

Becoming One Through Christ

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Preacher: Sam Orr

[0 : 00] Excellent. It is genuinely good to be with you again. Thank you so much for your welcome and your friendship. And as we were saying before, just your incredible, overwhelming generosity to me and Jen and to the work that we've been doing and to UCCF and to the CUs.

You have been quite literally a bedrock of our lives here in Edinburgh right from the start. So we want to thank you so much. And what I forgot to mention is that I am moving on into working for Chalmers Church as a minister in training, which is both exciting and daunting.

So thank you for encouraging me in that as well. This church has given us a lot. And I don't say that as a platitude. I mean that sincerely. So thank you very, very much.

But today we are looking at Ephesians. Ephesians chapter 2, verses 11 to 22. If you've got your Bibles, it would be great to have it open as we go through it.

Ephesians is often called the jewel of the New Testament. It is a wonderful, wonderful book. And it's short, but it is packed with incredible stuff.

[1 : 12] And this is a wonderful part of this as we move through Ephesians, this passage. Ephesians 2, verses 11 to 22. And let's read it together. And then I'll pray for us.

And then we'll begin Ephesians 2, 11 to 22. Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called uncircumcised by those who call themselves the circumcision, that's done in the body by the hands of men.

Remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.

But now in Christ Jesus, you who are once far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he is himself our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations.

His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace. And in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he puts to death their hostility.

[2 : 25] He came and preached peace to you who are far away and peace to those who are near. For through him we both have access to the father by one spirit.

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his spirit.

Let's pray as we start. Heavenly Father God, we thank you so much for your word. Thank you that it is true and thank you that it is good. Lord, we pray that as we come to it, we would be softened in our hearts by the spirit.

Lord, may what the spirit has to teach us, may it stay with us. May we go out of here feeling changed. And may we go out of here feeling like we've met with you and that we want to be more in love with Jesus Christ.

[3 : 30] Heavenly Father, I pray that as a church body, we would be wanting to tell people about Jesus. Heavenly Father, I pray that as we go through Ephesians today, you would warm our hearts to yourself.

Lord, we thank you that we have your word. Lord, we thank you for being with us now in your mighty name. Amen. Amen. On a warm summer's day in the middle of a vast wealthy city, 200,000 men, women and children flocked to the steps of a nation's national monument as they clamored and jostled for space, craning their necks to see if they could spot the man of the hour.

Workers downed their tools, teachers in schools, left their classrooms, families sat around TVs, those who had them, while police up and down the country were on high alert as everyone flocked in their droves to the epicenter of history being made.

Everyone wanted to glimpse this man. A man who had seared himself on the consciousness of that nation and the world. A man whose every movement, speech and mannerisms was clocked, calculated and reported.

A man who was very well aware of just how incendiary even his name had become. They wanted a glimpse of the king. On the staging, someone moved a lone microphone towards him.

[4 : 49] The crowd fell silent as a hush descended over the masses. And the next 17 minutes were to be the defining moment in a long and bitter, hard-fought battle.

And the king spoke. I have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. I have a dream.

That one day, on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down at the table of brotherhood. I have a dream. That one day, even the state of Mississippi, sweltering in the heat of injustice, sweating in the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream today. I have a dream. I have a dream. I have a dream. I have a dream. I have a dream. I have a dream. I have a dream.

I have a dream. I have a dream.

[6 : 39] imiz■■■. I have a dream. 22, we have an insight into what's really going on between the Jew and the Gentile. And we see what God brings about when he starts fixing this divide. It's nothing short of amazing.

The civil rights issue and the problem of racism and slavery was a monumental problem, an issue very few people felt would ever get rectified. And to a certain extent, that still continues. Indeed, even today we talk about it. But as we look at what Paul paints for us, we see that there is a deeper problem with the divide that we are talking about here.

And the bringing together of the Jew and the Gentile has as much greater eternal significance. And it's a very theologically important point that Paul makes in Ephesians 2.

