

# Are You Well

by Major Ian Thomas

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of giving a valid expression of God's character through our thoughts, words, and actions, and how this can be achieved through the Holy Spirit.*

**Duration:** 38:45

**Scripture:** Genesis 1:27, Matthew 6:33, John 14:9, Romans 3:23, 1 Corinthians 12:13, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Titus 3:5

**Topics:** "Soul"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of believers being a true representation of God in every aspect of their lives. He uses the example of Jesus, who was sinless and perfectly reflected God's character. The speaker explains that God has given us physical bodies to communicate what is happening inside us, just like animals communicate their behavior through their bodies. He urges believers to restore their relationship with God and become compelling examples of His presence to the world. The ultimate goal is for believers to live in such a way that everything they do, say, and wear reflects God's likeness and character.

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## Transcript

I'm certainly very delighted to have this opportunity of sharing with you this morning in your morning worship hour. And I trust that it may be possible to see many of you during the course of the week. I wouldn't be sure that they're at seven o'clock.

You ought to check that. It might well be seven-thirty during the weeknights. But that's, I'm sure, easily ascertained.

But I appreciate the kindly welcome that has been extended to me, and I'm certainly happy to enjoy the sweet fellowship of this morning hour as we recognize the presence of our risen and triumphant Lord, whose life we share together. I'm sure on occasions you've been down in the city, maybe in a shopping centre, or jumping out of your car and bumping into a casual acquaintance. And you will engage in a little conversation, get caught up on the local news.

And probably, almost certainly, in the course of that conversation, you'll say, or your friend will say to you, I trust you're keeping well. And if you were to say that to your friend, in all probability they'd reply something like this. Well, they'd say, well, thank you very much.

As a matter of fact, in myself I'm feeling fine. Really fine. Just great.

And having said that, they will then begin to enumerate all the various physical ailments which they've been suffering in the last few weeks or months. Mind you, in myself they'll say, I'm just feeling terrific. But my corns do give me trouble.

And I find when I get up in the morning, my knuckles seem to get seized up, and it takes me quite a bit of time to get them working. I don't hear too well with my right ear, and I find my arm is now too short to read the newspaper. And apart from the fact that my hair is going grey and my teeth are dropping out, in myself, I'm feeling fine.

Now, I think probably this is what John had in mind when in the third of his epistles, the third epistle of John, in the first two verses, he greets the one whom he describes as the beloved Gaius. The elderly elder of the church addresses this letter, this is John, writing to the beloved Gaius, whom I truly love, says he. Then in the second verse of that first, that first and last chapter of the third epistle of John, he says this, Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in every way, and that your body may keep well, even as I know your soul keeps well and prospers.

Or in the paraphrase, living letters, Dear friend, I'm praying that all will go well with you, and that your body will be as healthy as I know your soul is. And immediately John here distinguishes between that physical, visible part of us, the body, and the invisible part. And in so many words, what he's saying is this, I'm not unduly concerned, beloved Gaius, about your inner well-being.

I believe so far as that part of you is concerned, the part I cannot see. You're in good health, but I just trust that your physical body is giving a valid expression of your inner well-being. And of course, John was right.

In one sense, you and I are what some folk call a dichotomy, in other words, two parts, a two-wheeler, not a monocycle, but a bicycle. We've got a physical, visible part, which is tangible and touchable and audible, and then we have an invisible part. That invisible part that constitutes the real you that lives in the house, with which it has been clothed in the goodness of God, which is our physical body.

And of course, although I look at you at this moment and you look at me, we're not really looking at each other. We're only looking at the house we live in. That mechanical means that God has provided each of us with, whereby we may communicate.

And this is what I'm doing at the moment. I'm simply using the mechanical device which God has entrusted me with, so that what is in my invisible mind can be impinged upon your invisible mind. I'm using my abdominal and thoracic muscles to use my thoracic cavity as a bellows to produce a draft of air that's passing over my vocal cords.

By adjusting the tension of the muscles of my vocal cords, I produce different wavelengths that are projected through the atmosphere and are caught by two cup-shaped appendages on the side of your head, which we call ears. And those wavelengths, those vibrations, are impinged upon the outer ear that begins to vibrate in harmony with the vibrations of my vocal cords, and that in turn is conveyed by a very intricate inner mechanism to an inner ear that also begins to vibrate in harmony, and that disturbs the nerve ends that convey an impulse to an area of your brain, then you know exactly what I'm talking about. And that's a purely mechanical process.

