

The Church Is One Body, Part 2

Scripture: Ephesians 2:11-22

Code: 49-9

Now this morning as we come to the second chapter of Ephesians—I read you the chapter, but we're looking only at [the] eleventh verse through twenty-second. And that's a lot, so I'm just going to give you an overview. But before we even get to that, I just want to say at the beginning what's on my heart.

I think the church gets a lot of abuse, and I'm talking not about a building, but I'm talking about the true church. I think it's easy to view the church as if it were a human institution and not to see the church for what it really is. It is the house of God. It is where God lives—the triune God lives, inhabits His true church. And I think we put ourselves in danger if we don't fully understand that because how we treat the church is how we treat the house where God lives. And I'm not talking about a building.

I don't think that any of you, or any other person who is a true believer in a church, would want to deface the facility of a church; that's pretty rare. Might be done by those who hate the church, but not those who love the church. And even though we wouldn't deface it in some visible way, the church suffers an awful lot of defacing in assaults that may not be quite as visible but are even more dangerous and deadly. So what Paul wants us to see in the passage before us this morning is the sacredness of the church—and I'm talking about the living church of Christ, the people of God. You remember Jesus said that it would be better for a person to be drowned in the depths of the sea than to offend one person “who believes in Me.” Offending another believer is offending God's house. I think we need to understand that in a fresh way, and Paul's going to help us with that.

But I want to begin back in 2 Chronicles, which is a long distance from Ephesians. But in 2 Chronicles we have the account of Solomon, who desires to build a temple for God as well as a palace for himself. And the second chapter opens with this: “Now Solomon decided to build a house for the name of the Lord and a royal palace for himself. So Solomon assigned 70,000 men to carry loads and 80,000 men to quarry stone in the mountains and 3,600 to supervise them.

“Then Solomon sent word to Hiram the king of Tyre, saying, ‘As you dealt with David my father and sent him cedars to build him a house to dwell in, so do for me. Behold, I am about to build a house for the name of the Lord my God, dedicating it to Him, to burn fragrant incense before Him and to set out the showbread continually, and to offer burnt offerings morning and evening, on sabbaths and on new moons and on the appointed feasts of the Lord our God, this being required forever in Israel. The house which I am about to build will be great, for greater is our God than all the gods.’” And then he has this moment of reality in verse 6: “But who is able to build a house for Him, for the heavens and the highest heavens cannot contain Him? So who am I, that I should build a house for Him?”

When he finished that temple over in the sixth chapter, Solomon held a dedication. And he had the same response, chapter 6, verse 18. After dedicating this great temple, he said, “But will God indeed dwell with mankind on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain You; how much less this house which I have built.” He recognizes that God is infinite and can't really be

contained in a house.

So where does God want to dwell? If He comes down to earth, where would He prefer to be? Isaiah the prophet writes this in chapter 66: “Thus says the Lord, ‘Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool. Where then is a house you could build for Me? And where is a place that I may rest? For My hand made all these things, thus all these things came into being,’ declares the Lord. ‘But to this one I will look,’”—here’s where God wants to dwell—“to him who is humble and contrite of heart, and who trembles at My word.” That’s where God wants to dwell. He wants a home in the heart. He wants a home in the heart of those who are humble, penitent, and obedient to His Word.

You go back into the Old Testament, and God came down to the garden with Adam. And then His presence came down in the Tabernacle as Israel wandered in the wilderness. And then His presence came down in the Temple when the first temple was built. And God was abiding with people in symbolic way by the *shekinah* glory that appeared in the garden and in the Tabernacle and in the Temple. But the prophet Ezekiel sees a scene, because of the disobedience of the nation Israel, where God departs, and all of a sudden the glory of God comes out of the Temple, up above the Temple, and across the valley and over the mountains; and God is gone, and “Ichabod” is written on Israel. But God came back; He came back in the person of Jesus Christ. John 1:14, “We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” He was the glory of God returned. God was dwelling in Christ.

