

Ephesians 14-05-11b

Let's resume our study in Ephesians chapter 4. We are really exploring under the guidance of the Apostle Paul the opportunities that we have because we are the body of Christ. And all of the many things that are accomplished by God on this earth in this age are done in and through us. God is at work in you to will and to do.

Do you remember our memory verse? God is at work in you to will and to do for his good pleasure. And that's been taken to mean, it's kind of like, remember I gave you the example of delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart. And they say well that means God will plant desires in your heart if you delight yourself in him.

And I suddenly have a desire to be a missionary to Zambia, you know, the desire will just pop in there in a sovereignly, you know, bomb-sighted fashion, you know, God's cruising over and you're in the cross hairs and suddenly you just wake up and you have this desire. Well in the same way when it talks about God is at work in you to will and to do, let me give you that reference because I want to point something out that pertains to this. It's in our Philippians 2 passage, it's verse 13, it is God who works in you both to will and to do for his good pleasure.

Well think about what we covered in the first session this morning. Are you thinking about it? I'm just encouraging you to do that. Think about what we covered.

We are gifted, we are associated, we are placed into a fellowship, into a corporate entity. This is what Paul was talking about in Corinthians when he talked about, you know, don't celebrate the Lord's table in an unworthy manner. He wasn't talking about a ritual and he wasn't even really talking about the meal.

He was talking about what is your attitude toward the body. If you eat and drink in an unworthy manner, in other words, your common functions, eating and drinking is some of the most common things that we do, everybody necessarily engages in taking in nourishment, it's a common daily function, but if you do it in an unworthy manner with respect to the body, you eat and drink condemnation to yourself. You eat and drink damnation.

If you disregard the body as you do these common things, just partaking of a meal after Bible class is what Paul is talking about. He says, when you come together to eat, I hear bad things because one of you is ravenously hungry and doing the whammo with the food and the others are drunk. You're grabbing the stuff and just gorging yourselves, trying to sate your appetites and you are disregarding the body.

That's what we're talking about here. Now it is God who works in you to will and to do for His good pleasure. Now, is this talking about God at work inside of me? He's busy, He's got little miniature angels in there constructing my edification complex, He's at work in me, He's rebuilding me and remaking me and turning me into some kind of a spiritual cyborg that's going to perform

His good pleasure? That's not what it's talking about.

In Philippians 2.13, and just turn there for a second, I just want to point one thing out. It is God who works in you. This is Energeo and the you here is plural.

It is God who works among you, who works in your midst, y'all, who works in the group, to will and to do. Many times it's difficult to even separate out the members of the Trinity when God is doing something. When the Lord Jesus was healing people in the first visit He made to this earth, the first advent, who healed the blind eyes? Who loaded in the software and the data so that the man blind from birth could not only see but could focus, could render three-dimensional space, could recognize, could navigate? It takes babies months and months to just figure out how to get both of their eyes pointed in the same direction.

You've seen babies. I remember looking at a baby one time that was actually one of ours and looking into this angelic, just seraphic little face and they're looking at me with a big smile. I think my mother had this experience.

I think many people had this experience. You look down at the face of the little baby and they look up at you and they smile. They've got this just smile to die for.

You're looking at them and you're thinking, wow, this is a bonding moment here. My child recognizes me and is happy to see me. While they're smiling, one eye just goes.

You realize they're probably not even processing the images yet. They're just smiling because, wow, the colors are really something. There's some large blob blocking the view and that's interesting.

They're smiling and one eye just kind of wanders away. Well, I'm not real sure how I got off on that, but that God is at work in us to will and to do for his good pleasure. When Jesus was here on this earth and he would heal the blind man, was God the Father uninvolved in that? Jesus was here to do his Father's work and to perform his Father's will, right? It was God's will that the blind man be healed at multiple levels.

Not just for the man's sake, but for Israel as an object lesson, as a rebuke to the scribes and Pharisees, as something to be in the Bible from then on for us to study. It's a part of the plan and purpose of God. Where did the actual power come from to perform that miracle? Did Jesus possess that healing power in his flesh? He performed his miraculous works, not even in his own deity, but in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, right? And yet Jesus is the Son of God as he stands there doing these works and so there's a sense in which all of them are involved.

God is at work in you all to will and to do. And the Reformed theologian's mistake when he comes to a verse like this is to say, well, God is implanting desires and God is inside the individual and if I just wait for the prompting I'll follow the desires of my heart because God is giving me those

desires and God is at work in me to will and to do. Did you not notice that it's plural? This is the bad thing about modern English as opposed to King James English.

