

God's people, the church session 5: Christ's body

"And God placed all things under his [Christ's] 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." *Ephesians 1:22–23*

This study will try to help us understand what are the implications for us of being Christ's body. There are three main passages which talk about the church as Christ's body, all in letters of Paul.

Romans 12:3–8

- "We, though many, form one body". What then do you think Paul means by saying that "each member belongs to all the others" (v5)?
- How does this relate to our different gifts (vv6–8)?
- How should we therefore act towards one another (v3)?

Paul uses the same picture when he writes to the church in Corinth

1 Corinthians 12:12–30

- What divisions does Paul pick out here as having been healed in the body of Christ? Why do you think he emphasises the Spirit?
- If we are all one, does this mean we are all the same? Well, no... How do you think Paul's long illustration in vv15–26 reinforces unity? Or does it?
- In vv25-26 Paul says that different parts of the body should have "equal concern for each other". What do you think this means in practice? And what are ways we could practically show this concern?
- Another list of gifts is given in v.28 – what is Paul trying to emphasise here about these gifts? (He goes in v31 to talk about "greater gifts" and follows that with the famous chapter on love.)

Ephesians 4:1–16

This passage actually follows on from what we looked at in our last session. So

- What is "the calling you have received" (v1)? What particular things should we be doing to "live a life worthy" of that calling (vv2-3)?
- Why do you think Paul so emphasises unity in vv4-6? Why do you think he spells out these particular things (e.g. one hope, one baptism) when talking about our unity? Why do you think these are important?
- Although Paul emphasises our unity, he also tells his readers to "make every effort" to keep it. What does this say about the difficulties we face in being united and why do you think this is so? What sort of things have you seen in churches that divide people?
- Christ gives different gifts to his church as we have already seen. Why do we need these different ones? What does Paul here tell us about what they are for?
- What is the ultimate goal of these gifts (vv14–15), both negatively and positively? Who plays a part in this? How can we help build up Christ's body?

We have looked specifically at passages which talk about the church as a body and the different gifts Christ gives to build up his body. However we should note that in Romans and Ephesians, Paul immediately follows these up with specific instructions for Christian living.