But what about now? Where is God’s home? Where does He dwell? Simple answer to that is He dwells in His redeemed people, the church. The New Testament makes it clear. Hebrews chapter 3, verse 6 says those who hold firm in faith in the gospel are the house of God, ruled by His Son. Hebrews 10:21 says the Lord Jesus is the “great high priest over the house of God,” which is the church. First Timothy 3, God’s house is called “the church of the living God.” And the apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians, used the plural pronouns when he said this: “Do you not know that you are a sanctuary of God, and the Spirit of God dwells in you” collectively? He said, “For the sanctuary of God is holy, and that is what you are.” In his second letter he said, “We are the temple of living God; as God said, ‘I will dwell in them.’” First Corinthians 6:19, that familiar verse, “Your body is a sanctuary of the Holy Spirit who is in you.” The body of Christ, the church, is where God dwells. John says in 1 John 4:15, “Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him.” So God indwells every individual believer and, of course collectively, He lives in His church.

Now with that, I want to draw your attention to Ephesians chapter 2. But before we look at chapter 2, the final verse of chapter 1 is very important. Christ is identified as the one who was raised from the dead, in verse 20, the one who now is seated at the right hand of God, is “far above rule, authority, power, dominion, every name that is named, not only in this age but in the one to come.” Christ is the one who has subjected everything under His feet. Christ is the one who is “head over all things to the church,” and then verse 23, “the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”

The distinctive reality of the true church of Jesus Christ is that Christ lives in His church. Paul says in chapter 3 of Ephesians, verse 17, that Christ lives in us by faith. So as individuals we possess the Spirit of Christ. “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he [doesn’t belong to Christ],” Romans 8 says.

But collectively we are the house of God, and that’s the point that Paul is making in chapter 2 in our text, verses 11 to 22, which we’ll just do an overview of. But notice verse 22: “You are being built

together into a dwelling of God.” “You are being built together into a dwelling of God.” You are God’s house. This union that we have with Christ, and consequently with each other, forms the sanctuary where God lives. And again, I’m not talking about a building, I’m talking about the collective people of God in whom the Spirit of God lives, in whom Christ lives, and in whom the Father has set up His home.

This is the church. It is the house of God. And I say again, it’s not likely that someone who is a true believer would want to deface the property the church owns, but how readily people deface the house of God in a spiritual way. The true church of God, the sanctuary of the Holy Spirit, is really the—it’s the eye of the storm, it’s the place of righteous calm in the midst of unrighteous disaster.

The message of the apostle Paul here is the unity of the church, starting in verse 11 down to verse 22. He’s calling for Jew and Gentile to come together. And as we saw last time, this was not easy because they had centuries and millennia of hostility between Jews and Gentiles—not ethnically defined, but religiously defined. The Jews were the believers in the true God, and the Gentiles were the blasphemers who rejected the true God. They knew that the whole world of Gentiles violated the first commandment, to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.” They knew that the Gentile world violated the Shema: that God is one; there’s only one God, and He is the only true and living God.

So they saw the Gentile world as blasphemers. God had chosen them and given them His law and His word and His prophets and His priests and His blessings—not as an end in itself, but as a means to an end: so that they, having known the true God as He revealed Himself to them, could then declare Him to the world. They were chosen as a missionary nation. But as we know, they—rather than being compassionate toward the nations around them, they were hateful and hostile. And through the centuries Jews and Gentiles hated each other. And it went both ways, as we pointed out last time; I won’t go back into that. Because the Jews had rejected the Gentiles, the Gentiles reciprocated and rejected the Jews.

Now the apostle Paul has to deal with this, because since the Day of Pentecost—you will remember on the Day of Pentecost, in Acts 2, three thousand Jews were converted to Christ. A few days later five thousand more men were converted to Christ. And you probably have twenty to twenty-five thousand people who are established as the original church, but they’re not Gentiles. This sort of fits the Jewish expectation that when the Messiah came and brought salvation, it would come to the Jews and not the Gentiles, and He would elevate the Jews to a place of prominence in the world, and He would destroy all the blasphemers and all the Gentiles.