There's a difference in you and in thee. One of the merits of the old King James is thee and thou is singular, you is plural. And even in the King James, this is you, not at work in thee, at work in you, you all.

I have a commentary where, I think it's maybe in the Baker series, it's William Hendrickson and what he does is to try to distinguish these. It's so important to get this right that when he renders an English version, when it's you, he spaces out the letters to indicate that it's a plural you. And so as you're reading, even in English, you can easily discern when they're singular and when they're plural because there's a space between the three letters to distinguish it.

It's too bad we don't have some way to do that, but here's the point. This again gets back to what we covered in the first session. God is at work in our midst.

God is at work in the group, in the body. This is not Paul saying God is inside your soul directing and constructing and, you know, it's Sigourney Weaver in the little mechanical suit operating the bigger thing. You know, one of these other movies, there's a little tiny alien guy riding around in the skull driving the fake body, you know, a little tiny guy.

Seriously, there's people who have this view of Christianity that God puts some kind of little desire maker and prompter inside our spiritual head and we will go along and we just, oh, that's of the Lord. I should do this, I should do that. It's not how it works.

That's not what this verse is saying. We need to grow. We are integral.

It's our mind. It's not some other mind. It's not some little voice in the head.

If you're waiting for the still small voice to speak to you and say, go over and talk to that person, give that person a check, you know, you're wasting your time. And if you ever do hear the voice, run, because it is probably masquerading and it's from the Prince of Darkness. It's, you know, voices in your head are not a good thing.

If you hear them, don't listen to them. God does not speak in that way. God has a perfectly good, robust, reliable, checkable, verifiable way to speak to us.

It's in His Word. And when we're meditating on God's Word and we're thinking about it, and maybe we're starting to draw some conclusions, and we say, I wonder if these conclusions are valid. I had a great conversation yesterday with a believer, looking at some things in the Word of God and wondering, are these valid conclusions to draw? I hear people say this and say that about this.

Is this valid? Is this accurate? He did exactly the right thing. He went to another believer that he

knew had some experience with this and asked. And other believers have the chance to speak the truth to one another in love and say, well, you'll notice what it says over here.

I was just looking at this verse the other day, and when you put these two together, it really kind of tells you what this has to mean. Oh, of course, that's great. It's fellowship.

It is gifting. It is the ability to be a blessing to one another. It's a blessing a lot of times to be asked a question, to get the chance to speak the truth.

You think, well, I need somebody to be a blessing to me and give me an answer. You can be a blessing by asking the question, by bringing up the subject. Maybe sometimes it's something someone hasn't thought of in a while, or they're thinking about something else.

And when you bring up your question, these two things come together and click, and God opens a whole door or a window in the soul of somebody through your need, through your question, through the opportunity that you create for somebody else in the body. This is what it's talking about. Ephesians chapter four, verse eight, verse nine, when he, the Lord Jesus Christ ascended on high and took his corporeal, physical, one place at one time body out of the lower parts of the earth, he gave gifts down here.

Now he's got a distributed body. Now he is all over the earth. He's in this room where two or three are gathered in my name.

There am I in the midst. Christ is really almost tongue in cheek because that's body of Christ. That's believers being Christ, being the blessing that the Lord Jesus could be.

But it's multiplied, it's manifold, it's exponential, and it's us. You have an individual gift. Verse seven, to each one of us, it doesn't say to most of us, it doesn't say to the best of us, it doesn't say when you get mature it suddenly drops on you, it's like a second blessing.

You get saved but you're a baby and you're just there to be cared for and to be carried around and to be lugged from place to place and spoon fed. Then after you grow up and at a certain time, then you will suddenly have a gift and be a blessing to each one of us. You can put in there, to me.

To me. First person, singular pronoun, pointing at your face. To me was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift.

If you're hearing the sound of my voice by any means and you're a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, you have been given grace. You possess it. I don't care who you are, I don't care where you are, I care not for your circumstance.

In this sense, you have been given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. He gave it. He giveth grace, he giveth more grace.

Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud but giveth grace to the humble. To each one of us grace is given, that grace is operational in humility. You can be given a thing and never exercise it.

Did you ever get a coupon in the mail? Ten percent off at Kohl's. Were you given a ten percent off discount? Yes. But if you didn't go to Kohl's and use it, did you actually get a ten percent discount? Well, you did and you didn't.

You were given it in the potential, you have it, it's yours, you can use it, check the expiration date. But if you don't go use it, did you really receive it? Well, it kind of depends on how you're looking at it. To each one of us grace was given, but in James, God gives grace to the humble.

