

“Who Am I in the Body of Christ?”

Romans 12:3-5

We’ve marched through 11 chapters of theology

We’ve elevated into the heights of praise in Romans 11:33-36

We answered the personal call to be a “living Sacrifice”

Now, the PRACTICAL SECTION of Romans turns from “I” to “we” - the BODY

Today our subject from the text answers a very important question, “Who am I in the Body of Christ?”

What is the Body of Christ?

There are three ways which this is presented in Scripture

1. His physical body. (Hebrews 10:5) *“Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: “Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me;”*
2. The Memorial Bread of Communion. In a symbolic way, each time we partake of the bread at the celebration of the Lord’s supper, we remember his physical suffering on our behalf. *“This is my body...”* Matt 26:26
3. The application we see here in Romans 12:3-5 is a beautiful description of Christian believers. This is Significant because we are God’s messengers, just as Christ was the logos of God. *“Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! **As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.**” (John 20:21)*

There are at least fourteen passages in the New Testament that refer to the Body of Christ in this context (Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 10:17; 12:12, 27; Eph 2:16; 4:4, 12, 16, 25; 5:23; Col 1:18, 24; 2:19; 3:15). Two in particular give us a clear picture of the meaning here in Romans 12:3.

(Ephesians 5:23) *“For the husband is the head of the wife as **Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.**”*

(Colossians 1:18) *“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.**”*

Both passages here remind us that the CHURCH is given the description, “the Body of Christ.” This primarily refers to all believers through the Church age, sometimes called the Universal church. But the phrase also relates to the relationships and ministry we experience in the local church.

The importance of the local church as the primary manner in which God is accomplishing his work today is seen throughout the New Testament. Most of the Epistles begin with a greeting to a local church (Romans 1:6; **1 Corinthians 1:2**). The first three chapters of

Revelation contain Jesus' message to seven local churches of the first century. The opening words of 1 Corinthians make very clear the distinction between the Universal church and the local church. Paul was writing to a local congregation. Today, the local church is vitally important in the work of God. We cannot ignore or replace the importance of the local church.

What constitutes a church?

There are several ideas that come to mind when attempting to define the word "church."

1. One church that claims complete authority. (Roman Catholic) This is not the biblical usage for church. No one denomination or group can claim that they are the only true church, in the context of one assembly over another.
2. Para-church ministries. These well meaning ministries offer substitutes for the local church. Some offer worship services, discipleship activities, mission and camping ministries. But para church organizations are no substitute for the local church. Rather, they must be in subordination to the local church.
3. Home Bible studies. Where there are many house churches around the world, a home Bible study is not a local church.
4. Sitting in your Living Room watching Charles Stanley? Great preacher, great church. But one cannot vicariously participate in that ministry as his or her church experience.
5. A man preaching on the street corner 7 days a week. We can do many good things that are a part of the ministry of the local church. But the following five elements are necessary for a church to be in existence.

Required Elements of a Church

- a. Comprised of saved individuals
- b. Obedient to the authority of the Word of God
- c. Missional. (Obedient to the Great Commission)
- d. Ordinances. (the church administers Baptism, Communion on a regular basis)
- e. Pastoral leadership. (Teaching, accountability, discipline, leadership, training new pastors)

As we think of our responsibility to the Body of Christ, we must consider our part in the local church!

Who am I in the Body of Christ?

1. You are an individual part of a larger Body. Romans 12:4-5
2. You are Contributing member that is NEEDED by the others. (Rom 12:5) "*so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other.*" (1 Corinthians 12:25)

3. You have been gifted by God to fulfill your function.
 - a. Paul received “grace” (Romans 12:3)
 - b. You have received a spiritual gift. *“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.”* (1 Peter 4:10)

The phrase *“Measure of faith”* conveys the truth that each believer can know the limitations of their gift. God has given the gift and the faith to discern the limits of your gift. (Bruce Hurt, Preceptaustin.org)

How Do I Fulfill my Function in the Body of Christ?

I Must THINK the Right Way. Wrong Thinking About my Function Hurts me and the Rest of the Body

The Greek word for “think” used 4x in Romans 12:3. IT is used as a play on words between the phrase “Think more highly,” and “Think with sober judgment.”

First, we see a warning against improper thinking. The phrase “Think more highly” is from two Greek words, Hyper and phroneo. We all understand what “hyper” means. It is something in excess. Out of control. Like a hyper-active thyroid, or a hyper active child.

The warning to us is that we are not to think too highly of ourselves. Here are a few of the ways that we do this:

1. By thinking we are **indispensable**. (Elijah - “I am the only one left”)
2. By thinking that we are above accountability. (Saul - “Samuel is not yet here”). I once heard Dr. Joseph Stowell, then president of Moody Bible Institute, say “men, you will never reach a point where you do not need accountability.”
3. By thinking that we are infallible. *This happens as we develop a sense of **spiritual superiority, thinking that our way, our doctrine, or practices are right just because we think they are.*** Now we are to be diligent in our doctrine. There is nothing that I believe that I can say “I know that I am wrong.” But even in our careful exegesis and obedience to Scripture, we must keep a humble spirit, recognizing that only God is infallible, and that because of our fallen sinful nature, there are some things that the Lord is going to have to teach us.
4. By acting as the center of attention - Here, I think of Diotrephes , *“who loves to be first”* (3 John 9). We place ourselves in the center of attention when we do any of the following:
 - a. Bragging. I once knew a young man who always had a bigger story, a more impressive injury, a more frightening experience. You get the picture. We called him “Bill the legend.” (Name changed to protect the arrogant).
 - b. The opposite extreme, but equally self centered is self deprecation. This is the person who constantly speaks poorly of themselves, their skills or their

life. It is nothing more than a spiritual way to keep attention on ourselves.

Proper Thinking

Here, the combination of words is “So - phroneo.” The first part is from Sozo (to save). This means “saved thinking,” or better yet, “sound thinking.” It’s characteristics are

1. Humility
2. Recognizing that we are called by God to fulfill his purpose in the church
3. Recognize that we are gifted by him
4. Willing. *"We must not say, I am nothing, therefore I will sit still, and do nothing; but, I am nothing in myself, and therefore I will lay out myself to the utmost, in the strength of the grace of Christ."* Matthew Henry

Not only must we THINK the right way, we Must ACT the right way.

The Christian life is not a SOLO event, but part of a great ORCHESTRA

At the beginning of a concert, every instrument is tuning, playing their own thing. There is NOISE, there is ANTICIPATION, but there is not music until the conductor picks up his baton and strikes the downbeat. Then, every instrument fulfills it’s intended purpose under the direction of the master conductor.

The church is much the same. Jesus Christ is our conductor. He has presented each of us with an ability to do our part in making a beautiful symphony for him.

We must accept the instrument he gives to us

We must work hard to play beautifully and skillfully

We must also follow the Conductor and not play simply for ourselves