And we are fearfully and wonderfully made. There's no question of doubt about that. But the physical device that God has given to you and to me, whereby we may communicate the one with the other, that is not you, and that is not me.

That which constitutes you is that part I cannot see. Your soul and your spirit, which also is a dichotomy, so that man ultimately is a trichotomy, not a monocycle or a bicycle, but a tricycle. He's got a body, a soul, and a spirit.

And your soul and your spirit, indivisibly identified, the one with the other, never to be detached the one from the other, but never to be confused the one for the other, constitutes the real you that I can't see and you can't see. And of course this is the important part of it. I'm glad you brought your bodies this morning, otherwise this service would, to say the least, be a little spooky.

I'm almost certain you'll meet somebody during the course of the coming days who will tell you that though they, you know, couldn't bring their bodies, they were here in spirit. And I'm sure they are. We don't know exactly where they're sitting, and I hope you're not sitting on them.

And it's quite certain they didn't put anything in the offering. But no doubt they're here, in spirit. But you see, God tells us plainly that he gave us this piece of machinery, this body, this physical, visible body, for a specific purpose.

He gave us a physical, visible body so that there may be communicated to the outside world what really goes on in the real, inner, invisible part of it. It's a mean of communication. Now that only isn't common to man, that's common to all forms of animal life, as most of you will know.

Every form of animal life within its species also has a soul. It's mind, emotion, and will, that behaviour mechanism, and its behaviour then to be communicated to its physical body so that you know what's going on inside. That's why if I'm visiting a home that I've never had been to before, and between the sidewalk and the front door there's a dog, I look at the dog.

I look at its body. I don't look at its soul because I can't see it. But I want to know what's going on in its soul.

And the only way I can discover what's going on in its soul, what it's thinking, how it's reacting, and what it's deciding to do, the only way I can discover is by looking at its body. I want to know which end of the body is getting into action. You know, its tail or its teeth, don't you? Now if it's one of those fluffy little things that comes, you know, curling round and sort of one ear up and one ear down with a grin, and a wink in one eye, and its tail wagging like a windmill, I'm encouraged.

But if it's one of those things that suddenly puts its ears back, you see, haunches and sticks its tail between its legs and bares its teeth, I hesitate. I'd probably call my friend and say, please open the door and call off the dog. So you see, you and I were given a physical visible body so that we could give a valid expression of an inner invisible self.

But of course, God didn't make us just to be animals. God created man in a unique and a marvelous way for a particular function. When God created man, we're told in the first chapter of the book of Genesis, he said, let us make man in our image and in our likeness.

And in the likeness of God made he him. And when God, having created man uniquely as his creature for that particular function, and to discharge that particular office, God said, good! And when God says a thing is good, it is as good as God can make a thing good, and that's as good as God. And we were marvelously, marvelously furnished for the task.

God created man morally competent to discharge that office. So when he made man, he didn't just make man with a physical visible body that would give a physical visible image of an invisible self. He made man so that with that physical visible body, he could give a physical visible image of an invisible self, intimately identified with an invisible God.

In such a way that all creation would have the right to look at man and know exactly what God is like. That's why you and I are here. And you and I have only accomplished our mission in the measure in which other people in our presence become compellingly aware of God's character.

And of course, this is what the gospel is all about. And we need constantly to remind ourselves of this fact. God did not send his son incarnate in this world to die upon a cross, and shed his own precious blood, and then rise again from the dead, and ascend to be with the Father, simply that guilty sinners might get out of hell and into heaven.

It's gloriously true, but it's entirely incidental. Entirely incidental. The gospel of the grace of God was designed not just to get sinners out of hell and into heaven, but above everything else, to get God out of heaven in a man.

Because that's exactly what it takes. For you see, when God created man to discharge this office with his physical visible body, to give a physical and a visible image of an invisible God, it was only by virtue of the fact that God as creator was prepared by the Holy Spirit to inhabit man his creature. In the person of the Holy Spirit, who from within the human spirit would have access to the human soul, govern mind, emotion, and will, so that God as king in his kingdom might call the shots, and by everything a man does, says, and is, give a valid expression of God's character.