But that’s not what happened. In the book of Acts we have the story of a man named Saul, who persecuted Christians—Jewish Christians. The Lord saves him on the Damascus Road and calls him to take the gospel, of all people, to the Gentiles. And he goes to the Gentiles his first missionary journey; and where he goes, the gospel goes; and where the gospel goes, God saves Gentiles. And eventually he has to come back, and he has to make a report to the Jews and to the leaders of the church in Jerusalem, and it’s in Acts 15 that that occasion is described; and I’ll tell you the story by just reading a portion of Acts 15.

Verse 1: “Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, ‘Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you can’t be saved.’” That’s pretty blunt. Gentiles can’t be saved. They can be circumcised and then saved; in other words, you have to at least be a

proselyte to Judaism before you can find a door into the kingdom of salvation. They were trying to impose upon them the non-moral, non-spiritual laws, traditions of Judaism—the externals.

“And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue.” This was such a huge issue—accepting Gentiles as part of the kingdom of God, part of the church of Jesus Christ—they couldn’t solve it even in a discussion with Paul and Barnabas; it had to go to Jerusalem.

So they sent them on their way, passed through Phoenicia, Samaria, “describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and they were bringing great joy to all the brethren.” People in general were happy for this. “When they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. But some of the sect of the Pharisees”—these are the legalists—“who had believed stood up, saying, ‘It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses.’” You can’t go from Judaism into the kingdom, you can’t go from Gentile religion into the kingdom, you have to go through Judaism.

So verse 6 says, “The apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter. There had been much debate, and after that Peter stood up and said to them, ‘Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe’”—and he’s talking about the first Gentile convert, back in chapter 10 when he went to preach the gospel to the centurion named Cornelius. “And God,” verse 8, “who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?” “We haven’t even been able to bear all of these externals; why impose them on them?” Verse 11, “‘We believe we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are’”—only one way of salvation for Jew and Gentile. “All the people kept silent, and were listening to Barnabas and Paul as they were relating what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.”

The Jews had so much animosity toward Gentiles that this created terrible hostility throughout history, and even into the church. This is hostility of the most epic kind because it’s the accumulation of millennia of hatred. And the apostle Paul and the preachers of the New Testament had to deal with it; and so Paul does.

Look at verse 11. Now he’s talking to the Gentiles, and he’s going to say, “I know the Jews have made it difficult on you; I don’t want you to return that to them, OK. I don’t want your hostility coming back at them; this has got to end.” “Therefore remember, remember, formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are ‘Uncircumcision’ by the so-called ‘Circumcision,’ which is performed in the flesh by human hands—remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.” “Before you divide the church by getting angry at the Jews, remember the pit from which you were dug.”

I mean, this is a good word for all of us. Before you become divisive in the church over any issue, certainly any racial issue, you’d better remember the pit from which you have been dug. The fact that you’re even in the church is the work of God. “You are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus.”

You could say that the hostility had reduced itself to one word, an epithet that one Jew could throw at a Gentile and Gentile might throw back at a Jew in verse 11: “You are called ‘Uncircumcision.’” That was what the Jews liked to call the Gentiles as a pejorative: “You uncircumcised Gentile.” They had sort of a good Old Testament text to support that kind of talk, because when David went out to fight Goliath in 1 Samuel 17, do you remember what David said? “Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?” He had to throw the adjective “uncircumcised” in there. That was just a nasty way to identify a Gentile—though the Gentiles would call the Jews “circumcised,” and reduce them to that.

This is name-calling about the presence or absence of a surgical sign. You might say, “Well what was circumcision about?” It had two functions. One was symbolic: The circumcision was God’s symbol of the fact that people are sinful, and they’re sinful at such a profound level that they can only pass on sin to the subsequent generation. Nothing defines the depth and breadth and height and length of human sinfulness like progenerating children. Guess what, you may think you’re a good person—you’ll only produce little sinners. Circumcision was a way of identifying the fact that sin was so profoundly embedded in human life that all sinners could do was produce more sinners; and they needed to have a surgery on the heart because of that sin.

But circumcision also had a second function in Judaism, and it was a way to protect the Jewish people from many illnesses that were passed on by uncircumcised people. So God was preserving His people for the fulfillment of His plan and promise.

