

The Body of Christ is us

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[0:00] I'm talking this morning about the church, the body of Christ. When people think of the word church they think of a building of times. But really it's a gathered people, not really so much a place.

That's not to say we don't need a building to meet in. Really the church is not a building but what happens in the building. And so that's the church, the congregation, the gathering, the assembly of God, God's people.

And God's word actually talks about the church as a family, as a body, as a living body. And this is the church, the body of Christ. There's numbers of times it talks about that.

And Ephesians 4.16 is where we're going to go this morning. And just to lead in I'll read Ephesians 4 verse 15. And then I'll read Ephesians 4 verse 16 which we have here.

So Ephesians 4.15 it says, The Bible describes God's church as the body of Christ.

[1:24] The body of Christ. What is a good church? What does that look like? The church is meant to be a body. A healthy one.

A healthy body. A body can become weak, we know, can't it? Sickly, out of condition. And we know that our bodies can get under attack from toxins and harmful bacteria.

We have to beware lest an infection set in. Let's keep our body strong and healthy. So that our body can combat ill health.

And you might think for yourself. Now some of you younger ones won't probably feel it so much. But I know us older ones, we can start to feel the aches and pains as we get older. Who can identify with that?

And we know that a body can get run down. And if we were to check the health of this body, the church, the body of Christ today amongst us, what would we notice? What would we see?

[2:22] So I put to you, we're going to check the pulse today. Make sure you've got one for a start. And see how it's going. How does a healthy body look like? What does it sound like?

What makes a body healthy? And I see three things in this verse. Really going to dwell on this one verse largely. Three things here about a body. Joined, working and growing.

So firstly a body is joined. Joined together. We see that in the first part of this verse. It says, From whom the body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplied.

So it's saying there the whole body fitly joined. So the body should be united, closely united.

Knitted, welded together is the sense of it. Knitted, joined together, united, together, joined.

And then it says compacted, which means held together or strengthened together by that which every joint supplied. So every joint, every part, contributes.

[3:25] It's saying that every joint supplies, every joint contributes. So we see all of these factors. We'll just kind of unpack that a little bit today. What a healthy body looks like. A healthy body is joined.

Now I don't know about you, but my body is one unit. I don't have a hand over here or a foot over there in some other place. It's all one body.

And it's the same with the body, the church of God. We're joined together. All of us are joined. And we join not only to one another together, to the different parts, but to the head. Of course, it talks about the previous verse.

We're joined to the head, who is Christ. And all the parts of the body are joined together with the other parts. Of course, the body has to be joined to the head. Now, if you're a headless body, you're in poor shape, I put to you.

Isn't it? We need to have the head to have... I know if someone was to cut my head off, the body would not work. All right? And it's the same. We can kind of think, yeah, that's a laughable idea, isn't it?

[4:27] It's the same with the church. We need to be connected to the head, who is Christ. It talks about the headship of our Lord. And he must direct. Of course, the head has got the brains. It's got the thinking, the decision-making, the direction setting.

The head leads the body, doesn't it? And we think how Christ, as the head of the body, he's that one who directs. And he shows us the way. And so it's so spiritually that if we don't pray, the head will be hindered from communicating with the body.

We need that connection with the head, don't we? In other words, the body, God's people, need to be connected with Christ, who is the head of the body. And so we need to keep that communication line going with heaven and not let it be hindered.

So prayer, keeping connected to the head, is that connection of prayer you could see. And we need to maintain that connection with Christ, our Lord, our Lordship of Christ.

And then together, it's talking about maintaining that unity of the body. There's many contrary forces against the work of God. The work of God is always under attack. The ministry of God is always under attack.

[5:38] Every believer, every one of us, is under attack. There's many obstacles and opposing forces that would seek to hinder us from growing in Christ, from maturing, from serving.

And so we want to be a church that's joined and holding fast God's word in a world of compromise. And we've got to love people and show grace.