Now that's man in normality. And of course, quite obviously, God having created man to that end, and having furnished him morally to that purpose by the presence of the Holy Spirit through whom he shares the very life of God his maker, you and I are only normal, you and I are only functional in the measure in which everything we do, say, and are declared God's likeness. In other words, if by everything you ever did, everything you ever said, everything you ever were, 24 hours and every day, seven days a week, 52 weeks in the year, other people in your presence or creation looking at you knew exactly what God was like, you'd be normal.

You'd just be normal. You'd be standard, you'd be functional. Would you be prepared to stand up this morning and say, ladies and gentlemen, I'd just like you to have a good look at me, because I want you to know that ever since I've been in this world, by everything I ever did and said and was, I've never given anything but an unsullied, unblemished, absolutely uncontaminated expression of God's likeness.

Just please have a good look. Would you be prepared to say that? Well, probably not if the family were around, and nor would I. In other words, it's my privilege this morning in my subhumanity to minister to you in your subhumanity as an abnormality. I'm ministering to you in your abnormality.

Pardon me for saying so, but that's really why we're here this morning, and that's why God has revealed to us in this book the restorative and remedial measures that he has introduced in the person of his Son, that is calculated not to change our destination, but to change our character. Not just to get us out of hell and into heaven, but God's back into the man in such a way that the world around us may become compellingly aware of his presence. You see, sin is simply falling short of that glory.

There is no difference. All of sin simply means, as you've been told many, many a time, missing the mark. All of sin and come short of the glory.

You and I are no longer in the image of God our Creator, and sin is defined, of course, by John in the earlier of his epistles, as the transgression of the law. And whether I transgress the law or fall short of God's glory, I'm doing one and the same thing. I'm abusing my humanity.

My humanity, by an alien principle that is hostile to God, is prostituting my humanity. When God says, thou shalt not steal, in his law, he's simply saying this, I as God created, created you as man, my creature, in my image. In my image.

And I don't happen to be a liar. And I don't happen to be an adulterer. So when I say, in my law, thou shalt not steal, I'm just telling you that I, your Creator, who created you in my image, I'm not a thief.

When I tell you, thou shalt not lie, I'm simply telling you that I, your Creator, who created you in my image, I'm not a liar. And when I tell you, thou shalt not commit adultery, I'm simply telling you that I, as your Creator, who created you in my image, I'm not an adulterer. That's all.

And all I'm expecting of you is to be functional. Because I created you as my creature to give a valid expression of my character as Creator. That's the nature of sin.

Sin is every area in your life and mine in which there is other than a valid expression of God's character by what we do and say and are. It isn't just a question of rules and regulations that you tick off. It isn't a question just of religious procedure.

It isn't a format to which you conform. It isn't simply blessings that you experience or gifts that you manifest. You can do all of that and produce to the world in which you live only a character, a caricature, a parody of the real thing.

Nearly 2,000 years ago, a little baby was born. His name was Jesus. The Word was made flesh and dwelled amongst us.

God incarnate, miraculously conceived of the Holy Spirit and fashioned in the borrowed womb of a virgin girl, the Word who was in the beginning with God and was God and by whom all things were made. And without whom was not anything made that was made. The creative deity stepped out of time into eternity and for 33 years in a parenthesis carved out of eternity lived on earth, clothed with our humanity.

He assumed our flesh and blood and it beheld him in all points to be like unto his brethren. And as a little helpless baby in his mother's arms and as a child clinging to her skirt, as a little boy romping with his friends in the village street, as a young lad learning his trades at the apprentice bench, as a carpenter on the job, as a citizen, as a son, as a neighbor. In everything he ever did or said or was, the Father could look down from heaven and say, this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.

In other words, God in heaven could look down to earth and say for the first time since Adam fell into sin, I have a man, a real man. A man who is discharging the office which we as God in the triunity of the triune Godhead, Father, Son and Holy Spirit created man. At last the Father could say in heaven as he looked down to his son Jesus Christ on earth, I have a body on earth as healthy as my soul in heaven.

