

Finding Our Place In The Christian Church

The Body Of Jesus Christ

[Part 1]

By extension this three-part article includes our personal preparation for our place in the soon-coming Kingdom of God on earth.

Part One – Our calling by God the Father

John 6:44 [New King James] *“No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.”*

We cannot take even the first step towards becoming a Christian, that is disciple of Jesus Christ, unless God the Father considers it is the best time for us to be called.

Until we have found our place in the Church, the body of Jesus Christ on earth at the present time, [1 Corinthians 12:12-31], we will never be a totally fulfilled Christian, disciple of Jesus Christ.

For God has a place of service for each one of us in the Christian Church.

Proverbs 27:8 [New King James] *“Like a bird that wanders from its nest is a man who wanders from his place.”*

Nothing is more weak and pitiful than a young fledging that has fallen out of its nest and cannot get back into it again. This is how we are in the Creator God’s eyes when we are out of the place that He has prepared for us in the Christian Church.

1 Corinthians 12:27 [NIV] *“Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.”*

We are all part of the same body and we need to know what part we are so that we can live our lives in the place we were called by the Creator God to be living and serving.

For example in the physical human body the hand cannot function well on the end of a leg or the eye placed in the sole of the foot.

We have to find out what part of the body we are and join ourselves to the other appropriate parts of the body.

Our calling by God the Father is directly related to our place in the body.

2 Timothy 1:9 [NIV] *“who has saved us and called us to a holy life, not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time,”*

This applies to all of us who have been saved from eternal death, by accepting in faith the death of Jesus Christ in payment of our own death penalty which is all our *“religious works”* could ever earn, [Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23].

There are many Christians who are saved by faith in Jesus Christ’s sacrifice, but do not know their place in the Church or who have not even tried to find their place.

Such saved Christians have an identity crisis, not knowing where they fit in or what they should be doing.

1 Peter 1:14-16 [NIV] *“As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy.’”*

Our calling is a holy calling, by the One who is totally holy, the Triune God.

1 Thessalonians 5:24 [NIV] *“The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.”*

If we respond to God’s calling, He is faithful and He will enable us to fulfil that calling.

That fulfilling is **not** dependent on our ability but on God’s grace, and the active indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Our calling is **not** a “*last minute*” idea of God’s when He saw how we were “*shaping up*” in life.

Romans 8:28-30 [NIV] *“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.”*

Our calling, our place in the Church, the body of Jesus Christ on earth, was planned by the Creator God before He created time, at the same “*time*” as Christ’s sacrifice was planned, [**2 Timothy 1:9**].

Why were we saved and called? –

I would like to illustrate this by sharing with you my own preparing, saving and calling by the Creator God.

God began preparing me for the work He had for me to do in His Church by implanting in me through the encouragement and example of my physical father, an appreciation of God’s creation and a passion for knowledge and truth, along with an enjoyment to be found in hard work.

This passion for work made up for my lack of natural gifts and intellect.

God also humbled me often in my youth through poor health and failures, which prepared me to become totally dependent on Him and other people.

God then gave me training in discipline and leadership through experiencing the Outward Bound Sea School in my teens and then National Service in the R.A.F. as a pilot.

My flying was brought to an end by a near death accident that left me physically unfit for flying.

God then brought me in contact with part of His Church which would involve me in the sacrifice of my job, due to keeping the Sabbath, many of my friends and having to put my family and even my marriage in second place to serving Him, [Luke 14:26-27, 33].

The instant I accepted this new commitment of my life God gave me a new job, the one He wanted me to have, new friends, tenfold over and held my marriage and family together inspite of the dramatic changes of lifestyle.

The passion for knowledge and truth was then transferred by God from His physical creation to His spiritual creation and a deep desire was given to me to serve others by sharing this knowledge and truth with them.

All these gifts from the Creator God as part of my calling were to be ineffective until through heart-rending personal experience God developed in me other essential attributes that are His.

This painful process started with my first-born child coming to the point of death through the curse of anorexia as it was only God's direct intervention of personal healing that brought her back to life.

James 5:14-15 [New King James] *“Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.”*

This scripture became very real to me from that day onwards.

God next turned the great excitement and exhilaration of the birth of my firstborn grandchild into sadness as she was born with massive brain damage, but Rachel was the vehicle that God used to develop in me those great attributes that are Him, love and compassion. Without these attributes all the truth and knowledge given to us, through the Holy Spirit, [John 16:13], cannot be taught to others effectively.

