

"One Another"

by Wayne Goff

THE LOCAL CHURCH IS GREATLY AFFECTED BY EACH MEMBER'S RESPONSIBILITY TO "ONE ANOTHER"

In the New Testament, God explained the relationship each member sustains to each other by the analogy of the human body. Each various part of our physical body has a unique, independent function. At the same time, that same different part is dependent upon the rest of the body for its existence. So it is in the local church, 1 Corinthians 12. (The phrase "one another" appears 87 times in the New Testament.)

In my experience as a gospel preacher over the past thirty-five years, I have seen local churches harmed by a lack of appreciation of the interdependence of each member. This should not be, brethren, because we begin our Christian life by first "denying ourselves" (Matt. 16:24). If we do that, then we should be affirming others. In Romans 12, Paul put it like this: "Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another" (v. 10).

And who are the others? Members of the local church. How did we get to be members of a local church? By joining ourselves to the disciples, Acts 9:26. Why did we do this? Because God has commanded us to do together certain things, and we cannot do alone what we have been commanded to do together! You see, the local church is God's invention, not man's!

Someone objects by saying, "Well, I can worship God at home just as well as I can down there at the church building." Great! I am all for each true Christian worshiping God as an individual. In fact, you see many examples of such worship in the book of Acts. There is Cornelius (Acts 10), Paul and Silas in prison (Acts 16:25), as well as many others. But here is the problem. Such individual worship does not satisfy God's demands upon us to worship together! God has commanded that we work together for the benefit of all Christians in a local church. He does not permit us simply to worry about ourselves and go to heaven alone. It is sad to me that anyone thinks that is acceptable. There is so much joy in the love and encouragement we can give to one another.

Our feet do a great service to our physical body in helping us stand, walk, run, and keep our balance. But if the feet were not connected to the circular system, and the nervous system, then they would be useless and dead. So it is with the Christian. If he is not connected to a local congregation, then he cannot get the edification and spiritual nourishment necessary to his spiritual growth. He will wither away and die.

I recall reading about a preacher visiting a wayward member one cold, damp evening. The two were sitting by the fireside discussing the importance of church attendance. The man asked the preacher why he should attend regularly. Without a word, the preacher reached over to the fireplace, took the tongs and picked up a piece of coal, and laid it on the hearth by itself. At first it glowed a brilliant, fiery red color. But slowly it lost its luster, began to grow dark, cold, and then it died. The man got the point and quickly said, "Preacher, I'll see you in church on Sunday." This is God's way. May God help us all to see the great privilege and blessing it is to both be saved and to help save others. Look to the many ways in which we can help one another.

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