

One For All, All For One

by Michael Durham

This sermon emphasizes the importance of loving and valuing the church as the body of Christ, highlighting the intimate connection between Jesus and His church. It challenges believers to prioritize the church, as it completes Jesus and plays a crucial role in fulfilling His mission on earth. The sermon calls for a deep commitment to the church, recognizing it as an essential part of the Christian faith and a reflection of Christ's love and glory.

Scripture: 1 John 4:21, John 15:5, Colossians 1:24, Ephesians 1:22, Genesis 2:18, Ephesians 4:16, Matthew 16:18, Psalm 23:4

Topics: "Love for the Church", "Commitment to the Body of Christ"

Description

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Transcript

I greet you again in the name of Jesus Christ. And also bring greetings from Providence Chapel, the church of which I'm a member. I'm the church's evangelist, that's what they call me.

I'm thankful to be here. It is truly a privilege to get to be finally in Grace Community Church, and I have been blessed by the Christ in you. And let's just pray right now, shall we? Father, I thank You for Jesus Christ.

I have two sons. I love them dearly. I could not sacrifice them for wicked and evil people.

What kind of God are You? You love us so much that You would give us Your only begotten Son. What kind of love is this? Take us deeper into it. Help us to explore.

Help us, Lord, to be overwhelmed. Help us to see its majesty and its beauty, its high and lofty heights. Let us be just captured by Your love today.

God, there are people in this room. They don't know Your love. They don't know You.

If they knew You, they'd know Your love and they would be moved. They'd be attracted. They would love You in return.

Oh God, please, I beg Thee. Would You rescue them? Would You somehow by Your Spirit help them to hear what they need to hear? You are in this room and we honor You right now. We acknowledge Your greatness.

You are the chief person here and we worship You. We adore You and we long to know You better, to see You in Your glory, to see Your manifestation work amongst us. So please, Lord, grace us.

Grace us. Help me now, Lord, to serve You well and in Your power, I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. The text I pray the Lord be pleased to speak to us from is Paul's epistle to the Ephesians, chapter 1, Ephesians chapter 1, verses 19 to 23. If you could just know what's going on in my heart right now, it is an amazing thing to get to talk to you today.

It is just a tremendous privilege and honor to get to tell you of the love of my life, the person who means so much to me, who rescued me, and to tell you about who He loves, the love of His life. Man, God's good to me. Ephesians chapter 1, verses 19 through 23.

I want to speak on the theme, one for all, all for one. One for all, all for one. Ephesians 1, beginning verse 19, And what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe according to the working of His mighty power, which He, God the Father, worked in Christ when He raised Him up from the dead, and seated Him at the right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion.

And every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come, and He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him, who fills all in all. The church is the wife of Christ. She is the body of the Lord Jesus.

It is the dwelling place of God. All three words, wife, body, temple, say this to us. Jesus and the church is one.

It doesn't mean, as I said, in the first hour of the church is Jesus, or that Jesus is the church. They're not the same, but they are one, meaning you don't get one without getting the other. If God saved you today, you just don't get Jesus.

You get these, dear ones. You get His people. You get His temple.

You get His bride. You get His body. You're not going to be in the journey alone, dear friend.

You don't think you can live the Christian life? Well, you're right, you can't. But not only does He put His life in you, power, supernatural, but then He gives you member after member after member whose strength pours into you and what strength you have will pour into them. And something happens called life.

Brother back there, do you understand what I'm saying to you? We're talking about something that is living, real, alive. Jesus and the church is one. The church can't redeem a sinner from his or her sins.

The church is not all-powerful or all-knowing, and yet the church has been made one with Christ. In other words, it's been joined to Christ so that you don't get Jesus without getting the church. One of the weaknesses of modern Christianity is a misunderstanding of the church.

Most people sitting in church have no idea about ecclesiology. That simply means the doctrine, the truth about the church in the scriptures. And I think one of the contributive reasons for not knowing what the real church is is an overemphasis of Jesus being a personal savior.

That's why so many Christians have an improper relationship with a church. It's why they can give so little of themselves to the body of Christ. It's because they've overstated the personal aspect of salvation.

Now don't misunderstand me. Jesus saves persons personally. If God saves you today, it's because He personally confronts you, makes you to know Him, and makes you to know you.

And you will see yourself in a way you've never seen. You'll see the reality that you've been ignoring, running from, hiding from. He will personally save you.

But He's not just a personal savior. He's also the savior of the church. Paul in our text calls that Jesus's body.

In chapter 2, the apostle states that the church is the building of God. In chapter 5, she is the bride whom He loves and died for. Christianity is about a relationship with Christ.

But what's missing today is the truth that your relationship with Christ cannot be lived out and functioned without the church. Church doesn't save you. But you cannot live the Christian life apart from this body.