Who are the humble? Who are the typaino frosune? Those who are looking for the interests of others. God gives grace and then that grace spreads, that grace multiplies in the body. According to the measure of Christ's gift, because He ascended and to take His place He left us and He gave us these gifts.

You've got one, I've got one, we've all got one. And it is almost always, with rare exceptions, there is a limited ministry of evangelism and of shining the light in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. But the vast majority of that function is in and for the body.

It is self-sustaining, it is self-blessing. So, verse 11, He Himself gave. Who is He Himself? What does verse 7 say? It's Christ's gift.

This is a gift from the Lord Jesus Christ. He Himself gave some. Notice 2B is in italics.

It sounds like, well, He had this apostle ship thing and He spotted Saul of Tarsus and He said, I'm going to give this apostle gift to Saul. I'm going to give this apostle gift to Shimon, Petras. I'm going to give this gift to Jacobu.

I'm going to give this one to Ioannes. I'm going to give this one to Bartolomeo. I'm going to give this one to any one of the other apostles.

That's not what it says. The recipient, the object to whom these things are given is the body. The body has been given apostles.

Have you ever gotten a blessing from an apostle? You're getting one right now from the pages of this letter that an apostle wrote. This apostle has blessed the church from the day he wrote this letter forward. The apostle Peter has been a blessing to the body ever since he lived his life, penned his letters, the account of his experiences with the Lord Jesus were set down.

They've been a blessing to the body. He gave some apostles. He gave some prophets, prophecies, forth telling, proclaiming about the present and the future.

He gave some evangelists. He gave some who just have a knack for being there. God positions them so that when somebody's God consciousness results in a readiness to accept and to receive the truth, there's that person.

They are in the right place at the right time, and that's really their gift. They're uniquely gifted in evangelism. The problem with evangelists in the body is they think everybody has their gift and should be operating the way they do, and it's not so.

They are uniquely gifted in that way. It would be like me saying, well, everybody should be a pastor. You should drop what you're doing and get busy and learn a little Hebrew, learn a little Greek, and get out there and start having some Bible classes.

If you're not teaching somebody the scriptures, if you're not elucidating and expositing and expatiating on the scriptures to somebody, you're not healthy. Nobody makes that case, do they? Well, why do they make the case on evangelism? We've got evangelists. Do you have the opportunity to expound, explore, and expatiate on scripture from time to time? Do you get the chance to explain a passage or speak to people? Of course you do.

You learn it in class. What do we have that we did not receive? We learn things, and from time to time we get to share them. Some of us have that as a regular job.

Other people, it's occasional. As the need arises, a little here, a little there, line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, there a little. But it's not your spiritual day job.

It's a hobby. It's an opportunity. It's an occasional thing.

That's how it is with evangelism. Do not take one thing and do the fallacy of composition with it, where you take one thing and generalize to all. Well, He gave some apostles.

He gave some apostles. Gave them to whom? To the body. He gave them.

He put them on the earth to do the apostle thing. He gave some prophets to prophesy, to proclaim, to foretell, to be proclaimers. And this is a legitimate ministry even today.

There are people who will become aware of something and sound an alarm to the body of Christ. They are not pastors and they are not evangelists. They are somebody who will prophesy.

Agabus gave a message to the apostle Paul. If Paul is an apostle, why didn't God just give it to him? Why did He give it to a prophet to give to Paul? Why will there be prophets that will say certain things are going to happen? Well, I'll give you an example. I just was made aware of this this morning, actually.

You know, and this is kind of a, if you're squeamish, you're not going to like this subject. There have been in recent years a lot of problems, for example, in the Catholic Church with regard to

sexual abuse. You've heard about this.

It's a very difficult issue for the Catholic Church to deal with, because if you view yourself as the vicar of Christ and as the representatives, plural, of Christ on earth, and you've got these internal problems that are ugly, you say, well, I can't air this out because this shames the name of Christ, which of course it does. So we'll try to deal with it offline, out of sight. We don't want to fly the dirty laundry in the front yard, right? But this creates its own set of problems, because in many cases it multiplies and magnifies the problem.

They'll try to suppress the victims and say, don't speak up and talk about this. You're making trouble. Sacrifice yourself.

Fall on the sword. Just accept the fact that this happened to you. But don't cause a problem for the bigger church, because the bigger church is more important than you.

Be sacrificial towards self and beneficial to others. It's sort of perverse. Don't let it out.

And in many cases, there's a lot more attention made to squelching the victim than there is to dealing with the perpetrator or perpetrators. Well, you know about this, right? Here's the thing. Billy Graham's grandson is the founder and operator of a ministry called Grace.