See the word love there, which we'll get to. We want to love people and show grace to one another. There's someone put it like this, that sometimes you've got to plow around the stumps.

You know, the farmer's got to plow around those stumps. It's the same kind of in a church setting that we've got to, I guess in a way, accept some people are not going to change. They're going to not want to grow or not going to want to get joined.

Not everyone wants to be joined. For some, church fellowship is not a priority. You know, that's something we can notice at times that, sadly, some people are not as connected as we want them to be.

[6:44] And it's a shame. We want to encourage everyone to be interconnected. So we get to know each other. So we don't just dart for the door when the meeting's finished. We'll actually spend a little time getting to talk, maybe meet some new people.

There's plenty of people that you might not have met here this morning. Take that time to get to know one another. That's an encouragement for me as a pastor, that we can connect and get to know one another.

That we be living, engaged parts of the body. You might see someone across the way, I haven't met that person yet. Go and introduce yourself. Make yourself known. Share your name.

Share names with each other so that you know who's who and get to know one another. Get to know one another. It's about joining together. Joining together. Every chance we can. It's important that we have that goal. Romans 8.14 talks about being led by the Spirit of God.

The Spirit of God. That headship. His direction. In every step and action we take. That it's directed by our Lord. That He's the head of the body. And there's that theme of unity through the book of Ephesians.

[7:47] The theme of unity. It talks about chapter 4.13. The unity of the faith. It talks about chapter 4 verse 3. The unity of the spirit. Of course as a healthy human body.

We want to be one interconnected, close-knit whole. And a body is really a completely united entity. As I say, when we gather as a church we don't want one of our, you know, the eye over doing some shopping or the foot down doing some other activity or the leg down at some other church gathering.

We want to be together. We want to be a united entity. And interdependent in harmony, in cooperation, in coordination. Now of course amongst us, whilst we endeavour for unity, there's always going to be some differences.

And that's okay. It's okay to have some different views from time to time. They need not divide us when we might see some things a little differently from another. But to be a healthy church body, we

all want to keep the same focus on that main mission.

That essential mission. That one essential mission. We don't want to detour from that. And so we've got to put our energies into the main mission. Now there's a danger also of what some have called watering the lawn while the house burns down.

[9:10] Who's heard of that? You're watering the lawn while the house burns down. Now it would be nice to have some water on that lawn. But while the house is burning down, that's the priority. So there's a danger where we can put our energies and efforts, our time, which is limited, into stuff that is not important in the scheme of things.

So we want to not divert or waste our resources on secondary matters. So focusing on the main mission. And the unity that we have doesn't mean that we see every finer point the same way. And that's okay. We're all united under the Lordship of Christ. That's what matters. That's what counts. So let's be that local fellowship where everyone is working in that united way for that main mission that we're all moving forward to that same goal, that great mission that we have.

Secondly, we see a healthy body has all of its parts working together, working together. We see in the middle of the verse it talks about the effectual working in the measure of every part.

It's talking this effectual, it's got the sense of active. It's about operative, it's about power and energy, activity. There's an activity here in the body. And it's saying the measure of every part.

[10:22] In other words, the different parts are all working properly and doing their respective functions. Of course, you want to make sure your eyeballs are working so you can see, right?

You want your foot working so you can walk. That every part is doing its function. And it's a sign of a healthy body. You know when one of those parts starts to break down, don't you?

One of those, when any of our parts are not functioning like they should. So it's the same when you think about it, of this picture, of this truth, that we're the body of Christ. That we're healthy. That we're growing.

And that can mean stretching. Now some of you younger folk, I know when I was younger I really wanted to be tall. And so I'd do some stretching exercises every day. That's why I'm so tall, you see.

So do that kids, when you're at home. Do some stretching and you'll be taller than the ones who don't do the stretching. Alright? So it's good to stretch, isn't it? To strain, to grow, to increase.

[11:20] And it's the same in the church. We should stretch ourselves. Alright? They extend it. You know when the pastor says, oh can someone volunteer to do this? You say, yes sir, I'll report for duty.

