

TO SERVE IN HUMANITY WITH DIVINITY

By Titus Chu

MESSAGE FOUR: THE APOSTLE PAUL'S UPLIFTED HUMANITY WITH DIVINITY IN FIRST CORINTHIANS (1)

THE STRUGGLING OF OUR SERVING LIFE IN AN UPLIFTED HUMANITY WITH COMMITMENT (1)

Introduction

From the very beginning we should be reminded that this is a service training. Why are we here? Because we have a desire to serve the Lord. We hope that after this week our whole view of the serving life would become very different. The book of First Corinthians indicates that the serving life is a struggling life. It is just like parents raising up a child. The raising up of a child is a struggling, because no parent knows how. No parent can say, "I know how to raise up my children. I can do it. I have the secret." Even a Ph.D. in education cannot help you, except in theory. Parents do not raise up their children according to a theory. Parents can only raise up their children with struggling. To serve in the church life, we must learn how to struggle. The serving life is a struggling life.

If we want to serve, if we want to struggle, and if we want to be a healthy and proper serving one, we ourselves must be a special kind of person. To be this kind of person we need five things: 1) we need to have a commitment; 2) we need to know the will of God; 3) we need to be with the local churches; 4) we need to have high expectations; and 5) we must have a life laboring for the Body of Christ. We should not think these five items are easy, because not one of them is with our common mentality. As a common man we don't have consideration for these five items. How many of us can say, "I am so thankful to the Lord. I am saved. I love Him. Because I love Him so much, I know I am a

person with divine commitment.” Most of us do spiritual things because they are the things we ought to do. Why do some saints clean the meeting hall? They might say, “No one else is doing it. If I don’t do it, it will get too dirty.” This means that their serving is not a commitment. Instead, it is an obligation. If what we do in the church life is merely an obligation, we will never raise up anyone and can never serve in the church life properly.

Some saints are “resurrected” by particular services, such as a love feast. They become zealous and full of activity, and when it is over they “die” again. Why do saints go through this? Because there is no divine commitment. There is only a commitment to an activity, which can never build up the church. It is the divine commitment which builds up the church. The first of the five crucial items for serving in the church life is that we ourselves must be those who are divinely committed. We may think, “I don’t know what you are talking about. I love the Lord. Isn’t that enough? I attend all the meetings. Isn’t that enough? I prophesy. Isn’t that enough?” No, it is not enough! It is not enough for us to just be good brothers and sisters. We must be those with a divine commitment!

The second item we must have for a serving life is the will of God. How are we committed? Through the will of God. Have we ever considered, “I live and I serve because of the will of God”? This is not what we usually mean by “God’s will.” “God’s will” to us usually means “if God allows.” It is often common among Christians to say, “If it is God’s will, I will see you tomorrow,” or something similar. They act as if this is all God has to care about. But God is very busy in carrying out His own will, and not our will. God is very purposeful. God has His will. Our commitment in our serving life must be through the will of God.

The third item in our serving life is that we must be with a local church. The apostle Paul wrote First Corinthians as a letter to a local church. We should not look down on the local churches. Suppose someone says our local church is not so important because it is too small. We should react, “A local church is a local church! What do you mean it’s too small? God honors it, so

who are you?” First we must have the divine commitment, secondly our commitment must be through the will of God, and thirdly we need to be in the local churches.

Paul wrote to the church in Corinth with high expectations. This is the fourth item for our serving life. It is hard to find a church today which has as many problems as the church in Corinth. It seems that God allowed the church in Corinth to become the totality of all the problems a local church could have. Corinth had divine problems and human problems, problems with the flesh and the self-life, problems in truth and in life. Yet Paul wrote to them with such high expectations. When we think about our local church, what expectations do we have? What do we dream about? What do we see? Every serving one must be a “dreamer” with high expectations for all the saints. We shouldn’t look at the saints as “tools” to be used by us. When we look at the saints we should be filled with expectations. Then the saints who are under our shepherding will be blessed.

