

Members of One Another

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[0 : 00] Our scripture reading this morning is taken from the book of 1 Corinthians, chapter 12, beginning at verse 12 through 26.

! For just as the body is one, and as many members, and all the members of the body, though many are one body, so it is with Christ.

For in one spirit we were all baptized into one body, Jews or Greeks, slaves or free, and all were made to drink of one spirit.

For the body does not consist of one member, but of many. If the foot should say, because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body, that would not make it any less a part of the body.

If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing?

[1 : 07] If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them as he chose.

If all were a single member, where would the body be? And it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you.

Nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable. And on those parts of the body that we think less honorable, we bestow the greater honor.

And our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty. Which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it. That there be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together. If one member is honored, all rejoice together.

[2 : 15] The word of the Lord. Thank you very much, David. In this passage before us, we come to another metaphor in scripture.

Used to describe believers. And that metaphor is body. Those who belong to Christ are a body. They're a body of believers. And the reason we have this description in the Bible that refers to believers as a body is it gives us a picture of how we are to live together and relate to one another. United in love and service to Christ and to one another. I could have used all kinds of metaphors to refer to the body of believers.

But he uses this one, which is a body. And that's what we are as a local church. We are a body. And if a local church is going to flourish and be healthy, then understanding and practicing this truth of being a body of believers united in love and service to Christ and one another is essential.

[3 : 42] And this is an important truth that we all need to understand. And I believe that at the beginning of a new year, as we embark on this new year together as a church, I think this is an ideal time for us to hear afresh this truth that the local church is a body.

Let me pray for us. Father, we, our hearts this morning, having heard your word, and pray that you now would apply it to our hearts as it is preached.

Lord, you know what we need as a local church to fulfill what has been read in our hearing. And so I pray that you would so work this morning to speak to us, speak to us together, speak to us individually in ways that we need to hear.

And God, we pray that you would use your word today to truly build this local church into a healthy, growing body of believers in love and service to you and to one another for our good and for your greater glory.

We pray and ask these things in Christ's name. Amen. The Corinthian church to whom Paul wrote these words and indeed the whole letter of 1 Corinthians was a divided church.

[5 : 24] At the very outset of the letter, the Apostle Paul addresses their divisions. and he urged them to be united in the same mind and in the same judgment.

And the area of spiritual gifts was one of their biggest divisions. They were divided with some members having their heads bow low because of a sense of spiritual inferiority because they did not possess certain prominent spiritual gifts or roles in the church.

And then the heads of other members were lifted up due to a sense of spiritual superiority because they possessed certain prominent roles and gifts in the church and they felt that they did not need those who they viewed as having less prominent roles and gifts.

and clearly these attitudes and these ways of relating to one another ripped at the heart of community. When we consider this passage that was just read the word body is used 18 times in it. And if you look at the letter of 1 Corinthians you will see that Paul introduces this idea of the church as a body in a very concentrated way starting in this section.

[7 : 01] He uses the word body elsewhere but not in the same sense of the church being a body. And in light of what he says we can only imagine how this church was falling far short of what God had intended them to be and to receive from one another in community because they were divided with some feeling inferior and some feeling superior.

And so starting in verse 12 of chapter 12 the apostle Paul uses this illustration of the human body to help the Corinthians to see and really to remind them that they were one body and in the same way the human body with its many members is one whole they being many members together are one united body of Christ.

Paul is clearly addressing the interpersonal relationships of the Corinthians. He's addressing the interpersonal relationships in any local church and indeed what he said to them applies to us. I mean to think about what is being written it's easy to take this and try to universalize it and that's not Paul's point. The things that we read in this passage cannot apply universally in the church. It cannot apply to for example all the churches even in this vicinity including the church right next door. We have no clue what goes on in that church next door. We don't know the people. We cannot relate to them.

[8 : 43] These words are in the context of a local church and the interpersonal relationships and dynamics that happen in the life of a local church.

And from what Paul writes I believe that we can describe the local church in this way. The local church is a diverse group of believers! whom God has joined together in one interdependent unified body.

The members of the local church are diverse and God joins them together in unity and he makes them interdependent upon one another.

He causes them to need one another. He causes them to not be able to be the church without one another. They can be something but not the body that God intended them to be.

Again, this is true of all local churches and so certainly this is true of Kingdom Life Church. If you look at verses 12 through 26 you will notice that the passage is subdivided into three paragraphs verses 12 and 13, verses 14 to 20 and then verses 21 to 22, 26.