If you're taking notes, I'm going to go through my talk in three points today. If you're not, don't worry, it's still three points. But my first is this. We are alienated from Christ. And this is this is the argument that Paul is making in Ephesians 2. One, we are alienated from Christ. If you notice, when we read this, Paul starts his thought here in verse 11, very similarly to the way that he starts his thoughts in Ephesians 2 verse 1. Now, let's flick back to that for a moment, shall we? I think it's very important. It says this.

As for you, this is Ephesians 2 verse 1, as for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world. Here in Ephesians 2 11, we read, therefore, remember that formerly you who were Gentiles by birth and called uncircumcised by those who call themselves a circumcision. Remember that at that time you were separate from Christ.

[8 : 26] Now, can you see the similarity? Paul brings us right back to where we were in verse 1. We are separate from Christ. Can you see that? But there is a very different emphasis here in verse 11. Verse 1 is because we're dead, spiritually comatose. In verse 11, it's because we're Gentile.

And what did being a Gentile mean? Well, verse 12 goes on to say this, that it not only separates us from Christ, but we are excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenant of the promise. And if that isn't bad enough, Paul goes on to say that we are in fact without hope and without God in the world as a consequence. And this is where we realize that in many respects, the Jews had it good. They had the promise of Abraham. They had the physical land. They had the nation around them. They had redemption history behind them. They had the patriarchs and the prophets, the circumcision and the covenant. This is what the Jews had. Indeed, they were God's chosen people.

They had the father of the nations, Abraham. They had the great redeemer, Moses, the mighty King David, the powerful Isaiah and the uncompromising Daniel. And all the way down through this redemptive history, these patriarchs and these prophets, these kings and these rulers were pictures of the king who will arrive, that will have an eternal kingdom whose rule will never end. Do you get that? The Jews had it really good. And all the way down through this redemptive history, we are reminded that the Gentiles didn't. And the Jews certainly knew that. Let's have a little look at this divide in greater detail. Here's what William Barclay says of the Jewish Gentile divide at the time of Jesus. He says, as quoted by John Stott, this, the Jew had an immense contempt for the Gentile. The Gentiles, so the Jews were created by God to be fuel for the fires of hell. God, they said, loves only Israel of all the nations he has made. It was not even lawful to render help to a Gentile mother in her hour of sorest need, for that would simply be to bring another Gentile into the world. Deep seated animosity to the point of intense hatred and a hatred that works both ways. Mixed with the realization that the Gentile, because of his status of not being

Jewish nation, was cut off from the promises of God and a foreigner to the covenant. Destitute of an inheritance they could not lay their hands on. And Paul says, this is who you are.

Or this is who you were. We don't have the history of the prophets, the kings, the priests, the judges. It was seen that we may as well be dead back in verse one, because life as a Gentile doesn't seem to be that much better. We are, as John Stott says, doubly alienated from God.

[11 : 34] Is this so much of a problem? Well, yeah, it really is. It's a big problem. You see, all the way down through this redemptive history, we are reminded that there will be a king who will be the mainstay of the remnant after the exile, and a king who will prove himself to be the Messiah and lead his glorious people into a glorious revolution of justice, peace, and freedom. That is the covenant promise that the Gentile is excluded from. And how is that fulfilled? Well, it's fulfilled in Christ.

Therefore, we are excluded from the wonder of being able to know Christ and be with God. That is a huge problem. As Paul himself says here, you are separate from Christ.

Who on earth could do anything about this divine? God. Then Paul nails it. But. That glorious, glorious conjunction. But. Now, in Christ Jesus, you who were once that far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.

Isn't that amazing? This brings us on to our second point. Two, we are made one in Christ. The solution to this alienation is the person from whom we are alienated.

Christ himself. Paul continues to use chapter 2, verse 1 to 10 as his parallel thought here. So follow me for a bit. Go back to verse 4 of chapter 2.

[13 : 13] We read this. But because of God's great love, we are made alive with Christ. Then, here in verse 13, but now in Christ Jesus, you who were once far away have been brought near.