We may have the first three items, but when we come to this one we would feel, “Oh Lord, now it is not so easy.” If we are serving ones, then we must ask ourselves, where are our expectations? In the past week how many saints have gone through our person, and when they did, how many expectations rose up within us? Usually when we serve, for some reason we go from program to program. We are just glad that the saints are still in the Lord’s recovery. We shouldn’t be so meaningless in our serving. Instead, we should be filled with hope. The reason we are not so qualified to serve is because we are not possessed with expectations. When a good serving one considers his local church he is possessed with hope and high expectations for the saints. If we don’t see this, we cannot serve. Serving is just like being a parent. Parents are always hopeful for their children. Otherwise, how can they raise them up? Good parents always find ways for their children to have the best development and education. They make sure that their children’s talents are manifested so that they can have the most success. Only when we are like this can we serve the saints properly. The last item in our serving life is for us to see the Body of Christ. This letter is

not only written to the church in Corinth, but it is written “to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, the called saints, with all those who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in every place, who is theirs and ours” (1 Cor. 1:2). This means that the epistle of First Corinthians is actually for the Body of Christ. In everything we do we must realize that we are part of the Body. We love the Body, we serve the Body, and the fruit of our labor must be for the Body. Everything must be for the Body of Christ.

With Commitment

The apostle Paul was a called apostle of Christ Jesus. His apostleship was not a position, and neither was it a title. His apostleship came from his person. He was an apostle, a constituted apostle. Thus, his operation and exercise became his apostleship. Paul’s apostleship came from his person. His person was called, and in his person he was an apostle. His title didn’t matter. Whether he was called “brother Paul,” or “the apostle Paul,” or just “Paul,” he was an apostle. His apostleship didn’t come from his birth, but by many years of divine constitution. Then in his operation he raised up churches, appointed elders, raised up co-workers and believers, and preached the gospel. His operation and exercise became his apostleship.

Although we are not an apostle, we are called just as Paul was called. God called Paul, and God also called us. When we desire to serve, we should realize we are not doing a spiritual thing or carrying a spiritual work. Don’t say, “The Lord has told me I must prophesy every Lord’s Day morning.” Then that becomes a spiritual thing. The Lord may lead you in such a way, but it should not be taken as a spiritual thing. In the same way coworkers should not think, “The Lord has given me this particular region.” No, the Lord has not called us to do a work or a spiritual thing. Rather, our serving must be our “being,” our operation must be our person, our labor must be with our commitment. Until this is clear, there will be no reality in our spiritual service. Our serving must be our person. What kind of

person we are becomes our serving. Furthermore, our labor must be with our commitment. What are we committed with? That commitment is our person. Our person and our commitment should be the same, with the divine constitution. We should be able to say, “My serving is my person, my operation is my person, and my labor is my person with my commitment.” Until this is clear, there will be no reality in our spiritual service. At the most, we will just get things done.

If our person is not right, then nothing else will work. If our person is lacking, then our serving will not be so healthy. Within us there must be something as a divine commitment. For example, if we are carrying out a divine commitment in our ministering, then if we are with one hundred people, we minister. If there is only one person, we still minister. There is something within us as a divine commitment. If there is a need to speak to a large group, we minister. If there is no need to speak in such a way, we are still willing to sit down with just one person and fellowship our burden. We are equally burdened if there are three thousand people, three hundred people, or only one person. But when the essence and substance of our commitment disappears, then only a work is left. We lose the freshness in our serving.

The Lord Jesus was such a person, with a divine commitment. He would preach to the multitudes, and He would feed the five thousand. Yet He would also travel a long distance to gain one immoral Samaritan woman. He was committed. He was burdened. This commitment was His very person. We must be the same: our commitment must be our person. However, if we are those who simply prepare a message, so that if there is a big crowd we minister, but if there is no big crowd we have nothing to say, it will never work. A message in itself never works. We must have a commitment, with something constituted in our person. That constitution becomes our very “being.” It burns in our person so that we desire for it to come out. Then if there is one person with us, we fellowship. If there are a few people, we teach them. If there is a group of people, we speak to them. With a large multitude, we minister. But in each situation we are

equally possessed with the desire for all our riches to go out to those we are serving.

It is normal for us to be encouraged or discouraged in our serving, but we should never be distracted from our commitment. Our commitment should never be “diluted.” In the sight of God, if we are serving the young people and only two show up for a high school gathering, maybe that is because they are the ones who really need it. That may be the best chance to gain them.