[10 : 07] And in each of these paragraphs Paul addresses an aspect of church life that can be summarized in one word.

And now remaining time this morning I want us to consider those three words in turn. The first word is unity. In verses 12 and 13 Paul makes a point about the unity of the members of a local church by pointing to the unity of the members of Christ's body generally.

Now it's important to see how he does this because this is not his point. He's doing this to make a larger point. He is illustrating how the human body though comprised of many members is still one body united with its many members.

God and Paul is likening the human body to Christ's spiritual body, the church. How did the human body come into being?

A sovereign and wise God designed it and brought it all together. And I'm no biologist but I know the body has many, many parts, intricate parts and though they are many, God in his wisdom has brought them together in codependent, cohesive, efficient, working together.

[11 : 50] And how did Christ's body come together? Came together by God, his spiritual body came together by God creating it by the Holy Spirit.

Now notice this is what Paul is saying to us in verse 13. Look at what he says in verse 13. For in one spirit we were all baptized into one body, Jews or Greeks, slaves or free, and all were made to drink of the one spirit.

Here Paul is talking about Christ's spiritual body, universality. He's not talking about this local church because we're not baptized into a local church. We are baptized into the body of Christ. This is a common experience that all believers have. It's important to grasp what Paul is saying in this particular verse because it is this verse that he actually, well actually these two verses, 12 and 13, but he builds the rest of what he's going to say on these verses.

Paul tells us that we become Christ's body by being baptized in one spirit into one body. Whoever we are, whatever our race or nationality, whatever our social standing or economic standing, all of us were made to drink of the one spirit.

[13:20] This is a shared, common experience of all who are born again, all who belong to God by one spirit, baptized into one body.

And so this is Holy Spirit baptism to be the body of Christ. And I'm going to talk about some, when people talk about some subsequent experience, whatever, this is the experience that God gives to his people.

And this experience is the gateway for all that God has for us. We don't need to go through some other experience to experience anything that God has for us. This is that experience.

Those other experiences are manifestations of this experience, not a unique experience. So this is Paul's basis for unity among believers. Whoever they are and whatever their race or status in life, their unity is in Christ because they have had this common experience.

And the truth is that we cannot truly be a part of a local church until we have been a part of this experience of regeneration and conversion and spirit baptism into the body of Christ.

[14:44] This is the only way that in a local expression, in a local setting, that we are able to be a true and a vibrant part of a local body of believers.

We must all have this gateway experience, all of us, without exception. And then we can be members of a body in a local context.

And this shared unity in Christ is the basis for it. This shared unity in Christ is the foundation of life in the local church.

And it's so important for us to understand this and to really grasp it. We are then called to live out this shared unity that we have in Christ in local settings, in the local church that we are part of.

And this is what Paul is getting at in his letter to the Ephesians, in Ephesians chapter 4, when he pleads and he says, starting in verse 1, I therefore, a prisoner of the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace.

[16:17] Please hear those words this morning. eager to maintain the unity of the spirit. We gain the unity of the spirit by what God does by his spirit in bringing us together in one in Christ's body.

That's something he does for us. And then we are called, as we live that out in the local church setting, to maintain that unity in the bond of peace. He goes on to say, there's one body and one spirit, just as you've been called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

We all share this and Paul says you need to live this out in the local context and you need to maintain this unity of the spirit. And he tells us how we're to do it.

We're to do it with humility, with gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love. These are the kinds of virtues, brothers and sisters, that we need to be cultivating as we live life together. If we're going to maintain this God-given unity, this beautiful thing that the psalmist talks about in Psalm 133 where he says how good and precious it is to see brothers dwell together in unity.

[17:46] This is a precious thing and we are called to maintain it. Paul is urging us to live in the local church in ways that will maintain this unity from this common experience that we all have.

And the reality is that when we walk together in the local church setting, situations will arise that will threaten our unity. And the reason is because we are sinners, though we are saints and sinners at the same time.

And situations will arise that will threaten our unity and it will require us to be humble and gentle and patient with one another and bearing with one another and being eager to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

And how sad when we would allow lesser things to threaten and even harm this precious blood-purchased unity that we enjoy in Jesus Christ.

Brothers and sisters, we're all called to this. This is our duty to recognize and maintain this unity of the spirit that we share as brothers and sisters in Christ in the local church.

[19 : 21] It is a shared responsibility. Yes, I would have a greater responsibility in my role as pastor, but it's a shared responsibility that we all have.

