

1Tim 24-04-21b

We're looking at Paul's revelation of the fourth aspect of the mysteries contained in his gospel, the mystery of the blindness of Israel, and we're heading for this central passage in Romans 11:25 and 26, the mystery that blindness has happened to Israel. And Calvinists have a field day with God choosing who's going to be saved. Are they elect? Are they called in advance? Are they foreloved? God loved them in advance, and so on.

So we're looking at this in our passage in Romans, and we have come to the calling on the Lord with the mouth. To confess with the mouth the beliefs of the heart is, if nothing else, a picture of the comprehensive nature of our faith, that it defines us inside and out. It operates at the interior level and at the exterior, what we express, what we communicate, what is heard from us.

And it's just something you can't help but observe. And the Lord is over all and rich to all who call upon Him. It doesn't say who pray to Him, those who call on Him.

And I heard an interesting thing. I think I've mentioned it a few years ago. I was reading about the early church fathers, and it wasn't until the third or fourth century that people began reading silently, written correspondence, written books. People would read the way the scribes read in the synagogue.

You open the scroll, and when you look at the letters and words and sentences, you would speak them. And it was a remarkable thing, and it is noted, one church father talking about another, that he reads silently, his lips barely move, and there is no sound coming out. And this was thought to be an extraordinary thing, because even reading in the earlier days of writing and reading was out loud.

Call upon the name of the Lord to be saved. Verse 14 of Romans 10: How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? People don't call on something or someone in which they don't believe. How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And once again, this audibility permeates this.

We take it for granted. We don't particularly notice. It doesn't say, "How shall they believe in Him of whom they have never read?" Because most people did not read. This was reserved for scholars.

And what was written, scholars would have to read out loud for others to get the content. Now we have the advantage of high rates of literacy. So hearing can now be by means of the eye gate instead of just the ear gate.

How shall they hear without a preacher? We could add in this day, how can you read without something being written? How shall they preach unless they are sent? This is the stello idea, being sent forth, apostello, to send forth. How shall they preach unless they are sent? And there are those who are commissioned, equipped, given a message, and sent to present it. It's not all of us, but there are those who are so commissioned.

Paul is one of them, and he continues to fulfill that commission today through his writings. How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things. And this is a part of our witness.

The light that shines from our lives that we talked about at the end of the first session ought to be characterized by good things. And it is the Word from which the Holy Spirit creates and communicates joy and peace. If we don't feel particularly joyful, if circumstances are getting us down and we try to go to sleep at night and some concern, something that we agonize over, keeps coming to the fore and our mind just turns and turns and turns and we run in circles.

It's not easy to just will ourselves to not worry. And we can't will ourselves to be happy. What we can do is recognize and turn to the source of peace.

We can fret not because of evil men. We can cast our cares somewhere. To get rid of cares, we've got to throw them. We've got to cast them, casting all our cares on Him. We take them someplace and drop them. And we do this through the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit.

If our life lacks an ongoing pattern of peace and an ongoing pattern of joy, if we just find ourselves mildly discontent at best and raging at the machine at worst, if we are constantly frustrated, constantly simmering and coming to a boil, constantly irritated, constantly impatient, that is not peace and that is not joy. And what is the

problem? It isn't, "I need my circumstances to change. If I could just fix these circumstances and get these people to behave themselves, I would be happy. I would be joyful. I would be at peace."

Peace and joy do not come from circumstances, ever. Genuine peace and joy do not come from people, ever. We can enjoy peace, enjoy. We can be joyful and we can be peaceful and we can revel in our horizontal relationships with people and we can have fun in our circumstances. But it is because when we come to the party, we bring the joy and we bring the peace.

Hey, you're going to come over and spend some time with us? What can you bring? I will bring the joy. I will bring the peace, because I've got it. I possess it. I know where to get it. It's not just hamburger buns or a two-liter bottle of Coke that you bring.

But to bring it, you have to know where to get it and you have to have it before you walk in the door. And this is the gift of God through the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit generates these things in us through the Word of God. Not just the power of God comes into the life of the believer through the Spirit and the Word.