I'll put my hand up. I'm willing to serve. I'm willing to volunteer. I'm willing to stretch myself and do something that's hard for me. Alright? And that's a good thing for you as a Christian. To say, yeah, I'm willing to stretch myself.

I'm willing to get a bit taller in God. And so that we're not spreading ourselves too thin. Because sometimes I myself, I'm stretched. And I'm doing too much stretching. I need some help.

So, as we believe God, He will raise up others who He will gift and enable and commission. Where are those who are willing to serve? Who can serve?

Who can serve? Who can serve? Who can serve? Who can serve? Who can serve? Who can serve? Who can serve? Who can serve? Who can serve? Who can serve? Who can serve?

[12:17] Who can serve? Who can serve? Who can serve? Who can serve? Who can serve? Who can serve? Who can serve? Who can serve? Who can serve? Who can serve? Who can serve? Who can serve? Who can serve?

Who can serve? Who can serve? Who can serve? Who can serve? Who can serve? Who can serve? Who can serve? effective helpers and workers and we pray that each one amongst us can be in that number those who are truly saved firstly of course then living a clean life working in the power of god's spirit submitting to godly direction willing to work together work spiritually and pray together because it's a god-directed mission he must direct the head of the body and so all of our efforts really as this body that we are this this one unit unified people that we are we've got one mission we've got a need for the fresh passion for the old gospel the message hasn't changed it's always the same it's still the message of salvation sadly some parts are not working it's so it's the same in our body isn't it some parts are not working like they should fulfill your mission fulfill your

function now now of course we know this there's people amongst us here i know some people are working six days a week in a secular job it's hard to find time some of you're working night shift and funny shifts and and you've got conflicting things to juggle children minding and all sorts of pressures on you this is not to put a guilt trip on anyone or to overload anyone that's the last thing we want but find the place you can serve and serve well man your station and be patient with others as well some people are still learning there's people doing stuff you might think oh you didn't get that quite right or this is quite right everyone's learning we're learning together so give some scope some yeah allow some room for grace as we're all growing we're all and the hardest thing sometimes is the first time to do something i know when in times past i've asked someone to preach and afterwards i heard wow it's the first time they've ever did that and it was really stepping outside of the comfort zone for that person so we've got to be patient with each other we're all learning me too i think the key is that we be christ-centered not pastor-centered some churches can get pastor-centered where the pastor of course the pastor is here to guide and to steer but not do everything that needs doing so i want to encourage all of us to man our station take the initiative be empowered be released in what god has called you to do i'll offer you guidance and support but i will release you to work i'll give you the delegation and freedom to serve i want to see every believer reach their full potential and that this church be characterized by action not stagnancy you know there's things i've kind of got it in my annual report that i'll talk later through i hope you can stay for that this is kind of the part one of the chairman's report but really that sense of look you don't have to ask permission to clean the carpets after church all right you don't have to be appointed or uh given i don't have to lay hands on you and appoint you as the carpet cleaner and you don't have to ask permission to get the vacuum cleaner out of the cupboard that's in the kitchen uh there you know really i'm just kind of making the point that there's some things you can do without having to be asked to do or or given every finer detail or or a particular request to do there's some things that are obvious that need doing all right and it shouldn't necessarily fall on the few that we all can muck in so feel very welcome to participate in some of these ministries and then as you do the little things god will give you bigger things to do all right as we are abased he will exalt us he will empower us in our weakness there's one pastor wrote wrote it like this every member has a gift a special contribution to make to the body of christ

