

One New Man
Tear down that Wall
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Bible Text: 1 Corinthians 12:12-31; Ephesians 2:14-16
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Our scripture lesson is taken again from the second chapter of Ephesians, in this little short series entitled, “Tear down that Wall.” And we begin reading in verse 14.

14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, 15 by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, 16 and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.

The word of the Lord. [Thanks be to God.]

May we pray.

Lord, help me as I speak about one new man. I pray for practical application. I pray for soul searching. I pray for conviction. I pray for rejoicing. I pray for toes to hurt, and I pray for the healing of those hurt toes with the wonderful balm of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. For Lord, there is no one who is really righteous in your sight. But in Jesus Christ, we have a perfect righteousness put to our accounts, and our sins are washed away. Lord, bless them, we pray, the reading and hearing of your word through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Well, I want us to focus on this, there are two metaphors, there are two figures of speech, two analogies that are used here by Paul, but I want to submit to you that they’re not simply figures of speech or metaphors. The first here, as you see, is of a human body. He speaks about taking people

who hate each other. And you've got to understand, when he's talking about this here, you're talking about groups of people who hated and despised each other.

You remember the case of the Apostle Paul? He was accused of bringing Gentiles or bringing Greeks into God's holy temple in Jerusalem, and they tried to beat him to death (Acts 21:28). And that was the great offense, to bring the Greeks into the temple. Why? Because in the history of the Jewish people, they were mistreated under the Greeks more than under any other group of people. Why? Because the Greeks wanted to make one new man. Their man. Their man made in their image. Their model. And therefore, the Jewish people were tortured when they observed their religious ways, and the Greeks defiled the temple of God. The Greeks went into the temple of God, and they took a pig, and they offered it to Zeus.

(ἐποικοδομήσας δὲ καὶ τῷ θυσιαστηρίῳ βωμὸν ὁ βασιλεὺς σύας ἐπ' αὐτοῦ κατέσφαξε, θυσίαν οὐ νόμιμον οὐδὲ πάτριον τῇ Ἰουδαίων θρησκείᾳ ταύτην ἐπιτελῶν. ἠνάγκασε δ' αὐτοὺς ἀφεμένους τὴν περὶ τὸν αὐτῶν θεὸν θρησκείαν τοὺς ὑπ' αὐτοῦ νομιζομένους σέβεσθαι, οἰκοδομήσαντας δὲ ἐν ἑκάστη πόλει καὶ κώμη τεμένη αὐτῶν καὶ βωμοὺς καθιδρύσαντας θύειν ἐπ' αὐτοῖς σὺς καθ' ἡμέραν. “And when the king had built an idol altar upon God's Altar, he slew swine upon it, and so offered a sacrifice neither according to the law, nor the Jewish religious worship in that country. He also compelled them to forsake the worship which they paid their own God, and to adore those whom he took to be gods; and made them build temples, and raise idol altars, in every city and village, and offer swine upon them every day.” (Josephus, Flavius (1999), *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 12, Chapter 5, in *The New Complete Works of Josephus*, trans. William Whiston. (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications), p. 404)

And you can understand some of the hatred of the Jewish people for the Gentiles, for the Greeks, when you realize that defilement. In fact, we often associate it with Christmas. Hanukkah is the time when God did a miracle and enabled on the only bottle of consecrated oil they had, for it to burn for eight (I accidentally said seven) days. And so that celebration of Hanukkah is the commemoration of the rededication of that temple that had been grossly, filthily, wickedly defiled by the Greeks (Kislev 25, 164 BC)

(“For when the Greeks entered the sanctuary, they made all of the oil that was in the sanctuary unclean. But when the rule of the Hasmonean house

took hold and they conquered them, they searched but found only a single jar of oil, lying with the seal of the high priest. But that jar had enough oil only for a single day. But there was a miracle done with it, and they lit the lamp with it for eight days. The next year they assigned these days and made them festival days for the recitation of Hallel psalms [Ps. 113–118] and for thanksgiving.” Neusner, Jacob. (2011). *The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary*, Vol. 2, IX.14. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers) p. 85.)