The peace of God that passes understanding, that keeps our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, the joy that enables us to rejoice in all things. Paul says, "I rejoice in my sufferings." There's a good trick. I'm not going out trying to find a suffering so I can rejoice in it. But if I am suffering, it's a wonderful thing to bring joy and peace to that party or to that hospital room or to that sick bed or to that grinding, abrasive circumstance. It's okay, because I brought the joy and I brought the peace because I knew where to get it.

I look to the Holy Spirit. I look to the promises and the principles and the doctrines of the Word of God. Read Psalm 119, the joy that comes from knowing and keeping God's statutes and His ordinances and His commandments, His principles, His truths.

So, how beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things. You think the opposite. There's a very famous book written in the early days of the United States by Jonathan Edwards called Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God. That's the gospel of Jonathan Edwards.

And it was hellfire and, you know, judgment for people. And people fell in the aisles and weeping, and they were scared to death they were going to wind up bobbing around in the living lake of fire. And they were scared into repentance and scared into whatever it takes to avoid the mighty, conclusive, and everlasting judgment of God.

That's really not the gospel. Nor is it the gospel to say, "Come to Jesus and you'll have a wonderful happy life." The gospel is peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ, that we turn to Him for all good things. It's glad tidings of good things.

They have not all obeyed the gospel, he says. Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?" This is Isaiah talking to the people of God. Isaiah speaks God's truth and he says, "I can't find anybody who's listening. They're not believing it. They're not responding to it."

Faith comes by hearing, hearing by the Word of God. In other words, the Word of God goes forth and those who hear it have the opportunity not only to listen but to believe it. But there is an option.

Isaiah got the Word of God and preached it, and he said, "I can't find anybody listening." They have not all obeyed the gospel. Faith comes by hearing, hearing by the Word of God.

Have they not heard? Yes, indeed. Their sound has gone out to all the earth. You see why I'm emphasizing the verbal nature, both of the presentation of truth and the reflection of that truth in prayer.

Scripture is replete with references to calling. I will call upon God and the Lord shall save me. I will call upon all those who call upon the name of the Lord. The sound has gone out to all the earth and their words to the end of the world.

And of course, here he is quoting Psalm 19:4, and there are abundant references to this. Matthew 24:14, Romans 1:8, Colossians 1:6 and 1:23. The sound of this has gone out.

Psalms 19:4 is the source of this. Their line has gone through all the earth, their words to the end of the world. In them, He has set a tabernacle for the sun.

And he's talking, of course, about the heavens. If you can observe the heavens, what will be known of God is manifest in creation. Chapter 1 of this book, Matthew 24:14: "This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations." As a witness. Then the end will come.

Romans 1:8: "I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world." Notice, your faith is spoken of. People talk about your example. You are confessing with your mouth the Lord Jesus. You believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, and you are the subject of conversation. People are noticing that there is something different about you.

It doesn't say, "I thank my God that you went out and talked to the whole world. You went out and verbally witnessed to the whole world." Your faith, your life, your practice, your example, it is the peace and the joy that characterize you. People are talking about that. Your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

Colossians 1:6, the message which has come to you as it has also in all the world and is bringing forth fruit as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth. You heard the grace of God. You knew it. You heard it and you came to know it in truth. It has come to you just as it has come to the whole world.

Verse 23 of that same chapter 1 of Colossians: "If indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast." What is that if? Paul says, you who were once alienated. I'm reading Colossians 1:21. "You who were once alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death to present you holy, blameless, and above reproach in His sight."

Now how does that happen? I don't know about you—actually, I do know about you. You're like me. There is no greater anticipation and wonderful opportunity than to be presented as a member of the body of Christ, holy, blameless, and above reproach. No shame. I'm not ashamed that it's coming. When I am presented, I'm acceptable. I am well-pleasing. Above reproach, if indeed—what is, how does this happen? What is the condition? What can you and I do this afternoon and tomorrow when we resume another work week? What can we do to be presented holy, blameless, and above reproach?

"If indeed you continue in the good works, continue in keeping the law, continue in modeling the good works"—if you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, immovable, not moved away from what? The hope of the gospel which you heard. I know whom I have believed. I'm persuaded He is able to keep what I've committed to Him against that future day. That's my hope.

My salvation rests in the faithfulness of God, in the promise of God, and in my opportunity to avail myself of His grace and His power to meet the conditions for the fulfillment of these promises and the laying hold of these elements of hope.

