

Christ's Body is Amazing

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[0 : 00] Turn in your Bibles this morning to Ephesians chapter 4, verse 16. Ephesians chapter 4, verse 16.

! Let's pray.

Father, for us this morning, prayer is not a habit. It's not something that is required by some person in a distant city.

It's not something that we've merely scheduled, but it really is an expression of our humble and our glad dependence upon your Spirit to work in us. In me, that I might preach with the power and authority of the Spirit of God, and in our people that their ears would be open to hear, to delight, to be encouraged, to be shaped by the truths of your Scripture.

And Father, we would ask that you would answer our prayer and that we would grow in our affection for the Lord Jesus Christ and our understanding of the Scriptures that you've given to us, and as importantly, that we would live these truths out in a deeply evident way that you would be glorified.

[1 : 38] We ask this in your precious name. Amen. This morning, what we are looking at in verse 16 is actually the closing statement that Paul makes in the first 16 verses that really explain what the church has been created to be.

You'll remember that the first three chapters are about how the church comes into being through the ministry of Christ and the purposes of a sovereign God, how He has called us for His own glory and drawn us together to be a people that reflect the character and the heart of Christ.

And as Paul had finished up those three chapters of explanation about how we came into existence, then he launches into this matter of explaining, all right, so we understand that the church is something that Jesus created by His blood and for His purposes, but how does the church work?

Interestingly enough, we found out that the very first thing that the Spirit of God wants to instruct us regarding is the matter of unity. And in verses 1 through 16, Paul explains that the church is to be different from any other thing in the world because it is united, it is growing, and it is a representation of Christ.

The church is really not a place to go so that we can kind of satisfy or calm our guilt. The church is a place that we go because of our relationship with Christ and our desire to be part of the body that He has connected us together to be part of.

[3 : 15] It is something that is woven into the heart of the genuine believer. It is something that is profound and significant, and it's not something of secondary importance.

My studies this last month in particular have inflamed my affections for the wisdom of God informing the church, have made me profoundly sensitive to just how compromised current evangelical thinking is about the significance and the supremacy of the church.

And I recognize that our lessons in the book of Ephesians have to address this profoundly significant issue. What is the church?

We've seen in three chapters. Now, what does the church do? And my studies have encouraged me. If I were to say prior to my study in the book of Ephesians that I was a lover of the bride of Christ, I would say that part of that really arose out of the fact that at one point in my life, God used the church to do a profoundly significant thing in my heart.

Not in the matter of salvation, but I will tell you there was a time where in just very practical and simplistic terms, the wheels came off in my life. Much due to my own behavior and issues of my own making, but I'll never forget going to church that Sunday after I had come home to a broken house, and I had one of the men put his arm around me and say, Tim, I understand what you're

going through.

[4 : 49] And in the next year, God used that body of believers to not only rescue me from self-destruction and just from the heartache and the terror of sin, but to begin the process of changing Tim Knoyer to be someone different than he was.

I became in practical terms a lover of the bride of Christ because I discovered what it was. And so this morning as we take this passage and we talk about what the church is, I want you to know in part that the individual who stands before you this morning is one who is deeply persuaded of the supremacy.

You know what I mean by supremacy? It's important. And raising my voice doesn't make the point. The Bible says it's important.

And we live in a day and age where the idea of the church being supremely important is almost faded into the background.

Our studies, I pray, in the book of Ephesians, rescue you from contemporary foolishness.

[6 : 06] We're looking at verse 16, and we are thinking this morning of just how amazing the church really is. So let's recognize, first of all, that that all flows out of our union with Christ.

Why is the church so spectacular? What is it that makes it so unique? What is it that's so special about the church? Well, the first thing that we're reminded of as we take up this verse there in verse 16, it says, From whom the whole body.

And as we look at this final segment of Paul's call for unity, he reminds us that Christ really is our head. We find that over there in verse 15. And as a result of him being our head, we are connected to the body.

Those of us who have come by faith to know the Lord Jesus Christ as our personal Savior are brought together into a definite, distinct relationship with a group of people.