some think that the pastor has a pipeline to god that is god is going to speak to the church it's going to be through the pastor but i believe that the same holy spirit lives in me lives in every christian in the church so i developed a permission giving atmosphere that people felt free to dream and step out in faith and by fanning the flames instead of throwing water on people's ideas so you might have some new ministry idea of course we want to be wise about starting new things and not overload or cram the program with stuff but as god puts on your heart to do something you know let me know and mostly i'll be fanning into flame the idea rather than trying to throw water on it right because everyone's got a different calling and ministry i know there's a good book i read unleashing the church which talked about that about different people doing different ministries some quite wide open different kinds of things that are kind of left field and that's a good thing we want to encourage everyone to use how god's calling and leading them and giving them giftings to serve and another thing is about being in ministry is not pushing yourself to learn to do the work of 10 people the best leader is one who gets 100 people doing the work of 100 people that's what we want to be as a church don't we when we're all functioning working together the effectual working in the measure of every part so i want to encourage you how however old you might be if you know the lord younger people older people god wants to use you god's got something for you individually for you every one of you so be a volunteer be willing to be trained you youngsters that are in the sunday school i know some of you are already helping mr and mrs harvey with some of the work that needs doing good on you got to step up to the plate god will use you as you do the little things to help god will give you bigger things to do it's the same for all of us amen so be willing to be a volunteer be willing to be trained i want to do more to help others to serve to be trained to be used of god place yourself at god's disposal be willing to be challenged to be teachable to be humble to gladly serve as needed and that's what ministry means it means being a servant and it can mean doing that which is unrewarded and unrecognized i don't have time to recognize everybody for everything that they're doing in this church and i thank god for every one of you it's just doing something just the little things every little thing helps and maybe you can think for yourself maybe i could do something extra something that's just for me something that i want to do that god puts on my heart to do sometimes you've got to make the leap of faith the leap of faith to believe god enough to jump and

trust him now to illustrate that there's a story told in war days in the blitz where the bombing was going on i guess in london and other places there was a time where there was a father holding his small son by the hand and they ran into this building while the bombs were going off and there was a big shell hole like this big hole in the ground and the father jumped into the hole and he held up his arms for his son to come and jump back into the hole with the dad and the boy heard his father's voice telling him to jump and he said i can't see you i can't see you because you're seeing the those burning buildings all around lots of fire and the sky was red and the father could see the son could just see the silhouette you know the kind of outline of his son but the boy couldn't see anything it was just dark in the hole and so the son said i can't see you but then the father said but i can see you jump and so the boy jumped he trusted his father and he was caught by his dad and they were safe and it's the picture of faith isn't it that we believe god we've got to jump when god says do something believe me jump into god's arms trust him and know that he'll keep you and hold you and you'll be safe as you trust him have faith take that leap of faith sometimes it's what we've got to do sometimes isn't it you say yeah i feel god's putting this on my heart to do i've never done it before but i'm going to trust god to help me to do it i'm going to jump into his arms i'm going to take the leap of faith you can do that brother sister young man young woman older people here today so we see that a healthy body is connected number one together it's working secondly working together and thirdly a healthy body is every part growing together growing together god wants his church to grow now i'm blessed by the amount of people we've got here this morning it's a great joy to see so many wanting to fellowship this morning we want to be growing together we'd like to see this place packed you know the place to see that it's overflowing that we almost have to have extra services or or knock this building down and stuff you know get a new place to meet somehow just where we can just keep growing in number and that's a good thing but it's not about growing in number so much it's about growing together isn't it growing together maketh increase it says of the body unto the edifying of itself in love so this increase this growing that god wants a growing here and it's a continual thing maketh increase has got this sense of continual and then this edifying building up constructing and it's all in love so we see a healthy body is not only whole interconnected every part functioning but it's thriving keeping healthy growing stronger like i'm saying you young people you're going to get taller i know some of your youngsters are taller than your mums and dads oh you will be let's just give it time just keep stretching all right keep growing together that's all of us isn't it we can all grow the body of christ is his church and we can grow god wants us to have an increase an increase of the body now in 1 corinthians 3 verse 7 it talks about god gives the increase we can do all the efforts of men and all of our labouring and every part doing its part but ultimately it's god who gives the increase he brings the harvest he makes the the grain to grow to the harvest to grow and for things to increase to flourish some would consider big crowds means a church is healthy but that is not always so not at all it could be the faithful small the smallest number of believers gathering together could be stronger than the big crowded kind of church what does god look for and want as far as the growth of a church i put to you it's one by one it's soul by soul it's person by person that we can all see a real increase an increase individually every one of you that you're stronger today than you were last week and last year that you're stronger today as a christian your faith is mightier and stronger and you're more in tune with god than you were weeks months ago that we all can see an increase individually one by one of you that you are stronger as a believer today than you were and you're going to be yet stronger when we think about souls today every person is a never dying immortal soul so every person counts every person matters because every immortal soul will spend eternity somewhere every one of us are going to have an eternity somewhere so we believe god for souls that's our mission that christ died for sinners and as a pastor hebrews 13 17 says that i must give account for every soul that's why i take it seriously if you're a soul that identifies or even visits this church that i want to take every effort i can because i must give account for every soul and that's a weighty thing the growth talked about here is an up building a building up in love and so i want us to be that loving church that gathering together of god's people that will all be encouraged we'll share that loving heart for people amongst ourselves we'll care about souls so let's show god's love to one another to be spiritual it talks in 1 corinthians 3 some are carnal they're fleshly the strife and envyings and division he says you're carnal you walk as men he says don't be carnal be spiritual that's 1 corinthians 3 in way ephesians 4 14 it says be mature no longer children put away childish things no longer children some people stay in this childhood state spiritually it makes you think to when