And so, you understand in this animosity, the Jewish people stood in the ancient world as people who refused to be like other people. And in many cases, that doesn't bother people, but in the case of the Greeks, who had a religious obsession to make everybody a Greek, it was terribly offensive. They wanted everybody to speak Greek. They wanted everybody to believe Greek philosophy. They wanted everybody to worship the Greek gods, the gods of Mount Olympus, and Greek culture. In fact, in the Roman Empire, the Romans simply took over the Greek Empire and administered it better, but they preserved the Greek language. And as I pointed out before, one of the errors in the movie “The Passion of the Christ” is the Roman soldiers speaking Latin. The Roman people did not speak Latin except right there around Rome. They spoke the *lingua franca* of that day, which was Greek.

So here is this animosity between the Greek and the Jew and we're told here that God's purpose in verse 14 was to destroy that barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, of hatred. And we found archaeological records. There was a plaque there that warned anyone who was non-Jewish that if you cross this, you cross it upon pain of death. So, a dividing wall of hostility.

(ὄν περιεῖχεν ἑρκίον λιθίνου δρυφάκτου γραφῆ κωλῶν εἰσιέναι τὸν ἄλλοεθνῆ θανατικῆς ἀπειλουμένης τῆς ζημίας. “This was encompassed by a stone wall for a partition, with an inscription, which forbade any foreigner to go in, under pain of death.” (Josephus, Flavius (1999), *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 15, Chapter 11, in *The New Complete Works of Josephus*, trans. William Whiston. (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications), p. 524)

And it said his purpose, that next full sentence in verse 15, was to create in himself one new man out of two.

Now, it's interesting that that's the first analogy and the second analogy is, as you go down in verse 19, he says, “Consequently, you are no longer

foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord."

So, the second analogy, the second metaphor, which is more than a metaphor, is the temple, the new temple of God. You remember Jesus' words and how they were twisted in John 2 and Jesus had spoken about the destruction of the temple, and the Jewish people point out to him, "This temple has been being built for 46 years" (John 2:20).

And that gives us to know the date when Christ began his earthly ministry in John 2 because Herod the Great entered into a great remodeling program in 19 BCE. What does BCE mean? Before the Christian Era.

There's no Common Era. That is nonsense. The Muslims have one set of dates, and other people have other sets of dates. BCE, which is a popular thing, before the Christian Era, and then CE is the Christian Era. That's the date. And so, 19, before the Christian Era, Herod began this remodeling program and you can take it forward for 46 years, and there's no zero, you realize Jesus began his earthly ministry around 26, 27 CE, Christian Era. And so, what is he saying?

He's going to build a new temple and the new temple is made up of living stones. In fact, I'm looking out here today at a quarry that's been mined somewhere near Texarkana. And I see all kinds of living stones. Tim and Jack, Becky, Rusty, living stones. You're living stones. The new temple of God is made up of living stones. You're alive in Christ, and you're built upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles.

Now, if we continue on in the book of Ephesians, turning over, he says here that in chapter 3, he talks about, in verse 2, the administration of God's grace that was given to him, that is Paul,

"To me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I've already written briefly. In reading this, then you will understand my insight in the mystery of Christ."

And he goes on and he says,

"Which was not made known to men in other generations, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is

that through the gospel, the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body.”

Now, again, you’ve got to say this: Could God take people who hate each other—can God take people who despise the way of life of other people—could God take two diverse people with a history of violence and outrage and violation—could God take those two people and unite them into one? It’s more than marriage here. He says, “That we would become members together of one body, sharers together in the promise of Christ Jesus.”

And then he goes on, and he speaks further about this, and he says in chapter 4, verse 1, page 1,821, “As a prisoner of the Lord, then I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you’ve received. Be completely humble and gentle, be patient, bearing with one another in love.”

What does that “bearing with one another in love” mean? It means putting up with their junk. I mean, people really do rub us the wrong way sometimes, don’t they?

We heard a wonderful testimony at Presbytery. Our Presbytery met at Diamond Head Community Church, and the pastor spoke, his name is Jason, and his wife’s name is Ann. And he was in his office one afternoon, and he gets a phone call from his son, but it didn’t come through, and what happened is that an 18-wheeler plowed into the back of his wife’s van with her and two children in it.

The 18-wheeler, obviously, he was on a cell phone. I’d rather see a bottle of bourbon in a man’s hand, guzzling it as he rides down the road, than a cell phone because at least if he’s guzzling bourbon, he’s looking around, wanting to make sure the cops don’t get him.

