

# The Gospel and the Creeds part v

## A Recap

Gods' gift of the Gospel to us is so much more than just giving us a place in heaven. Over the previous weeks we have looked at the Apostles and Nicene Creeds as they highlight what is now ours through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord. So far we have seen that we have been restored to the Father, given every spiritual blessing through Christ and awarded the very real presence of God the Holy Spirit within us. Today we look at a further blessing in...

*We believe in the Holy Catholic Church and the Communion of Saints.<sup>1</sup>*

## Gods plan

Matthew 22:37-39 tells us that what God is looking for are people to love him and love one another. The Gospel claims that it is in fulfilling this command that we will find our ultimate satisfaction while confronting us with the truth that we cannot do this without help from above. Through the Gospel God wants to restore the relationship of his people back to himself (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), and to others because God has created us as 'social creatures' ("it is not good for the man to be alone" Gen 2:18 is not just about having a 'mate').

## Good News

The Bible is quite clear that every believer in Christ is joined not only to God, but to every other believer by their act of faith. To describe this connection the Bible uses the following pictures.

- A Part of the Bride of Christ (Rev19:7)
- A Citizen of the Kingdom of God (Eph 2:19)
- A member of Christs' Body (1 Corinthians 12:12 Romans 12:4,5, Colossians 1:18 etc)
- A Living stone in the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16)
- A constituted member of the sacred assembly or Council, (Ekklesia) (Acts 15:22)
- Adopted into the Family of God as a true son or daughter (1 Tim 3:15)
- A Soldier in the Army of Jesus Christ (2 Timothy 2:3,4)
- A part of the lump of clay in the potters hands (Jeremiah 18:6)

This redemption of human society under Christ (Eph 1:22,23) is the point, and obviously so inspired those first believers that when we read Acts 2:40-47 we can not help but be touched by a tinge of hope and desire.



## “Houston, we have a Problem”

If this is Gods plan, then it is not surprising that this 'fellowship of believers', "communion of the saints", or "unity of the body of Christ" is at the forefront of Satans attack. The heresies of the Gnostics focussed on the individual relationship with God (a bit like the modern error) and tried to undermine the Church (hence why the writer to the Hebrews says do not stop meeting together 10:25) and similar ideas have continued to arise over the years that break down the opportunity for us to fulfil the command (1 John 5:1).

Furthermore the history of the church is littered with the power plays of men and women who have corrupted the Church and severely affected the effectiveness of Christs' body through a variety of means including Church leaders silencing the saints, denominational wars, corrupt practices, ecclesiastical laws and so on. It is also seen in individual Christians within the Church who refuse to submit to its leadership and lead others in their rebellion, or those who abuse the privilege of membership using the Church to satisfy their own desires, or in those that take and refuse to give etc etc.

All of these and many other practices have lead the Church into disrepute with a resulting walking away of both Christians, and non Christians, just as our adversary would have it.

## The implication of the Problem.

However it comes about, when the church is compromised like this Christs' body fails to achieve its purpose for the Kingdom of God and every individual member is a casualty. As the Bible says "if one part suffers, all suffer" (1 Cor 12:26) if the eye doesn't do its job what will the body see? (1 Cor 12: 12-22). This also places us at odds

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<sup>1</sup> Many Christians think this statement does not apply to them because a) they're not catholic, and b) they're definitely not saints!

However this applies to all Christians because, a) every believer is a member of the Church Universal no matter what fellowship they attend or don't attend, which is what *catholic* means. And b) the communion of saints, is not about the really holy people celebrating the lords supper, but about the shared experiences, hopes, and salvation that is every Christians inheritance through the blood of Jesus. Every one of us is a "saint" not by our own merit, but by what Jesus did for us in cleansing us from sin and sanctifying us to himself that is why Paul calls your everyday Christian a *saint!* (Eph 2:19)

with the word of God. We are called to love the brother and sister that we can see, and touch if our words about loving God are in deed true (1 John 2:9, 4:20) and we are called to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ (Eph 5:21), to fail to do so is sin.

### **Giving AND Receiving**

God has not made us a part of the Church to punish us, but to fulfil us! His purposes are always to satisfy our spiritual, mental, social, emotional and purposeful needs. Imagine being a part of a Church community that fulfils every one of these “one another” commands.

(Joh 13:14) Wash one another's feet.

(Joh 13:34, 15:12,17; 1Jo 3:11,23, 4:11) Love one another; as I have loved you.

(Rom 12:10) *Be* kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;

(Rom 13:8) Owe noone any thing, but love one another.

(Rom 14:13) Let us not judge one another any more and do not put a stumblingblock in your brother's way.