And so I ask us this morning, if you are aware of any strained relationships that currently exist between you and anyone or others in this congregation, I urge you to pursue them and seek to bring reconciliation.

reconciliation. And let me say this, by the grace of God, I'm not aware of any. By the grace of God, I am not aware of any.

But this is the passage, and this is important, and maybe you're hearing this this morning, not because there is some relationship that is strained, but maybe in the days ahead, there might be. And God calls us to seek reconciliation. And you know what? He calls both the one who is offended, who has offended, and the one who is offended, the one who has sinned, and the one who has been sinned against.

[20 : 41] There's an equal responsibility to go and to seek to bring reconciliation. And Jesus says this unity, this reconciliation that would be needed in a situation that is more important on the list than you bringing worship to him.

He says that there is some issue with you and your brother or your sister, you, before you come and you worship, you set it as a priority, and you go and you make that right.

Now, he's not saying, you know, if you're here, you can't worship until you go and make something right with somebody else. That's not what he's saying. He's just making the point of how important it is for us to take these things very seriously.

And the Bible helps us because sometimes we're not responsive, and what Scripture says in Matthew 18 is if we go and our brother or sister doesn't hear us, well, then we go and get one or two other persons to come with us to help them to see what it is we're seeking to bring to them.

And then if they don't hear the one or two who we bring, then the Bible says we're to take it to the church. And that doesn't mean you go to every single member of the church and you share that. Practically what it means is to bring it to church leadership so that more help can be brought into that situation.

[22 : 05] And why does the Lord call us to this long and patient process? He does so because unity among his people, unity in the local church, unity in this visible expression of the body of Christ, of those whose sins have been forgiven, those who have been reconciled to God.

That is a precious thing. And that is an important thing. And it must be guarded. And it must be maintained as we live our lives together.

Brothers and sisters, our unity has been purchased by the blood of Jesus. So unity is the first word that summarizes the first point that Paul makes.

The second word that summarizes the second point, or the word that summarizes the second point, is the word diversity. And this is the point he makes in verses 14 to 20.

Paul makes the point that although local churches are made up of people who are united in Christ, those people are diverse in their giftings and their roles that God has given them to play in the local church.

[23 : 23] Now you'll see that Paul is now transitioning. He's given us this big picture of how we've all been saved. And we had this common experience of being by one spirit baptized into one body.

and now he moves into the local context. And the only way, again, you can make sense of what Paul writes, starting in verse 14 to 26, is in the local church context.

This can't apply in other local churches. And so when we consider these remaining verses, let us think in the context of our local church and not in some universal, hard to imagine church circumstance.

He's speaking about life in the local church. The body of believers which he has sovereignly brought us to and joined us to.

And we must remember that above all of our choices and all that we did, there's a sovereign God who has brought us to this local church. And he has acted as sovereignly in doing that as he has acted in determining who our parents are and who our siblings are and all kinds of other things, even some decisions that we had a part in.

[24 : 52] Ultimately, it was God who was at work in the midst of all of that. The church of Corinth was divided over this issue of spiritual gifts, which were the best and which were most valuable and most desirable.

And this no doubt brought about a lot of feelings of superiority and inferiority among the members based on the gifts they possessed or didn't possess, based on the roles they played or didn't play. And here in verses 14 to 20, Paul addresses those with feelings of inferiority. He begins by reminding them that the body does not consist of one member or part, but many.

Look again at how he says it in verses 14 to 16. For the body does not consist of one member, but of many. If the foot should say, because I am not the hand, or I'm not a hand, I do not belong to the body.

that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the heir should say, because I am not an I, I do not belong to the body, that would not make it any less a part of the body.

[26 : 12] The issue here is discontentment with one's gifting or role in the local church. And Paul's point to those who feel this way, who feel that their gift, their role in the body is inferior, and that he says to them, look, even if you take the attitude that if you can't be this, then you don't belong to the body, he says that don't make you, that does not make you any less a part of the body.

You're still a part of the body though you have that attitude. And then in verse 17, he presses the point to help them to see how ridiculous that view is.

He says, just imagine if the body was one big part, one big eye or one big ear. He says, if it were one big eye, wherever the sense of smell be.

And if it one big nose, wherever the sense of hearing be. Won't be able to do the other things that it needs to do.

The body will not be able to function with all of its parts functioning together. But beyond human reasoning, Paul addresses the issue for the Corinthians and he addresses it for us as well.

[27 : 41] In verse 18, he gives the reason that members of a local church body should be contented with whatever their spiritual gifts and roles are.