So just as there's a solution to my being dead, there is a solution to my being Gentile. Got it? And as there are different issues to me being blocked off from God, one being dead and two being Gentile, the solution, however, is one and the same.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God. But how does he reconcile this division? Well, he reconciles it through his death, through the shedding of his blood.

We have been brought near through the blood of Christ. And what does that shedding of blood actually accomplish for us? Let's read the next few verses together. Ephesians 2, 14 to 18.

It says this. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations.

[14 : 23] His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.

He came and preached peace to you who are far away and peace to those who are near, for through him we both have access to the Father by one spirit. The language is quite vivid here, isn't it, actually, if you really think about it.

We have two pictures, if you like. Paul paints two pictures of what this Jew-Gentile divide looks like and how the solution works. The first picture is the wall of hostility that divides.

Now, when Paul was writing this, he would have been writing to people who really, really understood what this issue felt like. Today, sitting here in 21st century Edinburgh, we don't necessarily feel this division like the readers would have felt this division.

And so Paul uses language that the Ephesian church would have really picked up on. And language also that really helps us today, seeing what's going on. For example, he uses the picture of the dividing wall of hostility.

[15 : 26] In the main temple built by Herod, there really was a physical dividing wall of hostility. And it was to appease the Jews.

There was a huge concourse. And in this concourse, there were three main sections, one for the priests, one for the Jewish men, and one for the Jewish women. Outside of this concourse, you descended five steps to a wall with an arch.

You went through the wall, through the arch, and you go down another 14 steps, and you end up on a big, vast plaza that ran around the entire temple. This was the tourist part, if you like.

And on the wall that divided the concourse from the plaza, which was literally called the dividing wall, was written these words. No foreigner may enter within the barrier and enclosure around this temple.

Anyone who is caught doing so will have himself to blame for his ensuing death. And what does Paul say has happened to this wall?

[16 : 27] It's been destroyed. It's been taken down. Reading of this dividing wall that condemned the Gentile to death as being removed would have provoked an immediate feeling of euphoria in the Ephesians.

That's amazing language. We are allowed then to associate with the Jewish people. That wall being obliterated means I can step over the barrier, through the gate, onto the concourse without fear of death.

Indeed, it is as if I were Jewish. And as soon as we understand that, we instantly get what Paul goes on to say in verse 15, when he says that it was his purpose to create in himself one new man out of the two, the Jew and the Gentile, thus making peace, and in his body, to reconcile both of them to God through the cross.

And that's our second picture. This picture of two men becoming one man. It means I am one with the Jew in Christ, in the body of Christ, you see?

It's not enough for me to be somehow tacked onto the family line. In Christ's body, I am made one with the Jew. I have that status. And as Christ dies on the cross and sheds his blood, so the dividing wall of hostility comes down at the very moment he breathes his last.

[17 : 51] The Jew and the Gentile are one in Christ. That's unbelievable language. The Jew and the Gentile are one in Christ. It is gloriously true.

But we know, don't we, that there's another divider that comes down the moment Jesus breathes his last. And as the dividing wall in the temple metaphorically crumbles, so the curtain in the temple physically tears.

And I am allowed to walk in unhindered to the room of the presence of God himself. And what does verse 14 remind us we have?

Peace. He himself is our peace. Christ is our peace with God, so I can move into the holy of holies. And he is also my peace with those who are separated from me on earth, so I can move into the concourse of the Jew.

He is the peace that rectifies this hostile divide. And we're beginning here to get an idea of what Paul is doing in his argument, how it plays out in chapter 2.

[18 : 56] In verse 1 to 10, because of Jesus Christ, I'm made alive in him, and so my relationship with God is perfectly restored. And as my relationship with God is perfectly restored, so in verse 11 onwards, my horizontal relationship with mankind is perfectly restored.

It's the inversion of everything that went wrong in Genesis 3, where creation order was unceremoniously dumped upside down, as animal deceived woman who tempted man who defied God, so our relationship with him was severed at that moment.

