

August 14, 2016

-I Corinthians 12:12-27 -

“The Saints of the Church”

Introduction:

I believe as does Franklin Graham that the hope for America and the Nations lies within the Church. II Chron. 7:14 – The church must intercede for America unlike any other period in our history. The consequences of failing to intercede are unthinkable. As Saints of His church we must follow God's Word, lean on the Holy Spirit employ Christ's mandate for the Church. The devil is going to attack the church, you can be sure of that. Satan hates the church and is doing all he can to destroy the one saving grace of America. I want to read a portion of a speech as part of my introduction; it is called ... If I were the Prince of Darkness.

... If I were the Prince of Darkness, I'd want to engulf the whole world in darkness. I'd have a third of its real estate, and four-fifths of its population, but I wouldn't be happy until I had seized the ripest apple on the tree. So I'd set about however necessary to take over the United States. I'd work first to subvert the churches — I'd begin with a campaign of whispers. With the wisdom of a serpent, I would whisper to you as I whispered to Eve: 'Do as you please.' To the young, I would whisper that 'The Bible is a myth.' I would convince them that man created God instead of the other way around. I would confide that what's bad is good, and what's good is 'square.'

And the old, well I would teach them to pray, after me, 'Our Father, which art in Washington...' "And then I'd get organized. I'd educate authors on how to make lurid literature exciting, so that anything else would appear dull and uninteresting. I'd threaten TV with dirtier movies and vice versa. I'd pedal narcotics to whom I could. I'd sell alcohol to ladies and gentlemen of distinction. I'd tranquilize the rest with pills. "If I were the devil I'd soon have families that war with themselves and churches at war with themselves.

If I were the devil I would encourage schools to refine young intellects, but neglect to discipline emotions; just let those run wild, until before you knew it, you'd have to have drug sniffing dogs and metal detectors at every schoolhouse door. "Within a decade I'd have prisons overflowing, I'd have judges promoting pornography — soon I could evict God from the courthouse, then from the schoolhouse, and then from the houses of Congress. And in His own churches I would substitute psychology for religion, and deify science. I would lure priests and pastors into misusing boys and girls, and church money. If I were the devil I'd make the symbols of Easter an egg and the symbol of Christmas a bottle. "If I were the devil I'd take from those who have, and give to those who wanted until I had killed the incentive of the ambitious. I would get whole states to promote gambling as the way to get rich? I would caution against extremes and hard work, in Patriotism and in moral conduct. I would convince the young that marriage is old-fashioned, that swinging is more fun that is what you'd see on TV and the way to be... If I were the Prince of Darkness.

This speech was broadcast by ABC Radio commentator Paul Harvey on April 3, 1965.

It seems that the devil has done pretty much this and even more than Paul Harvey once predicted. We must get back to the true nature and purpose of Christ Church. Last time...

I. Review of Church Leadership

1. The responsibility of the shepherds is to feed the sheep; labor among them and oversee the sheep. Paul said to the sheep in his epistle to the Thessalonians "Appreciate the shepherds, esteem the shepherds and submit to the shepherds and spiritual leaders such as your deacons and teachers. The word "know" is very interesting. A'do "eidō" in Greek means to have regard for one, cherish and pay attention to. Simply put it mean to show respect and follow their lead.

2. There needs to be respect for those that labor in the Word. Preaching is the chief means God uses to dispense His grace. It is the proclamation of the Word that people are edified, built up, equip strengthened, motivated, confronted, convicted, rebuked, reprovved and restored. The shepherd and the sheep must appreciate and love one another if they are to grow the church. The congregation must see the pastor in the role God set for him and not with preconceive ideas that do not have any validity in the Word of God. Preaching must be first! If the church is going to be great and have the influence it needs its saints to follow. Let's look again at the passage we are expositing verse by verse, sermon by sermon. -- **Ephesians 4:12**

II. Realize the importance of your role and spiritual gift (12:12-20).

1. The apostle Paul stresses here the perfecting of the saints in verse 12. The word "perfecting" comes from a Greek root word that means "complete furnishing or equipping". God gave spiritual leaders to teach and mature His saints to do the work of the ministry. Leadership is to equip and the saints are to do the work of ministry. The apostle Paul amplifies this truth in his letter to the Church at Corinth in the passage we read today.

2. Every saint and if you are "born again" you are a saint and you need to seek out your gift and use it. Indifference toward your duties as a member can harm your church and weaken its' influence. Every believer has at least one spiritual gift, which is not a ready-made ability but a supernatural enablement that must be developed. You developed it by working it out. Paul was using an analogy of the human body here, which of course has many parts but the many parts are one body (12:12a-c). Then, he writes in the last phrase of verse 12... **For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.**

Our physical bodies have many parts but work together as **one**. That's the way the church-the body of Christ-should be. In our churches, there should be unity without uniformity. We can even disagree on nonessential things. As someone has once said, "We don't have to be twins to be brothers and sisters in Christ."

2. Explaining our oneness, Paul writes, For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free (12:13a-c). Every person who

receives Christ as Savior is baptized by the Spirit into the spiritual body of Christ and receives the Holy Spirit.

These verses substantiate Ephesians 4:13. Paul continues comparing the church to the human body. For our physical bodies to be healthy, each part must function properly. In the same way, for a church to be spiritually healthy, each part must make a contribution to the whole. To build up the body of Christ, realize the importance of your spiritual gift and that all the members are important and we are to work together like a team. We have come to know the value of teams working together even when they have difference.

III Recognize the importance of others and their spiritual gifts and service (12:21-26).

1. Some of the Corinthians who regarded themselves as superior, especially the rich, needed to remember that all members are vital to having a healthy church. This truth is emphasis by Paul Romans 12:3: **For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.** Just as the physical body has vital members that are not seen, so does the church. Our bodies also have *comely*, or presentable, *parts* that have no need of clothing, such as the face (though some do need makeup).

2. God does this so there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another (12:25). True spiritual greatness is determined by a spirit of servant hood, God is interested in the humble servant. It is God's will and plan that if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it (12:26a). I found it hard for me to do some things with my arms and legs when my back went out, other members of my body were affected. In the same way, when one member of our church suffers, we all suffer. More than fifty times in the New Testament we find one another or each other statements commanding us to minister to each other. We talked about this in our Romans study of the Bible.

Every believer is an individual part of *the body of Christ* (12:27). No member is unimportant because each has a gift necessary to build up the church. Failure to understand your ministry and to recognize it is unto God... is a major fault in today churches. We have the instructions but we do not follow. I have a true story that illustrates this point.

Conclusion: It took place at the University of California at Berkeley. The University had a termite problem so they order information to be given to the maintenance department. They were shoved into a closet and never distribute. A maintenance man went into a storage room and found this stack of pamphlets called "Control of Termites". He discovered that termites had eaten through the stacks of pamphlets. The university knew how to solve the problem of termites, but they didn't act on the knowledge they had. That's the way it is with us believers all too often. We know what the Word of God says but we don't always act on that knowledge.

---You will never be happier than doing this because this is what he created you to do for Him.