Grounded and steadfast, not moved away from the hope of the gospel. Notice, there are people who can be moved away from the hope of the gospel, who don't remain grounded, who are not steadfast. So what can I do? I'm just a person out here. I've got jobs, I've got tasks, I've got responsibilities, I've got people who depend on me, I depend on people, I'm in the milieu here. There's human life, there's cars and houses and taxes and income and outflow, there's just all kinds of stuff going on.

These spiritual things can easily become sort of a pie in the sky by and by, or I'll revisit these things and affirm them Wednesday and Sunday, but the rest of the time I'm a human being watching the news and answering my phone and doing the things that I have to do. The problem is, when we live too much in this world and we forget who we are and why we're here, we are no longer grounded.

The foundation on which we base our plan for the day and the goals and objectives that we establish and try to accomplish, if it's not grounded in who I am—I represent the Lord Jesus Christ, I'm a member of the body, I'm connected to other believers—where are they? Do I have some one another love opportunities today? Can I not forsake getting together with other believers? This is not just for worship. It's not saying be sure you attend church on Sunday. Forsaking not the getting together, the koinonia, the fellowship, the assembly, getting together with other believers, making sure that my orbit intersects with other believers so that I get the chance to both give and receive in the one another's.

If my life path rarely, if ever, puts me in contact with believers I know, I've got something to fix in my goals, my values, and my priorities because my faith should be grounded in pursuit of that love. I need to find and experience both in the giving and the receiving of one another love.

Forsake not getting together with like-minded believers. You can't fulfill the fifty-odd one another commands if you never see a one another except on Sunday, right? So, if we are rooted and grounded in our faith, then that defines what my goals are for the day.

Maybe there's a co-worker that is somewhat or greatly interested in the things of God. Well, if I have a choice of places to eat lunch, maybe I can open my lunch box and sit with that person. Maybe I can make a phone call in the middle of the day and check in with somebody in my family or somebody close to me and just see how it's going, exchange a few texts, check a few Facebook posts, comment under somebody who puts a picture and a verse and is thinking the thoughts of God and appreciating the Lord Jesus and bringing Scripture to mind.

There are people who kind of have a gift and a ministry, I believe, in doing that sort of thing. You're going to go check Facebook and there's all kinds of dancing cats and exploding toilets and things on there. But here's somebody that has put something worthwhile, something spiritually edifying. Well, let me interact with that. I can put an LOL under a funny video or I can take a moment to appreciate and connect with a like-minded believer. That should be a goal of mine.

And I'm not saying everybody needs to be on Facebook. I'm not. But in some way, shape, or form, whatever opportunities present themselves, we can put ourselves in the path of gladness and joy and fellowship and mutual edification or, by default, we'll miss those.

Well, I'm busy. I've got a big thing I've got to finish for work. I've got something I've got to do at the house. I've got a broken car. I've got it in and out of the shop. I've got to do this. I've got to do that.

When you stand at the judgment seat of Christ, there's not going to be a list of how many times you got your car fixed or how timely it was that you got the lawn mowed or the laundry done or other mundane, necessary tasks. Many times it's the same tasks, but it's how we do them. It's who do we involve?

But to cultivate fellowship, to cultivate one another love primarily, do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith. Well, you've got to be connected in some way, shape, or form. Find a way to connect. It is essential because it's not just the Holy Spirit in us that generates love and joy and peace. It's the Holy Spirit in fellow believers, and happiness can come in and through relationships with people because the Holy Spirit is there and it's communicated from faith to faith.

This is the way to be presented holy and blameless and above reproach in His sight. If we continue in the faith grounded and consistent, steadfast, immovable, not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, we're hearing it right now. This is the gospel preached to every creature under heaven of which I, Paul, became a minister.

I now rejoice in my sufferings. I have joy, Paul says, in my sufferings because they are for you. You are my one and others. And if I've got a hardship, if I'm going through some serious persecution, if I'm having setbacks, if people are after me and running me out of town and arguing with me in the synagogue and trying to get me arrested by the authorities, I rejoice in my sufferings for you. Why? I look at that as filling up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ.