The life of Jesus Christ is the perfect living example of this, it was His great love for people and His compassion for those in need that drew the people to Him to hear His teaching.

Due to the rejection of Rachel by her father and his family and other problems in the marriage it ended and my daughter not fit physically and mentally was unable to take care of Rachel and her sister and brother.

My wife and I then part fostered these three grandchildren for many years and still have very close relationships with them, especially since Rachel's death at the age of 18 years.

Romans 12:1-2 [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

I have honestly sought to make this the scripture that I live by so that the Holy Spirit will continue to re-educate me.

I don't always do this perfectly but when I do harmonise with God's will for me, great peace of mind envelopes me.

God started to use me as a servant to His people in 1975 first as a deacon then in 1979 as an elder.

I have always been a bi-vocational minister **not** taking any expenses from the Church, following the apostle Paul's example, [1 Corinthians 9:16-17].

I have now retired from being an active minister, but continue to run this website as my channel to continue to offer knowledge and truth to as many people who access it.

Ephesians 2:10 [NIV] *“For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”*

First I wish to encourage you to look back over your own life and ask the Creator God to show you how He has and is now preparing you by past experience, to be saved and called, to fill your part in the Church, the body of Jesus Christ on earth.

I then would encourage you to follow the following steps to find and fill your place in the Church.

The key to our future life as a true Christian, I have found to be **Romans 12:1-2** as I have already mentioned.

As a “living sacrifice” we are called to sacrifice our time, energy, our natural gifts, giving them back to the Creator God where they originated in the first place.

When we, as a “living sacrifice” give our body, mind and human spirit, [our intellect, see **Job 32:8**] back to the Creator God, He becomes owner of our lives, [**Acts 20:28**] and accepts responsibility to maintain in good order the property He owns.

Our future life, in all its aspects, is His to use and maintain, allowing us to relax and not worry about our future.

Matthew 6:31-32 [Living Bible] *“Don’t worry at all about having enough food or clothing. Why be like the heathen? For they take pride in all these things and are deeply concerned about them. But your Heavenly Father already knows perfectly well that you need them and He will give them to you if you give Him first place in your life and live as He wants you to. So don’t be anxious about tomorrow. God will take care of your tomorrow too. Live one day at a time.”*

Have you ever considered that our life is made up of “h-ours” **not** “mine-s”!! Life is to be shared with others, not devoured by selfishness.

How do we make this sacrifice? –

Download and study the first seven chapters of Romans on this website listed under ‘Romans’.

Then enter into the doorway to your new life by accepting what we are told in **Romans 8:1**.

The result of us accepting in faith the sacrifice of Jesus Christ in our stead is to become now “without condemnation,” that is accepted by our Holy Creator God as holy.

We are thus prepared by the Holy Creator God to accept a holy calling from Him.

This leads to a totally new perspective on life, a new mind, [**Romans 12:2**].

We no longer pattern our thinking and lifestyle to that of the society in which we live, we think differently.

The world’s “**religions**”, secular and spiritual try to change us from the outside to our inside. A change of dress, days of worship, rules of conduct, creeds and statements of belief.

The Creator God, through Jesus Christ [Christianity], makes the changes to our life from the inside to our outside.

God changes first the perspective of our minds which will then be reflected in our lifestyle, we live and act differently.

Romans 8:5-9 [NIV] *“Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.”*

Until our mind is changed, it is hostile to God and He will **not** reveal His plan for our lives to one who is His enemy, that is a hostile mind.

But when our mind is renewed by the Holy Spirit through the mercy of God, then He will reveal His will for our lives to us.

This change of mind does **not** happen overnight and the discovery of God's will is progressive.

Romans 12:2 [NIV] "... then you will be able to **test and approve** what God's will is ... **His good, pleasing** [or acceptable] **and perfect will.**"

- a) We are given the ability to know God's will by **"testing"**.
- b) **"Good"** ... our life will change for the better. God never wills anything bad for us.
- c) **"Acceptable"** ... our faith is key to knowing God's will for our lives. We tell God we **accept** His will unconditionally **then** He reveals it to us, as our faith in Him increases.

How is this needed faith increased?

