

# One Body, Spirit, Hope, Lord, Faith, Baptism, God and Father (part 1)

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*Ephesians 4:4-6*

By John Owen Butler

**Bible Text:** Ephesians 4:4-6  
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## **Heritage Presbyterian Church**

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I invite you to remain standing as we hear God's word. Our Old Testament reading this morning is Psalm 22, the 22<sup>nd</sup> Psalm and before we read, let's pray.

*Indeed Lord, let your name be sung around this world, every nation, every land, every tongue, and to that end, Lord, we pray that you would bless the word as it is read and as it is proclaimed in preaching this Lord's day here and around this world that Christ Jesus would be exalted. If he be lifted up, he will draw all men unto him and so, our God, we pray draw us now to your word, help us to hear and to understand, work on us by your Spirit to give us new life in you, to help us to see our Lord Jesus and glorify his name, and we ask it, Lord, by and in and through his name. And God's people said amen.*

Psalm 22,

1 My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? 2 O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest. 3 Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel. 4 In you our fathers trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them. 5 To you they cried and were rescued; in you they trusted and were not put to shame. 6 But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by the people. 7 All who see me mock me; they make mouths at me; they wag their heads; 8 "He trusts in the LORD; let him deliver him; let him rescue him, for he delights in him!" 9 Yet you are he who took me from the womb; you made me trust you at my mother's breasts. 10 On you was I cast from my birth, and from my mother's womb you have been my God. 11 Be not far from me, for trouble is near, and there is none to help. 12 Many bulls encompass me; strong bulls of Bashan surround me; 13 they open wide their mouths at me, like a ravening and roaring lion. 14 I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast; 15 my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death. 16 For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet--

17 I can count all my bones-- they stare and gloat over me; 18 they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots. 19 But you, O LORD, do not be far off! O you my help, come quickly to my aid! 20 Deliver my soul from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dog! 21 Save me from the mouth of the lion! You have rescued me from the horns of the wild oxen! 22 I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will praise you: 23 You who fear the LORD, praise him! All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him, and stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel! 24 For he has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, and he has not hidden his face from him, but has heard, when he cried to him. 25 From you comes my praise in the great congregation; my vows I will perform before those who fear him. 26 The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek him shall praise the LORD! May your hearts live forever! 27 All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you. 28 For kingship belongs to the LORD, and he rules over the nations. 29 All the prosperous of the earth eat and worship; before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, even the one who could not keep himself alive. 30 Posterity shall serve him; it shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation; 31 they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn, that he has done it.

Then our New Testament reading from Ephesians 4, again beginning at verse 1.

1 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit--just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call-- 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

And all God's people said amen. Please be seated.

Brothers and sisters, we have heard this exhortation from the Apostle Paul writing by the Holy Spirit that we are to be eager, that we are to rush to the maintenance of the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, that it is already something that has been affected, already something that has been declared and worked by our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, that he has broken down that middle wall of partition and joined of Jew and Gentile together so that as our children have sung, that the name of the Lord would be proclaimed in every land, by every land and by every tongue to the glory of God forever and ever, that Jesus Christ is Lord. And so as we have this new reality that Paul has been declaring to us affected by the blood of Jesus, brought about by his Holy Spirit drawing a people to himself from every nation and tribe and tongue and people, the reality is that there is this unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace but we are called upon, exhorted to maintain this, to advance this, to keep this, and we are to do this. And why is it that this is to take place?

Well, Paul is telling us now in verses 4 through 6 which we will begin exploring this Lord's day and in the next Lord's day and perhaps the one afterwards, we will continue to work through, is that the work of God the Father and Son and Holy Spirit is what has affected this, is what has brought this about, and we are to work to maintain this because of that work of the Trinity.

Every member of the Trinity's work is brought forward for our consideration here, the work of God the Spirit, the work of God the Son, the work of God the Father, and today we're gonna look at why we are to be eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace due to the work of God the Holy Spirit. We are to do this because of the work of God the Holy Spirit. Look at verse 4, "There is one body and one Spirit--just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call." The church is called not just to individual moral behavior, we are not just called individually to have that character and conduct that is pleasing to the Lord, although that is a huge thing we need to see, but the church of the Lord Jesus Christ as we act together as that unity brought about by God the Holy Spirit, we are, as we have seen already, at that primary stage upon which God demonstrates his glory in the universe.