You only know some of the suffering that Christ went through. I am a demonstration of suffering that is motivated by love and is beneficial, sacrificial to self, beneficial to others. Paul says, "What you don't know about the sufferings of Christ, you can see in me." He's at a distance. I'm right here. And what you see in me, it is for the sake of the body, which is the church.

Notice, Paul does what he does, not just to get something done, not just to pay the bills or to avoid detention. For the sake of His body, which is the assembly, of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God, which was given to me for you.

Every spiritual gift is given from God for the body. Your gift, and you have one. You have a spiritual gift. But God can't use your gift. There's no blessing flowing from your gift unless you are associated with, connected to, spending time in contact with the body, with other believers. Your gift is fruitless.

It's like somebody in a coma. Never use your arm. It's going to start drawing up and getting all twisted and deformed from lack of use, lack of exercise. Contact with other believers is vital so that the ministry of the Holy Spirit, as He is present in each fellow believer, blesses us. And the Holy Spirit in us becomes a source of blessing to others through your presence, your conversation, your steadfastness, your groundedness in the faith, and your spiritual gift.

So, gift given to me for you to fulfill the Word of God, the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which we've already studied, previous point, Christ in you, the hope of glory.

So Him we preach, warning every man, teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man mature, teleios, complete. He's going to use this word again very shortly. Every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this end I also work, striving, agonizomai, I'm agonizing, I am putting everything I have into it, according to His working, which works in me mightily.

Wouldn't it be a great thing to realize that God is working within you, working within me mightily for the blessing and the benefit of fellow believers, as well as those who can become fellow believers, being drawn to the light? Those who start out maybe as neighbors and can be drawn closer. Those who are outside and are drawn to the light at whatever distance.

I want you to know what a great conflict I have, Paul says in Colossians, and he's going to continue. But going back into Romans, we left off here. The sound has gone out in all the earth. Did not Israel know? I will provoke you to jealousy. I'm back in Romans chapter 10, verse 19. Did not Israel know? Is there not a witness in the heavens? They're not a witness in the Scriptures.

Moses says, "I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation. I will move you to anger by a foolish nation." Isaiah is very bold and says, "I was found by those who did not seek me, I was made manifest to those who did not ask for me." To Israel, he says, "All day long I have stretched out my hands to disobedient and contrary, stiff-necked people."

So, there's a lot you can say about that, but we're moving forward. We're driving toward chapter 12, verse 1 of chapter 11. Has God cast away His people? Certainly not. This is now getting to our fourth mystery.

Has God cast away His people? Certainly not. I'm an Israelite, seed of Abraham, tribe of Benjamin. God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Now, these are those within the nation of Israel who are actually Israel. Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah? He pleads with God against Israel, saying, "Lord, they've killed Your prophets, torn down Your altars. I alone am left, and they seek my life."

What is the divine response? "I have reserved for myself 7,000 men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." Even so, then, at this present time, there is a remnant, according to the election of grace.

In a nutshell, God has ensured that even though, as a group and corporately, Israel is missing it, they did not know the hour of their visitation, Jesus weeps over Jerusalem, He is put on the cross by the leadership, and most of that generation is like the generation that left Egypt and dropped in the wilderness, redeemed under the blood of the Passover lamb, but unable to enter into the promised land. Redeemed, but disqualified by lack of living faith.

So what does God do? There is a remnant. Why is there a remnant? What happens if there's a generation and every single Israelite rejects God? Who determines when and where people are born? God ensures, through His foreknowledge, that in every generation there are some. God determines when and where we are born. He doesn't determine our choice, but He can determine in what circumstances and in what sphere our choices are exercised.

So at the present time, there's a remnant, according to the choosing, the election, of grace. If by grace, it is no longer of works; otherwise grace isn't grace. If it's by works, it's no longer grace; otherwise work isn't work.

What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks. This is corporate Israel. This is the nation of Israel wanting the Messiah and the Millennial Kingdom to come. As a nation, as a group, they have not obtained what it seeks. But the chosen within have obtained it. Why? Because individually they have chosen to express faith.

The rest are blinded. God has given them the rest, those who were seeking their own righteousness and not the righteousness of God, those who don't understand faith, who are ignorant of how God's righteousness works, they've been blinded. God's given them a spirit of stupor, eyes that don't see, ears that don't hear, to this very day.