If this is where you are located, this is the body that God has put you in as a believer. And too many, if not some of you in this room, do not have your life centered around the church. You can't love, my friend, and be devoted to Christ without loving and being devoted to what Christ loves and is devoted to.

The church. I mean, that's logical, isn't it? I'm not saying something that comes from Mars. Isn't this just simple? If Jesus loves you, this body enough to die for you, to birth you here in this city.

I mean, friends, this church's existence is miraculous. Every church's existence is miraculous. But not every place that has a name and a sign as a church is necessarily a church.

But where God plants, births, conceives a body of believers, that is a miraculous thing. And He loves it. He's devoted to it.

And if you're not devoted to what He loves, I don't see how you can say you're devoted to Christ. You're not. The Apostle Paul gives us two reasons, two reasons in our text why you cannot love Jesus without loving the church.

The first reason, the first reason is you can't love Christ without loving the church is because the church is completed by Christ. He fills the church. He completes the church.

The Apostle Paul begins this train of thought actually earlier in chapter one, but we're going to pick up with verse 19 where we begin the text. And in verse 19, Paul says that the mighty power of God has worked for us and toward us, meaning us, meaning the church. Let's read it again.

And what is the exceeding greatness of his God the Father's power toward us who believe? Did you know church, you only exist by the power of God? It's not been brilliant leadership, although we thank God for leadership. It hasn't been the great sacrifices of you, the members of this church, although we are thankful for the sacrifices you have made over the years. This church exists by the power of God because you are not self-sufficient.

The cumulative power of all Christians everywhere couldn't generate enough power to light a light bulb. Without Christ's life in you, you're as dead as a corpse. That's what you would be without the Spirit of Christ here in amongst us.

That's why there are so many churches in name only, having a form of the gospel, but denying the power thereof. From such, says the apostle, turn away. Why? It's not what Jesus loved and died for.

It's a counterfeit. In verse 20, the apostle tells us that this awesome power of God is the same earth-shattering, stone-rolling power that resurrected Christ from the tomb. Look at verse 20, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe according to the working of His mighty power, which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places.

God the Father raised Jesus from the dead. He died for sinners. He condemned in my place He stood.

He suffered my penalty and the wrath that I deserved. As someone said, Brother Jeff said earlier, it was His bloodshed. It should have been my blood.

I should have been on the cross. But He says, no, I love you, Michael. I want you, Michael.

I will do it. Before time began and before He flung the worlds into their orbits, He and the Father, the Son and the Father, made a covenant that they would rescue me, me and you who have been redeemed. And the power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead has raised you from your sleep of death, from the tomb of sin.

You have been resurrected and you've come alive. Thine eye diffused a quickening ray. My chains fell off.

My heart arose. I went forth and followed Thee. Been set free by the power, the resurrection power of God.

And so, my friend, I say to you, this is what God is extending to you. Power, resurrection power that transforms, chains, completely makes you new. But not only did the Father raise Christ from the dead, look at verse 21.

Paul says that God has raised Jesus to the highest position of all creation. Jesus is King of Kings, Lord of Lords. He is the preeminent one.

If you're not a Christian, you probably thought, why did they do all that singing? I have a feeling you could have sung some more songs, couldn't you? Why? And why did they sing the way they sing? Why was there feeling? And why are they happy about these words about somebody dying on a cross and my sins and all have been forgiven and redeemed? Because, my dear friend, we're talking about the preeminent one, the highly exalted one who did that for us. We're talking about the creator of the universe. We're talking about the man who put you together and knitted you in your mother's womb.

We're talking about the Almighty. The Almighty. I know some of you young men, I know what you think.

I thought the same thing. You're going to bull your way through life. You're going to try with all your power to be on top of the heap.

Let's say you do that. Let's say you do that. But there's going to come one heap you are not going to be able to climb.

You're going to be faced with the Almighty power of God who made you can take you just like that. You will not win that fight. He's the ultimate.

Look at verse 21. How far has he been raised? Far above all principality, power, might, and demon and every name that's named not only this age but all also that which is to come. Beings whom God made that are greater, stronger, smarter than human beings.

He's far above them. Hell, demons, Satan himself, slew foot, Lucifer greater than him. When he died on the cross Satan thought he had won, but what he felt was a pressure that split his head wide open as the heel of Jesus' Son came crashing down.

But verse 22 it's more amazing which is only surpassed perhaps by verse 23 which we'll look at just a few moments. It seems Paul is saying that the reason why God has raised and exalted Jesus to preeminence over is for the church. Look at verse 22 again.

And he put all things under his feet and gave him to be head over all things to the church. The Greek construction you know Paul didn't write in English. I didn't know if you know that or not.

He didn't write in English. He wrote in the Greek, old Greek language. And the construction's a little difficult.