We tend to think of it, if you remember looking at God's marvelous work of creation, his making of all things out of nothing in the space of six days, by that marvelous word that he spoke and the worlds came into being, we tend to think of it in terms of Genesis 1 and 2, we tend to think of it driving on our vacations and going to the Grand Canyon or Sequoia or just looking at the glorious towering clouds over our Oklahoma prairies, but the glory of God is demonstrated more magnificently, the demonstration of that awesome mighty power of God is seen through the venue primarily of the church. As God has worked that power that brought our Lord Jesus from the dead, that same power that is at work in those who believe, in us Christians, in us God is glorifying himself and so we are to see this work of God the Holy Spirit, God the Son, God the Father, as he works in us, and therefore it is not just to individual moral behavior, individual character that we are to exemplify, but it is all for the purpose that together we show a new community, that we demonstrate that we are a unique people, to use the terminology of the King James, that we are a peculiar people, that we are definitely peculiar in the world's eyes, that they see us and they see that we don't hold to their values, that we are not affected by how they think and affected by what they treasure and what they desire. Why? Because God has transformed us. We're not like them. "Behold, if any man is in Christ Jesus, he's," what? "A new creation." A new creature, and the church is to show, to manifest this new reality.

So the apostle tells us here in Ephesians 4:4-6 that, in fact in this new reality, in this new community, in this new kingdom, that the world's values do not obtain, don't hold, that there is a fact here of a unity. Notice here in verse 4, "There is one body," and notice here the apostle is going to repeat this seven times, "one body and one Spirit--just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call," let's say it together, "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." And that word "all" also is brought out for us here. Paul is driving home a point. Anytime you see repetition in the Scriptures, it's to help drive home a point. Well, I mean, he hammers this down that there is this perfect unity here: one body, one spirit, one hope, one Lord.

This is the reality of things. He's not saying we hope that there's going to be one body and one spirit, we hope that there's going to be one Lord acknowledged. No, he states the fact this is how it is, this is the new reality of things, this is how our understanding is to be shaped, our thinking is to be molded. He's not exhorting us to be united, the fact is that we are united as we are incorporated in the body of Christ. He is urging us here to a conscious commitment and striving to maintain this unity, to advance this, as we saw last week. It's an encouragement that this isn't something that we're called on to achieve, to pull this off, and what a comforting thing that is because there's never in a billion years any way that we would be able to generate this in our own strength and power. There's never any way that we could bring this about, it has to be the work of God in accomplishing all of this and he has.

So when he helps us here to understand this glorious reality that it is to shape and mold all this what we're going to see following on here in Ephesians, when he talks about how we are to relate one to another in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ and that transformation that is to take place of our laying aside the old man, the old ways of thinking, we need to live according to that new reality, to be renewed in the spirit of our minds and to put on those loving patterns of behavior in Christ Jesus, it's because of this new reality that there's one body, one Lord, one God and Father of all and so forth.

Now also understand something here, when he says "one," we need to read this, we need to understand this, there is one and only one. One and only one body. One and only one Spirit, and so forth. Not one among many, not one that is in a range of choices, there is one unique work of God. We don't have a God who has to make a replacement. We don't have a God who has to function according to a Plan B. We have a God who has no substitutes, no work-arounds, and he accomplishes it, but we need to also understand there's one and only one body. We can't put forward an alternative to the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is no salvation ordinarily outside of her, as we have confessed. Why? Because it is through the church that God has declared that his Gospel is to be preached. It is through the church that God is manifesting this marvelous work of salvation and holding out before us the means of grace of the word as it is read and preached, of prayer and of observance of the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. There is no work-around that we may legitimately use. It is in and through and by the means of this body, this reality. God has said it and done it, that's how it is.

He says now there is one body and we see that this is the body of Christ. All Christians, all believers are in Christ. He is the head of the body, the church, as we saw in Ephesians 1:22. The church in this next verse in Ephesians 1 tells us that the church is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all, and it was important for the Ephesians to see there are not churches such as a Jewish church and a Gentile church, there is one church, that unity that God has affected and brought together, one body in Christ.