David says their table is going to become a snare and a trap. What is the table a picture of? What's the table? "Thou preparest a table before me," Psalm 23. "I will come in, sit down with him. I will sup with him and he with me." This is at a table. This is fellowship, right?

David says you have set a table, you have fellowshiped with me, you have shared a meal with me, like God and the two angels do with Abraham, in the presence of my enemies. My enemies cannot interrupt my fellowship, my peaceful meal with God. Let their table, let their fellowship become a snare and a trap. Why? They're fellowshiping with each other. This is a mutual admiration society. This is everybody telling everybody else, "We're doing the right thing. My right meter agrees with your right meter, we're right because we believe we're right." And they don't understand the righteousness of God.

Their table is a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a recompense to them. This is a response to them. Recompense doesn't come out of the blue. You do something and then you are recompensed. And this snare, trap, and stumbling block are a recompense to them. God responds by blinding, darkening, so they do not see. And their back is bowed down. This is a recompense. It's a response.

So, have they stumbled that they should fall? Verse 11. Certainly not. But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles. If their fall is riches for the world, if their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness.

This blindness for corporate Israel is temporary. I speak to you Gentiles. I'm an apostle to Gentiles. I magnify my ministry, if by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and save some of them.

In a nutshell here, for purposes of application, for you and me. What is the application of this mystery of the blindness of Israel? Paul says, the assignment that God has given me is not to Israel. I have a heart for Israel, I love them, they are my kinsmen after the flesh. I would give away all of my future rewards and blessings if Israel could be saved, is what Paul says, in the same context.

But he says, "You know how I draw them to God? You know the best thing I can do for Israel who are currently blind? And branches that have been snapped out of the tree, you can keep reading this for yourself." What does Paul say the best thing is he can do? "I magnify the assignment God gave me to the Gentiles."

The best way to win the Jews is not for me to go preach to the Jews. This was Paul's mistake when he goes back to Jerusalem and tries to convince the Jerusalem Judaizers by taking a vow and cutting his hair and paying for the sacrifice of other guys that took a vow. Bringing the gift of the Gentiles. Paul is trying to preach directly to the Jews and trying to win them. And it's an utter failure. There are riots and dissension and disputes and division, and it creates nothing but problems. And ultimately Paul gets locked up and sent to Rome when he tries to go back to Jerusalem.

What he understands here when he writes Romans, the best thing I can do for Israel is to accomplish my own ministry. I will magnify my ministry. I'm going to preach to the Gentiles night and day, 24-7. Why? That will provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and save some of them. Me preaching to the Gentiles, if I magnify it, if I focus on it, if I fulfill that God-given ministry and assignment to the absolute best of my ability, that is going to indirectly be used by God to save some of the Jews.

They're going to figure it out. God is going to use it. I'm not talking to the Jews. I'm preaching to the Gentiles. And the Jews get saved.

By way of application, when there are unsaved or doubtful and unknown-status people in our periphery, especially loved ones and those that we think would gain such benefit from faith and relationship with God

through Christ, in many cases the best thing we can do is fulfill our assignment. Walk by faith and not by sight. Cultivate the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, and self-control.

These are qualities that we cultivate in our life. We don't aim them like a cannon and shoot them at the lost or those who are doubtful. We live them. We let the light of Christ shine in and through our life. There are times when we will have a wonderful God-given opportunity to speak the truth in love. But most of the time our assignment is Paul's assignment.

Let your light so shine before men. They see the goodness that is intrinsic, that is shining out of your life, and they will glorify your Father. They will be drawn to the Father from what they see in you, not what you preach at them, not the rope that you try to lasso them with and drag them across some line.

Live the life. Magnify your ministry. What are my assignments that I absolutely know from God? If I'm a husband, I've got God-given responsibilities to my wife. If I'm a wife, God-given responsibilities to my husband. If I'm a child, to parents. Parents to children. Slave to master. Employee to employer. If I'm an employer, to my employees. Those that are in my periphery. Fellow believers. All of the one another's.

And I need to cultivate opportunities to have one another love, given and received. And if I have somehow mapped out my path where I skillfully avoid contact with other believers, I'm doing something wrong. If I've got wrong priorities, wrong goals, and I'm not coming in regular contact, and I am forsaking the assembly, there's something wrong with me. I need to fix that.