God the Father didn't just set Jesus over the church but he gave him to the church. Christ is a gift given to the church for her good. So a better rendering of this verse is this.

Please listen. He has given him as head over all things for the good of the church. That's really what he's saying here in this preposition too for the good of the church.

Now Paul does not say this is the only reason God raised his son from the dead and made him to be head over all things. The Bible tells us there are other reasons but this is the only reason we have in our text. So we're going to deal only with it.

God made Jesus to be supreme over all the creation for the purpose of blessing you church. Now how does Christ's preeminence bless you? I hope when you leave here today you will understand more how blessed you are. A royal nation, a unique people, a holy priesthood.

You are blessed. First it elevates the church in importance. God has made his most lofty and holy purposes to involve the church.

His exaltation of Jesus includes the exaltation of us the redeemed. As the king of all kings takes his celestial throne there is his bride by his side. What an amazing mercy.

How loving God must be to incorporate wicked and rebellious people into his majestic glory. All we are is walking, talking, thinking, feeling dirt. Right? We were made out of the dust of the earth.

You could say we're walking talking dirt bags. That's about the sum total of us. He made us from the dust of the ground.

Yes, he breathed his spirit into Adam before the fall. He did make us in his likeness which makes your revolt even more criminal and heinous. Yet for us he's done this remarkable thing.

He's bestowed upon us a favor and a kindness that exceeds common. He didn't do this for any angel. Listen to the Word of God.

The Bible asks the question, but to which of the angels has he ever said sit on my right hand till I make thine enemies thy footstool? And the answer is he hasn't. But in this verse the apostle Paul says that this exaltation of Christ and the subjection of everything to him is for us. This is incredible when you think what you are.

When I think of what I am not even the perfect angels who have perfectly obeyed him are so honored as you and I this morning. But we are and we will be. Therefore the church is important.

It's important. She's important not because of herself or what she's done or will ever do. No, the church is important because God, God in his electing love and humble mercy has blessed her undeservedly.

But he's blessed her nonetheless. And he has conferred upon her a specialness. And in importance he has lifted her up into prominence by considering her in this way.

And as a result you better respect her. You cannot take or leave the church as you please, sir. She's of high spiritual eternal purpose.

You cannot get any higher than her unless you are God. Second, Christ's preeminence restores the church to the dominion originally given to man plus more. Let me say that again.

Christ's exaltation has restored the church to the dominion originally given to Adam plus son. The head of the human race, the first Adam forfeited dominion on this earth. But the last Adam, Jesus has regained it for us.

What the first Adam could not do the last Adam has done. What the first Adam resigned and relinquished, the last Adam has regained. Can you believe this? That the unbelievable fact is that the second person of the Godhead became a man and overcame temptation and defeated the deceiver.

He was in every sense tempted as we are yet without sin. He was a man in every sense as you are yet without sin. He had a human mother.

He had a human ancestry. He was tempted by the same deceiver, Satan, who had tempted Eve. He was tempted in the wilderness.

He was tempted in the city. He was tempted in the garden. But he defeated the devil.

Listen closely. He defeated the devil by doing what our first father Adam would not do. He won the victory by surrendering his rights.

Adam gave up power and control in order to try to grasp the power and control. Jesus won by surrendering. It's an oxymoron.

It's a paradoxical thought that the way you win is by defeat. By surrender. It's so contrary to human thinking.

But you see human thinking is perverted. It doesn't think along the way God thinks. And He created the human intelligence.

So our thinking is perverted, my friends. The way up is really down. And Jesus showed us this.

Though He was equal with God, He didn't think it was robbery to be equal with God. In other words, He knew that He being God was not something He was stealing. He was not a thief.

Adam tried to steal it. Adam tried to become like God. He wanted to be his own boss, his own director, his own creator God.

That's what the temptation was all about. Don't listen to him. This man, this person who created you, you can be your own boss.

You can be your own God. You can decide better than him what's best for you. And Adam seized it.

And the moment he did, he lost everything. Everything. Jesus comes and Satan says, you just bow down and worship me.

I'll give you everything. And Jesus said, no. I'm going to submit and bow down to my Father.

And even that means if my Father turns me over to you, to let you do with me whatever you want to do with me, so be it. And in that moment, Satan fell like lightning from the heavens. And his victory has regained what man has lost.

And now a man, listen to me, a man, a kinsman of ours sits on the throne of heaven far above every principality in power. Oh yes, he's still God, but he's now also a man. And he is not ashamed to call us his brethren.

I love the progression you see in the Gospel of John till you move into the latter part of the New Testament. I no longer call your servants. I call your friends, he says, right before he's to be betrayed.

But then after the cross, he tells the ladies, go tell my brethren. We went from servant to friend and now brother. And when Christ Jesus ascended back to heaven, he did not cease to be human.