He says there is one Spirit, one and only one Spirit. It refers here to God the Holy Spirit. He's not talking about some kind of spirit, little s, of camaraderie and so forth that we

have. No, he's speaking of God the Holy Spirit and since there's only one God the Holy Spirit, he is that one who indwells the body of Christ. He is that one in whom we were all baptized into one body, Jew or Greek, slave or free, and we are all made to drink of one Spirit as 1 Corinthians 12:13 tells us. This unity is brought about by God the Holy Spirit so any sin against the unity of the church is also a sin against the Spirit of God who indwells the church as well. Our sins which work against the unity of the Spirit were to undo what he has worked to put together, what he has joined together, just as we will use in the language of the traditional language of the wedding ceremony, those and of Scripture, "Those whom God has joined together," what is it? "Let no man put asunder." In the same sense, those whom Christ, those whom God the Holy Spirit has joined together in his church, let no man put asunder. We are in one body, joined by God the Holy Spirit. The demands that are placed upon us here that we love our brothers and sisters in Christ and live at peace with them is a weighty thing and yet if we are to act contrary to this, if we are to neglect this, this is as it were, to declare war on God and those who are his.

He tells us there is one hope, one and only hope. Now here he's talking about that hope to which we look towards, we look towards that future of our redemption fully in Christ Jesus that we will experience that hope of glory of being with him. This is something that we often don't tend to think of as much but there is in the Christian faith a future-orientedness. We look forward to his coming again with eager expectation. We have this glorious inheritance in Christ Jesus pressed home to us by God the Holy Spirit reminding us of who he is and what Christ has come to do, and it's a hope that is not going to be a dud. It is a hope that will not make us to be ashamed, that we are not going to be embarrassed as we live out our lives for him in this world. Yes, we are called to live as a separate people, we are called to live as a people who live according to this new reality in the kingdom of God, and the world may look at us and go, "What is going on with you? Why are you living in this way? Why are you acting, behaving in this manner?" And the world would deride us and yet we are not looking towards our earthly treasure but we are looking to our heavenly glory which is to come, our inheritance which is Christ Jesus himself. It is that one who is the center of our being.

Now by way of doctrine this morning, I want us to notice this. We had brought out in our reading of the first couple of paragraphs in the Westminster Confession of Faith in chapter 25 about the invisible and the visible church and about which Pastor Mike had exhorted us about this, notice with regards to the invisible church, that we see that, "The catholic or universal Church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the Head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."

If you were to plot on a map within a 10 mile radius of this address of this particular building here, you would see a huge number of congregations. Why? Because we're in Oklahoma. We're in the Bible Belt. We're in Edmond which has sometimes been referred to as Colorado Springs East. If you know anything about all of the Christian organizations that have set up headquarters in Colorado Springs and then you look at the number of them here in the Oklahoma City area and especially in Edmond, one would

say that. But if you see the huge number of churches but then a number of denominations of Christians. Some groups, they have fellowship with one another, others don't, and to the world's eyes we give lie to the phrase of the hymn in "Onward Christian Soldiers, we are not divided, all one body we." The world goes, "Yeah, right. Boy, see how they love one another."

Even if we were to look within our own congregation, not every member is in intimate fellowship with one another. Part of that is due to the nature of human relationships. There's, I forget what this particular quotient is called but generally you can only know about 150 people. Now, yes, you might be able to name off the names of somebody but to really have some kind of interaction and to be able to keep all of those things in your head and juggling as to what's going on, only about 150 people and you kind of max out beyond that. You know, those of us with over 600 friends on Facebook, you know, we are not intimate with all 600 people. It is that small cadre that we tend to focus upon, it's just the nature of our creatureliness, in our ability to handle these sorts of relationships, and I dare say that even out of that 150, we are not on intimate terms, well, let's ratchet that down quite a bit. Even our Lord Jesus had the 12 and then the 3.

But a big thing with regards to this lack of communion, this lack of koinonia, this lack of fellowship one with another is our own sin, our own sin that gums up the works. That is perhaps the biggest hindrance to this manifestation of the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace in our own congregation, is it not? And I'm not saying this out of any particular knowledge of things, but it's the fact that we are sinners and that we will do things to hurt one another, we will do things that are selfish, we will do things that are not reflective of the mind of Christ. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." Why? Because we think of ourselves more highly than we ought.