And I want you to understand that we're under Christ's headship. The church's existence. The church's power. The church's authority. The church's witness.

[7 : 17] It doesn't flow out of its building. It doesn't flow out of its leaders. It doesn't flow out of its schedule or its prayers or its offering. It really happens because of Christ.

The church exists because of Christ, and it draws its life from its union with Christ. Its mission, its energy, its existence cannot be legitimized apart from Christ.

Where he is head, whether it is here at Maranatha, or whether it is somewhere in Westerville, or whether it is in Linworth, or wherever, wherever the gospel of Christ is being proclaimed, and the supremacy of Christ is being adored, let me tell you, Christ is the head, and he's doing a good thing. And we recognize and we rejoice in that. I want you to understand that we look here in the passage and recognize also that this matter of being under Christ's headship brings us then to the question of the provision of individual members.

There's an underlying assumption for whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint, what we're recognizing is that God has had something to do with the fact that we're all together here this morning.

[8 : 40] It wasn't just a capricious or kind of a wistful choice that you became part of the family here and that you were connected to these people together. God had something to do with that.

If you look in Ephesians chapter 4 verse 11, you have to understand that gifted servants, and then verse 7, going back a little further, gifted saints are part of what he has done in putting us together. And put it the way I would here for the notes, it says, gifted servants as well as saints with spiritual gifts are placed in the body by his grace. Now it's true that almost 27 years ago, this congregation considered whether or not I would be called to be their pastor.

And there are some of you sitting here who were part of that decision and made that vote that night. But every other person who's become part of our membership also has gone through the same voting process of saying, you know what, I believe this is where God has called me.

And then the congregation said, yes, we recognize that and we want you to be part of our fellowship. And behind that activity of this congregation voting, either on me as a pastor or our members, we recognize it's really a sovereign Lord who places both gifted servants and gifted individuals into the body of Christ for his glory.

[10 : 02] And he puts us together with our respective gifts to do the things that he has equipped us to do. In a week or two, we are going to have, actually two weeks, we're going to have a meeting where we as a congregation are going to consider the question of officially endorsing Caleb and

Charity and saying we approve of them and we recommend them to ABWE to be considered for missionary service.

That is a process that we as a body are going to go through. And part of what we're saying is we believe that God has placed them among us and we have watched them grow and we are ready to send them off to serve Christ over in Jamaica.

That's where they plan to go. They're a part of our fellowship. And even when they are ministering in Jamaica, and I can tell you this, that Caleb and Charity intend to continue serving Christ as long as they draw breath, they'll still be part of our family.

They grew up here among us. We watched them. I remember some of the dumb things Caleb did. You know, I can't say anything about Charity. She must have come out perfect, but you know. We watched them grow and they've been part of our body. And God was the one who put them here and gave us the privilege of watching them grow. Every piece of this body, every person that is part of this body, has been drawn here by His grace and for His purposes.

[11:33] I think back over this summer, a perfect illustration of it would be that when we no longer had a family youth pastor to take care of some of the normal responsibilities, which included a mission strip, we had Tim and Meredith Bauer step forward and say, I'll take a week of our vacation and I will take our teens up there to shepherds to minister.

They're a gifted group, a couple to us and we enjoyed as a body. We need them, don't we? And by the way, they need us. Our togetherness is what makes us effective for the gospel.

And then following that, Seth and Joy took our kids to Teen Leadership Conference and they did their part. We need them, don't we? Yes.

And they need us. And so when we look at this matter of the fact that He is the one who has provided those members to us as a fellowship, I want you to recognize that it is His purpose that put me here and put them here and put you here.

Now there's something else that I want you to recognize in this passage that is very important. I want you to look there at the little statement that is made where it says joined and held together.

[12:50] Because I can tell you this, this issue of joined and held together is something that Satan is picking at more today than at any other time that I can think of.

Joined and held together. So let's think about this work of joined and held together. When we read in the text that the body of Christ, the local church, is joined together, it's something that we have to think about carefully. The word comes to us from ancient construction technology.

When we want to put something together, we either rely on welding, we rely on adhesives, we rely on fasteners. Do you follow that?