And as soon as that happened, so their relationship with each other was severed. Adam and Eve started to blame each other. They created their own physical barriers to each other, those made of clothes out of fig leaves to hide their shame.

Zoom on thousands of years to Christ on the cross, and I see everything falling back into perfect order. As my relationship with the living God is reconciled, whilst at exactly the same time, the divided relationship with my brother, the Jew, is also reconciled.

I am one in Christ, and I am one with the Jew. And the two happen at exactly the same moment as Jesus sheds his blood, as that final sacrifice on a wooden cross.

[20 : 14] But just before we move on and tie up this point, I'm going to do what I sometimes do in a student Bible study and ask a painfully obvious question. And it is this. Just take a look at verse 16 and work out who it is that is actually to be reconciled to God.

Who is it that is actually to be reconciled to God in verse 16? It's both. And in his body, reconcile both of them to God.

Can you see that? The Jew is also to completely be reconciled in death and the resurrection to God through Jesus. But what about their history?

What about the priests, the prophets, the rulers, the judges, the kings, the promise that we were talking about earlier? Well, it's all true, but it's all pointed to Jesus Christ. You see, just as the Gentiles had the issue of not being Jewish, the Jews had the issue of facing the law.

And try as they might, the law was never kept. And as verse 15 reminds us, Christ abolished in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. You see what Paul is doing here.

[21 : 23] As much as the Gentiles were doubly alienated from God, the Jews were also lost. They also needed to be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ because they couldn't keep the law of their own covenant, just as the Gentiles can't.

There is no other name under heaven by which man can be saved. The Jew and the Gentile both need to be reconciled to him through his blood.

And that's the whole point of the Jewish nation. That was the whole point of the old covenant. Everything from creation and the fall onwards was a foreshadow of what the promised kingdom really looked like.

Even in the heart of the covenant of the promise of Abraham in Genesis 12, God himself says that he would be the father of many nations, not just one. You see, as Gentiles, we were eventually always going to be included into this family, just as the Jew was always meant to be reconciled to God, despite the law condemning them.

And it was to be through the same person, the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ. And sometimes I look and rejoice in the fact that I am one with the Jew.

[22 : 39] The Jew can look at the Gentile and rejoice in the fact that they are one with the Gentile. As they understand that the promise of the covenant is fulfilled in Jesus Christ, who has done his job.

He made the Jew and the Gentile one. Now, let's move on to what that looks like. What does that now look like?

My third point, we are united with Christ. Let's just read the last few verses together for the last time. It's Ephesians 2, 19 to 22. Consequently, you who are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

In him, the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him, you too, not being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his spirit.

What are the consequences of this incredible act of unification with peace through Christ's blood? Well, whatever they are, the consequences are immediate and eternal. Verse 19 says, as a direct consequence, then I am no longer a foreigner and an alien, but a fellow citizen with God's people and in God's household.

[23 : 57] That's incredible. With this double alienation from God, I stand in Christ, saved by his righteousness, called a son of God, and at the same time, standing one with the Jew, and so having access to the covenant of the promise by being called a son of Abraham.

I was tempted to go up and ask the musicians if they wanted to play, Father Abraham, many sons, many sons, but I didn't think it would go down too well.

But it's true. And actually, it's a very important theological point, in that we have to be engrafted into the line of Abraham so that we can enjoy the covenant promise.

My complete and terrifyingly insurmountable twofold barrier to God is perfectly destroyed by a complete and wonderfully unbreakable twofold salvation. If I am one with the Jew in Christ, then I get everything that the Jew was eligible for.

I suddenly become eligible to the promise, an inheritor of the covenant. I am a citizen of Israel, but better still, we both are fellow citizens in the new Israel.

[25 : 09] Now, get a load of this. If the Jew and the Gentiles thought they'd made it by this point, they sort of missed something. Because what kind of country does this new Jew Gentile man now live in?

The church. The glorious, nation-consuming, gospel-carrying, completely unified, worldwide, multilingual, international, interdenominational, awesome and terrible, as an army with banners, church.