So when we look at this reality here of the disjointedness, of the fact that we are not fitted and joined together as we ought to be, we might be tempted to say, "Oh, there is no unity," but Paul's emphatic answer is, "Oh, yes there is." It's a fact. You are the body of Christ. You are the body of Christ. There is one body. Regardless of what the world sees, regardless of what you perceive with your own eyes and may have experienced, there is as the Nicene Creed has put it, one holy catholic and apostolic church. This is who and what we are, Paul is saying. This is this reality. Let's live according to this.

What affected this unity, what brought it about wasn't the work of man. If it were something that was dependent upon us, it would never ever ever come about. It had to be created by God. He is that one who gives us life. He is that one who shapes us and molds us. You see, what is it that makes us a congregation? It is the work of God the Holy Spirit. It is that finished work of Christ Jesus that makes us a people. You see, he alone can bring us from darkness into his glorious light. He alone is that one who can take us out of the pit and place our feet upon the rock of Christ and to give us a new song to sing for him. He alone is that one who can work in us to shape us and to mold us and to make us like his own Son.

Just as our own bodies are fearfully and wonderfully made, so is the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is visible, comprehended in its entirety only to God. None of us has an ability to comprehend and to see all of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ that meets at Edmond, let alone throughout all of this world, and definitely not through the ages in looking back to the beginning of creation all the way to the grand and glorious summation of all things in Christ Jesus. God alone knows that because he alone knows the heart. He alone sees his work that he works within the heart. He alone can see this whole number of his elect, the whole body of those whom he has brought to saving faith in his Son. He alone is able to look through the ages and to comprehend them all and we speak of that reality when we gather at the Lord's Supper and even in our own liturgy, we say that we are gathered here with the church throughout the ages, all who call upon Christ in all places and in all time.

Does that glorious reality smack you upside the head, as it were, that when you come to the Lord's Supper, that you are gathering with the saints throughout all time and in all places, confessing that one true Christian faith, that there is one holy catholic and apostolic church? Does that reality here that you are gathering together, that not just you're here at 14500 N. Western Avenue, Edmond, Oklahoma, 735, no 73013, you see, I'm still thinking another zip code. It's funny, last Lord's day Mike was talking about gathering here at Providence. Greg, you'd appreciate that, wouldn't you? Gathering here at Providence. When I was in radio, I slipped up and gave the call sign for an old station on the air. That happens.

But we are confessing here, no, there's this new reality. This is where we are part of the body of Christ. The testimony of the Holy Spirit through the word here is that though we may not perceive it naturally, there is a supernatural reality brought about by him. It is invisible to our natural perception of things but there are more things in heaven and earth than dreamt of in our human philosophy and perceptions.

Why is it this way? Well, as fallen human beings we can't perceive all of these things and we don't want to. So operating under that handicap of our own creatureliness and of our own sin, we end up hobbling the public visible expression of the body of Christ as we're called upon in Scripture to express. Our twisted perverseness implies that there is also something straight and true, though. You see, there is genuine real unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace affected and maintained by God in the body of Christ, his church. We are united to him by his grace. We are also united to his church as well, united to all who are united to him and this is the real church, the real union that cannot be broken. Paul is telling us, "Live in this union. Live united. Be who you're saved to be and be who you are."

We also confess with regards to the visible church, all those in every place who profess the Christian faith and their children, but the reality is we see that though there are these marks of the church, the Reformers would speak of the three marks or notae in Latin, of the church that we are to look for, the pure preaching of the word, that there is also the right use and the right participation in the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and then also proper biblical church discipline, walking in holiness and a guarding of the

table against the leaven of unrighteousness. Others would add a fourth mark, that of true fellowship in the saints. But if we were to line up each of these three marks here, we would see that we fall woefully short in so many ways and the Reformers realized that, you know, it's a mixed bag. The church of the Lord Jesus Christ in its visible manifestation, even our Lord Jesus says there are tares among the wheat and God's gonna sort all that out at the end of the day, but until that time we're going to live in a situation under circumstances where we're not hitting on all cylinders, we are not loving each other as we ought, we are not serving one another in love as we must because we're growing in grace and we're not all there to the same degree, we're not all living in that way and in that manifestation that we must and should. And there are those who profess the name of Christ Jesus in name only but who profess that name but deny the power of the resurrection, who deny the truth as it is in Jesus practically. Oh, they may be quite orthodox in their profession of their faith but the reality of that faith has not gripped them.

