

Picture 2: The Body



Seven Pictures of God's People
(Part 4)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as we continue to look together into the mirror to discover how God sees us—not merely as individual believers, but as one, new collective entity. In my talks this week I'm holding up for you the mirror of God's word in such a way that you will gain new understanding in how God sees His redeemed people in this world as a single, corporate whole. Hence, my title for these talks, "Seven Pictures of God's People." All these seven pictures are taken from Paul's epistle to the Ephesians.

In my talk yesterday we looked at the first picture which is found in Ephesians 1:22, where it says this:

> "And God placed all things under his feet [that's the feet of Jesus] and appointed him [Jesus] to be Head over everything for the church." (NIV)

There's the first picture, the first title: Church. I pointed out that the original Greek word there translated "church" is "ecclesia" and that it's important to understand the root meaning of that word. By derivation it means "a company of people called out from a larger group." Its secular use in the time of the New Testament was very clear. It was clearly understood. It was used to describe a "governmental assembly." In Acts 19, the word is used three times of the city council of the city of Ephesus, the body that governed the city of Ephesus. So it's primarily a governing body. That's why I choose the word "assembly" rather than the word "church," of which the meaning has largely been obscured over the centuries by misuse.

Today we're going to look at the second picture, which is found in the verse immediately following. I'll read both verses together so that we get the context. Ephesians 1:22 and 23:

> "And God placed all things under his feet, and appointed him [Jesus] to be the Head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way." (NIV)

So there's the second picture, the second title: His Body, the Body of Christ. That's how we are collectively in this world.

First we are the assembly; second, we are the Body of Christ.

Now we need to ask ourselves: What does that indicate? What does that teach us about our functions and our responsibilities? What is the purpose of a body, very simply? I would say, in very simple terms, the purpose of a body is to get things done in a time/space world, to relate to a time/space world. That's how we relate to this world, through our bodies. And that's what I believe the purpose of God for the Body of Christ is. It's the way Christ relates to this time/space world. He relates through His Body. We, His Body, are the instruments by which He works out His redemptive purposes in this world. He depends on us to get His will done in this world. Let me show you a passage in Hebrews 10:5–7, which speaks specifically about the Body of Christ. It's based on a quotation from one of the Psalms but we won't go into that. We'll just try to bring out the main points for our purposes just now. This is what it says:

> "Therefore, when he comes into the world [and this is describing Jesus coming into the world as Savior] when he comes into the world, he says, 'Sacrifice and offering thou hast not desired, but a body thou has prepared for me [This pictures Jesus coming as the Savior, not to introduce the Law which has already been introduced by Moses, but to save as the sacrifice for our sins. Therefore he had to have a body to provide a sacrifice. Then it goes on:] in whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou has taken no pleasure. Then I said, [this is the Lord speaking, Jesus] 'Behold, I have come. In the roll of the book it is written of me, 'To do thy will, O God.'"" (NASB)

Let me put together those two phrases, "a body thou hast prepared for me," "to do thy will, O God." What does that tell us about the function of a body? The body is the instrument to do the will. So, we have Christ's body in two aspects there. First of all, it's the physical body of Jesus Himself that became the sacrifice for our sins on the cross. But secondly beyond that, it's the collective body, God's people collectively, that continues and completes His ministry on the earth, still doing God's will in the earth.

The Scripture, the New Testament, has a number of pictures of us as the Body of Christ. I'll just give you two. The first is from Romans 12:4 and 5:

> "Just as each one of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ, we who are many form one body and each member belongs to all the others." (NIV)

That's the essence. "In Christ we who are many form one body." Many individuals, one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We're not a group of separated, isolated individuals; we belong to one another. In 1 Corinthians 12:12–21, Paul amplifies this picture and makes it very vivid. I'm going to read that whole passage. Remember, it's speaking about the body of Christ.