He says, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. This is a local church.

God has arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. And this is why we should be content with our spiritual gifts and the roles we play in a local church at any given time. And the reason is that they are by divine design. God arranges the members in the body, each one of them, as he chooses.

And therefore, discontentment with our gifts and our roles is ultimately discontentment with God's wise and sovereign choice. And, brothers and sisters, it's important for us to remember that really no role that we play in a local church is permanent.

[28 : 53] No role is permanent. Some roles may have longer duration than others, but none is permanent. We die. We retire. Some roles are more seasonal than others.

We step down from them. Sometimes people go to other local churches. Sometimes other local churches, people come to this church. And so the makeup of the body is often dynamic and it often changes.

And that's part of a living organism. Our bodies are the same in terms of that dynamic, that reality. It changes over time because it is a living organism.

and all of these factors and others result in local churches changing in ongoing ways over time. But we must remember that behind it all is still a sovereign God who is arranging the members of the body as he chooses, gifting them and placing them.

[30 : 02] And despite what it may look like on the face, there's a sovereign God who is at work behind it all. And so what really we are being called to in verses 14 to 20 is to celebrate our diversity, recognize it, accept it, and to celebrate the diversity that we enjoy in the body of Christ with our different gifts and with our different roles.

And so rather than desire to be in some other role or to have some other gifting, we should be celebrating those in those roles and in those giftings, celebrating the diversity that God has given to us in the body and thanking God for those members with different gifts and with different roles from us.

And so, for example, people with less spectacular gifts, like the gift of mercy and the gift of serving or the gift of giving, these are quiet gifts.

These are oftentimes behind-the-scenes gifts. These are not in-the-limelight gifts. Those who have such gifts should not be envious of those who have gifts that may be more visible, more prominent, maybe like teaching or singing or playing an instrument.

Instead, we should all celebrate this diversity and celebrate the gifts that God has given, remembering that it is He who sovereignly apportions them as He chooses.

[31 : 44] And so, brothers and sisters, let us celebrate in an ongoing way the diversity of gifts that we have and the roles that we play.

And I want to encourage us to let us be intentional to demonstrate gratitude for one another and the gifts and the roles that we play.

The gifts we have, the roles we play, because ultimately, it's all by God. It's all from God. And we should never, if we're thinking soberly, we would never think, or when we say my gift, we don't think that's like really, really my gift.

It's something God has given to me, but we are distorted for the good of the local church. And I encourage us to embrace the gifts and the roles that God has given to us to seek to grow in them, to seek to fulfill them at any given time in the local church.

And then we can rest in the truth that God arranges the members in the body, each one of them, as he chooses. Paul's third and final point can be summarized in this word, necessity.

[33 : 06] And Paul makes this point in verses 21 to 26. In the same way that some in the Corinthian church had a sense of inferiority, there were those who had a sense of superiority because of the gifts they had and the roles that they played.

and their sense of superiority made them look down on other people and thinking that they didn't need other people, their gifts, and their roles.

And notice how Paul addresses this attitude in verse 21. He says, the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you, nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

In other words, the eye that guides the body can't say to the hand, I don't need you. Because I think we all know that without both eyes and hands, we're in a lot of trouble.

I mean, both are so essential that if I were to ask, what would you prefer not to have? Hands to be able to do things and move things, or eyes that you could see where you're really going?

[34 : 28] See, because if we have eyes, if we don't have any hands, we can see things that we want done, but we can't do it. And if we have hands with no eyes, so we can't see things, but we have these able hands, they're really meaningless.

And Paul's point is, the parts of the body are indispensable, they are necessary. He makes a similar point with the head to the feet, where the brain is in controlling and making decisions.

He says, you can't say I don't need the feet. Because again, you can decide, well, I want to walk over there, but if the feet don't take you, then you're not going to go. Paul is saying, you are one integrated whole, and you need all the parts of the body.

They are indispensable, that's the point he makes in verse 22, they are necessary. And in verse 23, he makes the point that the parts of our body that we think are less honorable, we take greater effort to make them more honorable.

And the latter part of verse 23, Paul actually uses veiled language to talk about intimate parts of the human body to make a very profound point.

[35 : 46] what he says is, in the same way that you take extra care to make presentable those parts of your body that require greater modesty, you should exhibit the same protective care and concern for those whose gifts or roles in the church or even their life circumstances practices you view as unnecessary.

