*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

October 25 - 30

“The Spirit Gives Every Member Their Part”

**Monday, October 25 Ephesians 4:14-16**

*“As each part does its work, it helps the other parts grow”*

 Paul wants his readers to become mature through the use of spiritual gifts so that they will not be carried away by wrong teaching. Immaturity is described as being “tossed back and forth” and “blown here and there,” that is, being easily deceived. Paul pictures a person who does not know where to find the source of truth and life and who is repeatedly being duped by charlatans and tricksters. With the transition to the description of maturity in verse 15, we encounter perhaps the most important ethical guideline in the New Testament, one that summarizes what Christian living is about: truth, love, and continual growth into becoming like Christ.

 Maturity, the ethic of truth and love, and becoming like Christ, are all achievable in the church when the gifts of the Spirit are being put to good use. Every member of the body, however insignificant he or she may appear to others, has something important to contribute to the wellbeing of the whole. Every part does its share. As it does so, the body grows and is enriched in love.

*Build our church in truth and love, Lord, as each one of us does our part. Amen.*

**Tuesday, October 26 1 Corinthians 12:12-17**

*“The many parts make up one body”*

 Paul paints a picture of the church as a living body, using the analogy to teach several important truths about the church. First, while we are not the same, each of us is important to the whole. Second, we desperately need each other. Third, what affects one member is felt by all the members.

 But what is obvious for our bodies is not so apparent within the church. There is something in us that tries to make the Christian life a “Lone Ranger” kind of experience, but there should be no such thing as isolation in the church. All the pictures of the church are group pictures. The more mature we become in Christ, the more we realize that throughout our entire life we will continue to need each other. We complement each other, challenge each other, comfort each other, and communicate with each other. Within this context we find our Christian identity, our ministry to one another, our growth, and our support. The church is the place where each of us is needed and to which each of us brings needs.

*I praise you, Holy Spirit, for bringing our church together into one body. Amen.*

**Wednesday, October 27 Romans 12:3-5**

*“Each of us has different work to do”*

 Our natural tendency to selfishness and individualism works against the concept of the unity of the body of Christ, but the person who is seeking to become like Christ has a renewed attitude about God’s desire for the church. Those who are receiving their guidance for living from the Word of God recognize the uniqueness of the believer’s position in the church and are also committed to being a part of the body of Christ.

 When Christ was on earth, he inhabited a body similar to our physical bodies and, accordingly, knew something of our physical limitations. But after his resurrection, the person of the Holy Spirit inhabited numerous individuals who, together, would become the means of Christ’s continued activity on earth. So varied were the abilities and ministries of the Lord that it would be ludicrous to expect any one individual to begin to emulate his ministry. But when many people come together as his body, they can collectively begin to demonstrate the multiplicity of ministries which he longs to perform through their united efforts.

*When we all do our part, Lord, you can do amazing things through us. Amen.*

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“The Spirit Gives Every Member Their Part”

**Thursday, October 28 John 13:31-35**

*“Love each other”*

 Jesus calls these disciples “dear children.” He is tenderly preparing them for his departure which will shortly take place. They will seek for him in pain and wonder after he is gone, but they will not be able to come where he is going. This is a journey he must make alone! But Jesus’ band of followers is not to live on in a scattered vacuum clinging to vague memories after he is gone. He gives them a new commandment, “that you love one another; as I have loved you.”

 This was not an optional extra thrown in, but a command to be obeyed. And only in keeping it would the Spirit of Jesus flood these men and draw them together in a living community stronger than life or death. This commandment of love is new because it is based on a new covenant sealed with these disciples in Jesus’ own blood. The old command, “you shall love your neighbor as yourself” was based on Mosaic Law. This new command love is a gift shared freely by Jesus, seen in his love for them. He is the only source of a love that needs no other motivation. The mark of a Christian is Christ’s love in us that allows us to love one another.

*Fill me, Holy Spirit, with the love of Christ that I may freely love others. Amen.*

**Friday, October 29 Galatians 5:13-15**

*“Freedom to serve one another in love”*

 Being free from having to obey the law in order to be made right with God, we need to be careful not to allow this freedom to give us an excuse to indulge our sinful nature. Being saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, we are now free to live as he lived when he was on earth, and to love as he loved. If freedom in Christ is interpreted merely as the removal of restraint, sin will use the weakness of human nature to launch attacks against the Spirit’s work in us. So, Paul says, we need to use our new freedom for love and not for sin.

 When we disobey Jesus’ command, we end up destroying one another. The problem Paul was addressing in Galatia was typically human: egos entered into the debates between people and before long the issue was who was going to win; it became *who* is right, not *what* is right. Instead, Paul says, their freedom is to be a platform for serving one another in love. For Paul, love is defined by Christ’s sacrificial giving of his life in love, love is inspired by God’s Spirit, and love is expressed in doing good and in interpersonal relationships in society, especially in the church.

*It is when I love others, Lord, that I experience love’s true meaning. Amen.*

**Saturday, October 30 Hebrews 10:23-25**

*“Think of ways to encourage one another”*

 The emphasis here is on getting to know one another in the intimacy of a community of faith. The *koinonia* (a sense of community resulting from having something in common) created by knowing one another deeply creates and releases attitudes of love and stimulates the actions of good works done together. When a person is known for all he or she is, with all the wrinkles and foibles, and yet is loved, trust in engendered and creative ways of loving and caring for others become a possibility in that person’s life.

 This is why it is so important for us not to neglect gathering together as the people of God. There are some who have decided that they don’t need the church, either because they think they can go it alone or because they have been disappointed by a church experience and choose not to return. They will miss out on the opportunity for mutual love and caring service within the fellowship of believers. The church is not perfect – it is, after all, full of imperfect people - but with the Spirit’s help it will still be empowered to engage in acts of love and good deeds.

*May encouragement to love and good deeds, Lord, characterize our church. Amen.*