And I saw a post on Facebook where there was one of the men in our church standing on top of a ladder holding a nail gun. Grin, grin, grin. New toy, new tool.

And, you know, everybody needs a nail gun. Well, along with a nail gun, you need a compressor.

You know, there are a lot of other things you need. In the good old days, when you wanted to put a building together, you didn't have adhesive, you didn't have the welder, you didn't have cement, you didn't have nails for the most part.

[14:02] Occasionally, you had a couple that were very expensive. So the way things were put together was that you took a piece of stone and another piece of stone and you kind of got a rough idea of which stones came closest to going together.

But then, you see that little picture behind you? There it is. There's a picture on the wall I want you to see. That is from Machu Picchu. Can you say that? No, don't say it with me.

Machu Picchu. Those stones are dry fit. You know what dry fit means? It means that they actually fit together so well that you can't put a dollar bill between them.

Do you know how many stones they had to lift to find those that fit that way? Not very many.

Because what they did was they found ones that kind of fit and then they took a hammer and a chisel and they beat the senses out of those stones so they fit together.

That's how it happened. Bang, bang, bang, chip, chip, chip, bang, bang, bang, fit, fit, fit, bang, bang, bang, chip, chip, chip, fit, fit, fit. Hey, hey, look, look, look. It's working. That process took time.

[15:22] And that process also required that the stones stayed together and stayed in the same place and didn't say, well, I don't, I'm not liking the way I'm being treated here. People are hammering on me a little bit too much and I'm going to go over to where Bubba is a lot nicer.

Do you follow that? Stones did not migrate the way contemporary evangelical believers do. They stayed. And in the process of staying, guess what happened?

They were joined together. Look over in your Bible to 1 Peter 2, verse 4. 1 Peter 2, verse 4, Peter uses a very similar image where he says this, so you come to him a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God precious.

And then in verse 5, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house. How is it that this spiritual house of living stones that are all lumpy and scrapey and have bumps where they shouldn't have bumps and have difficulties that everybody can see?

How is it that we eventually end up kind of sticking together like that? It is because we stay together and the Spirit of God works to knock off the rough edges. And so I want you to understand that the truth of the matter is what this Scripture is teaching us is that he works in the church using the Word of God, lasting relationships, and the power of his Spirit to knock our edges off and shape us to fit together.

[16:56] Now, if you cannot see how the Spirit has been using others in the body to take off some of your rough edges, it may be that you are not allowing other people to get close enough or you are not allowing God to use the critical element of time.

How many of you realize that it takes time for relationships to end up creating some of the benefit that he intends for us to have in relationship?

We also read that each part of his body is held together by what every joint contributes. Look there at the verse. It says that we are joined and held together by every joint with which is it equipped. Paul actually uses an interesting set of words to communicate the idea that each member in the body was to be connected by what they had been equipped to provide.

Let me say that again slowly. So you follow me. The point that Paul is making with the words that he chooses is that each member of the body has been designed to be connected by what they have been designed to contribute.

[18:03] Do you understand what I'm saying? Connectedness and contribution go together. He has gifted each of us differently.

And in the body of Christ there are all different kinds of individuals that are engaged in doing all different kinds of things. And so what we see here in this passage if we were to summarize it is that God's word tells us that salvation places the believer into a relationship and a body in which Christ is the head and the authority and where the individual is part of a team or a family that is knit together by grace.

So let's put it this way. The church is where the spirit works one to knock off rough edges can we put that up?

To knock off rough edges so we fit together better and work together better so that we stay together better for the glory of Christ.

Now we're getting there here we go you got it? See it? The church is where the spirit works the church let me say that again slowly the church does it happen at McDonald's?

[19:22] No. Does it happen in these in Bible studies? Do Bible studies have the authority of exercising church discipline and what's the answer?

I don't think so. The church church the church of the living God the body of Christ the bride of Christ is where the spirit works to knock our rough edges off so that we fit together and work together better so that we stay together better.

That's a mouthful but that's Bible doctrine. I think this is important truth to understand. I remember as I was studying about this one of the things that that I thought about is how different I am today than when I first arrived here.

