

THE BODY – MEMBERS IN PARTICULAR.

In illustrating the complete subjection of the now crucified, will-dead little flock to their once crucified but now exalted Lord, it is difficult to find a more perfect figure than that which Paul suggests, viz., the human form, head and body. As a human body is composed of many members with various functions, yet all perfectly controlled and ordered by the one head, and without any will or desire to control themselves, so is "the body of Christ" under its head, Jesus. Every member must be in perfect accord with the head, that the great work of the Christ in the coming age may be accomplished perfectly.

That perfect "body of Christ" is as yet only an ideal: it is a body of the future and not of the present, and will not be complete until the last member has been tried and proved worthy and glorified – made like unto, though subject to its head Christ Jesus. During the Gospel age the prospective members have been called or invited (none but the justified believers, are called) and this is styled "a high calling" and "a heavenly calling" because it invites these to so high and grand a station, and to a heavenly nature and glory and honor and perfection which is to be *restored* to in *exchange* for, and instead of the earthy glory and honor of the world in general. The joining together of this body in the present life is only probationary – a membership *on trial*, to ascertain who are worthy. Hence it is that those already called members of the body of Christ, are exhorted to make their calling and election *sure*, or permanent, by full and hearty submission to all the *tests* which their Lord and forerunner on the course shall impose. Such, too, have the assurance that their head sympathizes with them, and will not permit them to be tempted and tested beyond what they are *able to withstand*, but who at the very moment when their strength and endurance would fail – not through lack of *desire to do his will*, but through weakness of the flesh – will open a way for their escape from the trial.

Under misconceptions, false teachings, etc., many are *nominally* counted as members of Christ's body, or church, whom the Lord in no sense recognizes as such, whom he does not enter among the probationers on trial for permanent membership in that choice "little flock," because they have never taken even the first step toward becoming members.

Every one answering to the "high calling," (already justified believers) was informed of the conditions of membership, namely, that such must deny themselves, set aside and entirely ignore their own wills, and plans and ambitions however noble, must crucify their human wills with all their human affections and lusts (desires) no matter how pure and good, and must submit everything to the will of Christ, whether they see or do not see the wisdom of his arrangements. To the worldly-wise this is foolishness and those who obey this call are considered fools, even as was their Master for the same cause: For the world knoweth us not, because (for the same reason that) it knew him not. – 1 John 3:1.

The narrow way of self-sacrifice through which the high calling invites us, is so contrary to worldly wisdom that few find it in the sense of knowing or realizing it; and fewer yet, after finding it, will walk in it; it is so narrow, so difficult and painful to crucify the flesh with its human affections, hopes, aims and desires; so difficult to have a mind and judgment and will of your own and yet obey not their dictates, but crucify them and take and follow the will of another which often seems so much less complete than our own, and whose ultimate advantage we so often cannot see.

The conditions therefore upon which we become probationary or *trial* members of the body of Christ, are that we *covenant*, or solemnly *consecrate* ourselves and all our interests as human beings, to the Lord's will and service. This the probationary member symbolizes by baptism into water. His immersion into water is a figure of his *death* to all earthly things, chief among which and representative

of all, is his HUMAN WILL. It must be buried in order that the consecrated one may be reckoned a fellow-member in that *will*-less body, whose will is the will of the head only. "Therefore are we buried by baptism INTO CHRIST" into membership in that "body of Christ;" for as many of you as were baptised *into* JESUS CHRIST were baptised into *his death*, "Crucified with Christ" to earthly hopes, etc., and risen *by faith* to heavenly hopes, plans, etc., under his direction, to which we shall attain if we faint not, but continue firm unto the end, keeping our wills fully subject to the will of Christ, and our bodies as much so as possible.

Every such consecrated one is recorded as a prospective member among those "whose names are written in heaven:" but the record is such as can be erased. The final inking of the record, so to speak, is not done until the probationary membership is ended, and all the consecrated ones adjudged either worthy or unworthy of a place in that perfect glorious "body of the Anointed" whose record in the Lamb's book of life is indelible; among, and a part of that company which God foreknew or intended from the foundation of the world, as his honored instrumentality for blessing all the families of the world.

Not all the consecrated, probationary members shall be of the real body of Christ, but only the *overcomers*. Of such the Lord says "I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father and before his messengers." (Rev. 3:5.) And, blessed thought, our overcoming consists not in perfect works, but in a perfect heart or will. His own will fully crucified, the will of Christ dwelling in his heart richly, none need be barren or unfruitful in the *knowledge* of the Lord, but shall renew his strength, and go on from grace to grace in the knowledge and service of his head; and finally such shall be accepted into the everlasting permanent membership in the body glorified.

And there is a thought *beyond* crucifying our own wills. We should not only crucify our own wills, but fully accept of and *use* the

Lord's will instead. "***Let*** the word of Christ dwell in you richly," and Let the mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. (Col. 3:16; Phil. 2:5.) A human body whose members were ***merely*** without will or plan of their own, would be aimless, lifeless, and useless, and so probationary members of the body of Christ, if ***merely*** dead to the world will be cold, aimless, idle, languid and lifeless, and hence profitless. The apostle therefore exhorts that we be not only dead to present hopes, and aims, and hoping for the future glorious body and its glorious work, but our ***mortal*** body which with its will we have crucified, we should partake so thoroughly of the holy spirit of our Master's consecration, that the mortal body alive, and active in God's service – delighting to do his will engaging heartily in his plan and work. (Rom. 8:11.)

Until our own wills are crucified, we are not truly prepared to seek to know the will of our Lord. The uncrucified will, if it goes to the Word of God to learn his will, is not prepared to receive it, and stumbles over it, blinded by its own plans, desires and ambitions. Misled by these it wrests and misapplies the word of God to fit its wisdom or plan. Alas! how many of the consecrated are crucified only in part, and how many not at all. How many, failing still worse, see nothing of the high calling, and have passed by justification by faith in the ransom and are trusting to secure ***justification*** by crucifying their sins. Let us walk in the light as he is in the light, and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. And in order to do this and attain the great prize let us see to it that we can say with Paul "I am crucified with Christ, yet I live, yet not [the former] I, but Christ liveth in me." His will being fully mine I can call myself his and feel confidence before him. I being fully his, he can own me as a member of his body and use me as such now and forever.

=====