That's what we belong to. A friend said to me, as we were discussing this passage, he said that I had to get across that the church is great. So I'll say it, the church is great.

The church is great. The church is not boring ideology. It's a mind-bending reality. And we are a party to that. Indeed, we are that.

We are that. And what are we? We are a body of believers, that is, verse 20, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, with Christ himself as the chief cornerstone.

[26 : 12] Can you see how this is a direct consequence of me being accepted into the line of Abraham? We are a body of believers, where the Jew and the Gentile both stand together, looking back over the entire history and covenant of Israel, and we can say, I am included in that.

We are built on this history, and the church is built on this covenant. This is the new Israel. And fundamentally, we are built on Christ.

Christ who is the chief cornerstone. Christ who was slain before the foundation of the world. And Christ who is the final word of the Father. Christ whose act on the cross spans before the ages, before us, and right back through to the dawn of time beyond us.

Indeed, the foundation of our unity as a church is built on the only one who could unify the ununifiable division of God and man, and Jew and Gentile. And just as we were looking at the dividing wall falling down, and the dividing curtain being torn down, in verse 21, we are shown the active joining together of this remarkable new building.

And then we see it rising to become a holy temple in the Lord. Paul says, And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his spirit.

[27 : 28] And I've done several sessions of God's big picture. I don't know if you've read that book. I think it's a brilliant book. It's a walk through the whole of redemption history.

It's a walk through the Bible. And it looks specifically at the idea of God's kingdom. I think many of you students I can see have actually done this with me, I think. And with each chapter, which corresponds to a big moment in Israel's history, there are three criteria that you have to look at every single time.

And they're all the same. At every single point in redemption history, the three things are the same. Who are God's people at that point? Where is God's place at that point? And what does God's rule and blessing look like at that point?

And when we get to this point in the Bible, this is the proclaimed kingdom, as this book calls it, we see that God's people is the new Israel, the international church of Christ.

God's place is the whole earth, not just one nation. And God's rule and blessing is pictured as the spirit himself being in the heart of the believer, no longer separate from mankind.

[28 : 33] We, as his church, are the antithesis of separation from Christ. We are now the temple that houses him. The temple of the Holy Spirit.

This is magnificent. Can you see that? Truly magnificent. And guys, I dare you to take a look around, as embarrassing as that may be.

Look at each other. Have a look at the people that you sit next to week after week. Sunday after Sunday. Look at your friends, the people that you don't know particularly well, who are in the church. You are together this church. You are sitting here in this building, which is not the church, as a people who are now the temple of the living God.

You are this church. That is your status. That is who you are. As you step through that wall of hostility, this odd assortment of young and old, big and small, international and local, student and worker, people you would never dream of associating with on your own terms.

You are here together, doing so, because you are this church. And you know I'm not just talking about us here this morning, or even Brunshall Evangelical in general.

[29 : 50] I'm talking about the church. The millions upon millions of brothers and sisters that we are unified with across the span of the entire globe. Now be careful that this doesn't make us all feel fuzzy and warm too quickly.

It is a glorious truth. But we know that in our own church families and our relationships, they're fractured. Our hearts are divided, that there are people I can't stand, situations I find really tough.

We know that church is difficult. And even more so, when I feel I need to be united with people. But that's kind of the point. Because we can't do this on our own.

We can't be united together on our own. We can only be because of Christ. And what that all looks like, the messes that we get ourselves in, and how we deal with each other, that's exactly what Ephesians goes on to next.

And that's really important. We are this church, it is true, but it has nothing to do with us. Our selfishness, our pride, our bitterness, our survival instincts, they'd never allow us to meet together, let alone live life on life with each other.

[30 : 56] You know that's true. We are only this church because of Christ, built on the foundations, reinforced by the prophets and the apostles, and maintained through the Spirit, who is actively, continuously, and tirelessly working in our individual hearts, every single moment of every single day.

It's also worth remembering that being a part of the church is actually a worldly desire, to a large extent, isn't it? We hear every day on the news, the words, closer community, big society.