I'm not the same man I used to be. Becky are you out here? Is Becky Radcliffe in here? Hi wave at me Becky. I'm different aren't I? Becky was our first was my first secretary and Becky taught me a lot of things about ministry survival.

One of them is that you catch more flies with honey than with vinegar. Remember that Becky? I came here thinking that I could treat the body of Christ a little bit like a soccer team and it didn't go very well if you're wondering how that was and not just Becky men like Hal Burchett men like Bill Driscoll yesterday we had a deacons meeting and mid stride in the deacons meeting I started laughing to myself the reason I was laughing is because one of the misguided rumors is that pastor always gets his way in a deacons meeting there have been people that have actually said that in our congregation I mean you know pastor always gets his way and I was laughing because I was

on about my third iteration of my attempt to get my way and we had made no progress in my way and I will tell you that

[21 : 38] I am very very thankful for the collaborative nature of our deacons meetings one deacon after another contributed thoughts and value that led us to very what I believe are profitable decisions but I think to myself I am different today than I used to be because of the bride of Christ and because of your ministry to me but you're also different because of all of us together isn't that right that's the way it should be I got to tell you something if you keep on floating around you will not make much spiritual progress you got to lock in you got to work through the hardships of life you got to work through the misunderstandings you know I have been the son of Quentin and Marlia Knoyer for 65 years I was over at their house this last week saying dad would you forgive me I hate doing that it was bad at 64 but it's worse now it's definitely worse and lasting relationships are where we grow and our passage this morning says the whole body is joined we're working to come together and we're held together by the fact that we all have we have a part to contribute and that contribution is part of what connects us together now it goes on and says something else when each part is working properly it makes the body grow so what's the outcome of this union the last point that

Paul makes in this passage is that when saints under Christ's headship are marked by interconnection and contribution genuine growth takes place the primary focus of this passage is on internal spiritual maturity genuine growth within the body itself can be seen by things like less pettiness less inclination to gossip less offendability do you know what I mean by offendability have you ever bumped into people that are always in a snit because of something somebody said or did and you're always just kind of walking on eggshells around them because you know they're going to get tweaked about something I'll tell you what as you mature in Christ one of the things that should be a giveaway that you're maturing is that you roll with the flow you're not always in a perpetual grump less jealous more forgiving more gentle more loving more marked by the fruit of the spirit those are the things that the body works together to help us with look at what it says there again it says that when each part is working properly makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love here's the deal because

I'm going to walk through this theologically because God took you rough and ugly stone that you are and put you with a couple other rough and ugly stones that they are and then the spirit of God used the people of God and the word of God to begin knocking chunks off of you so you fit together a little better am I making track so far with the word the surprising outcome is that you grow spiritually is it nice to grow spiritually and what's the answer from God's people yes yes I love the fact I do I love the fact that there are things different today in Tim Knoyer's life because of the spirit of God and the people of God the word of God I remember the unhappy predictability of my depressive spirit at an earlier stage in life can I say that again slowly

I remember the unhappy predictability of the depressive spirit that I used to have I was a little bit like Eeyore you know didn't take meds but I needed them all the time I could wake up in the morning and the sky was dark and overcast whether there was a ray of sun or not I still on occasion can wake up and I think today and then what I do I've been at this long enough I think there you go Tim being proud and you're not thinking about Jesus let's get into the scriptures and allow the spirit of God to use the word of God and the people of God to hammer on me and I love being who I am today as opposed to who I used to be is that true for you are you glad you're not where you used to be and the answer is I hope now listen to me you stay permanently detached from other members of the bride of Christ and your spiritual progress is going to come apart at the seams though Paul doesn't note it expressly here a healthy loving body that is growing in grace is marked by two characteristic affections one is a love for the Lord Jesus Christ and a sincere interest in lost mankind so if you're growing in the Lord one of the things that's a giveaway is I'm more interested in Jesus today than I used to be that's the way it should be and I'm more interested in people who apart from the grace of God will spend eternity in hell and I'm concerned about them loving Christ and loving lost mankind go together that's part of spiritual growth and maturity so let me close with a question so we come to the ah part this all sounds well and good and it's easy to read about in Ephesians and think well