The church struggles to live up to the reality as Paul has described us of one body, one Spirit, one hope. Sometimes we live according to our high calling in Christ Jesus, we have good days and we have some not so good days and that can be pretty much a downer, it can be pretty much discouraging. Some time ago, I talked about having an inner Eeyore, where that gloomy things and nothing can go right and so forth. Listen, you don't want to be a fly on the wall some days when Mike and I get together and we lament our own hearts and we lament the state of Christ's church but yet that is the reality, and even within our own congregation, it can be pretty much of a downer. But what is it that we must do? Turn our eyes upon Jesus. He is that one who has effected this unity. The challenge is to keep sight of by faith of the reality of the invisible church so that the reality of the visible church doesn't overwhelm us, that Christ is at work in those who believe, that he who has begun a good work will keep at it until that day when he comes again to take us home to be with him. There must be that continual pleading, "Please be patient with me. God is not finished with me yet. Heritage, God is not finished with you." We have this one hope to which we have been called.

There is one body. There is one Spirit. If we were to humanly pull the one from the other, we would die. There is an intimate, personal, organic connection between body and Spirit and as it is with our bodies, so it is in the body of Christ. No part of the body can go without the other parts. If your heart has a blow-out on the way home today, it's safe to say you're not coming to the evening service. You know, it's not like you can just send it out for repair. You need it. The rest of you depends upon it. So it is in the body of Christ, you come to serve the Lord and worship, you're blessed by him in worship but you have a role to play with your fellow saints as God the Holy Spirit works in and through you to encourage, to instruct one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs of rebuke, of fellowship, the myriad of ways in which we as the body of Christ interact.

Just as our bodies minister to all of its parts, so we all together minister to each other and this is all driven by, what? A feeling of warm fuzziness and camaraderie? No, by God the Holy Spirit. Who prompts us to pray for one another? Who prompts us to pick up the phone and say, "How's it been going today?" That causes us to rummage around in the



pantry to see if we can fix something for someone? That causes us to be burdened as we wake up in the middle of the night thinking about some brother or sister and to hit our knees in prayer? All driven by the Holy Spirit that indwells us and this isn't some generic kind of principial way, the Holy Spirit's at work in particular, specific, continual acts to motivate us, to move us to serve one another in love, to stir us up unto love and good works as he is at work in us who believe.

So in order to see the glory of God manifested through the church, we need to be in the church to have that glory manifested through us and to one another. You want to see the work of God, see it coming to you through your brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus, if you want to see the glory of God, see it as he works in you to serve him. Oh, that glorious prayer hymn, "Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee," 585, pull out your hymnbooks and let's look at that. 585.

"Take my life and let it be  
consecrated, Lord, to thee.  
Take my moments and my days;  
let them flow in ceaseless praise,  
let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Take my hands and let them move  
at the impulse of thy love.  
Take my feet and let them be  
swift and beautiful for thee,  
swift and beautiful for thee."

All on through that particular hymn, this is what we're called to do and to be, to be those instruments through which God the Holy Spirit is manifesting his glory here in the church and Paul is saying here, "Look, live according to this new reality." That's what the hymnwriter is doing here, praying, "Lord, help me to live according to this new reality, that I would be the instrumentation through which you will show forth your almighty power."

Now by way of application this morning, I want you to notice first, and this is not in your outline, this is a real antidote to me-ism in the church. In our sinful natures, our orientation is that everything is to be centered upon us. We used to have this little girl who lived next to us, her family lived next to us in Mississippi, and one day I had gone over to the house and knocked on the door and just was knocking on the door and this little girl comes tearing around the house and says, "Here I am!" I wasn't looking for her but, you know, when you're that age and that particular kid, everything did revolve around you, at least that's how you'd like to think it, and that's how we are. We want everything to revolve around us. That's part of our sinful human nature. We want everything to relate to us and, therefore, we tend to think of the church as it relates to us. We weigh it, we evaluate what others do to us and how they serve us. We tend to think of it in a consumeristic fashion: our needs, our wants, our desires, our likes, our dislikes, our preferences and our druthers. We tend to evaluate it all according to that standard but in

