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"The Church Is Built on Leadership: Christ the Head"

I heard Warren Wiersbe teach on I Thessalonians this week and he said, "..the local church is the most important agency in God's program today." That's a good word as we continue to talk about the church.

Does it matter how the church is organized and governed? We may think it is only important to preach Christ crucified, buried and risen - but don't waste our time with issues of polity and government.

But since the church is His and we are the body of Christ; and because there is much in Scripture about this; then it is important.

Sadly, we today follow our culture more than we follow the Scriptures when it comes to church government. I will show you this later when we talk about the changing roles of elders and deacons. But the truth is as America developed and democracy, the roles of elders and deacons in Baptist life changed. But the culture also influenced the early church after the death of the apostles wishing to assimilate the Roman and Jewish concepts of status, power and priesthood.

I am not going to do an in-depth study even though you may think I am. I will speak on the issue of Elders/Deacons and male leadership in the next few weeks; but I could spend weeks on just the issue of Elders and Deacons.

Church polity - organization created for managing affairs.

Titus 1: 5 - "set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I direct you."

So when we begin to "set in order" - we start at the top. Jesus is at the top.

I. As Head, it speaks of His position

The first thing to develop in a baby in the womb is the brain and spinal cord. The first thing to develop in the church is the Head. Ephesians 1: 20-23; 4:15; 5:23

John 10: 16 - there is one flock and one shepherd. I Peter 2:25 says He is "the shepherd and overseer of your souls." That word shepherd means pastor. I Peter 5:4 "The Chief Shepherd." A "man" is never called "the pastor - the Shepherd." But the God-man Jesus is called "The Chief Shepherd" "The Good Shepherd."

Colossians 1: 18 - there is one body and one Head.
Hebrews 4:14ff - there is one holy priesthood and one great High Priest
I Peter 2: 5 ff - there is one building and one cornerstone

He is the Head of the church. "The Pastor"

II. As Head, it speaks of His presence

Matthew 18: 20 "Where two-or-three are gathered together, He is in the midst."

A body with no head is neither alive nor wanted.

III. As Head, it speaks of His authority.

Matthew 28:18 "all authority has been given to Me both in Heaven and earth."

Wayne Barber says, "As head, His mind directs all.
His perspective (eyes) and His Word (speech) must be central.

The brain tells each nerve and each cell what to do. Signals go out from the brain to direct the body and feedback comes back in to inform the brain.

The spinal column protects the spinal cord so communication lines stay open."

Our direction comes from the Head. He has the authority, not us.

IV. As Head, it speaks of unity.

Philippians 2:1-5

The church, since it has the same head and the same mind, should be able to walk in unity.

Now that unity does not mean uniformity. Unity does not kill personality and personal likes/dislikes. God likes diversity - if you don't believe that just look around. But when it comes to spiritual issues, there should be unity.

Unity does not come from the bottom up or the grass roots. Unity comes from the head down.

However, in the Church the stress isn't on the individual as much as it is on the body as a whole. Paul uses the analogy of a body to describe its inter-dependence, of its need for other members to cooperate, to be of "one mind" so as to realize God's potential as the body of Christ.

Disinterested or disconnected members don't help the life of the local church; it is all the members *"joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love"* (Eph.4:16)

A healthy church is a listening church; a membership that has its ears turned to hear from their Lord. If you aren't listening you're not living by faith; and if you aren't living by faith you aren't pleasing God!

This is why prayer is not just something we do at the start of a meeting, but is the primary ministry of the church.

V. As Head, it speaks of Identity

You know the body because of the head. You take "head shots" so you can identify the person.

Jesus is our identity. We are not first Baptists nor Southern Baptists - but we belong to Christ.

VI. As Head, it speaks of a Body

I Corinthians 12: 24-25 "God has put the body together..so that there would be no division in the body but that the members would

have the same concern for each other." Romans 12:3-21; Ephesians 4: 1-16

When members are faithfully related to Christ, the Head, His life flows to them and through them to the rest of the body. A key to a healthy body is our relationship with the Head.

When the body is rightly aligned with the Head, Christ has a new body through whom He can obediently carry out the will of the Father every day.

When Jesus had a fleshy body, He always knew what the will of His Father was and always did it.

Since a body is interrelated, we are responsible for one another's walk with God. Henry Blackaby said (page 112) "Every member is responsible for every other member."

VII. As Head, it speaks of accessibility

As members of His body, we all have equal access to the Head.

This access is through Jesus Christ and His blood.

Hebrews 4: 16 "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

Hebrews 10: 19-22 "With boldness we enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus."

This is why we believe in congregationalism. He lives in each of us and we all have equal access to the Father.

Paul appealed to the whole church in discipline of the man in I Corinthians 5.
Paul appealed to the whole church to re-admit the repentant man in II Corinthians 2
The early church chose six men to handle the business of the church and the dispute in Acts 6.
But, it doesn't mean the congregation is always right. Paul warns in II Timothy 4:3 that in the last days the church will seek out speakers who "tickle their ears" - tells them what they want to ear.

While all in a congregation that are born again have equal access to the Head, it does not mean all are equally gifted to lead the church.

Ephesians 4:11 says God gave gifts to the church in the person of apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastors-teachers.

VIII. **As Head, it speaks of accountability.**

Just as Hebrews 13:17 says leaders will give an account for their leadership; so will ever member of the body.

We will all answer to Him.