- a) **By reading God's Word, the Christian Bible –**

Romans 10:17 [NIV] "*Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.*"

- b) **By serving God's people and all humanity –**

Luke 17:5-10 [NIV] "*The apostles said to the Lord, 'Increase our faith!' He replied, 'If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, "Be uprooted and planted in the sea," and it will obey you. Suppose one of you had a servant ploughing or looking after the sheep. Would he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, "Come along now and sit down to eat"? Would he not rather say, "Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink"? Would he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, "We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty."'"*"

- c) **By seeking perfection –**

Matthew 5:48 [NIV] "*Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*"

The Greek word translated "*perfect*" is "*tēlēiōs*" which comes from a root word "*tēlōs*" meaning to set out towards a definite point or the goal, set out by the Creator God before He had created humans.

Genesis 1:26-27 [New King James] "*Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.*"

Note that God only at first created humans in His "*image*" Hebrew "*tselem*" meaning a shadow of the real thing. **Not** His "*likeness*" Hebrew "*demûwth*" meaning manner or character.

It is the perfect character of the Creator God that is the ultimate goal that God has set Himself and in us as we yield our lives to Him.

We must be realistic about ourselves –

This we will find to be very humbling if we do it impartially. The only thing that stops us from being realistic about ourselves is pride, when we look in the "*mirror*" of God's Word, the Christian Bible, we exclaim "*that can't be me!*" but it is, [**James 1:23-27**].

Romans 12:3 [NIV] "*For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.*"

Humility is **not** a feeling **it is a decision we can make.**

Jesus Christ gives us an example of this in a parable.

Luke 14:7-11 [NIV] *“When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honour at the table, he told them this parable: ‘When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honour, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, ‘Give this man your seat.’ Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, ‘Friend, move up to a better place.’ Then you will be honoured in the presence of all your fellow guests. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.’”*

Humility is always a decision we make.

- a) How we think about ourselves.
- b) Where we place ourselves in company.
- c) How we relate to other people, do we “look up to” or “down on” them mentally?

1 Peter 5:5-6 [NIV] *“Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility towards one another, because, ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’ Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.”*

Humility makes us teachable, we accept God’s Word, the Christian Bible, as the truth [**John 17:17**], and this will lead to a life that is lived by faith.

Habakkuk 2:4 [Amplified Bible] *“Behold the proud, his soul is not straight or right within him, but the rigidly just and the uncompromisingly righteous man shall live by his faith and in his faithfulness.”*

Romans 1:17 [Amplified Bible] *“For in the gospel a righteousness which God ascribes is revealed, both springing from faith and leading to faith, disclosed by the way of faith that arouses to more faith. The man who through faith is just and upright shall live and shall live by faith.”*

We must recognise our God-given measure of faith –

Romans 12:3-5 [NIV] *“For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, **in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.** Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.”*

Why does the Creator God give us a specific measure of faith?

Our measure of faith fits our appointed place in the church.

Our measure of faith is also a key to our finding our place in the church, the body of Jesus Christ on the earth.

If the Creator God wants you to be a hand, He will give you “*hand faith.*”

If the Creator God wants you to be a toe, He will give you “*toe faith.*”

So if we are supposed to be a hand and we are trying to be a foot, we are out of place and without the specific faith to operate as a hand, there is an imbalance between what we are trying to do and the faith given to us.

The reason is **not** because we don't have enough faith, it is because we are trying to use our faith for something it was **not** given to accomplish.

If a person is always struggling for faith, you can conclude they are trying to do the wrong job in the Church the body of Jesus Christ on earth.

When we have discovered what part of the body we are, we must always remain part of the body.

One thing is essential for every part of both physical and spiritual bodies that we can only work effectively with a direct contact to the head, [**John 15:4-5**].

The head of the Church is Jesus Christ, [**Colossians 1:15-19; Ephesians 1:22-23**].

Our place in the Church is determined by the specific gifts of the Holy Spirit we are given.

Just to seek for gifts is unrealistic for God-given gifts are **never** detached from function.

Romans 12:6 [Amplified] *“Having gifts, faculties, talents, qualities, that differ according to the grace given us, let us use them.”*

In the second part of this article I want to help you to find your place in the Church by recognising your gifts [*“charismata”*] and you will be pleasantly surprised at some of the functions that the Word of God, the Christian Bible, classifies as gifts, [*“charismata”*].

Now before you read the next part of this article –

I want to challenge you to do something you may **not** yet have done or at least **not** done fully.

Lay yourself on the spiritual altar before the Creator God and become a *“living sacrifice.”*