

CHURCH IS CHRIST MADE VISIBLE TO THE WORLD

"APART FROM ME YOU CAN DO NOTHING"

Without constant affectionate closeness with Christ, we are robots of the world's fallenness. Disunity happens when Christ is thus side-lined.

THE MAIN REASON FOR FAILING TO DO WHAT GOD REQUIRES OF THE CHURCH IS, WE DON'T LIVE IN THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST

Church is Christ made visible

Living in His presence insures we don't become useless. Without Christ living in us we are useless, because we are disconnected from God.

We are saved to serve the Church with Christ

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them."

Eph 2:10

We are well equipped to serve Christ and His Church

"But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gifts....for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ."

Eph 4:7, 12-13

"God's truth is not fragmented and divided against itself, and when His people are fragmented and divided it simply means they are to that degree apart from His truth, apart from the faith of right knowledge and understanding. Only a biblically equipped, faithfully serving, and spiritually maturing church can attain to the unity the faith. Any other unity will be on a purely human level and not only will be apart from but in constant conflict with the unity of the faith. There can never be unity in the church apart from doctrinal integrity." John MacArthur

"But the one who is spiritual discerns all things, yet he himself is discerned by no one. For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he will instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ." 1 Cor 2:15-16

The outcome of our service to Christ is maturity

"As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of people, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in

love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, that is, Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love."

Eph 4: 14-16

The Church is Christ working through us

When the truth of the redeemed people of God as being the actual body of Christ is not found in the members living as the flesh of His flesh, the bone of His bone, and one life in the Spirit. Where Christ in heaven in His human body, is joined to our bodies on earth, it means we have Christ in us and all of us in Christ. When this reality of God becomes no more than a figment of our imagination, then the spiritual unity of our one life in Christ disappears like a mist in the hot sun.

The unity that Christ actually died for is found in those who are compelled by love to live for Him.

"For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that those who live would no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose on their behalf."

2 Cor 5:14-15

As with all the instructions of God, we can understand that the opposite to what He commands is evident in a lack of holy motivation and obedience. Therefore, if we are not loving, and living for Christ, we are still living for ourselves. He died for all that we would be one life in Him, living His life by the power of the Spirit as the children of obedience.

"For just as the body is one and yet has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptised into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. For the body is not one part, but many....so that there may be no division in the body, but that the parts may have the same care for one another. And if one part of the body suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if a part is

honoured, all the parts rejoice with it. Now you are Christ's body, and individually parts of it."
1 Cor 12:12-14, 25-27

If we live day by day as anything less than being joined together with Christ in our hearts, and being renewed in our minds, to be of the same mind in Christ, then the claims of the church to be unified in Christ as His life on earth for the effective work of God no longer has the authentication needed to be seen to be true in practice.

Doctrine without application is a fool's paradise

And as a result of the disunity that can only come from the flesh of self, the church will no longer be able to be an effective witness to the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ because those who claim to belong still live for themselves.

Maybe we need to constantly examine ourselves to see if we are really living in the body of Christ.

"Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realise this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? unless indeed you fail to meet the test!"
2 Cor 13:5

If we are in Christ, we have a holy relationship with God and we are knitted together in love, and therefore God is ministered to each one for the benefit of each other.

"God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord."
1 Cor 1:9

This fellowship is holy, eternal, and transforming, because it means we are joined to Christ and share in all that is His before the Father.

John Piper explains:

“In the New Testament, *“koinonía”* signifies having a share in something, or sharing with someone in something, or you could say participation in something or with someone.

- “They begged us earnestly for the grace and the *sharing/participation* in the ministry to the saints” (2 Corinthians

8:4). In other words, they wanted to have a *share* in sending financial relief to the poor in Jerusalem.

- “That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and the *fellowship/sharing* of his sufferings” (Philippians 3:10). In other words, Paul wanted to have a *share* in the sufferings of Christ. To *participate* with him in suffering for the gospel.

So *koinonia* can be a sharing in the benefits of the death of Jesus, or in the financial relief of the saints, or in the sufferings of Christ. So when we talk about Christian *koinonia* — fellowship or sharing or participation that is unique to our relationship *with other believers* — what we are referring to is the *shared union, the shared participation that we have together with Christ*.

So Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:9, “*You were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.*” Which probably means both (1) sharing vertically in the union *each* of us has in Christ, and (2) sharing *together* with other believers the common union we have with Christ and each other.