[28 : 16] God's pretty sharp to think about how he ought to take ugly hunks of stone like me and you and put us together and bang bang bang and help us to fit together and do the work of Christ and actually be the living represent that's amazing but when we look around we have to confess

that what we see is that things aren't really quite as like we think they should be from the book of Ephesians because there's something amiss if we say that we really buy into what the Bible says about church life and our relationship with the bride of Christ as being one of the very most significant issues in our life we'd have to say that many professing evangelicals today are not as deeply committed to the church of the living God as the scriptures are how can we say that so we have to ask the question do our calendars support what we say about our convictions do you follow that do our calendars support what we say about our convictions

I read an interesting blog this week I think it was on together for the gospel by and one of the you can probably go out there it's on are you a part time church goer and what it did was it took some of the very common reasons that people are not actively involved in our contemporary culture with their local church on a given Sunday and what they did was kind of added it up here's the statistics that they come up with and I'm sure that there are a wide variety of incidents in all of our lives but he said for one reason there were many that would go off on vacation and since they actually were on vacation four weeks it probably took them a week to decompress and so actually five weeks of absence from the body of Christ because of vacations this particular family had one of their children on a travel team and as a result of being on a travel team guess what if you're on travel team you probably have to drop off nine to twelve additional weeks so that that you can go sit in a ballpark instead of being with God's people now listen I don't want anybody to come to church because they're guilting here say that again slowly we don't come to church because we we satisfy a sense of guilt do we get extra points for coming here what's the answer really no but if the body of Christ is this important somewhere along the line you have to make decisions that reflect what you say theologically and I'm talking to you some of you who are parents and I got to tell you if you're out out out out out out what you say with what you do is far more significant than what you say you believe there are those that in addition to the travel team and weeks of vacation there are other times and this article commented on the fact that that a lot of times in churches when you have the senior pastor gone guess what happens people sometimes head for the back door well you know and thankfully when pastor Saul preaches he knocks it out of the park and you're thinking why doesn't he do it more often so you probably come when I'm not here it's good thank you pastor but you know people can figure out all kinds of reasons a lot of churches you know the senior pastor's gone guess what bye bye when this article added up the total number of weeks that were missed I was surprised 24 weeks missed 24 weeks I remember when I was at a conference listening to pastors talk I remember listening years ago to some pastors in the west from the west coast talk about the fact that their most faithful families are following this the most faithful families in the church were were regular attenders at two times a month can you imagine what a real body looks like if a substantial part of its parts are not there 50% of the time you know you know okay I'm not trying to make you laugh but you get the point here's the deal we don't go to church to earn our salvation we don't go to church to tamp down our sense of guilt we go to church to be part of the bride of

Christ there's an old song that was running through my mind as I was thinking about this I have one deep supreme desire that I might be like Jesus and I want you to know that that you who are part of the bride of Christ as I read this passage are absolutely essential in what we do as his body I need you you need me he put us together for his glory to be the living visible representation of himself and so to put it in summary he wants you to connect he wants you to commit and he wants you to stay in the body for his glory let's close in prayer precious father we are reminded this morning that you have given us your scripture you have given us your spirit and we want to be a people who revel in the truth of Christ those who are here today that know the

Lord Jesus Christ I pray that their hearts would just kind of fill up with joy at the part the thought of being part of the body of Christ man I am not an orphan I am part of a family and there are some here today that do not know Christ as they sit where they do burden them with the sense of hopelessness that is true apart from Christ and draw them to the point where they cry out and say I need Jesus I need him to save me I ask this in your precious name amen let's stand together as we close in singing and as we're doing that if God is addressing an issue in your heart and life that you need to care for publicly calling you to be part of our family here at Maranatha talking to you about a need you have in your heart for salvation if you are here today and you don't know Christ today is the day that you need to believe in him if you're here this morning and need to be obedient to the matter of baptism you come forward as we sing this song as we close ending in ending ending

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