you see sometimes quite an old child walking around with a dummy in their mouth you think when they're going to get rid of that you know spiritually so isn't it time spit the dummy get rid of it the best kind of growth we want to see is when god brings real fruit and spiritual progress and it's one life at a time one by one each one of us so god is building his church and that's you and me and he's putting us together with this mortar as brick by brick and the mortar is his love so let's be that truly loving church he's building the church it says edifying itself in love let's foster loving relationships let's overcome if there's any gripe or difference that is dividing that we put it to rest anything that's hostile anything of ill will that we lay it to rest that we foster loving relationships to be those brothers and sisters together and let's show that care for one another and and keep on doing that ephesians 4:16 it talks about loving building edifying in love and of course we know the love that we have it speaks the truth in the phasms 4 it talks about speaking the truth in love there's times when there's a loving caution a loving correction and we love the church enough to tell the people the truth about doctrine about practice and you know sometimes i can relate to you that admonition and correction can be called for and i put to you and i tell you honestly that this i've done with weeping and even many tears in acts 20 verse 19 when when it comes to telling someone the truth it can cause deep heartache for the minister for the ministry to correct someone but we do that in love not out of big noting or or putting down it's for the sake of the body that the erring ones will be restored because we care about the whole lump if there's some leaven we have to take action there and so that's all part of maturity that issues are resolved and maturity means that we're not sloppy or lazy too i want to foster excellence not a she'll be right attitude but an excellent spirit like daniel had daniel chapter 6 verse 3 so be the best you can be for god act like the act like it dress like it talk like it excel aim for excellence let's set that high standard for our standard for ourselves and let's lift the standard let's take god seriously in that sense of growing it talks again of growing here in the context of the body and colossians 2 verse 19 that we knit together increasing with the increase of god that's what god wants that the work of god is in every soul in every one of us each one one by one and as the body is joined together working together growing together we have that one goal to bless our lord to be led by his spirit led by the head our lord and to reflect further i'd like to just spend a few moments talking about vision