He was on this earth, so is he in heaven, both human and divine. Again, the writer of the Hebrews says, you have made him, that is man, you and me, you've made him a little lower than the angels. You've crowned him with glory and honor and set him over the works of your hands.

You see, when God made Adam, he said, I want you to take care of all of this. This is yours. I want you to tend to it.

I want you to superintend it for me. But it's yours. I give you rulership over everything.

Verse 8, he says, you have put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. And then we have this conjunction, but, but now we do not yet see all things under him.

Look at you. What would you do if a rattlesnake was under your foot right now? You would not turn to the rattlesnake and say, listen buddy, you've got to obey me. I have principality and power over you.

I guarantee you, your feet would move. You'd run. If you had any brains about you, you'd run.

We don't see all of nature under us. We can't control the wind or the wave. We can't control our climate.

They can talk about climate change and all that stuff, but we don't have the power to control that. But then he says this word, but we see Jesus. I'm looking under man's feet and oh, I do see a pair of feet.

But it's no particular average ordinary man. It's Jesus. I see Jesus who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor that he by the grace of God might taste death for everyone.

Number three, Christ in his exaltation blesses the church because he now leads the church. He completes the church by providing a head that's able to rule over all. Christ is given to us to be our head, our leader, our guide, just as the head is the head control center of the human body.

So the Lord is to be for you and me and for the church here. This means that we have a head unlike our human minds. Praise God.

We can't see all things, can't know all things, but we have a head that knows all things, sees all things, and he can wisely lead us. We have a head that's not intimidated, fearful, or anxious about anything or anyone. He's completely at rest and confident.

He is truly the prince of peace because peace rules his own heart. Jesus has conquered all things and because of our union with him, we are more than conquerors through Christ Jesus. And when you understand this truth, see if you don't, you need to pray right now.

You ought to be praying. Sermons ought to be a time of praying because the preacher's praying right now and you ought to join and say, Lord, I don't know I'm getting the import, the importance of this. Open my eyes.

Help me to see that I am a more than a conqueror through Christ Jesus because when you understand this truth, you can understand what can empower you to live victorious over every enemy. I remember reading many years ago of a Christian man during the World War II captured by the Nazis and the Nazi torturer was trying to break that man, but the more he hit him, the more he struck him, the more he tortured him, the more he could tell this man was not afraid of him at all. He was resolute, not indignant, not angry.

He just didn't fear the soldier. And so he asked the Christian, why aren't you afraid of me? And here's what that Christian said. Please listen.

You have power to control me and hurt me, but you don't have the power to make me hate you. Now that's unbelievable strength. I dare you tell me you're that strong.

I don't care how much you can bench press. That's strength. The man wasn't conquered.

He was conquering the greater enemy and the greater enemy was not the Nazi soldier. It was the inner passion to hate someone who deserved it. That's what he conquered.

And we can overcome all things and grow into the stature and likeness of Jesus because we have a head who can lead us. So you can see without Christ what is the Church? Nothing. She has no life, no power, no direction.

God did not design nor call the Church to serve Him by mere imitation. This thing, what would Jesus do, was crazy years ago. Why? Because life doesn't work that way.

Life doesn't work by mechanical formulas. No. It works by a desperate dependency upon God that he's your head and that he knows how to direct you as a good shepherd leads his flock.

This isn't about you and I trying to figure out what Jesus would do and try to imitate that. No. We have the very life of Christ in me.

That's what union with Him means. The question is will I trust in Jesus and depend upon Him to guide me, empower me, and express Himself through me? Do you believe that, friend? I'm asking you. Answer the question.

Do you really depend upon Christ? Or when problems come, and here's the test, when problems come, do you start trying to figure out the solution? Well, there you, there's your answer. You don't trust in Jesus. Even if you came up with a solution, who's to know that that's the solution that God wants to implement? So therefore we're lifeless, powerless.

We're useless. But thank God we've been exalted in His exaltation and we have a head. Now there's a second reason that the Apostle Paul gives us for why you can't love Jesus without loving the Church.

And it is amazing, incredible, stupefying. It's not too difficult to believe that without Christ the Church would be incomplete, but Paul doesn't stop there in our text. He challenges us to follow Him and to think the inconceivable.

He might as well bid us to walk on the water than to believe that Christ is not complete without the Church. But that's exactly what he dares us to believe. Look at verse 23, which is His body, the Church, the fullness of Him.

Christ completes the Church, but the Church also completes Jesus. That's what the text says. And if you're not for sure if he's really talking about Jesus, he answers because he knows you're probably stunned by that statement.

And so he qualifies who he's talking about, the fullness of Him who feels all in all. Who feels all in all? Jesus. So yeah, you've got the right pronoun.