(Rom 15:7) Accept one another, as Christ accepted you

(Rom 15:14) In goodness and knowledge, admonish one another.

(Rom 16:16, 2Co 13:12, 1Pe 5:14) Greet one another with an holy kiss.

(Gal 5:13) Use your freedom not to satisfy your own needs, but by love serve one another.

(Gal 5:15) But if you bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

(Gal 5:26) Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

(Gal 6:2) Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

(Eph 4:2) With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

(Eph 4:32) And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

(Col 3:13) Forbear and forgive one another,

(Col 3:16) Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

(1Th 4:18) Comfort one another with these words.

(1Th 5:11) Comfort and edify one another.

(Heb 3:13) Encourage one another daily, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

(Heb 10:24) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

(Heb 10:25) Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

(1Pe 1:22) Love one another with a pure heart fervently:

(1Jo 4:7) Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loves is born of God, and knows God.

(1Jo 4:12) No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwells in us, and his love is perfected in us.

### **But there is still a problem**

The above picture is not happening. What is more there are often huge expectations on the body of Christ to be and to do, things that we as individuals are unwilling to apply to ourselves, yet we are as much “the Church” as are the Leaders, or “them”. The reality is that the Church is not the perfect place to be part of because it is made up of people like me who, try as I might, gets it wrong, which actually is not that big a deal, if I am also big enough to acknowledge my mistake, seek forgiveness, and try again. Perhaps part of the issue is that being part of the Church is a practical way that God reveals our sin and selfishness as we rub up against people we may prefer not to be friends with.

### **Looking not to the Problem but to the Potential**

The Church is Good News! Through it, the lonely are put into families, the ‘reject’ is included, the weary is upheld, the exalted is humbled, the truth is tested, hope is returned. There is huge potential both for the individual and the collective body when the Church is operating together as in the biblical pictures.

MBC has huge potential it already is an amazing tool in the hands of God for the salvation of this neighbourhood. My prayer is that they will discover that in proclaiming the Good News, we are the Good News, not because we are ‘perfect Christians’ but because in being committed to God and to one another we choose to submit to each another and to give of ourselves recognising our different parts to play as the ‘priesthood of believers’ and so work with one another, talking, praying, fellowshiping, laughing, sharing, trying, failing, forgiving, hoping, rejoicing, thanking, loving; and in all things bringing Glory to God our Father and Christ our head.

### **Finally**

Everyone has a part to play. And let us recognise that some of the problems we face as members of the Church are not because ‘we are fighting flesh and blood’ but spiritual powers, Sin and Satan, who’s express desire is to destroy Gods instrument on earth (Eph 6:10). Praise be to God that the Son of Man came to destroy the works of the devil and that the Gates of Hell will never prevail against his Church! (Matt16:18)

1Co 10:17 By sharing in the same loaf of bread, we become one body, even though there are many of us.

### **Lyrics to Torches Together :**

Why burn poor and lonely under a bowl or under a lampshade  
Or on the shelf beside the bed  
Where at night you lay turning like a door on its hinges?...  
First on your left side, then on your right side...then your left side again.  
Why burn poor and lonely?  
Tell all the stones we're gonna make a building...  
We'll be cut into shape and set into place  
Or if you'd rather be a window, I'll gladly be the frame,  
Reflecting any kind words, we'll let in all their blame...  
And ruin our reputation all the same.  
So never mind our plan making, we'll start living...  
Anyway, aren't you unbearably sad?  
Then why burn so poor and lonely?

We'll be like torches!  
We'll be like torches!  
We'll be like torches...OH!!  
We'll be torches together...TORCHES TOGETHER!!  
We'll be like torches!  
We'll be like torches...with whatever respect our tattered dignity demands,  
Torches together...hand in hand.

Why pluck one string...what good is just one note?  
Oh, one string sounds fine, I guess...but we were once 'one notes',  
We were lonely wheat quietly ground into grain...  
What light and momentary pain!  
So why the safe distance, this curious look?  
Why tear out single pages when you can throw away the book?  
Why pluck one string when you can strum the guitar?

Strum the guitar!  
Strum the guitar!  
Strum the guitar...with no beginning, with no end.  
Take down the guitar and strum the guitar!  
Strum the guitar if you're afraid.  
And I'm afraid and everyone's afraid and everyone knows it,  
But we don't have to be afraid anymore.

You played the flute, but no one was dancing,  
You sang a sad song...but none of us cried.  
You played the flute, but no one was dancing,  
And you sang a sad song, and none of us cried.  
You played the flute, but no one was dancing,  
You sang a sad song...but none of us cried.  
You played the flute, but no one was dancing,  
And you sang a sad song...you sang such a sad song.  
[ Torches Together Lyrics on <http://www.lyricsmania.com/> ]