That sharing together in the Father and the Son is certainly the case in 1 John 1:3: *That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us [that you may share in what we have seen and heard]; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.*

So when you share with us in the realities we have seen and heard, namely the realities of Jesus, then you share not only with us, but you share with us in our sharing in the Father and the Son.”

We cannot have fellowship with anything less than Christ

The mystery and privilege that belongs to Christian fellowship is that it exists because God has enabled it by His grace alone. Those who *believe and obey* the gospel are united in the Spirit through Christ to the Father, and that unity of Father Son and Spirit is the basis for our eternal fellowship. This unity in relationships is described by Jesus in His high-priestly prayer for His followers: “*I have given them the glory that You gave Me, that they may be one as We are one: I in them and You in Me.*”

May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that You sent Me and have loved them even as You have loved Me.” John 17:23

The “*complete unity*” (NIV) or *perfected in unity* (NASB) that Jesus refers to is the oneness that Christians experience in true fellowship, oneness with one another, with Christ and with the Father. Just as the Father is in Jesus, so is Jesus in us, and we have unity with one another because of the uniqueness of that relationship.

As John Calvin has said: "Is not our Lord Jesus Christ all one with us, according as He is our Head and Mediator, and has received us to Himself in such a way that we live of His own substance?"

Everything is central to living in the presence of Christ

“For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.” Col 3:3-4

*“to whom God willed to make known what the wealth of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles is, the mystery that is **Christ in you**, the hope of glory. We proclaim Him, admonishing every person and teaching every person with all wisdom, so that we may present every person complete in Christ.”* Col 1:27-28

*“But **put on the Lord Jesus Christ**, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.”* Rom 13:14

***“Remain in Me, and I in you.** Just as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself but must remain in the vine, so neither can you unless you **remain in Me**. I am the vine, you are the branches; **the one who remains in Me, and I in him** bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing... **If you remain in Me, and My words remain in you**, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.”* John 15:4-5, 7

It's not enough to live daily in the word of God, we must dwell in Him who is the Word, otherwise His word will not carry the power of His presence. We need both Christ and His words to be able to ask Him to act on our behalf.

*"However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if **indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you**. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. **If Christ is in you**, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him 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 dwells in you**."* Rom 8:9-11

How is it possible to fulfil the requirements of the church as the living Christ in the fallen world if we only have a notion of attachment as some religious principle?

"Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord and not for people, knowing that it is from the Lord that you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve." Col 3:23-24

"For Calvin, the primary metaphor or image of the church was the Pauline description of the church as the body of Christ. The church is a living organism that is centered on Christ. Accordingly, Avis comments that "Calvin's doctrine is to be interpreted in a Christological way." The Church is a means of grace because it is the body of Christ, and not because it is an independently existing reality apart from Him."

John Mark Hicks. Associate Professor of Christian Doctrine. Harding University Graduate School of Religion

The purposes of the church are tied to the living presence of God

The presence of God has enormous implications for the way we understand life in the church. The New Testament calls the church a temple of God for a very good reason. Through this image we see that the community of Christ is the instrument the Lord Jesus uses to reveal His presence to a lost and sinful world.

"Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are."

1 Cor 3:16-17

“Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be! Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body with her? For He says, “The two shall become one flesh.” But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him.”

1 Cor 6:15-20

“For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, “I will dwell in them and walk among them; And I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”

2 Cor 6:14-18

“So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord.”

Eph 2:19-22

Since Christ is our head to obey, and our very life to live, everything we do, we do unto Him. If our hearts are expressing love for the brethren, we are loving our Lord. If there is division and dissension towards others, then we are in conflict with the Lord.

It is Christ who enables us to love, because He first loved us. He gives us His Spirit who delights to impart His heavenly habits into our hearts, so that we can love as God would have us love.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let’s follow the Spirit as well. Let’s not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.”

Gal 5:22-26

Unfortunately, there seems to be a widespread disconnect between the Word of God and its fulfilment in the lives of many of His people. And unfortunately, we are all disconnected at times when our old nature takes precedence in our lives. Therefore, we live in constant repentance by faith, because we love Christ and His church more than self.

If the Spirit of Christ is not able to lead me to manifest His fruitfulness, then the love of Christ is not compelling me to deny myself in order to live for Him. See 2 Cor 5:14-15

The effective work of God in our salvation means we are born again by the Spirit *so that we can obey His commandments*. See Ezek 36:25-27

"But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another. But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the desire of the flesh is against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, in order to keep you from doing whatever you want."