But it is concentrating on letting the light of God shine in my life. Flip down real quickly to Romans chapter 12, because he's going to talk about Israel becoming an enemy for the Gentiles' sake, but still being beloved for the sake of the fathers. Look at chapter 12, verse 1.

"I beseech you, therefore"—this is the application of the mystery that Israel has been set aside, blinded, branches snapped out of the tree for a time—"I therefore beseech you, brothers, one another's, I beseech you by the mercies of God, if you have any interest at all in receiving the benefit of the mercies of God, present your bodies a living sacrifice." Make yourself, avail yourself, cleanse yourself by the grace of God in the blood of Christ. Make yourself, your bodies, a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God.

This is your service, and it's reasonable. It's not too hard. It's not a great strain. It's reasonable. It's doable. This is your doable service.

Do not be conformed to this world. Be ye transformed. Don't try to transform somebody else. Don't try to transform society or transform some particular cause or social justice goal. You be transformed by the renewing of your mind, wisdom, knowledge, presence and power of the Spirit.

This is how you will prove. This is dokimazo. This is you figure out what's genuine and what's not, what weighs the proper amount and what doesn't. Dokimazo is the use of a scale. You've got options. Which thing are you going to pick? Well, put it on the scale. The one that weighs the right amount. The board that has the right length. You're going to measure. You're going to verify. This is the right thing right here. Look, it matches perfectly. This is tab A, and here's slot B. I have affirmed it. I looked at the diagram. I've checked the labeling, and this is what it is. Dokimazo. I prove it. I affirm it. I figure it out.

You will figure out and know what is the good. This is agathos. This is just intrinsically good and acceptable. Acceptable is well-pleasing. You can do a word study on this and many other places where it occurs. This is well-pleasing. It's not just good. It's not just, okay, that's not wrong. It's well-pleasing.

It's one thing to give somebody a good gift, but isn't it great when you figure out a way to give a gift to somebody and they're really pleased? You see the gleam in their eye. It's exactly what they wanted. You filled a need. You really hit the sweet spot. That's well-pleasing.

So there is the good will of God. Even better is to find the well-pleasing will of God. God says, "Wow, you really went above and beyond. You just hit the sweet spot with that." And perfect. Remember I said perfect previously? That word teleios? Perfect. Will of God. You have fulfilled every detail. One hundred percent. You didn't miss a single question on the test. It's exactly right. You did exactly the right thing.

And each one is a concentric circle within, just like our rings of love. There is the good. Even better is the acceptable. And right in the center of the bullseye is the perfect will of God. How can you know it? Don't be conformed to the world. Be transformed by the renewing of the mind.

That's what we do when we study the Word of God together, when we forsake not the gathering of ourselves together and spend some time in fellowship, and receiving the benefit that the Holy Spirit confers throughout the body by that which every joint supplies. The whole body is not the same. Got different parts. But the unity of these diverse parts makes this wonderfully complete, versatile, agile, functional, powerful, beneficial body.

This, oddly enough, chapter 12, verses 1 and 2, is the application of the mystery of the blindness of Israel. Paul says, "Look at the way God is working. Avail yourself of it. God has gone to a lot of trouble. And He's using your life to provoke others to find out what's going on. And those who are seeking will find through you and your faithful example."

What a wonderful opportunity. I don't have to sell my goods and buy a plane ticket to Borneo and try to be a missionary in a foreign land. I'm a missionary every day that I live my life. You are a missionary. You are a testimony. You are a witness. You are a lamp on a lampstand, just living your life and fulfilling your obligations and opportunities in the filling of the Spirit, respecting those spheres of love that define us as disciples of the Lord Jesus.

By this, people will know that you are my disciples because you are connected to others, the one and others, and you are living in that mutually expressed, reciprocal love. What a great opportunity. I can do that. It's my reasonable service.

Father, thank you for the truth of Your Word. Thank you for the wonderful guidance we receive. Thank you for the powerful truths that are a part of this gospel that is communicated to us most fully through the Apostle Paul. We pray that as we reflect on it, as we look at our own lives, that the Holy Spirit will shine the light of the Word on our path so that we can walk steadily, we can walk with a brisk pace on that upward road that leads through the straight gate and life eternal. We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.