But that became the epithet that was thrown about by Jew and Gentile, to reduce their hostility to name-calling. And Paul says even the circumcision, he says, is nothing. Verse 11, it’s “performed in the flesh by human hands.” It’s just an outward symbol. And then to the Gentiles he says, “While you might be tempted to use this epithet, or you might be tempted to be hostile toward Gentiles”—and he’s talking to the church—“you might be tempted to be hostile toward Gentile believers. And Gentile believers might be tempted to be hostile toward Jewish believers,” because that hostility was so embedded for so long. “You Gentiles need to take it on yourself not to do that.”

How do you do that? Verse 12, by “[remembering] that you were at that time,” in the past, not just what he said in verse 1—“dead in trespasses and sin,” not just “[walking] according to the course of the world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit working in the sons of disobedience,” not just living in lust and “desire of the flesh and the mind,” not just “children of wrath.” But you were “at that time separate from Christ,” Christless, excluded from the citizenship of Israel. You were basically stateless. You were a refugee, strangers to the covenants of promise. You were covenant-less; you had no promises of God. You were hopeless—you had no future hope, and you were godless. You had a lot of gods, but you had no God.

So what he is saying at the basis of this is a very profound argument: If you’re going to cause division in a church, maybe you need to remember what you came from. Before you get on your high horse and deface the sanctuary of the living God, and do damage to His redeemed church, maybe you should remember what you were: Christless.

Out of paganism was no savior, no messiah. This is world religion; this is ancient idolatry. No messianic hope, no deliverer, no savior. There’s no savior in Islam. Think of it: There is no redeemer

in Islam—millions of people with no redeemer. The Jews, they lived in a linear reality. Everything was moving down the line to the arrival of the Savior, the Messiah. The rest of the people in ancient paganism lived in a cyclical approach to life. They had no savior; they worshiped idols that didn't exist. The Stoics had the notion that somehow there's a fire that hits the reset button, and the cycle of life starts again. Life for the ancients was a treadmill—you keep walking, but you never go beyond the place you started. But to the Jews there was linear history; it was moving toward the arrival of the Messiah. The Gentiles had no such hope.

And secondly, they were stateless. They were excluded from the citizenship of a people that were blessed. Israel was blessed: "You only have I chosen from all . . . the earth," God says in Amos 3:2.

In Isaiah 63 there's a marvelous portion of Scripture which speaks to the unique blessing that God had given to Israel. Isaiah 63:7, "I shall make mention of the lovingkindnesses of the Lord, the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord has granted us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which He has granted them according to His compassion and according to the abundance of His lovingkindnesses. For He said, 'Surely, they are My people.' . . . So He became their Savior. In their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them; in His love and in His mercy He redeemed them, and He lifted them and carried them all the days of old," out of Egypt into the Promised Land. Continuing deliverance, even though they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit. And Paul says in Romans 9 they were given the law and the prophets and the covenants and the Messiah. It meant everything to be a part of the kingdom of Israel; that was the place where God had poured out His divine revelation.

The Gentiles were stateless, they were covenantless, they were strangers to the covenants of promise—what does that mean? That the Jews had had the covenant given to Moses and the covenant given to David. They had been given a New Covenant that came to the prophets, a covenant of salvation. God had made amazing promises to Israel, promises that they would be in the land someday, promises of national salvation, promises of a kingdom—and all the elements and features of that kingdom are laid out by the prophets. Gentiles had none of that: no savior, no special favor as a nation, no promises from God.

Then he says, "without hope." "You're hopeless. There's nothing that you can hold onto that would say to you there's a better future coming." Hope is based on credible promises from someone who can perform. In Paul's day, the Gentile world believed there was no future for the body, which is only the prison for the soul; and at death and the final breath, or out from an open wound, the soul would go to Hades, where the dead bemoaned their existence without comfort. One of the writers, Theognis, said, "I rejoice and sport in my youth"—and he meant that in an immoral sense—"I rejoice and sport in my youth. Long enough will I lie beneath the earth, bereft of life, voiceless as stone, and shall leave the sunlight which I loved, good man though I am, and I shall see nothing more"—it's just hopeless. The Homeric Hymns feature the Muses singing of the deathless gift of the gods, and the sorrows of men who, unlike the gods, will live in nothingness. Hopeless despair.

