

Pastor's Corner – 6-30-2018
Asking Help from the Body

I think that most Christians, at one time or another, have turned to God and asked why? The Bible teaches us that God loves us with an unmatched love so when we go through pain or trauma, or when we struggle with a temptation that we can't seem to overcome, it's logical to turn to God and ask him why.

Why isn't the God of love healing me from my illness?

Why isn't the God of love bringing my wayward child back home?

Why isn't the God of love giving me the strength to overcome?

Why isn't the God of love helping me with my finances, giving me more faith, performing a miracle, growing the church, calming my temper, finding my keys? The list could go on and on.

Whenever we start to ask God "why", there is an implicit expectation that God should be doing something in our life that we don't see him doing. We ask this question because we feel as if God has let us down, that he isn't holding up his end of the bargain. Weren't we promised that if we gave our life to Jesus that he would be with us to the very end of the age? Weren't we promised that he would intercede on our behalf and we would be his chosen people?

I wonder how many people over the ages have abandoned their faith in God because they asked the "why" question and feel like the only answer they received was the wind blowing through the prairie grass. God's silence can be pretty discouraging, especially when we are begging him for an answer.

So I'll go ahead and ask the question, "Why doesn't God answer, even when we beg him to?"

I know all the standard answers to that question and you probably do as well (read these with a patronizing tone of voice).

"God always answers and sometimes the answer is 'no.'"

"God is letting you go through this to strengthen your faith. Remember, he won't make you go through more than what you can handle."

"Maybe you just need to keep praying and keep listening, God will answer in his own time."

I'm sure we could add many more. Most of these statements aren't wrong. There is a truth to them, but they fail to really satisfy and answer our "why" questions.

At the risk of yet another pat answer I'd like to offer a suggestion as to why we don't see God directly act in our lives as often as we would like or expect.

All through the New Testament we are taught that God's people make up the body of Christ. 1Cor 12:12-13 says, "The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body... and we were all given the one Spirit to drink." Later in the chapter Paul continues by saying, "Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it" (vs 27). He then describes how there are different gifts within the body and that each person should function according to their gifts.

This isn't a new teaching. I think most of us have at least heard this "body of Christ" stuff before. But have you ever stopped to consider the implications of this teaching if it's taken to its fullest extent?

The fullest meaning of this doctrine is that God's primary means of working in the world today is through his people. If someone in the church is facing a financial challenge, God wants to send the church to help. If someone is facing sickness or disease, God wants to send those with the gift of compassion to visit, he wants to call those with the gift of faith to pray. For whatever reason, God has chosen to influence the world through his people rather than through direct divine intervention.

Consider a few other verses:

2Cor 5:18-19, "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and *gave us the ministry of reconciliation*: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has *committed to us* the message of reconciliation."

Rom 10:14, "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without *someone preaching to them?*"

1Pet 2:9, "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, *that you may declare* the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."

The picture that these passages paint (plus many more) is that God chooses to be active in this world through his church. If anything is going to get done, it will be through God inspiring his people to take action. If that is true (and I believe it is) how does this teaching help us understand unanswered prayer?

Perhaps we don't see God's direct intervention as often as we like because we never let his body know that we need help? It's as if God has told us, "Hey, if you get into trouble, if you need anything, just go to my people and they will help you out. They represent me. I'll take care of your needs through their efforts."

Then trouble comes along, we get on our knees and we beg God for deliverance. We keep asking and praying without telling anybody in the church (and if we do we swear them not to tell anyone else) all the while God is sitting on his throne shaking his head and wondering why we don't just go to the people he designated as his body. I can almost hear him saying, "Why are you asking me? Ask the church, they are the ones who can help you!"

But we don't like to ask the church. Oh no. The church is full of hypocrites, angry saints and badventists.

I hear that kind of thing a lot, but I don't believe it's true. I think that the church is full of people that recognize they are sinners in need of a savior. I think the church is full of people who would be happy to listen, comfort and advise without judging. I know there are people who have struggled with temptation, doubt, fear and who have wisdom that only experience can provide.

My point is this. Don't get angry with God when he doesn't answer your prayers if you haven't taken your needs and presented them to his body. God will act through his people and it's unfair of us to expect him to bypass the church just because we're afraid or shy or whatever.

Trust the church. Trust that God has his people sitting in the pews next to you. Trust that the body of Christ will work on your behalf and help you through your challenges.

The body of Christ is eager to be about the Father's business. But we have to know there's a need before we can know how to respond.

Have a Happy Sabbath
Pastor Tyler

P.S. Please note that I encouraged you to go to the body of Christ for assistance. That is not the same thing as going to the Pastor. The Pastor is just one part of the body (and definitely not the head). Never rely on a Pastor to do the work that should be done by the body. Thanks!