But when he’s in a cell phone—something about electronics—it’s almost supernatural, it sucks your consciousness into it. You go into another place when you’re looking at a cell phone. I mean, it’s just amazing. All you have to do is look at kids in modern places, and there they are. They don’t pay attention. They just—there they are, and it sucks their consciousness. And so, this 18-wheeler, the guy’s driving it, obviously didn’t do anything. He

didn't slow down. Everyone was stopped. And she was stopped. And she was in the hospital a very long time.

And he shared the story about how when she came to, and he would go in to see her, and how she had the joy of the Lord the whole time—and she spoke to the women who were there, and Sandy was able to be there and hear Ann.

And it was just amazing. And he said, “You know,” he said, “I was not being a good person.” He said, “I just, I would lose my temper, and I'd say things I shouldn't say.” And he said, “I went in there, and my wife Ann said to me,” she said, “you know, Jason, you need to go out and apologize to those people.” And he's thinking in his mind, “You want to get out of that bed and make me do that?” But she was severely injured.

People rub us the wrong way and our calling in Christ is to put up with people in their junk. How do you do that? Just give it to God. How do you do that? You do it over and over and over and over and over again, and the more you do it over and over and over again, the less it bothers you.

And so, he says that we're being, verse 2,
“Be completely humble and gentle, be patient, bearing with one another in love, make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”

There is one body, one body, not a black church and a white church and a Hispanic church. Not all these denominations. One body. Do we really have a vision for the church as the body of Christ? You see, that's quite a picture, isn't it? And he says,
“There's one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

And then he says in verse 7, and this is our focus,
“But to each one of us, grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says: ‘When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men.’”

And then reading on down, it says here in verse 11,
“It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists and some to be pastors and teachers.” And it probably should be

translated pastor hyphen teacher. “And the purpose of the pastor-teacher is to prepare God’s people for works of service.” Isn’t that an interesting concept? The preacher isn’t hired to do the work of the ministry. The preacher is hired to train you to do the work of the ministry.

It’s one of the reasons why after I’d been here for a couple of years, I pleaded with the Session to restore a teaching time and a time of prayer.

How do you learn to pray? You come to prayer meeting, because that’s what we call in higher education, you have the class and then you have the lab. Sunday morning is the class. When we have prayer meeting, that’s the laboratory.

People who don’t come to prayer meeting don’t know how to pray. You learn how to pray as you’re praying with other people who cry to God with true faith.

You see, what happens is we live in a world that is full of unbelief, and you have that damned television on, and I’m not cussing; it’s cursed by God. I would to God, he broke every single solitary television throughout our country because it is a distraction.

Do you know what it’s like to be sitting in a lobby anywhere and have a TV going? I know I must suffer—you know, we now have all these labels that we didn’t have 50, 60 years ago—of ADHD. And if I’m in a restaurant—those of you who’ve eaten with me in a restaurant, if there’s a TV on and I’m going to constantly go to the flickering light, lights distract me. I can’t concentrate with flickering lights. My eyes go up to it. And now we’re living in a world of distraction.

But the worst thing about television is that it pumps into you unbelief. We become like the people we associate with. If your associations are formed from television with people who don’t believe anything except true nonsense, you become like them. We’ve got to be with people who believe, because true faith, like unbelief is contagious. You want to catch faith? Be with people who have faith, because it will change your life. It’ll change how you pray. You begin to pray with expectation.

And so, he says that the pastor-teacher is to, verse 12, prepare God's people for works of service "so that the body of Christ may be built up." The body of Christ.

What does God want here in Trinity, Texarkana? He wants the body of Christ to be built up. He wants us to bring outsiders inside this building so that they can be incorporated into the one body of Christ and become one with us. Why won't our neighbors come here? We need to do whatever we've got to do to get our neighbors to come in and make them know they're welcome, that we want them to be one with us.

Because I'm telling you, this country is sliding on the slippery slope to the abyss. The divisions, the violence, the gun violence, the insanity of arguments, the divisions in our country over this issue, that issue, and every other issue. Then we've got the solution.

The solution to the divisions in modern America are found right here where we're gathering. Not so much the four walls here, but the body of Christ. If we can grow up to be who we're supposed to be, which is red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in his sight, we will demonstrate to the watching world what the first century church demonstrated.

There was no division there. You read the description of the people in Acts 13:1-2, as they gathered together. They're from all over the Roman Empire. They're of all kinds of ethnicities and so on.

