Acts 9:5 And he said, Who are You, Lord? And He *said*, I am Jesus, whom you persecute.
 - b. Christ's feeling for the Body became Paul's feeling for the Body.
 - c. Like Paul, we should take the feeling of the Head as our own feeling.
2. If we are conscious of the Body and care for the Body, we will take the Body as the rule in our thoughts and actions—Eph. 4:15-16.

Eph 4:15 But holding to truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ,

Eph 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and *through* the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.

IV. The consciousness of the Body of Christ is closely related to our frame of mind—Col. 2:18; 3:2; Rom. 12:2-3; Eph. 4:23:

Col 2:18 Let no one defraud you by judging you unworthy of your prize, in self-chosen lowliness and the worship of the angels, dwelling on the things which he has seen, vainly puffed up by his mind set on the flesh,
 Col 3:2 Set your mind on the things which are above, not on the things which are on the earth.
 Rom 12:2 And do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect.
 Rom 12:3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to every one who is among you, not to think more highly of *himself* than he ought to think, but to think so as to be sober-minded, as God has apportioned to each a measure of faith.
 Eph 4:23 And *that* you be renewed in the spirit of your mind
 A. Our frame of mind is our perception of things and is crucial; when there is the proper and thorough perception of matters, the frame of mind is normal.

- B. If we do not have an adequate understanding of the Body of Christ, our frame of mind is not proper, and we will not be able to have the common recognition of the Body of Christ—Rom. 12:4-5; Eph. 4:22-24.

Rom 12:4 For just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function,

Rom 12:5 So we who are many are one Body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

Eph 4:22 That you put off, as regards your former manner of life, the old man, which is being corrupted according to the lusts of the deceit,

Eph 4:23 And *that* you be renewed in the spirit of your mind

Eph 4:24 And put on the new man, which was created according to God in righteousness and holiness of the reality.

V. **The Body of Christ is universal, the divine life within us is universal, and the sense of the Body is also universal—1 Cor. 12:26-27; 2 Cor. 11:28-29:**

1 Cor 12:26 And whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with *it*; or one member is glorified, all the members rejoice with *it*.

1 Cor 12:27 Now you are the Body of Christ, and members individually.

2 Cor 11:28 Apart from the things which *have not been mentioned, there is this*: the crowd of *cares* pressing upon me daily, the anxious concern for all the churches.

2 Cor 11:29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is stumbled, and I myself do not burn?

- A. Once the divine life and the Spirit enter into us, we should have a universal sense—the consciousness of the Body—Rom. 8:2, 10-11; 12:4-5, 15.

Rom 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death.

Rom 8:10 But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness.

Rom 8:11 And if the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.

Rom 12:4 For just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function,

Rom 12:5 So we who are many are one Body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

Rom 12:15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep.

- B. The sense of the Body is a universal matter, but this sense has been restricted in us because of our own feelings and views—Prov. 14:10; 2 Cor. 6:11-13.

Prov 14:10 The heart knows its own bitterness, And a stranger does not share in its joy.

2 Cor 6:11 Our mouth is opened to you, Corinthians; our heart is enlarged.

2 Cor 6:12 You are not constricted in us, but you are constricted in your inward parts.

2 Cor 6:13 But for a recompense in kind, I speak as to children, you also be enlarged.

- C. The more we experience the Lord's breaking and are delivered from ourselves, the more we will discover that the sense of the Body, the consciousness of the Body, is universal, and we will live in the Body and care for the Body in the consciousness of the Body of Christ—11:28-29.

2 Cor 11:28 Apart from the things which *have not been mentioned, there is this*: the crowd of *cares* pressing upon me daily, the anxious concern for all the churches.

2 Cor 11:29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is stumbled, and I myself do not burn?

Excerpts from the Ministry:

WHAT IS THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE BODY?

Let us now consider what is meant by the consciousness of the Body. Although we cannot find this exact expression in the Bible, according to the teaching of the Bible and our experience, there is something called the consciousness of the Body. First Corinthians 12:26-27 says, “Whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or one member is glorified, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the Body of Christ, and members individually.” In addition, 2 Corinthians 11:28-29 says, “Apart from the things which have not been mentioned, there is this: the crowd of cares pressing upon me daily, the anxious concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is stumbled, and I myself do not burn?” These two references cover a scope that is both great and small. The smaller scope is presented in 1 Corinthians 12, which speaks of all the members suffering with a member who is suffering and of all the members rejoicing with a member who is glorified (v. 26). This clearly refers to the sense in the Body. This is easy to understand if we consider our body. If someone hits us on our ear, our ear feels pain, and the other members of our body also feel pain. It is not possible for only the ear to feel pain while the other members have no feeling. This is very easy to understand.

The greater scope is presented in 2 Corinthians 11:28-29, in which the apostle Paul speaks of his anxious concern for all the churches. His anxiety and even his weakness were a matter of consciousness. When a church was weak, the apostle felt it; when a church had problems, the apostle became anxious. The apostle felt this way concerning the churches and concerning the individual saints. He bore all the churches and had feelings for everything that happened to the churches.