It's hard for us to swallow, isn't it? How do we feel the Lord Jesus Christ? How is He somehow not complete without us? What does He mean? Well, let me first say what He does not mean. He's not trying to say that somehow Jesus is insufficient, incomplete. There's nothing lacking in our Lord.

He is the all-sufficient Person, Godhead, Deity. There's nothing lacking in our Lord. How could there be anything missing or insufficient about Him? There isn't.

You can rest assured, Church, He's very complete. So then what can Paul mean by this statement? Well, to see the meaning and to understand, you've got to stop thinking in terms of inadequacy. To complete somebody, he's not inferring that there's some inadequacy in Jesus that we make up the difference.

No, no, you can't think that way. You need to think back to our Word that we suggested in the first service of identification. Identification or oneness.

Jesus has so identified with us to the very point that He's one with His people. He's betrothed to us. But Paul here doesn't use the marriage description, does he? He's strategic.

He wants you to look at a body, human body, with a head. What good is a head without a body? Even if that head has life without the body like Jesus does, right? He's the head and He has all life within Himself. The head still needs a body.

So Paul's pulling back the veil and he's revealing to us that Christ has so joined Himself to you. He's made everything to ride on this union with His people. But unless we follow His direction as our head, His work, His work will not happen.

He's limited Himself. Are you listening? He's limited Himself to work through and by His body. That's what Paul is getting at.

So here's the significance. Christ has chosen to be identified with Grace Community Church, not just in His death, but in His life. In His life.

We've all heard and believed that Jesus Christ took our place. He was our substitute. He was numbered among the transgressors.

We know He identified in our sins and He was, He became sin for us. Yes, we know He identified in our sins and in our just penalty. He did identify with you so that He could redeem you.

But my friends, the identification goes beyond just death. It goes into resurrection life. He's chosen to be identified with us in His life from this moment on.

He's made you one with Him so that now you are His body. And His life lived out on this earth is through you. Now remember, where's Jesus? A logistics question.

Where is He? He's at the right hand of God. We're talking about the man Christ Jesus. Where is He? He's at the right hand of the Father.

But while He is humanly, bodily at the right hand of the Father, He's also deity, right? Which would mean He is on thy present. He's right here, everywhere. You can't flee from His presence.

Oh, if you make my bed in hell, there. So He's bodily limited to one time and place, location, space and time. But in His deity, He's omnipresent.

And here in His mystery. I don't pretend to understand that. I don't understand the mystery.

But I do understand in part its implication. And that's what Paul is driving at here. Here's the truth Paul is sharing.

Are you listening? Thank you, brother. You need to wake up everyone else. Are you all listening? Say amen.

Amen. Ooh, glory. Here's the implication.

In Jesus's deity, He inhabits us and fills us, completes us. But in His humanity, we complete Him and are His full expression on this earth. That's what the text is saying.

This is how we complete Him. We, the church, carry out His will and directives. He's the head, remember? He's the most important church member of grace community.

He's the head. He's the boss. He's the chief shepherd.

It's true and not just a cliché. We are the Lord's hands and feet. Some of us are His mouth.

So the logical question at this point is, what is Jesus's mission on earth? I thought He finished His mission on this earth and He went back to the Father. Didn't He say it's finished? Yes, redemption's finished, but not His mission on earth. If we are His body on the earth, the physical image bearer of Christ, then what is His mission that He intends to do through us that we complete Him? And His mission, listen carefully, His mission is the same as it was when He was bodily here on this earth.

It's not changed one iota. His task on earth was to do what? Well, you're one of the first churches that answered it correctly on the first attempt. Bravo.

I always had this, came to die, came to die, came to die. Well, yes He did, but that was only a tributary to the larger purpose. Like a little stream running into a larger river.

His ultimate purpose and mission was to do the will of the Father and thereby glorify the Father on the earth. That's it. That's what He came to do.

A body was created immediately to do Thy will. And it's still His mission, friends. Just because He's in heaven now doesn't mean He's not here on this earth working, doing the will of the Father that the Father may be glorified.

But how is He doing it? Through the church, His body. Remember what He said, let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and who? Glorify your Father which is in heaven. That was His purpose and that's what our purpose is.

And He's our head and He's directing that, overseeing that, empowering that. Another way to say it is the church completes Jesus because her fruit is the fruit of Christ. Okay, guys, here's what I refer to that one message.

I think it was Friday night that we all addressed this Sunday morning. Jesus said in John 15 that He was the vine and that we are the branches. The fruit that the branches bear is not the fruit of the branches.

It's the fruit of the vine. It's a grapevine that produces grapes. In fact, when you look at a grapevine, we have to quit dissecting it so much.

We have to take that parable and put it all back together because a grapevine includes not just the roots and not just the trunk, but the branches and the leaves. Right? That's the whole vine. Now what do we see again? Oneness or co-equal identification.

Making sense? So you're a branch in the vine. Praise God. But that branch is the vine.