And so, he is equipping the works of service through the pastor-teacher for you to do the work. You to do the work. If you want a preacher to do the work, you're going to die. I say it again, if you want a preacher to do the work, you're going to die.

My job, limited as it is, coming on weekends, is to equip you to do the work of the ministry to reach the lost. Are you burdened about the lost? Do you ever think about your neighbor as someone who very likely may end up in eternal hell? A place, as Dante put it, "All hope abandon, ye who enter here" (Dante Alighieri, *Divine Comedy, Inferno, Canto III, "Lasciate ogne speranza, voi ch'intrate"*).

Do you have a burden to reach the lost? Do you realize how many lost people are in the greater Texarkana area? Do you have a burden as you walk

to meet people and to introduce them to Jesus Christ? My job is to motivate you. How do I do that? I yell. I pound the pulpit. I try to train you from scripture. I want you to see the importance.

God wants to save America because America is sliding on that slippery slope into the abyss, and the politicians don't have the answer. Congress can't pass laws to make things happen.

Think about gun control. I know it's a crazy bumper sticker, "When guns are outlawed, only outlaws will have guns."

I can tell you this: If you want a gun in America—if you want a gun in a very controlled country anywhere in the world where it's illegal to own a weapon—if you are willing to do certain things, you can always get somebody in the military to give you a weapon.

Guns will never be outlawed as long as there are guns. And it's easy to construct a gun if you know what you're doing. I mean, the problem with America is not a problem with guns—though I do think that people ought to have a check for sanity before being able to buy an AR-15 or something, make sure they're not nuts—but an impulse buying.

And I read the story in the news this morning. The man went over to speak to his neighbor, "Sir, would you please stop firing that gun in your backyard? It wakes up the baby." And the man went totally nuts, shot and killed, well, shot the man as he left, but he didn't kill him, but he went in the man's house, and he just killed everybody he could find in that house.

Listen, the United States of America is a powder keg, and people are standing around that powder keg smoking and flipping their butts on it with burning coals, as if it doesn't have gunpowder in it. We're in the middle of a potential explosion.

What's the solution? It's right here, it's the gospel. God is building one new man out of all these people.

And so, notice what he's saying as he goes on. The pastor-teacher's job, verse 12, is "to prepare God's people for works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the

knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”

That’s God’s vision of the church. It hasn’t happened yet. That’s why the gifts of the Spirit still operate. It’s because the body of Christ is still immature. It’s still in its childhood. And God wants to create a model of a new humanity where people who formerly hated each other come together to trust and to love each other.

Don’t you want to be part of that? I want to be part of saving America because the only salvation for America is the church to be what the church is called to be.

And he goes on and he describes further, and part of my job as a pastor-teacher is helping in this regard, verse 14, page 1,821.

“Then we will no longer be infants tossed back and forth by the waves, blown here and there by every wind of teaching, and by the cunning and craftiness of men and their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the head, that is Christ. From him the whole body joined and held together by every supporting ligament grows and builds itself up in love as each part does its work.”

Think about what we’ve just read. My job is to instruct you so that you’re not deceived by false teachers because there always have been false teachers.

You think about Balaam in the Old Testament. He was a prophet of God, but he was a false teacher. He had prophetic gifts, but he was a false teacher. He tried to do everything he could to curse God’s people, but because God had blessed them (Numbers 22:5-24:25). They couldn’t be cursed until Balaam came up with a clever plan: “Let’s send some of those girls over there to seduce those boys so they will begin to worship idols” (Numbers 31:16).

And so that’s what Balaam did, and it resulted in Israel being cursed because they abandoned the faith that had been delivered to them at Mount Sinai.

And so, the purpose of a pastor-teacher is to teach you something. It’s to warn you.

You know, I look at the history of the denomination I used to be part of, that I was born into in 1947, and all of the crookedness and wickedness that developed there over the years. When people abandon belief that the Bible is God's inerrant and infallible word, they have no more ethics: "Go ahead and steal those people's property. Go ahead and take it from them."

I think about my friend Hector Reynoso, who constantly is having roadblocks down there in Mercedes, Texas—new rules and regulations coming from the city government of Mercedes. And there they've got their building, but the slab poured and the wall's beginning to come up, but a conflict with a neighbor over water route, how to get the water in the building. They need now \$200,000. They've been meeting in a Lutheran church. You can't build a church renting somebody else's building. You've got to have a place of consistency where people come.