Whose hands and feet and lips, whose eyes and ears, whose mind, whose heart, in every area of his being, body, soul and spirit, mind, emotion and will in the totality of his humanity is giving a valid expression of God in heaven. That's why the Lord Jesus could stand and say, he that has seen me has seen him ascent. He could bear this testimony in the presence of those who hated him most and sought to destroy him, which of you convinces me of sin and none dare accuse me.

But bear this in mind that when the Lord Jesus was here on earth for those 33 years he wasn't being Superman. He wasn't even, he wasn't even behaving as God, let alone was he superstar. When the Lord Jesus stepped out of eternity into time and clothed himself with our humanity for 33 years he was simply man.

As he as God created man to be. So that there was no marginal difference between anything that he said as man and the Father said as God. There was absolutely no marginal difference between anything he did as man and the Father did as God.

There was absolutely no marginal difference at any time, at any time, under any circumstance between what he was as man and the Father was as God. Because he simply allowed the Father by the Holy Spirit through whom he offered himself without spot to God, he allowed the Father as God to be God in every area of his being. This of course is the person working in the office of the Holy Spirit.

In equality with the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit as God is the one through whom a man offers his humanity to God and he is the one through whom God as God offers his deity to a man. That's all. Nothing more complicated than that.

And the measure in which you and I are normal, the measure in which you and I are discharging our office as man, in other words the measure of our spirituality, the measure of our spiritual maturity, isn't how many chunks of the Bible I've memorized, isn't how many doctrines I've mastered, isn't the eloquence of my preaching, isn't how many gifts I can manifest, isn't anything of that kind. The measure of my spirituality and the measure of my maturity is simply the measure in which my humanity is available to God through the Holy Spirit whereby I allow God to be available to me through the Holy Spirit. That's all.

The measure in which in everything I do and say and am, I'm actually by my disposition towards Jesus Christ allowing him to be the God he is in me in action. That's all. That's spirituality.

That's maturity. That's what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit. It's a process.

It isn't a crisis. It isn't a climactic blessing. It isn't some peculiar feeling inside.

It isn't a swelling tide of emotion. The fullness of the Holy Spirit is simply allowing Jesus Christ, my creator God, actually in me to discharge the function for which he as God created me. So that he as God, teaching my mind, controlling my emotions and directing my will may govern my behavior and by everything I do and say and am give a valid expression of his life.

There's only been one man who ever did that since Adam fell into sin and that was our Lord. In the end of 33 years, he looked up as it went to his father's face and said Father, for which I was born and for which for 33 years I have deliberately made myself nothing, Father, as man so that you as God can be everything. For Father, there will be boys and girls and men and women out of every nation, kindred, tribe and tongue and race and creed and class and color and they'll look around themselves in despair.

They'll see the greed and the hate and the lust and the drug addiction and the alcoholism and the inhumanity of man to man, the pride and prejudice, the greed and grasp. They'll look into their own hearts and they'll see all the wickedness they see in the world around them that has damned and scarred and marred humanity all down the centuries, finds its seeds in their own experience. They'll look into their own hearts and find only a dirty well from which no matter how clean the bucket they can only draw dirty water and some of them, dear Lord, in despair, my father, God, will cry, if only I could get back to where I belong.

There must be something more to life than this. And they won't forgive me, Father. And they won't have the right to forgive me.

They're dirty. They're dirty. Father, you know the plan.

You know the plan. That I should come to earth and be the kind of man, Father, which we as God created man to be. Now, Father, please credit me, dub me, douse me in all the filth and muck and wickedness of a fallen race of fallen human beings.

And, Father, execute the judgment that we had to pass upon man and his gifts in my presence. I lay down my life for ransom. That's the cross.

That was redemption. God made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might become the righteousness of God in him. He suffered the just, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.

He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, that the cost of our peace might be laid upon him. Because the sinless Saviour died, my sinful soul is counted free, and God the just is satisfied to look on him condemned. And peace lets me resign my breath in thy salvation.

See, my sins deserve eternal death. Jesus died for me. Now, that's the redemptive message of the gospel.

That isn't the gospel. That's only the fringe. That's only the threshold.

That's only the doorway in. That's only the prerequisite of gospel. But that's where it begins.