Perhaps if there is a larger number at that time it would not work. But for some reason we look at the spiritual service as a thing to do. “I will do this. I will carry this out to fulfill my duty and obligation.” Then in turn we miss the real thing. Again, our serving must be our “being,” our operation must be our person, and our labor must be with our commitment. Until this is clear, there will be no reality in our spiritual service. We should never say, “The elders have told me I’m in charge of the college students.” That means nothing. “I’m in charge of a certain meeting.” That also means nothing. We do not need to be told to be in charge. We are in charge because of our person. We do not need an “appointment” when we serve. For example, we may just love young people and want to care for them. We have divine things constituted into us, and it operates in us to be a blessing to the young people. If we are the right person, then we just care for those we serve. If we are not the right person, then even when we try our best it doesn’t work. It is not a matter of appointment. From the very beginning we should realize that if we want to serve we must have a divine commitment.

Through the Will of God

Paul was called through the will of God. He was a “called apostle.” How sweet that Paul was called through the will of God! The magnificent riches of the will of God were very subjective to him. Who God is, what God desires, what He expects, what He wants to accomplish, what He is doing today,

all of these are related to the will of God. To Paul, all of these things were very subjective. He received, he partook of, he enjoyed, and he lived in the will of God. This is not easy. When we serve, we often say, "I can't do it, but God can!" Is that right, or not? That still makes it a spiritual thing to do. God may not even care. We think, "I have five friends. I must do something to gain them!" God may say, "Forget about it." We quickly say, "Lord, I can't do it, but You can." Yes, God can, but maybe He doesn't want to. We always focus on a thing to do, but we are not for God Himself.

Whatever God wants to do, He must do through us. For example, God could not have written the Bible without Paul. To say "I can't, but God can," may just be religious talk. We must see that God has to do everything through us. So often we testify, "I tried again and again, until one day the Lord told me, 'You try too hard. Let Me do it!'" We may try so hard and nothing happens. Then we say, "Lord I can't do it, but You can do it!" God might say, "I never wanted to do it. How come you are so sure I can do it? I can do everything, but I don't want to do this." If we say, "Then what do You want to do?" God would reply, "I want to work on you."

It is better to tell the Lord, "Lord, honestly, I don't know what to do. I don't even care. I've tried so hard to gain these five friends of mine. Now I ask You to send them away so I can be peaceful. I am not going to work on them anymore." We are always so work-oriented. We want to do this and do that, but God may not be interested. We often say, "Let's do this!" and when it doesn't work we say, "God can do it!" No. God can do everything, but His problem is that He cannot do anything through us, because we won't let Him. God would say, "To gain your five friends is easy for me. But the problem is I cannot gain you. For some reason you refuse. When you come to Me I am just an object to be used by you." We may pray so much for other people - for our contacts, for the saints - but we never pray, "Lord, what is wrong with me?" We pray for our local church, but the Lord is standing there saying, "You haven't prayed a word for yourself. You think only you are right." How many of us realize that it is

not a matter of doing this or that? The problem is us. The Lord wants to gain us.

Paul was one who received, partook of, enjoyed, and lived in the will of God. When we experience God's person, we also enjoy His will. God's concern is how much we are in Him. Our view is how much we can do. Then if we cannot "do," our concern is how much can God do. But God would say, "I just want you to abide in Me." Why do we care for activities so much? We should pray, "Lord, send these five contacts away. I want to love You alone."

When instead we pray as normal, "Lord, save these five contacts," the Lord would say, "No. I can't, because I'm interested in you. The person I love is you. The person I desire to gain is you. I don't want you to enjoy a work, but to enjoy Me and partake of Me. I want you to abide in Me. When you are so one with Me, your caring for others will be surprisingly easy."

The will of God became Paul's existence and operation, and also became his controlling vision. Paul was not for a work. He was not for a thing to do. Paul was only for God Himself. Only by being such a person can God say, "Now I have a way with you." Otherwise there is no way for us to serve. We are usually not like Paul. We utilize God to do one thing after another, to carry through one spiritual activity after another. The Lord would say, "You must be like Paul. You must receive, partake of, enjoy, and live in My will. My will must become your existence, your operation, and your controlling vision."