And finally, godless: You have lots of gods, but not any true God.

Now look, if you're a believer, you now have a Savior, a Messiah. You have a kingdom to which you belong—His kingdom. You have promises, you have hope, and you have God. And what he is saying to them is, "Look, the church is the union of Jew and Gentile into one." You need to remember, before you do damage to that unity, the grace of God that picked you up and brought you

out of the state you were in, into His holy kingdom.

So you see in verses 11 and 12 the alienation. But verse 13 makes a big change, a very big change: “But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ”—blood of Christ brought you near. “Far off” was how Gentiles were referred to because Jerusalem was where the Temple was, and the Jews were in Israel and near Jerusalem. They were spoken of in the Old Testament as being near; and the Gentiles were spoken of as being far off, far off.

And so Paul says to them, “There’s no room for hostility toward Jews, even though they persecuted you, or even though they were hostile towards you in the past, because you have now been brought near. You are no longer far off.” That’s Old Testament language: “You have been brought near by the blood of Christ.” That is an incredibly important reality.

Verse 14, “For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall.” There’s nothing to separate us anymore. And by the way, the Jewish temple was a place of separation. There was a court of the Gentiles and a court of the women, then there was the court of the priests, then there was the inner court where the sacrifices were made, and then there was the Holy Place, and then there was the Holy of Holies. And everything was separated by barriers. And the only place the Gentiles could go was into the court of the Gentiles, on the far perimeter on the outside, and for a Gentile to go any closer was serious business. We find that in Acts 21, when Paul was accused of bringing Trophimus, who was a Gentile, past the barrier. So the Jews were still fussing with trying to keep Gentiles out, even though they were one in Christ. And Paul is saying, “The Jews ought not to be doing that, but neither should you Gentiles pick up on that hostility and give it back.”

There’s a wonderful story in France in World War II. Some of our American soldiers had a buddy who had been killed. And they saw a local cemetery, and so they wanted to bury him in that local cemetery. They stopped by the church, and they talked to the priest, and they said, “Can we bury our buddy here?” The priest said, “Is he Catholic?” and they said, “No, he’s not Catholic.” So the priest said, “No, he can’t be buried here.” Well discouraged as those soldiers were, they did the next thing they could do—they found a place just outside the fence of the cemetery, and they buried him there. The next morning they came back to give final respects, and they couldn’t find the grave. They found the priest, and they said, “We buried our friend just outside the fence; we can’t find the grave.” The priest said, “Well, first part of the night I stayed awake, sorry for what I told you; second part I spent moving the fence.” Christ moved the fence. He always moves the fence to embrace all that are His.

The “far off” all of a sudden became “near.” The church is one. This is our identity in Christ. Forget the ethnic identities, forget any other identities; Christ did this. In that sense, verse 14, “He Himself is our peace.” He is the one who brought peace. “What do you mean, ‘He is our peace’? How could a person be peace?” Because He is the one who provided the sacrifice for sin that brought us to Himself, and He provided it for Jew and Gentile.

When a Jew believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, he loses his national distinction. When a Gentile believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, he loses his ethnic identity. And we’re all one in Christ, right? We’re all blessed, and Christ is our peace. He “made both groups,” verse 14, “into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall.” He tore down all those barriers that separated, so symbolic in the Temple.

But there was more. How did He do it; how did He make two groups into one? He tore down the dividing wall, and verse 15, He “[abolished] in His flesh the enmity.” He abolished the hatred; that’s what “enmity” means—used again at the end of verse 16.

What caused the hostility was the law of commandments contained in ordinances, not moral law. Moral law never changes. Spiritual law never changes. But it was all those externals that once were given by God to keep Israel separate, so they wouldn’t easily be able to interact with pagans and then get polluted—when they were supposed to be set apart, sanctified as a witness to the true God, and evangelize the nations from the vantage point of an uncorrupted testimony.