And as the Lord Jesus, there upon the cross, vicariously, as your substitute and mine, accepted in his person the just judgment of the Holy God, executed there at Calvary. The Father said, Amen, and raised him from the dead. It is tetelestai.

If you were to go to Palestine today, Israel, or then, in his day and generation pay a bill and ask the shopkeeper to give you a receipt he wouldn't put, receive with thanks, as you and I would today they'd put, it is finished, tetelestai. This debt has been paid in full, no further demand may be made on this account. And that's what the Lord Jesus meant when he died upon the cross Father, for any boy, any girl, any man, any woman who comes to you out of any class or race or creed or color and pleads my name, pleads, reckon that the debt has been fully and finally paid and no demand can ever be made again on that

account.

Cleansed, cleansed, acquitted in the blood of Jesus. He remembering our sins now for his dear sake. The third day, raised again from the dead, he ascended again to be with his Father.

And the body, as healthy as his Father's soul in heaven, left this earth. That he might be the man at God's right hand. The man Christ Jesus, our only mediator.

Does he have no body on earth today? Oh yes. Because on the day of Pentecost, the Lord Jesus fulfilled a marvelous promise that after his redemptive and atoning death upon the cross being ascended with the Father, he would not leave us comfortless. But he himself would come to us.

Not in the flesh and blood in which he walked this world two thousand years ago but in the person of that other self through whom the Father had indwelt his humanity then that he now as God might inhabit our humanity now. And of course this is what Paul describes in the twelfth chapter of his epistle to the Corinthians as our baptism with the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ. Do you remember what he said? Just as the body is a unity and yet has many parts and all the parts though many form only one body so it is with Christ the Messiah.

In the thirteenth verse of the first epistle of Paul to the Corinthians in the twelfth chapter by means of the personal agency of one Holy Spirit whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free, we've been baptized into one body all made to drink of one Holy Spirit. And you and I become living members of the body of Jesus Christ on earth in that moment of time that God responds to our faith that allows the Lord Jesus to move redemptively into our experience and he steals that redemptive transaction by the immediate simultaneous gift of God the Holy Spirit who comes to invade the human spirit that from within the human spirit he might reinvade the human soul. We capture our minds, we capture our emotions, we capture our will and once more God in our behavior.

That's called being converted. That's called being born again. That's called being regenerated.

For not by any works of righteousness which we have done but according to his mercy he saves us by the washing of that regeneration which is the renewing, the giving back to us of God the Holy Ghost whom God sheds upon us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior. So the death of the Lord Jesus Christ was designed simply to put the life of the Lord Jesus in us. Not just to get us out of hell and into heaven but to get us out, him out, God out of heaven into us.

And in the moment of time that the Lord Jesus comes to indwell our humanity as we are born of the Holy Spirit, baptized by the Holy Ghost into the body of Christ and become common recipients together with every other redeemed sinner worldwide in his indwelling resurrection life in that moment of time we are grafted into the living body of that church of which he is the head. Yes, he has a body. The body does not consist of one limb or organ but many.

You collectively are Christ's body. Individually you are members of it. Each part severally and distinct.

Each with his own place and function. So by that miracle of spiritual new birth whereby the Lord Jesus by the Holy Ghost comes to inhabit your humanity and mine we become living members of that corporate body which he is the head and through which today once more he wishes to community. Are you a Christian? What I mean to say is, have you been redeemed? Do you know that your name has been written in the Lamb's book of life? Numbered amongst those who though they never deserved it have

been acquitted for his dear sake who in his person accepted the judgment that our sin deserved? Are you converted? Have you been born again? Does the Lord Jesus by his Holy Spirit actually inhabit your humanity? If he doesn't you are not yet a Christian.

Period. If you have not been baptized by the Holy Ghost into the body of Christ whereby through the Holy Spirit's presence you share the resurrection life of Jesus Christ you are still dead in your sin. You are not yet a Christian.

Period. But if I am talking to you as one who is actually in repentance toward God put your trust in Christ and claim redemption through his blood a transaction which is instantaneously sealed by the restoration of the Holy Spirit that gives you life and abolishes death then you are a member of his body. Could I ask you a question? If you as a boy, a girl, a man, a woman cleanse in the blood of Jesus and dwelt by his Holy Spirit sharing his resurrection life if you are a member of his body how is he keeping? How is he keeping? How is he keeping? I mean you are a member of his body.

