

We Need to View One Another As Spirits!

Our interpersonal relationships within the ecclesia are so critical in our everyday living. These relationships comprise the reality of Christian living which God defines in Scripture as fellowship. There are an unending number of things that we are told by our Creator concerning how we are to interrelate as His chosen people.

Knowing that fellowship is so critical in our daily functioning as fellow brethren, we are consequently brought face-to-face with the question of how we are to perceive one another. This may sound like a foolish question, since we are obviously God's people who are told to love, serve, and lift up our brothers and sisters in Christ. Yet, it is an extremely important issue that Scripture does indeed address ... and the answer to many of us may be surprising.

What Are We — Really?

In order to answer this question of how we need to view one another, let us first examine who we truly are. Notice first of all what Paul says in Philippians 1:19-25.



“For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer, and the supply of the spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard-

pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you. And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith.”

It is clear here that Paul admits the reality of who he is can be present in his fleshly being, or as a resurrected spirit: the “I am” who is Paul could be either in his flesh, or in his spirit reality. In both cases it is still the individual Paul.

Paul reiterates this reality in II Corinthians 5:1-3, when He speaks of being absent in body but present in spirit. In either case the reality is Paul. Notice what Spiros Zodhiates, the author of the *Key Word Study Bible*, says about this verse.

“What Paul is saying here is that the spirit is the real person, not the body. The body is represented by the Greek word *skenon* (Strong 4633), meaning “tent.” Paul explains that though this earthly body (“tent”) will be “destroyed,” God has promised that there will be a “building from God.” This is a description of the death of the mortal body, yet it is intended to be encouragement for the believer as he or she looks at death. The word that is translated “building” is the Greek word *oikodomen* (Strong 3619), which refers to “the process of building something.” This indicates that God will create something completely new. Then Paul uses the word *oikian* (Strong 3614), meaning “dwelling place,” which refers to the completion of the “eternal body.” There are two qualities of this new body that must be understood. First, it will be similar to the present one and identifiable, yet not identical because it will be produced by God. The word translated “not made with hands” is *acheiropoieton* (Strong 886). This is the same word that the Lord used in Mark 14:58 when He spoke of destroying the temple,

which was made by the hands of men, and in three days, building another, not made by man. Christ was speaking of His body following His resurrection. Although His own body was “born of a woman” (Galatians 4:4) at His birth, yet no human being was involved at the time of His resurrection. The believer’s human body will have the same outcome. The first time, when one is born into this world, the body is physically produced. However, at the resurrection by Christ of the righteous dead (I Thessalonians 4:15-17), God will change them to new, glorified bodies (I Corinthians 15:50-57). The second quality of this new body is that it is going to be “eternal,” translated from the Greek word *aionion* (Strong 166). This idea of eternity focuses on what characterizes God Himself.”

Moreover, all of the elect are called “sons of God,” as we read in Hebrews 12:5-6, John 1:12, Romans 8:14-17, Philippians 2:15, Galatians 4:4-7, and I John 3:1-2. Notice what this last Scripture states.

“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”

We know we are sons of God because we have received the spirit of Him that was placed in us at repentance, baptism, and the laying on of hands (Acts 2:38; 8:17-19, 19:6). This new body of spirit will be different from our current fleshly bodies — immortal, flawless, powerful like God, and sinless — but it will still be us! Paul talks about these differences in I Corinthians 15:35-54.

- The body is given as He pleases, like the difference between bird, fish, or animal flesh.
- The flesh and spirit are contrasted like the glory of the sun versus the moon or stars.

- The flesh is corruptible, but the spirit is not.
- The flesh is dishonorable, but the spirit is glorious.
- The flesh is weak, but the spirit is powerful.
- The flesh is a natural (physical) body, but the spirit is a spiritual body.
- The first Adam was a *nephesh* (living physical being), but the second Adam (Christ) became an eternal Spirit.
- As we have borne the image of Adam, the man of dust, so we will bear the image of the spiritual God.
- The flesh will be changed to spirit in a moment at the last trumpet.

