

Message Thirteen

The Body of Christ and the Local Churches

Scriptures reading: Rom. 12:5; 16:1, 4-5, 16, 23.

I. The central thought of the book of Romans is concerning the Gospel of God that God, in His complete salvation, is making sinners the sons of God to constitute the Body of Christ which is expressed as the local churches— Rom. 1:1, 16-17; 5:10; 3:23; 8:14; 12:5; 16:1, 4-5, 16, 23.

- A. Romans begins with sinners and ends with the churches.
- B. The sinners are redeemed, justified, and regenerated to become children of God; the children of God grow into sons of God to be members of the Body; and the Body is expressed as local churches.
- C. Redemption is the procedure, salvation in life is the process, the Body of Christ is the goal, and local churches are the expression of the Body.

II. The will of God in Romans 12:2 is God's intention, according to His good pleasure, to have the organic Body of Christ as the corporate expression of Christ—Eph. 1:9, 11; 5:17.

- A. After speaking of God's will in Romans 12:2, Paul goes on in verses 4 and 5 to unveil the Body of Christ; therefore, the will of God is the Body of Christ—vv. 4-5; 1Cor. 12:27.
- B. God's goal in His economy is to have the Body for Christ as His corporate expression; this is the peak of the divine revelation in Romans.
- C. In this chapter the will of God is that we whom God has chosen, called, redeemed, justified, sanctified, and conformed unto glorification in the preceding eleven chapters may be members one of another to have the living of the Body of Christ.
 - 1. God's intention is not to populate the heaven with millions of redeemed people, with each one living in a magnificent mansion, or to produce a multitude of redeemed, regenerated, transformed, and glorified sons who live independently of one another.
 - 2. God's goal is a corporate entity; in the present age, this corporate entity is the Body of Christ, and in eternity, this entity will be the New Jerusalem.

III. According to Romans 16 the Body life is lived out and expressed as in the local churches.

- A. The Body of Christ is not a mere doctrine; it is a reality in the sight of God.
- B. The universal Body of Christ is manifested in a locality as the church of God in that place.
 - 1. The New Testament practices of having one church in one city with one eldership—Acts 8:1; 13:1; 14:23; Titus 1:5; 1Cor. 1:2.
 - 2. The Body of Christ is uniquely one universally, and the expression of the Body must be uniquely one locally; this was both the teaching and practice of the apostles in the New Testament—Matt 16:18; 18:17; cf. Rev. 1:4, 11.
 - 3. It is through the building up of the churches locally that the Lord will have the building up of the Body universally—1Cor. 14:4-5, 12; Eph. 4:16.
- C. All genuine churches are therefore the Body of Christ in its concrete local expressions—1Cor. 1:2; 12:27.

***Rom. 16:25** Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel, that is, the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which has been kept in silence in the times of the ages*

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Reference Scripture Verses:

Rom. 12:5 So we who are many are one Body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

Rom. 16:1 I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a deaconess of the church which is in Cenchrea,

Rom. 16:4-5. **4** Who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles; **5** And *greet* the church, which is in their house. Greet Epaphroditus, my beloved, who is the firstfruits of Asia unto Christ.

Rom. 16:16 Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.

Rom. 16:23 Gaius, my host and *host* of the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer, greets you, and Quartus the brother.

Rom. 1:1 Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, a called apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,

Rom. 1:15-16. **15** So, for my part, I am ready to announce the gospel to you also who are in Rome. **16** For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes, both to Jew first and to Greek

Rom. 5:10 For if we, being enemies, were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more we will be saved in His life, having been reconciled,

Rom. 3:23 For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Rom. 8:14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

Eph. 1:9 Making known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself,

Eph. 1:11 In whom also we were designated as an inheritance, having been predestinated according to the purpose of the One who works all things according to the counsel of His will,

Eph. 5:17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Rom. 12:2 And do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect.

Rom. 12:4-5. **4** For just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function, **5** So we who are many are one Body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

1Cor. 12:27 Now you are the Body of Christ, and members individually.

Acts. 8:1 And Saul approved of his killing. And there occurred in that day a great persecution against the church which was in Jerusalem; and all were scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

Acts. 13:1 Now there were in Antioch, in the local church, prophets and teachers: Barnabas and Simeon, who was called Niger, and Lucius the Cyrenian, and Manaen, the foster brother of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

Acts. 14:23 And when they had appointed elders for them in every church and had prayed with fastings, they committed them to the Lord into whom they had believed.

Titus 1:5 For this cause I left you in Crete, that you might set in order the things *which I have begun* that remain and appoint elders in every city, as I directed you:

1Cor. 1:2 To the church of God which is in Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, the called saints, with all those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, *who is* theirs and ours:

Matt. 16:18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

Matt. 18:17 And if he refuses to hear them, tell *it* to the church; and if he refuses to hear the church also, let him be to you just like the Gentile and the tax collector.

Rev. 1:4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is coming, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne,

Rev. 1:11 Saying, What you see write in a scroll and send *it* to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamos and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.

1Cor. 14:4-5. 4 He who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but he who prophesies builds up the church. 5 I desire that you all speak in tongues, but especially that you would prophesy; and greater is he who prophesies than he who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, that the church may receive building up.

1Cor. 14:12 So also you, since you are zealous of spirits, seek that you may excel for the building up of the church.

Eph. 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and *through* the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.