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts. And though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free, and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

What's the word that's emphasized there? It's the word "one," isn't it? They form ONE body. "We were all baptized by ONE Spirit, into ONE body. We were all given the ONE Spirit to drink." The emphasis throughout is the unit of the body. Then Paul goes on:

> "'Now the body is not made up of one part, but of many. If the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,' it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,' it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But, in fact, God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them just as he wanted them to be. [You see God's sovereign control over the body.] If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts but one body.' [Notice that repeated continuing emphasis, ONE body. And then a very practical application:] The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I don't need you.' And the head cannot say to the feet, 'I don't need you.'" (NIV)

We cannot say to one another as believers, "I can get on without you. It doesn't matter what happens to you, I'm all right." That's not permissible. It just isn't correct. The eye, though it's such a wonderful, refined, delicate instrument with more than 3 million moving working parts, cannot say to that rather prosaic member, the hand, "I don't need you." Even more remarkable, the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you." The head is right at the top, the feet are right at the bottom, they're separated by the whole length of the body. And yet the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need

you." And in a certain sense, the head typifies Jesus. Isn't that remarkable. Jesus cannot say to the lowest part of the body, "I don't need you." You see, He needs us. We're His body. We're the instrument that He uses to get things done in this time/space world. So we are the Body of Christ, one body. Many members, one body.

Now let's look at a picture of the finished product, just for a moment. It's given in Ephesians 4:16:

> "From Him [that's Christ] the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love as each part does its work."

So, all of us together who are united in Christ, are one body. There are many, many ligaments that hold us tightly and firmly together. We cannot break loose. And as we're held together in this single unity, this organic unity, the body builds itself up. But, to build itself up it depends on each part to do its work. The body cannot be healthy if any part is unhealthy. It affects the health of the rest of the body.

So, let's consider now our two-fold application as we're doing for each of these pictures. The first question: What is the essential feature that this picture teaches? Secondly, very practically, what is required of us? Well, what is the essential feature of the Body of Christ? What does it tell us about God's purpose, about our function? I believe I've said it already but I need to emphasize it. As the Body of Christ, we're the agents of Christ's will to get His purposes done in this world. He depends on us. He, the Head, cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you." What is required of us? I think I can say it this way: We've got to recognize that we're all different but we're all independent. We're not all one member, we're not all one nose or an ear, or an eye; we've got many different locations, many different functions, many different characteristics, but we're independent. I cannot emphasize that too strongly.

It seems to me the primary emphasis of the Holy Spirit to God's people today is we've got to give up our aggressive individualism, our wrong attitude to our fellow believers: "I don't need you. It doesn't matter what happens to you. I'm all right." We can't do that. None of us can say to any of the others, "I don't need you." We all need one another. And God's purposes will not be complete until the Body is complete, until all the members are united together and every part is doing its job, and the Body is growing together in health and to the glory of God.

Well, our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll be bringing you the third picture of God's people.

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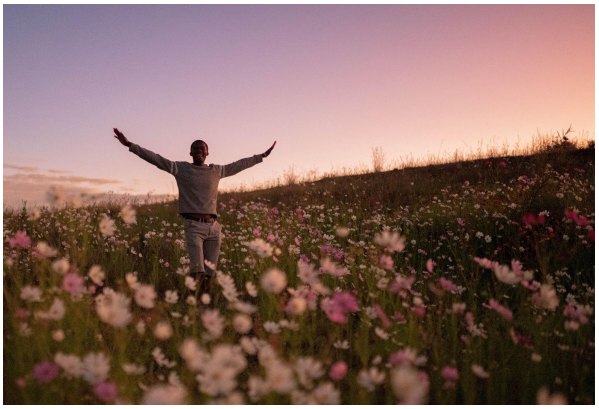

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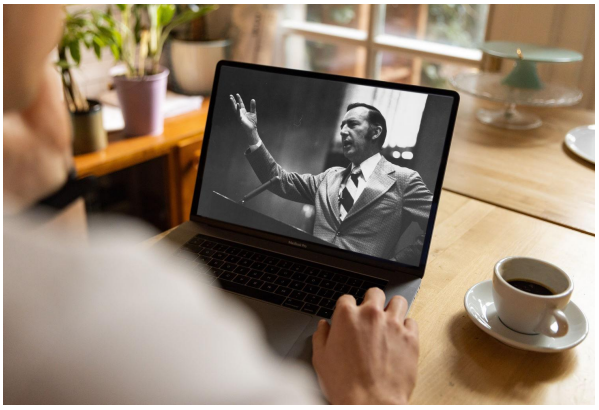

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