The Epistles written by the apostle Paul, including Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and those addressed to individuals, show his keen sense toward the churches and the saints. Since he bore the churches and the saints, he could sense matters related to the churches and the saints. This is the consciousness of the Body. Second Corinthians 11 shows a great and broad consciousness; 1 Corinthians 12 shows a small and focused consciousness.

Concerning the consciousness of the Body, we need to begin with the sense of the spiritual life. We have spoken much concerning the sense of the spiritual life. We pointed out that the divine life within us has feelings, and our regenerated spirit also has feelings. This is based on Romans 8:6: “The mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.” This verse clearly speaks of an inner sense. It is very simple to know whether a person’s mind is set on the spirit; we simply need to ask him if he has peace within. This peace is a matter of sense. If a person sets his mind on the spirit, he will sense ease, comfort, and peace within.

The divine life is truly a matter of sense. A person who sets his mind on the spirit will sense satisfaction, strength, brightness, freshness, and liveliness. This means that his inward being touches life. Whenever we set our mind on the flesh, we become dry and darkened within; this is death. Therefore, this is truly a matter of sense.

The divine life and our regenerated spirit have consciousness. Every form of life has a consciousness; anything without consciousness is not a living organism and has no life. As long as it is a living organism, the life in it has consciousness. The higher the life, the keener is its sense. We, the regenerated ones, have received the life of God, which has the keenest and richest feelings. Moreover, our regenerated spirit is not only mingled with the life of God; it is also indwelt by the Spirit of God. Our regenerated spirit is the three-in-one spirit referred to in Romans 8—our spirit mingled with God’s life and with God’s Spirit. God’s Spirit enters into our spirit with God’s life and mingles with our spirit. Therefore, our spirit is not only a living spirit but also a strong and enriched spirit.

The sense of life in our spirit, or the spiritual sense, is keen and rich. This spiritual sense of life within us is often the standard for our spiritual actions and the test of our spiritual living. It tests whether we are living in the Lord or in ourselves, and whether our mind is set on the spirit or on the flesh. There is no need for someone to tell us, because we have a sense within. We do not need others to tell us whether our speaking for the Lord is according to the spirit or according to the flesh; the sense in us will let us know. This sense can be compared to a thermometer. When we test ourselves with this thermometer, we will know where we are and our true condition.

CULTIVATING A CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE BODY

We need to cultivate a consciousness of the Body by fellowshiping more with the Lord. Our inner sense will spontaneously be developed as we fellowship more with the Lord. Furthermore, if we add obedience to this fellowship, our inner sense will become keener and richer. When a feeling comes, we should closely follow that feeling. If the inner sense desires us to stop, we should stop; if it desires us to go, we should go. In this way, our inner sense will become keen and enriched. Our inner sense is developed through our fellowship with the Lord and our obedience to Him. Therefore, we should always exercise this sense. This means that we must always use this sense when we touch spiritual matters.

EXERCISING TO HAVE A KEEN SENSE

Everyone who serves God, everyone who serves sinners, and everyone who administrates the church must exercise to have a keen sense. If we do not exercise, we will not be of much spiritual use. We must admit that often the help we render to people is in faith; we do not need to be so clear. In fact, our being clear concerning the condition of people actually hinders us from helping them. At the same time, we cannot be foolish. When people come to us, we should be able to discern their condition in three to five sentences. Even if they describe a certain condition, our spirit should be able to sense their real situation. This kind of exercise is necessary. Although we are outwardly listening when we contact a brother or sister, inwardly we should be exercised to sense their true situation.

The overflow of the life of Christ is the expression of the Body of Christ. The consciousness of the Body is the sense of Christ's life within us. If we use this sense often, it will cause us not only to sense our own condition before the Lord but cause us also to sense others' condition before the Lord and to be conscious of matters related to the Body. If we constantly exercise, cultivate, train, and use this sense, it will enable us to detect the problems in the Body.

If we use and exercise this sense often and if we love God and care for the church, this sense will become the sense of the Body. We will sense when our fellow members are in difficulty, when they are weak, happy, or victorious in the Lord, and we will share the same feelings with them. We sense their burden so that their burden becomes ours, we sense their experience so that their experience becomes ours, and we sense their difficulties so that their difficulties becomes ours. In this way we will be in one Body.

BEARING THE BURDEN TOGETHER IN THE BODY

When we exercise the consciousness of the Body, a good situation will develop. A member who is in a difficult situation will not bear his burden alone, but his fellow members will bear the burden with him. We will no longer pray for someone simply because he asks us; rather, we will pray out of the burden in the Body. Sometimes one person's prayer is not enough; there is truly the need for the prayer of the Body, but this prayer is still spontaneous. For example, a person who is Body conscious can sense that a certain brother has a difficulty and a certain sister has a heavy burden. The sense of the brother's difficulty is communicated into him, and the sense of the sister's being pressed is also added to his spirit. He shares the same feeling with the brother and sister. This feeling presses him and forces him to go before the Lord to pray for the brother and sister. This intercession is an intercession that comes from the sense of the Body. There is such a thing in the Body that proves whether we are weak or strong inwardly and also proves the extent of our concern for the children of God, the members of Christ.