We hear of the necessity for more peace talks, a desire for diplomacy. We crave an end to all wars. We're starving for peace. And that is great things to be wanting. This is what the world is screaming out for.

But for all the rhetoric, all we see is devastation, destitution, destruction, and despair. The world cries out for what Christ offers. The world desires to be the church in that sense, but won't accept that Christ's way is the right way.

This idea of church isn't foreign. It is Christ showing how our deepest desires actually are most fulfilled. In unity with those we would never be unified with only because of him.

[32 : 08] And ultimately, our desire is to be unified with him himself. And that is why we as a church need to look radically different.

The world is meant to be able to look on the church and say, how can that ragtail bunch of misfits actually work together in such close community? The church is where, as Martin Luther King says, where the black and the white should be one without thought.

Where the Israeli and the Arab can embrace and cry with each other. Where the Englishman and the Scot can watch rugby without malice. I have a dream. And where the Jew and the Gentile stand as one person, all because we are united in Christ.

Don't you see that being a united church of ununifiable people is in fact our greatest apologetic for Christ? Can you see that? It is also our greatest evangelistic tool for him.

Our being united in the face of a hugely fractured world of disunity illuminates the incredible power of the cross. Let's return to scripture for the last time as we draw to a close.

[33 : 26] Go into the bookends of the Bible to sum up the status of the church and our inclusion in the promise of the covenant. Exodus 19 verse 5. God tells Moses just before giving him the law, say this to the Israelites.

If you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all the nations, you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

1 Peter 2 verse 9. But now you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. And how do we get from Exodus 1 to Peter?

Exodus to 1 Peter? On a cold spring day, on the edge of a vast, busy city, hundreds of men, women and children flocked to the hill of a nation's execution ground as they clamored and jostled for space, craning their necks to see if they could spot the man of the hour.

[34 : 42] Workers downed their tools, rabbis in schools left their classrooms, families sat around fires whilst guards and centurions up and down the country armed themselves as people flocked in their droves to the epicentre of history being made.

Everyone wanted a glimpse of this man. A man that had seared himself on the consciousness of that nation and the world. A man whose every movement, speech and mannerism was clocked, calculated and reported.

A man who was very well aware of just how incendiary even his name had become. They wanted a glimpse of this king. On the staging, a cross was slowly hoisted up and fixed into place.

The crowd fell silent as a hush descended over the masses and the next three hours were to be the most defining moment in a long and bitter hard fought battle. And the king spoke.

It is finished. Let's pray as we close. Heavenly Father God, thank you so, so much for your gospel.

[35 : 41] Heavenly Father God, thank you so much for your son, Jesus Christ, who dies for us on the cross, who shed his own blood so that we may know you. Heavenly Father, thank you that he rose again from the dead, beating death, so that we know that he is truly God and that we will be able to reign with him.

But Heavenly Father, thank you so much that you made us church. You put us into church. Thank you that we are a church. But we know that that is hard. We know that sometimes this is difficult. But thank you that this is where you live.

Well, this is incredible language. May we not take that for granted when we step into this building or when we go out of here, when we speak to each other, when we speak to people who don't know you. May we always remember that we as a church bear your name.

Lord, that is so important. Lord, thank you so much for making us a part of this covenant, even when we had no right. Thank you so much, Heavenly Father, that despite our sin, our foolishness, and our continual struggles, you call us back and you make us right with yourself because of Jesus Christ.

Heavenly Father, I pray that we would not be ashamed of this gospel. Lord, forgive us when we feel so ashamed of this gospel. May we be willing to share it. May we be prepared to proclaim it clearly.

[36 : 55] And Lord God, may we also be teaching it to ourselves and to each other as we love each other well, as we live life on life with each other. Those of us, Lord, people we struggle with, Lord, I just pray that you'd really help us in those areas.

Lord, thank you so much that we are your church. And we pray that you'd send us out of here being encouraged by this and more in love with Jesus who has unified us.

We pray these things in your strong, strong name. Amen.