His name is Bob Chavidjian, T-C-H-I-V-I-D-J-I-A-N, Chavidjian, Boz, B-O-Z. This is Billy Graham's daughter's son. Grace is an acronym for this ministry because it is a problem in the Protestant world, a big, big, big problem.

It is as big or bigger in the Protestant world than it has ever been in the Catholic church. The Catholic church has a hierarchy, has a real discernible authority structure so that when things crop up, at least they have a mechanism. The mechanism has not worked in many cases, but there is a mechanism.

The Protestant world is often formless and void, and darkness is upon the face of the deep. And it is difficult to deal with these things. But name brand organizations, and I'm not going to name any of them here, but missions organizations that have been around for 50, 60, 70 years in their mission schools overseas, universities, Christian universities, well-known brand name, you've heard of them, universities, have had scandals to rival anything you have heard of in the news and then some.

Huge, horrific cases of abuse. Well, my whole point is we need to be aware of these things. We need to be able to prepare and protect our children from predators who find the petri dish of medium that is so nourishing and conducive to growth.

This is a great place for predators in an environment where trust is currency. And these people prey on trust. In an environment where authority is recognized and honored, authority can be used to manipulate and to victimize and to silence the victims.

And there is no more conducive place for these predators, these immoral, weak, evil individuals who have a pattern of this kind of behavior. This is paradise for them. It is so easy.

And some of you already know of cases where this has occurred. And it is very difficult to deal with because people are wrestling with, well, what about forgiveness? What about restoration and aren't we all forgiven? And listen, this thing is big. It is ugly.

It is horrific. It is widespread. And you haven't heard a tenth of a percent of how much of it is going on in the church today.

Well, Boz Javidian and a few others are beginning to air this out. And organizations that find out, unbeknownst to them, this stuff is going on, and they call Boz and say, okay, you grace guys come in and do an investigation. Help us find this and clean it out.

It is so bad that they say we're – and others see how horrific it was in that organization. They say, well, we're not going to call the grace guys in because we don't want it known. We don't want it aired out.

It will ruin us. We need to find it and try to deal with it privately. Well, as soon as you try to deal with it privately, it is getting swept under the rug and people just get moved and the tale is not told.

And these people go elsewhere. People that abused children for years and it was found out and they're quietly dismissed, they go to some new place and they do the same thing and there's fresh victims. And identification and expurgation of these things and protection of the rest of the body from them.

This is one of the – you want to talk about prophecy? I don't think anybody that comes to this passage is going to give you this application of it. But there is a need in the body of Christ for people to warn us. Dave Hunt was another example of the dangers of New Age-ism and of Eastern meditation and other forms of spiritism coming into the church.

Dave Hunt fulfilled the gift of prophet. I'm not comparing him to an Old Testament prophet. I'm saying that's a gift to proclaim to the body, to warn, to exhort, to encourage on specific issues, specific items.

Billy Graham himself, as an evangelist, also often functioned in that prophet role. And in his crusades, he would point out issues and areas that the body needed to be aware of. And he sort of had, I think, a dual role, the Billy Graham evangelistic organization.

There have been others that sort of wear double hats. Prominent preachers have sometimes been the means of proclaiming issues to the body. Legalism, for example.

And legalism, of its many hydra-headed evils, the multiple snakes, one of the problems in legalism is under a legalistic environment, abuse of all forms, and especially sexual abuse of women and of children, proliferates. It is the paint under which the wood rots and the termites eat and live and thrive. And they're so anxious to preserve appearances.

They're so confident that as long as this external rule seems to be followed and this external appearance is maintained, inside, dead men's bones. And if you want the link to this very in-depth article that I was sent this morning, I will give it to you after class. It is on a website called prospect.org. And there's a most popular section, prospect.org. Just look to the right, it says most popular, it's right at the top.

The next Christian sex abuse scandal. It's a long, detailed, and very warning article. That's the function of prophet in the church today.

It's not, hey, you're going to meet a tall, dark stranger. Not future prediction. Prophecy is proclamation and warning.

Proclamation and information for the body. He himself gave some apostles. He himself gave some prophets.

He himself gave some evangelists. And he himself gave some pastors and teachers. Granville Sharp, it's one gift, pastor and teacher.

Shepherd and instructor. What for? Verse 12. What's the purpose? For the equipping of the sanctified ones.

The equipping of the members of the body. Equipping of the saints. For the work of ministry.

For the building up of what? Say it out loud. For the building up of what? The body of Christ. Do you see where this is headed here? Do you see why he has affirmed and maintained and built this foundation? One spirit.

Unity of the spirit. Bond of peace. One hope of your calling.