This new spirit body, though changed from what we were is the flesh, will *still be us!*

How Should We Perceive Each Other Now?

Notice II Corinthians 5:14-17.

“For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (NKJV).

Verse 16 is worded thusly in different translations.

“So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer” (NIV).

“So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know Him now!” (NLT).

Let's look at Paul's situation as a strict Pharisee (Philippians 3:5), taught at Gamaliel's feet (Acts 22:3), a zealous protector of the Pharisaical status quo and a zealous persecutor of the ecclesia. No one was more adamant in condemning Christ and His followers than he was.

When confronted with the reality of the very One he was persecuting while struck blind on the road to Damascus, he was brought to his knees by the Creator of all things, the One he did not know. When he began to understand who Jesus Christ really was, and that He had the power to direct his own steps – to pull him away from persecuting those very people he was condemning, often to death — he made a remarkable transformation. As a result of that he insists that we look at every one of the elect from a different and often very difficult perspective. Rather than looking at one another as we did before we repented and received God's spirit, we, like Paul, must avoid looking at the outer appearance and view the spirit within. We must strive to see — as difficult as that may be — the incredible value and worth in the spirit of whom we really are ... the *real person!*

We need to see that our worth is not in physical things, personal wealth, physical beauty, or any supposed intelligence. Our worth is in the new creature the Eternal has made us into, not because of any inherent goodness on our part. Far from it. It is because of His mercy extended to us undeserving vessels of clay in which His spirit dwells. Paul once considered Christ as a mere man, and thought His punishment and crucifixion were entirely justified because of what he perceived to be His heresy. When the Father revealed Christ to him, Paul gained the repentance and faith that comes from His calling, even as we are individually called out of this present evil world. Then it became Paul's passion to share with others this incredible new way of life that he had been initiated into. He deeply desired to help others see the

reality of who Christ really is, and reveal to them their incredible future as sons of God.

See Others in Our Fellowship As Spirits Already!

It must be our design of living to view others as spirit already, even though we are still living in the flesh and have mortality. Of course, as spirits we will not sin (I John 3:9), but we continue to make mistakes with that pesky human nature that still lurks within us, and that Paul freely admitted continually plagued him (Romans 7:14-25). Even so, we need to view one another as vessels fit for eternal life because our sins have been washed away (Psalm 51:2; Acts 22:16; Revelation 1:5). Before our heavenly Father we have been purged of our sins and are clean, white as snow, like Jesus Christ Himself, our Elder Brother (Hebrews 1:3; II Peter 1:3; Revelation 1:14). WE NEED TO VIEW ONE ANOTHER AS THOSE KINDS OF BEINGS!

So, what are we to do? Let's take a close look at Romans 12 as a summary of how we are to view one another as spirits ... for it is the way that our heavenly



Father treats us. Here are some of the high points.

- Present your body as a living sacrifice to God (verse 1).
- Do not be conformed to the world, but to God's will (verse 2).
- Understand who you truly are, according to your faith (verse 3).
- Exercise your spiritual gifts to uplift one another (verses 4-8).
- Love one another (verses 9-10).
- Avoid evil and do what is good (verse 9).
- Prefer one another above those in the world (verse 10).
- Be fervent in spirit, serving our Creator (verse 11).

- Rejoice in the hope we have (verse 12).
- Endure trials patiently (verse 12).
- Provide for the needs of others when opportunity permits (verse 13).
- Practice hospitality always (verse 13).
- Bless those who persecute you, let God mete out vengeance against your enemies, and as much as possible live peaceably with everyone (verses 14-20).
- Overcome evil with good (verse 21).

It is the Eternal's will that we become sons of God in the spirit, translated into spirit beings even as Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, and sits at the Father's right hand. To attain that future eternal existence we need to look upon one another as having already attained that spiritual stature. We need to see one another as we really are — spiritual beings — and fellowship the conduct towards one another that brings joy, peace, comfort, and love to each of us as we look forward to being a part of that wonderful world tomorrow!