Just like the trunk is the vine. So the fruit that's produced through you is not your fruit. It's Jesus's fruit.

That's why it's called the fruit of the Spirit. Not the fruit of the Christian. And Jesus went on to say, listen, the branch cannot bear fruit by itself.

It's got to be doing what? Rest in the vine. Faith in the vine. But now listen carefully.

Don't think I'm a heretic. I hope nobody has any rocks. I don't know about you all down here.

Gotta be careful. The branch cannot bear fruit of itself, but the converse is also true. The vine without branches cannot bear fruit.

Without branches to bear the fruit, what fruit would the vine have? Therefore, the life of Christ is to work in us, that his life might bear the fruit. Brother, you're not alone. Why are you chafing under Jesus's light and easy yoke? I don't understand.

It's not your fruit. He's not asking you to go out here and work hard and produce all this fruit. He's saying, just hang with me.

Remain with me. Trust in me. And I'll bear the fruit through you.

That's why he said, come unto me, you who are labor and heavy laden. I'll give you rest. I'm going to tell you something.

When I'm doing the will of God, I get energized. Now, my body may sometimes even get tired. Somebody asked me the other night, aren't you tired? It was one of the preachers.

He said, man, after I preach, I'm exhausted and drained. You're ready to go again. Yeah, when you do it in the strength and the power of God, it's energizing.

The body can be actually fatigued, but there's an energy. I don't know how to explain it. I don't know how to explain it.

All I know is there's life, there's power, but it's not mine. And the fruit, the success, the results are not mine either. I told someone yesterday, they were just really profuse in their thankfulness.

And I'm thankful. But I said, wait a minute, stop. We've got to remember that this is not a man.

If this what is true about you has happened to you, you've got to remember that's a supernatural thing. I don't have the power to tweak your heart, tootle around in there and try to reconfigure things, but He can. It's amazing.

When I get to heaven and He's going to receive me and reward me, do you realize I'm going to get the credit for what He did? This is what a master. There's no one like this. You look at Christianity today.

If you're not a Christian and you hear all this, I want you to hear me. You keep trying to do what you're doing and it'll kill you. It'll kill you.

What if the man gains the whole world but loses his own soul? But working for Christ is not working. Now, don't get me wrong. I know we're to give diligence and to work.

We go to labor. But the labor, if it's done in the power of the Spirit, gives life and power. If you're tired this morning, I'm going to tell you, I think it's easy to diagnose.

If you're weary, I'm not talking about physically. I'm talking about spiritually. You're drained.

Your prayer life is dead. Your scriptures, you can't get a thing out of the Bible. You don't have the joy of the Lord.

I mean, I'm going to tell you what your problem is. You're trying to bear the fruit and it's not your fruit. Quit it.

Come on, get with the church here. Come on, plug in to Christ and His body and let the strength in one joint supply strength to you. As God designed the body, as He will explain in Ephesians 4 later.

The world cannot know Jesus apart from us, friend. This is His design for the church. Now, please don't think I'm abandoning the doctrine of the sovereignty of God because I say these things.

I am not. I'm just showing you how God's sovereign design works within the church. That's why I can say that you cannot despise the church.

You can't think so little of her and see her place as being secondary. Her place is not secondary. Her role is not secondary.

It's complementary because we're His bride. Remember Genesis chapter two, verse 18, and the Lord said, it's not good for the man should be alone. I'll make him a helper comparable to him.

God is talking about Adam, but he's thinking way beyond the first Adam. He's thinking about the last Adam and he's making a prophetic statement. I'm going to send my people to you.

It's not good for him to be alone. I'm going to make him a helper comparable to him. And so he created the bride to sit with him, to rule and to reign with him.

No, he's still the head. He's still above us like a husband, the head of his wife. But his wife compliments him and supports him and his obeying the will of God.

Therefore, the meaning of this strange text is, are you listening? Number one, the church completes Jesus by being the full expression of Christ on this earth, carrying forth his purposes in the world. Second, we complete his afflictions. He's still suffering, folks.

And these afflictions are necessary in order for He to display His love to every present generation. Paul says this, listen to Colossians 1:24, I now rejoice in my sufferings for you and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ for the sake of His body, which is the church. Now again, we know nothing's incomplete.

Nothing's lacking in Jesus. But friends, Jesus died in time and history. He's never going to be crucified again.

I will never see Jesus crucified, hanging on the cross, bleeding for me. And here we are, 2,000 years later. But God, through the sufferings of His people, is demonstrating the kind of love that nailed Him to the cross so that the present generation might see the love of God demonstrated through the people of God.

And there is something powerful, it is gospel powerful, when a Christian is enduring affliction, hard times, and they do it cheerfully, trusting that God is in control and that He can't be anything but good to them. It speaks to people because it's just not, it just didn't happen that way. When they have a problem, they fall apart.