And maybe even embarrassing. He's saying, how is it that you take that kind of care with those delicate parts of your own body, you don't recognize that in the body of the church that you ought to do the very same thing to those parts of the body that you don't have the time for, the interest in, or the value that you place upon them?

He's challenging those who have this dispensable view, this disposable view of others in the local church.

I've heard the joke about, you know, you take your car to some mechanics and you tell them that you need a job done and maybe they need to pull the engine down and they, you do the work and all the other stuff and then they give you the car back and they have a bucket of screws and say, these screws, they didn't need these screws, I didn't know why they had these screws on this car.

But all those screws are necessary. And yet the car may run, it's not going to run the way it's supposed to be and after a while it's going to get problems.

[37 : 32] Brothers and sisters, there are no unnecessary parts. things. What's the aim of all of this? What is the point?

The point that Paul is making in verses 21 to 26 as it relates to the local church is that all of the members of the local church are necessary and those whom we might be tempted to marginalize and ignore and exclude are as necessary members of the body as the parts that we place great premium and focus on.

And he says that we should go to extra length and we should go to greater extents to include them as the essential parts of the body that they actually are.

And he makes the point in the latter part of verse 24 that the more prominent members of the body don't need such special and intentional care. And the aim he gives us in verse 25 that there may be no division in the body and that members may have the same care for one another.

Here's the point. The point is if we take the approach that there are some whose roles and gifts and who they are are disposable and not necessary, division will come.

[39 : 04] And Paul says the aim of not doing that and extending mutual care and extending even greater care on those ones that you'd want to push away is that there would be no division in the body and that the members will have the same care one for another.

You know in the world some of the big walls of division are race, nationality, ethnicity or culture, socioeconomic status.

Those are the big walls of division, how societies are stratified. Brothers and sisters, the church should not be a reflection of that. The church should not mirror that.

Instead, the church should be a contrast to that. The church should be a picture of what life can be and ought to be because of what Jesus Christ has done in our lives.

How he has transformed our hearts that those walls and those barriers and those differences that separate people in the world that they no longer have any place among God's people whom he has redeemed.

[40 : 27] And brothers and sisters, this is a beautiful contrast when we live it out as a local church. And when we don't live it out, when we are mirroring the world, we actually in the church, when you have the walls of racism and the walls of prejudice and the walls of separation based on economic status and all the other ways that people are divided in the world, when you have that in the church, it is actually worse looking than it does in the world.

Because we expect it in the world, but it should not be in the church. And this should be so real among us that those who may be marginalized and they feel those distinctives and how they're treated and separated in the world.

There should be an awareness in their hearts in the local church and here it's different. It's not the same as the way I'm treated in the world.

And again, what's the aim? The aim is that there should be no divisions in the body. And so brothers and sisters, we are the poorer for ignoring those who don't seem necessary.

Those who we don't deem important enough to make the effort to reach out to, to grow in relationship with, to celebrate as parts of the body whom God has brought to this local church.

[42 : 13] We're the poorer for that. And what is behind that is sin. It is sin for us to think of ourselves more superior than anyone else.

Because all that we have, they're just trappings and they're temporary. When we strip it all away, we are all made in the image of God.

We are all image bearers of God. Look at what Paul says in verse 26. He says, if one member suffers, all suffer together.

If one member is honored, all rejoice together. Brothers and sisters, this could only be a reality for us if we are living together in community and in true fellowship with one another.

We could be living in silos, even though we're in a local church together where they're suffering and nobody knows, where there's reason to celebrate and nobody knows because we're not living as an integrated local expression of the body of Jesus Christ.

[43 : 30] Now, of course, some of this has to do with the fact that sometimes we could live in community and we don't self-disclose ourselves. We put the walls up ourselves because we don't want people to come near and to know us and give us the opportunity to know other people.

So some of the private silent suffering, some of the private silent rejoicing takes place because we're not relating in community the way that we relate. we're all affected because the Lord has joined us together in this particular way. And it's a beautiful thing when we are able to share in both the joys and the sorrows of brothers and sisters. And we should because that's where body operates. I don't think any of us know what it is to have compartmentalized pain where only one part of our body knows that it's in pain. When our body's in pain, the whole body knows that that body is in pain.

[44 : 42] And when we rejoice, and it's really something to rejoice, but our whole body is rejoicing in that particular situation. as I thought about this passage in verses 21 to 26, although Paul is addressing and correcting those who have this superior view of themselves and a lesser view of other people and their roles and their gifts, I think this passage, this part of the passage can also be applied to those who have the view of themselves that they really don't matter in the local church.

church. There are some in the local church who take the view of themselves that they really are an unnecessary part. And the way they do this is they view that it doesn't matter how they live or how they relate to the body.

