

# November 1999 The Church

by Aaron Greenway

There is no greater institution on this earth than the Church. With Thanksgiving coming up, I am truly, indeed, thankful for the Body of Christ, for people who have been called out of their sin, who have been saved into God's Kingdom through His precious and holy Son, Jesus Christ. I am thankful to be apart of such an incredible operation. When we are grieving, we can come to the Church. When we are wounded, we can come to the Church. When we wish to have fellowship, we can come to the Church. There is nothing like it and though Satan tries, he cannot stop this spiritual warship chugging full steam ahead (Matthew 16:18).

Going through different seasons in my own life, I have had times when I have had to go to the Church for nurturing and encouragement. And at other times, I have had to be the one to nurture and encourage someone else. Much of the time, they go together. And to be quite honest, I, as a member of the Body of Christ, like to be stroked. I do not like having to do the stroking always, because it takes up my time and it gets in the way of what I *think* God wants me to do. Then upon conviction, I realize that it is the 'little' things that God uses to build His kingdom.

In the New Testament, the Greek word *Ekklesia* is used to describe the Church. The word literally means an "assembly." However, the New Testament writers use the word regardless of whether the assembly is together or not. The word has taken on a new meaning. It isn't simply about "togetherness," it is about a distinct people bound by the threads of the Holy Spirit.

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So, as the *Ekklesia*, the people of God, bound together the Holy Spirit, we ought to have a unity like none other, right? Being unified doesn't mean we lose our significance as individuals. However, we would have to admit that in many of our churches, that the only significant people are the ones in power, or the ones with money, or the ones with charisma.

This point leads me to an observation that many Christians have made, an incredible lack of unity in the Body of Christ. This lack of unity is characterized by what may be a sincere desire to serve the Lord, but is devoid of the realization that God's long term goals and plans for our lives can never be divorced from the Body of Christ.

Here are some of the reasons for disunity in America's churches today:

- 1. A focus on personal agendas and self interests, rather than on Christ.** I know churches and Christian institutions that are run like businesses and not like the Church. Everyone has their own reason for being there, and many of those reasons sound pretty good when you first hear them, but the hidden motives of the heart could reveal a desire for financial gain and for personal prestige. This is where we need to examine ourselves very closely, because we can fool ourselves very easily. To say the least, these motives can be contrary to the will of God if they are separate from the Body of Christ, thus bringing about disunity.
- 2. A lack of Holy Spirit control in the Body.** Number one and number two seem to go together. It is a vicious circle. Our selfish interests drive the Holy Spirit away and yet we need Him to break our selfishness and propel our ministries. This is where grace comes in and prayer from people who see these issues and wish to do something about them.

Here are some signs of disunity in the Church:

1. A lack of concern for the needs of our brothers and sisters.
2. A lack of expressing love and care for people in the Body.
3. An unwillingness to accept a loss for the gain of another.
4. An unwillingness to pray for people in the Body.
5. An attention and support of our ministry and not the ministries of others.
6. An attitude of partiality and a judgmentalism based on how one looks, how much money they have or what their sphere of influence is.

I am sure there are others, but these seem to sum up the majority of individualistic-type dispositions.

Though the Church is great and God will have His way with the Church, we cannot ignore some of the problems that exist with the Body of Believers. So, you ask, what is the solution? Paul wrote to the Corinthians, a very splintered group, and told them let "there be no divisions among you" (I Corinthians 1:10). In fact, he called them immature and carnal because of their disputes (I Corinthians 3). Here are a few things that we can do.

**1. We can pray that God, in His great mercy, will break us and bring us to our knees.**

Maybe, we need to ask Him to do whatever it takes. This could get scary. What are we willing to sacrifice for Christ and the people of God? It put Paul in prison (I Thessalonians 5:17).

**2. We can begin to pray for the people who have wounded us in the Body.** We can seek

to return a blessing in spite of their curses. We can love them even if they do not love us (Romans 12:14).

**3. We can begin to pray for unity in the Body, that we would begin to love one another.**

How tragic that we have orders to fight "the good fight of faith" and yet are so wounded because we have been fighting one another (John 17:20-21).

**4. Do something every week for another brother or sister that you normally wouldn't**

**do, someone who maybe "gets under your skin."** Do something special for others. Be kind and keep a check on all hidden motives (I Peter 4:9, Matthew 5:41-42).

**5. Be forgiving.** Do not hold resentment toward others in the Body. This is lethal to your

own walk with God. He cannot forgive us if we do not forgive others. Do not harbor bitterness (Matthew 5:23-24).

**6. Know who your Enemy is.** His name is Satan, the deceiver of the nations, the divider and

the accuser of the brethren. Does the devil bother us? Are we ignorant of his devices? If he can get us fighting (or even ignoring) one another, then we are useless for the Kingdom, because God has foreordained that his purposes be accomplished through the Church, his Body and not merely individuals (2 Corinthians 2:11).

In closing, as we approach Thanksgiving, we need to understand that we are laboring together, we are weathering the storms of life together. We are not alone. The harvest that we reap, we reap together. We are a team! And we LOVE one another.

Today, go to someone in the Body and tell them that you love them or that you appreciate them. This week, go to someone that you normally wouldn't go to and do something for them. Will it take time? Yep! Will it cost us something? Uh-huh. Will we get a pay back? Probably not. But what did Jesus say? Why should we receive a blessing if we only do things for others that can give it back?