But Israel had failed to fulfill its mission, and now God was carving out a new people. And there wouldn’t be any external identifiers anymore; it was going to be those who are in Christ, whether they are Jew or Gentile. So the abolishing of all the Jewish external distinctions—and the two are one new man. Christ is our peace, verse 15. Christ establishes peace. And then in verse 17, “He came [preaching] peace.” Verse 16 says He “[reconciled] both in one body to God through the cross,” and then “put to death the enmity.”

This is the most severe human barrier, maybe in history; and it had to be eliminated in Christ, and it was. Why? Because the new humanity, the new humanity is indwelt by God. Look at verse 18: “Through Him”—that is Christ—“we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you’re fellow citizens with the saints.” All of a sudden—you didn’t have a kingdom, now you have a kingdom; you didn’t have a family, now you have a family; you didn’t have a household with God, now you’re in God’s house. And God’s house was “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets”—not so much that they were the foundation as that they laid the foundation, which was the apostles’ doctrine. And the corner stone was none other than Christ Himself, who set all the angles.

The dwelling place of God is the church, built on an apostolic doctrine, divine truth revealed in Scripture. Jesus Christ Himself is the corner stone, and from Him all the lines run to give symmetry to the building; and the whole building is “fitted together, growing into a holy sanctuary in the Lord.” And then this: “in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.”

The cross is God’s answer to racial discrimination. It’s God’s answer to segregation. It’s God’s answer to apartheid. It’s God’s answer to war. It’s God’s answer to antisemitism, hyper-nationalism, bigotry, and every form of strife. Christ is our peace. He made peace; He preached peace; He reconciled us. He gave us access to God the Father, God the Spirit, and to Himself—God the Son. And we have become the dwelling of God—I love that in verse 22. God lives in His people.

We need to be very careful how we treat each other, because we’re the temple of God. Any believer who comes to you brings Christ with him or her. However you treat another believer is how you treat Christ; however you treat the church is how you treat Him because He dwells in His church. The church was designed by the Lord to be one. Jesus prayed in John 17 that the Father would make us one. He did make us one, spiritually. We need to be one in terms of our life together.

Over in chapter 4, as we close, there’s some practical instruction. Chapter 4: “I, [Paul],” verse 1, “the prisoner of the Lord, implore you”—“now I’m going to tell you how to practically respond. I want you”

“to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called.” Here’s how you should be: “with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love,” verse 3, “being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.” That is just astonishing, isn’t it. Solomon couldn’t build a house that could contain God, and yet God lives in His redeemed people. This is a massive, incomprehensible privilege.

And coming along with that same privilege is great responsibility. You probably know this by now, but I am a protector of the church by calling. That’s part of being in the ministry—is not just to preach and teach, but to be the protector of the church. We’ve tried through this last year, in very unusual circumstances, to protect this church because this is Christ’s church, and this is God’s dwelling. And God has enabled us to continue to protect the church, and the church has flourished. It always breaks my heart when the church is under attack by people who want to destroy the integrity of its spiritual unity and the bond of peace.

We have seen a time when many churches were fractured. People were divided over everything you can think of; and you know what they were—whether or not they did mandates, masks, and now it’s vaccines. Whatever it is, the enemy will use anything to divide the church, arguing about issues. We have to remember that we’re only in the church by grace, right? The Lord saved us and put us in the church; and He lives in this church. And we need to be the protectors of His honor and His glory in the church. Let’s pray.

Father, we do thank You for Your Word to us. It’s clear what You’re asking: that we maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, that we love each other, that we never allow anything to come in by the way of pride or selfishness or division, dissention—because this defames Your name, this defaces Your church. Thank You, Lord. Of all the things that You have done in the last year, You have protected our unity in incredible ways in a time when there has been so much strife. And we have enjoyed the sweet love and peace and joy that You desire for the house in which You dwell, and You have blessed us. And we give You thanks. Keep us faithful, we pray in our Savior’s name. Amen.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2023 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<https://www.gty.org/about#copyright>).