If we look at ourselves from this perspective, we must admit that our service is weak because our sense of the Body is weak and poor. We may see a brother who is pressed, yet the others who live with him have no feeling of being pressed. A sister might not be able to get through a crisis, yet none of those who live with her have the same feeling. This means that we are not normal in the Body; we have not yet touched the reality of the Body. This shows that the element of the Body is not adequate among us, and we do not live in Christ enough when we are together. Therefore, although we may be living together, we may not be conscious of others' burdens. One may be fasting due to a spiritual crisis, yet others can be eating peacefully. This is an abnormal situation. This shows that there is a real problem, a great shortage, among us. We cannot match the sense of the Body; we lack the sense of the Body.

If our condition is proper, we should have a feeling of being troubled and pressed when a brother who serves with us is unable to get through a spiritual crisis or solve a spiritual problem. If a member is suffering, his fellow members should suffer with him. If he is suffering and we are not suffering, there is a problem with

us. If our condition is normal, it should be that as he is suffering, we are also suffering; when he has a burden, we also have a burden; and when he is in a crisis, we are also in a crisis. When his crisis is over and his spirit is released, our spirit will be released; when he is happy, we will be happy. We will have the same feeling. This is the Body. It is not possible for the foot to feel comfortable while the hand is suffering; this can never happen. When a member of the Body suffers, all the members feel uncomfortable. It should also be like this when we serve together. When a person has a difficulty, everyone else should feel the same way; when a person rejoices, everyone also rejoices together. This is the normal condition.

If someone hits my hand, all the other members of my body can sense it. If they cannot sense it, something is wrong with my body. Many times when something is wrong among us, we still care only about ourselves, loving our particular work, guarding our attachments to the world, and tolerating the sins within us. Because of our self-consideration, our inner sense is suppressed, and even if we had a sense, we would ignore it. We often ignore the sense of the Body when it comes to us and forcibly suppress it, because we are busy taking care of our own situations. This condition is altogether abnormal.

Many saints among us are in the midst of tremendous hardships, yet those who serve with them have no feeling for them, and no one bears the burden with them. We do not pray too much for them, and when we do pray, our prayers are superficial. We do not touch the burden, and we do not have a feeling of pain within. We do not have a sense of being troubled and pressed. This shows that our sense of being in the Body is not adequate and that we still remain in ourselves.

THE SENSE OF THE BODY BEING UNIVERSAL

The sense of the Body is very mysterious. If we allow this sense to be enlarged, it will become a universal sense. Strictly speaking, this sense is already universal, but when it comes into us, we limit it. Christ's life is universal, and God's Spirit is also universal. Once this life and Spirit enter into us, we should have a universal sense. This sense is great and far-reaching, but when it enters into us, we limit it. At our salvation this sense caused us to realize our own condition. However, because we have not been broken very much, this sense cannot come out of us. Gradually, according to the lessons we learn, the more we are broken, the more this sense will increase so that we can begin to care for others, for the church, and for the Lord's work. The more we experience the Lord's breaking, learning the deeper lessons and being delivered from ourselves, the more we will discover that this sense is universal.

Have we ever rejoiced for a local church other than our own? We are often shut up within ourselves, and when we see another local church being blessed, we do not rejoice with them. Even if we do rejoice, our rejoicing is stingy, not generous...This shows that we are not in the Body, and we do not have a sense of the Body experientially.

If we have the sense of the Body, whenever any member in the Body of Christ is blessed, regardless of whether it is our locality, we will be very happy because another church has been blessed. Regardless of whether it is our local church, as long as the saints have hardships or have been blessed, we will identify with them and feel the same hardship or blessing. If we can reach this stage, the sense within us toward the Body will be rich. It will no longer be local but extra-local. The supply to the Body of Christ from this kind of sense is indescribable.

If we can bring the universal riches to the Body of Christ, our usefulness to the Body is universal. Thus, we may serve in one place, but the effect is universal, not merely local. We are often shut up in ourselves. Even when we come out of ourselves, we remain in our locality and do not allow the Lord to enlarge us. The Body is universal, and the life within us is universal. The Spirit within us is universal, the sense within us is universal, and the supply is universal. It does not matter what locality is blessed. If the Body of Christ is blessed, we rejoice, and if the Body of Christ has a problem, we feel the pain. Like Paul, we should be able to say, "Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is stumbled, and I myself do not burn?" (2 Cor. 11:29). We feel this way because the anxious concern for all the churches is upon us. This is not merely a matter of an individual member; it is a matter of all the churches. This sense will save us and cause the Body to be supplied. (*The Church as the Body of Christ*, pp. 195-198, 200-205, 207-208)