I've been asking God and I'm asking in faith, and I'd ask you to join me in faith, believing that God wants to shower on Genesis Presbyterian Church of Mercedes, Texas, \$200,000.

Can you believe God for something like that? I've told you the story when we had somebody who shot up a place where our daughter and grandchildren were living and said to Sandy, "I don't know what we're going to do. We're going to have to go to the bank, borrow money."

She said, "Why don't we pray?" And I go to my office, and this was I think in 2013 (Actually, it was September 8, 2014), and there was an envelope, just said, "Please give to Bob and Sandy," lying on top of the safe inside the closet that had a solid oak door that was encased in steel and concrete; no way to break it open unless you had an extremely powerful thing, and the lock was flush with the door.

On top of the safe was an envelope, "Please give to Bob and Sandy." Other Bob's, other Sandys. Inside was \$10,000 in \$100 bills. So, I immediately called Sandy. "Sandy, you're not going to believe this." She said, "Well, after you left, I was praying, and that's the amount of money that God gave me to ask for." Really? "Yes."

So, can I believe God for \$200,000 for Genesis Presbyterian Church in Mercedes, Texas? Sure, I can. And maybe while I'm praying, I might write them a check. I've written them a check before. \$200,000.

What's \$200,000 to God? It's the penny on the sidewalk that you pass by and won't even pick up because somebody might have spat on it. What is \$200,000 to God? It's nothing. It's nothing. And so, what does God want to do? He wants to build the church as the body of Christ that supports itself in love.

Now I want us to look at another passage of scripture that fleshes it out much more graphically, and that's 1 Corinthians 12. Turn with me, if you would, for a moment to 1 Corinthians 12, where he speaks again of this work of the ministry. And that's on page 1,785. 1 Corinthians 12, beginning at verse 12, page 1,785. Please look with me. He says, "The body is a unit."

What's the body? It's the body of Christ. You're a part of the body of Christ. Wow. He 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."

Do you want to understand something? The body of Christ includes Christ himself. How are we connected to Christ? Because we're part of the body. And so he says in verse 13, "For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body."

Notice again what he says there. These terrible people, these hateful Jews and hateful Greeks, I mean by that, Jews hated the Greeks, and the Greeks hated the Jews for very good reason. He said, we were all baptized by one spirit into one body, "For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink."

Now look at verse 14 there on page 1,786.

"Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. 15 If the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,' it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. 16 And if the ear should say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,' it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he [that is, God] wanted them to be. 19 If they

were all one part, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many parts, but one body.”

Now think about it for a moment. You are important. I need you. You need me. You need each other. We’re not complete without Becky.

Did you know that, Becky? We need you. You’re a vital part of this church. We need you. We miss you when you’re not here. We want to make sure you’re always here because we love you. You have a part to play in this church. And you need to ask God, “God, what do you want me to do?”

And Nancy, we need you. We need you in health and strength, and we pray for that health and strength because we need you.

We need you, BR. You’re getting up there, and you suffer with a lot of pain, but we need you. You’re a vital part of this church. We need you.

You see, this is the thing we have to understand: we need each other. The church is about members of one body, and I’ll say this, we need First Baptist Church. We need some of their members here. No, we need, this town needs First Baptist Church, and it needs other churches. It needs the Assemblies of God.

The one body of Christ is made up of many members, and the thing is, there are two problems that we face. The first is laid out here, and that’s inferiority. You ever struggle with inferiority?

“Well, you know, I can’t speak like old Bob. Old Bob. I can’t speak like old Bob. I wish I could retain information the way he retains information and spit it out the way he spits it out. I’m not important.”

Yes, you’re important. You’re vital. You’re essential. And that’s what he says. The tendency is that when we are not an eye, we think, “Well, I’m a nobody. I’m worthless. I’m not important here.”

And you see, he goes through those body parts there, and he says, we need each one.

Now we go on, there’s another problem, and that problem’s pride, and that’s addressed in the next verse and that is verse 21.

“The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I don’t need you!’ And the head cannot say to the feet, ‘I don’t need you!’ 22 On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23 and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, 24 while our presentable parts need no special treatment.”

And what I want you to see here is, on the one hand, there’s that sense of inferiority. “I’m not important to Trinity Presbyterian Church because I’m not an ear, or I’m not an eye.”