When they have problems, peace flees. When they have problems and turmoils and tribulations, as we all do, they have to go see the psychiatrist. They have to go to the doctor and get some nerve pills or something like that.

Or they go to the bars or whatever they do to try to cover the pain. But here's a brother, here's a sister enduring hardship, and there's joy. No, he's suffering.

It doesn't mean that the lashes on his back feel any better. But there's something that sustains him that's out of this world. It demonstrates the love of God.

And so they ask him, how can you keep a smile on your face? How can you endure what you're going through? Well, let me tell you, Jesus, He's my sustainer. I can cast all of my cares upon Him because He cares for me. And by the way, you think this is suffering? Let me tell you what He suffered.

Let me tell you what He suffered. Number three, the church completes Jesus in that Christ thinks Himself incomplete until the body is all put together. In other words, when every member of the body that's been added, that is to be added, then the church is completed.

And so Christ, in His redemptive purpose, He's now complete. He loves every member of His body, even those who have yet to be saved and be brought in. And until everyone is brought in and placed by the Father in their proper place in the church, He's not going to be satisfied.

Not until all are saved in the church will He be completed. I know a little of this, in a small way, this yearning of Christ to be made complete. I feel it also, don't you? There are many more to be added to the body of Christ right here.

Look around you. How many people are here since you came here that they have been saved? The two we saw today. Look at them.

Look at those two peoples in the illustration. How many more faiths? And what was the brother's name? How many more? Just like them. You don't know them today, but you didn't know them at one time.

How many more are out there that Jesus is yearning for right now to be brought in? But He has no body unless you cooperate with the head. There's a holy discontentment in our hearts. Brothers and sisters, yet to be saved through your ministry in the next short months and years, if God should tarry.

Brands to be plucked from the fire. Sheaves to be gathered in and brought into this house. We must, as our living head, be filled with this joyous sorrow until they're brought in.

How can we be content, church, as long as our head's not content? Until the rest of the flock is brought in. How can you, His hands, His feet, rest idle while He groans for those whom He died? He groans. How do we take our ease and enjoy our pleasures while the Savior longs for souls that He would add to us? I ask you, the head commands we the body to go, but we stay.

He tells us to pray, but we play. How can this be? How can it be? Well, there you have it. He completes us, and we complete Him.

All for one, and one for all. Jesus and the church, one for all eternity. I ask you, friend, as I conclude, how important is Jesus to you? How important is He? How would you rate Him on the value scale? How important is He? Well, then I ask you this question.

Why does the church drag so far behind in importance to you? Everyone in this room would say, oh, yes, He's very important. He's number one. Why is the church lagging so far behind? If they complete one another.

Why is she esteemed so lightly? As members of a local church, it's your responsibility to love the bride and thereby love the bridegroom. The flock of God. So, listen, sir, madam, are you devoting your best energies, talents, and times to mere labors that profit men? Or will you not give the same devotion to the Lord's body? Can you lavish praise upon the head and have little in your heart for His very body? This isn't computer.

I think there's an evil dichotomy that's arisen. It's a separation of Jesus from His church. And the ill effect has to both weaken Christ and the church.

Can you truthfully say that all is well as long as you love the head, worship the head, adore the head, but have very distant concern for His body? Can you really tell me you're all right? If that's how you all think, you're very ill and not well as a church. The body's not working as the head dictates. And if the body's not working as it should, then the head, Jesus Christ our Lord, is not able to function as He is designed to function.

The church completes Jesus. Do you love the body? Oh, I know you love Jesus. That's not what I asked you.

Do you love the body? The truth is plain. It's undeniable that if you love Jesus, you love His visible expression on this earth. Listen to our head.

The Lord Jesus commands us to love Him by loving His body. Listen to this, 1 John 4, 21. And this commandment we have from Him that he who loves God must love his brother also.

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another as I have loved you, that you also love one another. There's no truth. Listen very carefully.

This is a hard statement, but may God help you. There's no truth to your confession of faith when you say you love Jesus, but not His church. There's just no truth in you.

You lie and do not walk in the truth. How can you honor the bridegroom whom you, when you despise his bride? A few years ago when I was pastoring, as a pastor, you take critique. You take criticism.

That's just part of the job. You know that because you don't do everything right either. I mean, sometimes it's warranted.

And I would never, ever, ever lash out, rejected, out of hand, try to defend myself. I took it. I tried to be gracious in the receiving of it.

But don't you dare talk about my wife. One day, a sister in our church who was at a bad point in her walk with God, had the audacity to walk up to me after church one day and begin to criticize my wife who had not done a thing to her. You ever see the movie Lord of the Rings? Remember Bilbo Baggins when Gandalf was trying to get the ring from him? Oh, I didn't turn black and I didn't grow in height.