And so, for example, they may see themselves as a former part of the body, but they don't see themselves as a functional part of the body.

They don't place a priority on attending, and so they attend if and when they wish. They don't place a priority on serving, and in some cases don't serve at all.

They don't place a priority on giving, and so they hardly give if at all. And without saying it in words, their deeds say, others will attend, others will serve, others will give, they don't need me, and I don't need them.

[46 : 44] I think that's a faithful application, what Paul is addressing in this passage. If you're part of the body, you are essential. If you're part of the body, there is a God-given role that you have to play, and when you don't fulfill that role, we are the poorer for it.

And when you are not a part of the body, you are the poorer for what you can receive from the other brothers and sisters in the body. And let me say that live stream has been a wonderful blessing to us.

During the pandemic, thank God for it. Still, even right now, live stream and Zoom, they're still blessings to us. But brothers and sisters, they are no substitute for the living organism that God has called us to be, foundational to which is gathering together in some regular way.

None of us would want a live stream body, actually. It doesn't function. I think for me, one of the sweetness of the last week and the week before last, when we prayed together, was that we were face-to-face praying together for years, something we hadn't done.

And I don't know how it was for those of you who were out and participating in that, whether that was a part of your awareness, but that was my awareness. It's wonderful when we pray on Zoom on Saturday nights.

[48 : 18] Enjoy it. We are led well. Our hearts are lifted up. But friends, it's very different from being together, being with brothers and sisters. And so, thank God for these tools.

But let us use these tools if we have to use them. We are not able to make it? Yes, use the live stream, get on Zoom. But brothers and sisters, let us not use it as a preference.

Let us not say, well, I'm not going to go, I don't want to do this. If the whole church did that, wherever the church be, we are members one of another.

God has sovereignly joined us in this local church and he has done it with the gifts, the talents, the abilities, the experiences, the circumstances, and all that we are.

And he's brought it together. And it's a beautiful thing. And we're different. And let's embrace those differences.

[49 : 22] And let's value those differences. Let's value one another. And let us marginalize none. Let it be that those who would say, I'm not necessary, are saying that because that's what they want to say.

And that's how they want to relate. But let it not be because we have treated them as unnecessary. necessary. And so they've put themselves to the fringes.

I recognize that a sermon like this could rest on us heavy for any number of different ways. But here's what I want to say.

What we're called to in this passage, like every other thing that we're called to in the word of God, we cannot do it in our own strength. We can't do it.

We're sinners. And as Paul says, he says, even the things I want to do, I find myself not doing them. The things I don't want to do, I find myself doing those things.

[50 : 28] And as you're reminded, we need the grace of God. We need the mercy of God to convict us and to help us and to strengthen us to do these things that he's called us to do.

And you know why we do? Because we're so proud that if God left it for us to be able to do, we would do it and then be proud that we did it. But he calls us to do it and he helps us to see that we cannot do it so that when he gives us the grace to do it, we give the glory to him.

And so I pray that God would convict us where we need to be convicted, encourage us where we need to be encouraged, because there's much to be encouraged about in this local church. I've said it before, I say it again, by the grace of God, I have never in my life desired to pastor another church.

I've never desired to go somewhere else, be somewhere else, be in some other circumstance. God has fitted me for this local church. church. And my job has been a joy.

I often times hear pastors talking about the troubles in ministry and the burdens of ministry. And yes, there are burdens, and there are difficult times, but in terms of some of the horror stories I hear of what pastors face to the hands of members, by the grace of God, it's not been my experience.

[52 : 06] And so I thank God for this church. But we can grow. And by the grace of God, let's grow. and let us be this beautiful local expression of the body of Christ that looks very different from the world out there.

United, diverse, and recognizing that every single member is necessary.

and in some cases to communicate that where we may sense that anyone feels that they're unnecessary.

Let's pray. Father, would you do for us this morning what only you can do to cause us to be a faithful expression of a local church, a church that is united yet diverse, and a church where all of the members are mutually cared for, and they are valued, and they are serving in the respective roles that you've given to them.

And Father, I pray that you would help us to see where we need to repent, where we can be encouraged, and I pray, Lord, that you would do all of these things in our midst for your glory.

[53 : 49] In Christ's name, amen. Let's stand for our closing.