But the other problem is, those that are eyes and ears tend to sometimes look down on others. “Well, who is he? Who is she? We don’t need her. We don’t need her. We don’t need him.”

We need to pursue each other when people stop coming, and whose job is that? I’m here on Sundays and once a month here three nights.

People that need to pursue people are sitting right out there right now and when you miss somebody, go see them. Knock on their door. You would be amazed at the people whose doors I’ve knocked on and stunned them, like the man who was running around on his wife, and they had moved away to Georgia, and she called me, and I was in Louisiana. And I said, “Well, I’ll come over this afternoon.”

So, I flew over there, and I got somebody to drive me to their house. I knocked on the door—he’d been nominated to be a deacon, but moved away and had a girlfriend. And I said, I’ll have to make up a name. My favorite name is Jethro.

“Hello, Jethro.”

“Bob, what are you doing here?”

Well, not everybody can jump on an airplane and fly to Georgia. But I’ll tell you this, everybody needs the sense of accountability when they’re missing, to get a visit and say, “Sister or brother, we missed you. We need you.”

And you see, that’s what he’s saying here, and he goes on down, and then he says, as you go through the list, he says, the weaker parts we treat with

special honor, and then he says the unrepresentable parts we treat with special modesty (1 Corinthians 12:22-24). We don't need to go into an exposition of that.

And then he says in that next sentence, the full sentence at the bottom of the page,

“24 But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, 25 so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. 26 If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.”

Think of that for a moment. Why do we as a church pray over and over again for Mrs. Bobbie Wright? Because we love Mrs. Bobbie, and we miss Mrs. Bobbie, and we want to see her back here because we need her. She's indispensable to this church at this point in time.

And so, we suffer in her suffering. When she fell and had that break, we suffered with that. When I learned yesterday in the meeting at Presbytery that a dear friend of ours who had had cancer, and then the cancer went into remission, and then developed this bizarre scleroderma, I learned that her cancer was back. It caused me to tear up.

Do we love other people? Do we feel in their suffering?

And can we be proud of other people's honors? You see, that's what he's describing. He's describing the body of Christ. This is the way the church is supposed to be.

Of course, we're not that way. Why? Because we're still immature. This is what we're to grow into. This is what we need to pray God will help us become, because not even First Baptist Church of Texarkana, Texas, in all its glory, is where it needs to be.

They're a very needy church. You have no idea the needs of that church. You have no idea what they're facing in their leadership and their membership. You have no idea. We need each other. We need to pray for each other. We need to honor others.

And then he says in verse 27, as we wrap up, he says,

“27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. 28 And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30 Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? 31 But eagerly desire the greater gifts.”

This is my appeal to you, why don't you right now ask God, “Lord, what do you want me to do? What do you want me to do? Do you want me to sit on my rear end until I die? Do you want me just to watch TV at home and worship at home?”

And I'm grateful for things like that during when the government outlawed worship. “Do you want me just to be a private person?” You know the answer to that.

No, you, Mrs. Patsy, you've got a place here. We need you. I miss it when you're not here. I like to see that walker in the aisle because we need you.

We need each and every one of you because we're part of the body of Christ. We're indispensable. And what I want you to do is say,

“God, what are the gifts you've given me?” (Sometimes we don't even know the gifts we've got.) “Show me the gifts you've given me so that I can use them.”

I can tell you the nightmare of nightmares for me is to no longer be able to gather with the Lord's people on the Lord's Day and fellowship and pray. That is terrible.

And if you're watching this today, I want to appeal to you, consider coming to this church. It is a loving church where there's rich fellowship. We need you. You'd like being here. We want you.

We need you, red and yellow, black, and white, they are precious in God's sight. We need you. Come and welcome because the most important thing in your life is to know the Lord Jesus Christ, and the best way in the world to

know the Lord Jesus Christ is to come to a Bible-believing, loving fellowship of other Christians and know that you're very welcome here.

May we pray.

Lord, we pray that you would bless this message that we would evaluate where are we, what do we need to do, what are the unique gifts God has given me?

Lord, how would you like me to use these? Show me how.

Lord, maybe it's unpacking and repacking groceries for Hero's Pantry that this church oversees each month.

Lord, maybe it's going out and knocking on doors.

Lord, just give us in our own heart of hearts a revelation from you: "This is what I made you to do and be."

*In Jesus' mighty name we pray.
Amen.*