

Everybody Participates



Foundations (Day 228)
by Derek Prince

Yesterday, we began to see that everybody is supposed to participate actively in church-life, and not only one or two – and usually the same - individuals. The same is confirmed by Peter, in 1 Pet. 4:10-11 :

> "As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ."

Peter here speaks of God's grace being manifold. That is, God's grace is so rich, so many-sided, that a different aspect of that grace can be manifested through each individual member in the total worship and service of God's people. In this way every member of the church may receive his own special manifestation and may thus have something to minister in turn to all the other members.

Peter emphasises that every member of the church is included; no one need be left without a gift or a ministry. He says: "As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another" (1 Pet. 4:10). And again, in the next verse: "If anyone speaks ... If anyone ministers" (1 Pet. 4:11). There is no question here of a church with one or two "professional," full-time ministers, while all the remaining members are largely passive or inactive. Every member is included in God's programme of supernatural ministry in the church; each one may have a gift; anyone may speak; anyone may minister.

This picture of the church with every member active is confirmed by the words of Paul.

> "For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let

> us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness." (Rom. 12:3-8)

In these verses Paul once again likens the Christian church to a body, of which each individual believer is a member, and he lays great stress on the activity of each member. Notice the repetition of phrases such as "each one," "the members," "everyone."

Paul teaches that God has allotted to each member a special function, a special ministry. In conjunction with this, God has also made a double provision for the effective exercise of that ministry: 1) the measure of faith and 2) the special gifts which the ministry requires. In this way each member is fully equipped for his task.

Thus the New Testament picture of the church is that of a vigorous, active body in which each individual member properly fulfils his special function. A church in which only one or two members had any active ministry would be, by New Testament standards, like a body in which, let us say, the head, one hand and one foot were strong and active, and all the rest of the body was paralysed and useless. Obviously such a body, considered as a whole, could never fulfil its proper function.

Devotional

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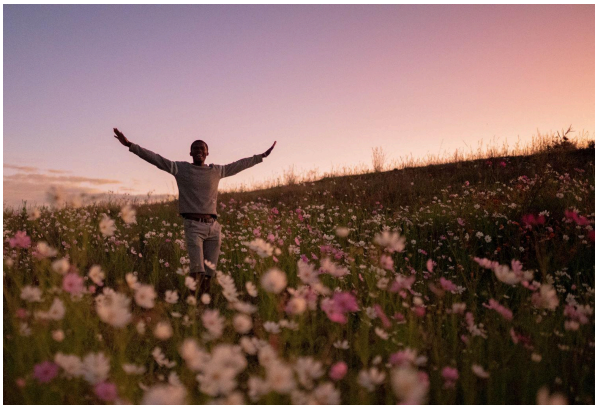

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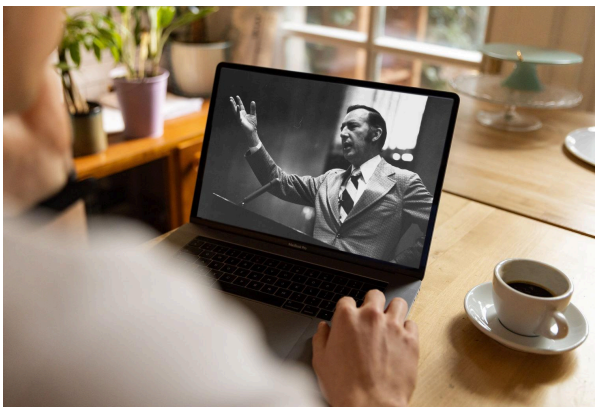

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