reality Paul is saying, "It is the polar opposite." We have to see ourselves as Martyn Lloyd-Jones said, as members of the body of Christ. It's a question of you relating to the body, not the body relating to you. It is the unity of the Spirit, not the unity of me that accomplishes this. And what a tragic thing it is when, "I am of Paul. I am of Apollos. I am of Cephas. I am of Christ," Paul encountering that with the Corinthian church and yet that's how we tend to roll, isn't it? That's how we tend to operate in things. We must see ourselves as we relate to Christ, to his body, not as it relates to us and so, therefore, this is an antidote to me-ism in the church.

Another thing as well is wrong to lead with any human distinction in the church. What do I mean by that? Anything that is erected by us as being a qualification, anything being a qualifier with regards to that unity that we are called upon to express. So therefore if we are to draw it on racial lines, if we are to draw that on political lines, if we are to line this out with regards to ethnicity. We're a Croatian church or, you know, we are a white Appalachian redneck church. You know, we can come up with all kinds of distinctions there. You know, I've heard it said, "Well, you know, we're a homeschooling church. Or we're this or that." There is no hyphenation. There is one church of the Lord Jesus Christ and if we lead with that other distinction, we are denying the reality effected by Christ. Now we may say, "Oh, well, we believe in the universal church and God has called out a people to himself and so forth." No, we have to show that reality within our own context here and we cannot erect barriers that God has ripped down.

This is what Christ has died for. This is what he has brought about. Now it doesn't mean that we ignore distinctions but we consider them a hindrance if they are man-made and erected, if they're a hindrance to that unity of the faith in the bond of peace. There is a relationship between the members of the body of Christ, a kinship. There has to be a true sympathy of the body of Christ. If we're not affected by what our brothers and sisters face, it may be very well the case we aren't brothers and sisters with them. We may lack membership in this body of Christ. And because there is this one holy catholic and apostolic church, we're called upon to rejoice with those who rejoice and to mourn with those who mourn.

So if a congregation down the street is growing, if we see their parking lot's full and our pews are emptying out, what is our response to be? Hallelujah! Praise the Lord's name! If that is a church that manifests the true marks of Christ, may his name be glorified that they might increase, that we would decrease, and in fact, their increase is only that Christ would be glorified. We are not in rivalry with other believers, with other congregations. If they preach the Gospel and believe and teach God's word as truth and God blesses it with growth and health, our right response is hallelujah, not, "Why can't we get in on that?"

God will bless. The Spirit blows when and where and how he pleases, the question that we ought to ask is, "How may I best express this unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace? How may I display that reality of there is one body and one Spirit just as we are called to the one hope that belongs to my call?"

Brothers and sisters, let me reiterate: anything that we do, any attitude, any action, anything that we put forward that is contrary to Christ, that is a hindrance to this unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, now it's a unity of God the Holy Spirit, of his truth, of his word, anything that is wrecking that and on our part, and anything that is disruptive of this sense of this unity in Christ Jesus, we are not just at war with his church, we are at war with Christ and with his Spirit. I hope that we would go home this day and spend some time in prayer and ask God the Holy Spirit, "Search me, O God, and try my heart today. What have I done or not done with regards to advancing this unity, advancing the fact that there is one body and one Spirit and one hope?" May God have mercy and grant us repentance.

Let us pray together.

*Lord, we ask of you knowing that we come to a great King and you know our heart's desire stated is to see your glory manifested in heaven and earth and, Lord, we pray that that would be something not just upon our lips but our whole lives would express this. And as we come to your table now and behold this grand and glorious reality that you have appointed to be observed in your church until you come again, that we are here because of your body being broken we are united, and of your blood being spilled that we have life, that as we come and participate in this meal, help us to engage by faith these grand and glorious realities as we come in contact, as it were, with you, Holy God, which indeed we do, we pray that you would change us to make us more like your Son Jesus. And Lord, as we come, help us to do so with gratitude and with joy and we ask it in Jesus' name. And God's people said, amen.*