Gal 5:15-17

When we separate the living Christ from the doctrine of the church, we end up with a wooden edifice where love no longer has a part in meaningful fellowship. The living organisms has passed away. The life of the Spirit no longer produces the passion for self-sacrifice in building up the body in love and making disciples of all nations.

We then have form without power. Faces without intimacy. Law without grace. Religious structure without the blood and bones that get results. Organisation without the organisms. Disjointed limbs without support. Knowledge without a heart. Private religion without connectedness. We conduct church as a business in the world without God. We lose the core of our mission to make and train discipline from all nations to put in Christ.

We can't make disciples for Christ if Christ is not living through us personally to be like Him. We go on learning doctrine and never really knowing the doctor and His medicine for our sickness, because we don't understand that death of self is the only way to life in Christ.

Division means we haven't understood that repentance is dying daily, because we sin daily. True repentance results in the Life of Christ. What is not like Christ is sin. If Jesus Christ was alive in each member of the body, His love wouldn't be denied the power to transform dead bones into living tissue.

“This is what the Lord God says to these bones: ‘Behold, I am going to make breath enter you so that you may come to life. And I will attach tendons to you, make flesh grow back on you, cover you with skin, and put breath in you so that you may come to life; and you will know that I am the Lord.’”

Ezek 37:5-6

If Christ is in us His love would be the all-compelling power to pursue His passion for unity in the church and outreach in the world. Building up the body of Christ would be intrinsically part of life in the Spirit. Passion for carrying out the commands of God would be as natural as breathing.

Every participating Church member would be like a deer panting for the water of God in Christ, so that immaturity of faith in caring for others, and ineffectiveness of service in building up the church would be sickening to consider to be expected as normal.

Indeed, all those in Christ would be both hearers of the word in order to be doers of the will of God to manifest Himself in the lives of His faithful children. Unity means that the blessing of God would flow freely for the benefit of building up each other in Christ, and go on to reach the unsaved that He has predestined to join the body of Christ.

Nowhere in the scriptures can we find justification for a private faith that looks after personal interests alone. For faith must be married to others; loving God with our whole being, and loving others as God loves us.

The life the Spirit gives us is the Life of Christ so that His will can be carried out through the lives of His people. The church is the collective temple of God so that God and His will may be manifested in the world by people who are His light of life.

So where is Christ seen in our love for each other?

“Love is patient, love is kind, it is not jealous; love does not brag, it is not arrogant. It does not act disgracefully, it does not seek its own benefit; it is not provoked, does not keep an account of a wrong suffered, it does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the

truth; it keeps every confidence, it believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”
1 Cor 13:4-7

When we are harbouring any indifference to the Spirit who directs us to lay down our life for others, or cultivating clandestine cannibalism in devouring one another under the guise of serving God's law, we are sending the message to the world that Christ does not live here. Both indifference and a desire to control others are intrinsic to the life of Adam and the flesh.

Simon Peter gives us the way out: *“Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they do not make you useless nor unproductive in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the one who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins.”*

2 Pet 5:1-9

This teaching from Peter is "useless" insurance, for the reality of its implementation insures against being useless in the church.

And John Calvin. In a sermons from Ephesians 4

"Now it behoves us to honour well this King who is set over us by God His Father, [Ps. 2:12] and consider that we are His people indeed, and even His very body. Seeing He does us such honour, let us see to it that we are so much the more inflamed with love for Him, and consider that Jesus Christ, being exalted above all the heavens, is also judge of the world, even to call us to give an account, not only of our outward deeds, but of all our thoughts. And therefore let us walk in the fear of Him and in obedience to Him, assuring ourselves that when the trumpet sounds at the last day, we must all appear before Him.”

1 Cor 15:52

Living Water Resources

Come to the River

John Calvin. Sermons from Ephesians 4

“Moreover, let us so walk under the obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ that we may feel that He fills us indeed, (as we have noted before) because He is in all and above all, and in all things. This was spoken of God His Father. However, we know that Jesus Christ is the means by which God dwells in us. Wherefore let us be His true temples, and since He, being the fountain of all pureness, vouchsafes us the grace and privilege to dwell in us, let us endeavour to keep ourselves holy unto Him both in our souls and our bodies. For if we are given to our pollutions, it is just as if we went about to drive away the Son of God, who cannot be mixed up with our corruptions and filthiness.”

Again:

“And just as He sanctified Himself on our behalf, so let us be holy, namely, by the grace and power of His Holy Spirit, and let the same holiness be consecrated by the doctrine of the gospel, as is said of it in another place.” John 17:17

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