[28:45] to expand our vision to pray for a bigger vision what do we look for as we see ahead someone's put it in this kind of three-fold way of the up look that the gospel is the up look it says our lord says the fields are white unto harvest look at the need to take the gospel far and wide the gospel look in prayer it says the psalmist said i will direct my prayer unto thee i will look up and then we see the blessed hope christ is coming friends his redemption our redemption draws near and we know christ is coming we need to be having that blessed hope looking for that blessed hope so i put to you this morning expand your vision as a believer how can you be better connected to this body how can you be functioning actively engaged working how can you be growing increasing your own spiritual faith and life god's will is that we have a healthy body each each one of us maybe start that get fit program spiritually so and here we see uh as the word of god talks about this term increase we see the apostles prayed for faith increase our faith it says john the baptist said he must increase i must decrease and then we see paul prayed that that the thessalonians would increase and abound in love increase in faith increase in prayer increase in love increase in that spiritual life god wants for you how do we see our church as we look to the future think about the world it's changing fast isn't it there's so much information but a loss of wisdom we see so much communication methodologies of communication but many are lonely in such a world and one thing's for sure in this changing world is the world is ever more godless it's christless it's christ rejecting it's anti-god that's the world we're living in we know as we go witnessing our little team we we get many who say that they they just don't want a bar of of uh you know the things of god they don't want to know about god they don't even want to think about god as the bible says god is not in all their thoughts it's a godless world out there and we're navigating these choppy waters these uncertain

times we we face many tests that that god's people we're going to be even more attacked and ridiculed how can we be the church god wants us to be in this present world the church of laodicea was called wretched miserable poor blind and naked they didn't have vision they were blind we must open our eyes and catch the vision that dimension of faith believe god and trust him what is the master's plan for his church we've all got to grapple with that because that's for you and me what is the master's plan we think what is god's heart as it were we see the heart beating here what is god's heart what is god's heart beating the bible says that god cares about souls and i really would underline that that our focus must be to reach souls and to trust god for the future when abraham was over 80 years old seemingly unable to have even one child by his wife sarah god's holding that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky or the dust of the earth and the amazing thing is in genesis 15 6 it says abraham believed god you can do that young people older people today you can be like abraham abraham believed god everything sounded like it was impossible but abraham believed god genesis 15 verse 6 so let's have

that right vision let's be like joseph he was called a dreamer let's believe god let's see what god wants for us let's see those fields that are ready there's opportunity we're living in this day of opportunity and the heartbeat the heartbeat of the body of christ is that which should flow through our hearts his big heart of compassion should be our love he came to seek and to save that which was lost friends lost people matter we want to reach the lost we want to reach out passionately and we've got to be activated each one of us to that mission so let's be willing to be that part of the body to reach into these deepest darkest heathen jungles of elizabeth of adelaide we're in a mission station here and reaching this this godless world with the message people need and let's stir ourselves up to take hold of god i like this verse here where it talks about that we should stir ourselves up to take hold of god think of that for yourself maybe we need some stirring up this morning i know i could be better stirred to get hold of god how great he is what he wants for me his mission that we can multiply workers in the harvest as our lord says the harvest is ready pray ye the lord of the harvest that he may send forth workers laborers into his harvest so what is our vision now we could have a vision that's all kinds of things there's a saying here a leader without vision is like an octopus on roller skates going everywhere and nowhere you know i could have a vision that's a bit airy fairy or too wide and multiplied i don't want to be an octopus on roller skates this morning going everywhere and nowhere let's have a biblical vision what does the bible say take hold of god stir yourself up to take hold of god seek god his will jump into his arms by faith believe god see the harvest field recognize the souls lost souls all around what's my part how can i be an active part of that body so let's wrap up here with really summing up our spiritual checkup as we take the doctor's report and the diagnosis the prescription friends it's talking about we should be joined together how's our unity as a body let's be more joined joined together right held together and also let's be working every part find the place to work and work well work hard under his yoke though which is easy his yoke is easy his burden is life so find what he wants to do and he'll help you he'll enable you he'll carry that load of the yoke as we heard earlier he'll take the weight and it won't be heavy for you to find that place to work and then we see there's an increase he promises to bless to grow us got to do some stretching though keep that stretching going on uh you know make make that your morning ritual do some stretching you know do the uh all the star jumps i won't attempt that but think how can i stretch and grow as a believer that's what matters how can my faith stretch and let's seize those opportunities to grow so be inspired this morning i trust that we can take to heart these truths about the body you are the body the body of christ and i pray you be encouraged in that vein