One Lord. One faith. One baptism.

One God and Father of all. Over all. Through all.

In all. You are in him. He is in you.

He is at work in your midst. And you, plural, to will and to do to carry out and fulfill his function, his purpose. That's you.

That's me. How is it done? First of all, don't split. Don't divide.

Don't carp and get your interests ahead of God's and cause division and dissension in the body. If there's a problem, absorb it. If there's a difficulty, get over it.

If it's an insult to you personally, now if there's a problem of another kind, touch not the unclean thing. I hear that there is immorality in your midst. A guy is shackled up with his stepmother.

Exit. Show him the door. Purge out.

So that the body can remain whole and undivided. There is a time to separate. There is a time to identify a problem.

And you don't just get over it for the sake of unity. This is the point of my illustration here from Boz Chavidian's group. There is a time to identify and remove genuine... You cannot reconcile with sex abusers.

They don't recover. You don't forgive them and enfold them and say, well, gee, just try not to do that again. That is a serious, serious flaw in the structure of the soul.

And that person has to be identified and quarantined. You don't remain unified with cancer. And that's a cancer.

Anybody that reaches that level to abuse a child, to abuse some position in the church, and take advantage of women, married or unmarried, teachers in Christian schools taking advantage of teenage girls, assistant pastors and this kind of thing, be on your guard. If you are a young woman, I don't care how holy the church seems to be, doors always open, multiple people in the room, you take no chances. You cannot believe how big this problem is.

It is not spoken of because people don't want to do despot to the spirit of grace. They don't want Jesus to be shamed. Look, there is a great quote from Boz Chavidian in this article.

He says, Jesus doesn't need your reputation. You're protecting yourself, saying that you want to protect Christ. Jesus doesn't need your protection.

He doesn't need you trying to keep His name from being besmirched. If you really want to not have His name be besmirched, don't let this stuff go on in the body. Identify it, cut it out and purge it.

And make sure nobody else gets infected. And this is serious and it is rife. It is everywhere.

Read the article. It is the ministry of prophecy to the body. The ministry of prophets.

The ministry of apostles. The ministry of evangelists. Teaching us how to best present the truth of the faith.

As well as proclaiming it to others. And pastors and teachers. What for? To equip us for ministry.

How many hats do you wear? What are the three hats you wear? You are a priest. This is to God. You are a minister.

This is one another. And you are an ambassador. Equipping the saints for the work of ministry.

That's the second hat. That's the one another's. For the building up of the body of Christ.

Body singular. Many parts, one body. Makes sense, doesn't it? You can really see how Paul has carefully, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, constructed this argument, this letter.

Emphasizing the unity that we have in Christ. Emphasizing the dynamic divine power and provision that we have in Him. And it's for a purpose.

It's for a reason. It's not just so that we can say, glory, glory, ain't it great? It is for the building up. It is for the edifying.

It is for ministry. It has a purpose. It has an outflow.

You should have outworking. There are ways that you can and should be a blessing. And be building up and ministering to the body.

And what I love about our church is that we have so many opportunities to do it right here in our midst. And when I think of the individuals in our church, everybody takes advantage of opportunities to minister and to be a blessing. Large things, small things.

Things that are visible. Things that are invisible. But it's such a wonderful thing to be a part of a fellowship where we have active benefit.

Active believers who are watching for and exploring those opportunities. And my hat is off in that regard. And I think this is the evidence that God is in our midst.

And God is at work in us to will and to do for His good pleasure. And it doesn't get any better than that. What a privilege and what a blessing it is to not only individually have these wonderful things from the Lord Jesus, but to be in a local assembly that does the same things.

And we must always strive to preserve and value that blessing. Because it's rare. It is precious.

And it is the expression and the fulfillment of the worthy walk and the calling to which we have been called. This is where it happens. Look around.

This is where it happens. Look at other believers in your periphery. That's where it happens.

And this will be the basis for our evaluation at the judgment seat where we will receive what has been done in the body. Remember the phrase? Each will receive what has been done in the body. It's a prescient foreshadowing of what happens in the body, capital B. Let's close here in a

word of prayer.

Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word. Thank You that not only have You made so many things available to us, but You've given us the instruction manual. You have explained in detail.

You've given us tutorials. You've given us examples. You've given us illustrations.

You've given us graphics, large and small, making it explicitly clear how we can serve, how we can grow in grace and knowledge, how we can be effective, how we can witness to Your glory and Your grace in representing the Lord Jesus Christ on this earth. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will keep us mindful of what we have learned and that He will, through these truths, thoroughly equip us for every good work. We pray it in Jesus' name.

Amen.