That's just the way I felt on the inside. And I told her how the cow ate the cabbage. And I did it firmly with as much love as I could have.

But right then it wasn't much. You can criticize me, but don't criticize my wife. That's my best friend.

That's my bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh. And as her head, it's my job to defend her, protect her against all who would come against her. I want to warn you, don't mess with his wife.

If you're a member of this church, thank God. I do travel quite a bit. I don't always get to preach in churches like this.

This has been a wonderful four days for me. I come from some churches that are as dry as last year's corn shucks. I mean, dead as a doornail, mostly reformed churches.

Thank God you're a part of such a body. God is here. God is at work.

God is doing amazing things. He's wanting to do even... He wants to show you things you cannot even dream about today. Because he always does exceedingly abundantly above all we ask or think according to the power that works within us.

What is the power? Jesus. But brother, sister, be careful. Get in sync with your head.

Because you have a part. You're a part of his body. You have a part.

If you're a child, you have a part. If you're a Christian, you have a part. Don't criticize her.

Don't despise her. Don't mistreat her. You know, what's what we do? We'll come and we'll start criticizing things in the church.

I had people that would visit our church from other churches that they were disgruntled with. Then they'd come and join our church. And they'd want then all of a sudden for us to change and be like the church.

But they couldn't stand and had to leave. All of us are out here saying, picking our little piece of her. Picking here and here till there's nothing left of her.

Feed me. Help me. Entertain me.

Meet my needs. No, no, no, no. You've got it backwards.

You're here for her because you're here for him. That's our purpose here. He's not just your Savior.

He's Savior of the church. His bride body and building. Don't despise what he loves or he will despise you.

Love him and love his church. And he will let you experience his love for truly all for one. And one for all.

Amen. Now, if you're not a Christian this morning, I am inviting you to the greatest relationship you'll ever experience. Right, church? How many of you have tried relationship after relationship and they never satisfied? This is a room full of expert witnesses whose testimonies are credible.

They have experienced what I've talked about. They are my evidence. I want to show them to you.

This is my evidence. What must you do to be saved and become a part of his bride, the church, and experience this wonderful thing we call family, brothers and sisters in Christ? Well, there's no work of religion that can bring you in. You can be like I was, a preacher of the gospel and still lost and on my way to hell.

Most preachers are lost today. Unconverted pews produce unconverted pulpits. I mean, unconverted pulpits produce unconverted pews.

We've departed from normal New Testament Christianity. I know religion will not get me there, could not get me there. Neither will it get you there.

What can get you there? To be confronted with the person of Jesus Christ and his glory, power, beauty, and love, and to see yourself as you really are. That you don't deserve any of that goodness. You don't deserve anything but his fierce, unkind wrath.

But that he would take your place. All you've got to do, says the scriptures, is believe. Not just believe with the head and say, OK, that's a fact.

I believe that's a fact. No, no, no, no, no, no. It's part of it, but not all of it.

Now you have to do something with the fact if you have faith, if you really believe. And believe now means you're going to commit yourself to that fact. Everything about your life is going to be committed.

Now you don't know what that's going to look like. And I can't tell you what it'll look like. But I can tell you this.

It's far better what you've got now. And the end is superb. It gets better as we go along.

Isn't that right, testimony, witnesses? Amen. So I'm inviting you today. If you want someone to talk to, you've got more questions.

The elders here, Brother Craig, Brother James, Brother Jeff. I know they'd love to talk to you. I'll talk to you.

But don't you leave here until you grab somebody that knows Jesus and say, would you tell me, would you pray with me that God would love me and receive me, help me? Let's pray. Lord Jesus. Our captain.

Our commander in chief. Our king. Who happens to also be our brother.

Who happens to be our head. Our bridegroom. The foundation of our lives.

We salute you. We honor you. Lord, our tongues cheat us right now because they cannot express what our hearts feel.

But you know. And we trust you that you know our hearts. We bless you and praise you for your design.

The church. And what you're doing in this beautiful body. Grace Community Church.

Lord, thank you for honoring and blessing them by being a part of this church. Being the chief member of this church, the head of this church, the chief shepherd. Would you continue to lead and guide them in the days and months and years to come? I pray, Lord, that they will do even as you have said.

The gates of hell will not prevail against them. That you'll protect them, defend them, champion the cause and the way for them. Lead them, O Lord, in the paths of righteousness.

And though they walk through the valley of the shadow of death, Lord, I pray they will not fear evil for you are with them. Your rod and your staff comfort them. I pray you spread a table before them in the presence of their enemies.

They will commune with you at your table. That you will anoint them and their heads with oil and that their cups would overflow and that surely goodness and mercy should follow them all the days of their lives. And that they will one day be in heaven with you.

Even as Jesus prayed that we would join him there and see his glory. Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

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