To what extent has the Lord Jesus the right ahead of the body to use your hand? To what extent is the head of that body does the Lord Jesus have a right to go with your feet speak with your lips hear with your ears see with your eyes think with your mind love with your heart how is he keeping? As a physical visible member of the invisible Lord Jesus are you giving a valid expression of his inner well-being? For if the Lord Jesus lived within you you have a God who is sinless in dwelling your humanity whose sinlessness, whose righteousness he wants to communicate to the world in which you live and he only does it through your physical hands your physical feet your physical lips your physical eyes how is he keeping?

To what extent can Jesus Christ as God who created you to be inhabited by your creator to what extent is he communicating his likeness to the world in which you live? I don't mean in here I don't mean in this building I mean when you're driving down the street behind the wheel I mean when you're working at the bench I mean when you're kids sitting around the family breakfast table I mean when you're boss in the office talking to your employees I mean when you're the person being served by the waitress in the restaurant To what extent is Jesus Christ inhabiting your humanity communicating his likeness through you as a member of his body to the world in which you live?

How is he keeping?

Is his physical visible body which you are a part giving a valid expression of his indwelling invisible self because that's what the gospel is all about Just suppose if you have enough imagination we could write to the Lord Jesus this morning and say Lord Jesus as a company of those who claim redemption through your blood who rejoice in the indwelling presence of God the Holy Spirit through whom we share your life we thought we'd just like to send you a note we just want you to know that we've enjoyed this morning's service we've been conscious of your presence there are some of you who are going to participate in the series of meetings here in Albuquerque during the coming weeks and we're anticipating which blessing as we turn to your word and allow your Holy Spirit to illuminate our

understanding we just want to thank you for these things and oh by the way we trust you're keeping well further he could reply and in a day or two's time we get a letter back from the Lord Jesus he said oh thanks, thanks for your note I was delighted to hear from you yes I know you enjoyed Sunday, I was there as a matter of fact I knew all about those meetings you were going to have I initiated them and I know perfectly well that my Holy Spirit will delight to enlighten your understanding so that you may more intimately become acquainted with me oh and by the way thanks for asking after my health as a matter of

fact together with my Father and the Holy Spirit I'm feeling fine in ourselves we're just terrific but we are having trouble with our body on earth we've got feet that don't go

where we're going we've got hands that don't do our bidding we've got eyes we can't look to we've got ears in the physical members of our body on earth that just don't hear the death not only to our voice but to the cry of a perishing world we've got minds that are contaminated and hearts with a heart in ourselves we're feeling fine but we are having trouble with our body on earth we've got boys and girls who said they were converted at camp but we're ashamed to hear the things they say we've got men in business who are officers in their church fellowship and they do in business things of which we're ashamed we've got the sweetest families when they're at church but boy you should hear how they go on at home and the neighbours know it and as to that man the way he drives nobody will ever

know that he knew God we are having trouble with our body say you remember the body of Christ do you want to tell me that you're a Christian don't tell me about your gifts and your talents and the promotional activities in which you're going to get your house to house visitation your missionary zeal your weekly giving, forget it how is he a Christian how is he supposed to be in trouble if you're a member of his body if you were the only member of his body in trouble pray Lord Jesus you die we might be redeemed and we're redeemed only to be inhabited by you so that the bodies that you've created as our creator to be inhabited by you to give a physical visible image of an invisible self identified with your invisibility might once more be restored to true function and some of us in our

hearts this morning Lord Jesus know our lack and we're sad if we're members of your body if we're those to whom you've got to make yourself audible and visible and tangible in this the sinsick, weary, tired world in which we live if we're the means that you're going to communicate you're in great trouble we need cleansing we need healing we need to be restored to that healthy relationship that you as our head that allows some boy, some girl, some man or woman in our presence to become strangely quaintly compellingly aware of the fact I'm in the presence of God Jesus himself forgive us that so many pass by and never even know that you were around to touch us a bridge make us healthy and wholesome and obedient members of the body for your namesake Amen

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