We should remember the Lord Jesus. It seems that when the door was closed, He tried very hard, yet when the door was open, He didn't do so much. When the Lord Jesus fed the multitude with the five loaves and two fish, they all came back. But the Lord seemed to chase them away. He could have done the same miracle for three months and gained so many people. Everyone would have followed Jesus. But the Lord deliberately said things to make them go away. The Lord basically said, "You come here not because of Me, but because you are satisfied with bread." He caused them to go away. Then how come we are so excited

about five contacts? This doesn't mean we should chase away those who would believe in Jesus. But how should we care for these people? We should say, "I have to partake of God, I have to enjoy God, and I have to abide in God. I must have an intimate relationship with God. I don't see my contacts, I see God Himself. I am saturated with this very God. Then from this saturation, something comes out of my person which is very attractive."

Suppose we have five people we want to gain for the Lord. What should we do? First, we should forget about them. Second, we should enjoy the Lord. Third, if after we enjoy the Lord so much we still have concern for them, then we should treat them as human beings. We should no longer treat them as our "prey," as the object of our labor. In the church we often become like hunters, looking for who is ready so that we can get them into the church life. Can we simply forget about our contacts, and just really enjoy the Lord? Then after we enjoy the Lord, if we still have concern for these people, can we treat them properly as human beings without unrealistic expectations?

When we raise up our children we are filled with expectations for them, but not unrealistically. We don't say to our children, "Tonight I fixed you a steak. I expect you to grow an inch!" We don't have these kinds of expectations. We are only happy that they enjoy a good meal. We know that if they live normally and eat properly, they will grow healthy. We don't require them to meet some unrealistic standard. How long will it take to gain our contacts for the Lord? What if it takes five years, including so many times of just being together with them in a normal way? Perhaps it will require numerous times of having dinner together and just being their friends. Even with so many times of being together with them, maybe there should only be five seconds in which a word of the Lord comes from our mouth. It's as if we have almost no expectation. Our feeling is, "I am your friend. I love you. If the Lord gains you, then He gains you. I am not trying to gain you. If you are captured by the Lord, it is not up to me. I don't want to capture you, I only want to love you." Then we truly see the will of God.

Can we find anyone more “incapable” than Jesus Christ? The maximum number He had was one-hundred and twenty. A person with that kind of wisdom, power, and discernment produced so little. Couldn’t we do a better job than that? We would tell the Lord, “I can’t believe You are that slow. I have five friends, and I want to gain them in thirty days. I have a neighbor, and I want him to come to one meeting and get saved. He’s already been to my house twice!”

Then where is the will of God with us? This shows that we live totally in our Christian activities. “I do this, I am burdened for that.” Our desire is good, our heart is good, and what is within us is good. But we are not after God Himself. If we want to be fruitful, we should forget about our contacts. Whenever we see them, we should no longer think, “When can I bring them into the church life?” They would say, “Never.” Rather, we should just be happy to see them. Whether they come into the church life or not is up to the Lord. We realize that our responsibility is just to enjoy God. We should be in God, enjoy God, abide in God, and partake of God. Then after our enjoyment we are different. We would say, “I love these five contacts. I am just with them, and I look unto the Lord. Maybe He will give me a way. Maybe the time for the Lord to gain them will be a year from now. But out of my enjoyment of God, I just love them.” This is to know God’s will.

When we are like this, fruit-bearing is so normal. We should just tell the Lord, “I love You. I just want to enjoy You. I don’t care if these friends come into the church life. I don’t care if I’m fruitful. I only care that I love You to the uttermost!” When we are so much in the Lord’s presence we may not even pray for our contacts. Sometimes when we pray for people we become more pressured to gain them, and they can sense it. Instead, out of our enjoyment of the Lord, we just love them. We enjoy being with them. We spend time with them. We become their good friends. We are open to them and stand with them in their difficulties. We can eventually let them know that we are a Christian. Then we can let them ask us, “What is it you believe?” We are ready for “everyone who asks of you an account concerning the hope

which is in you” (1 Pet. 1:15). Peter said that people would ask us concerning our hope. This is because we are a “living revelation” of the Lord (Hymn 642, verse 2). People are impressed. They want to know how we live such a life. Then we can tell them in a very simple way, “It is all the Lord’s mercy. I was a sinner. I was empty. I was hopeless. But somehow, I touched Christ.” That is to live in God’s will. When we are so one with God’s will, fruit-bearing is normal.

Paul met a need by investing himself, not according to the need itself, but according to the will of God. The Lord Jesus was also like this. In John 11, when someone came to the Lord to tell Him that Lazarus was sick, He waited for two days. Lazarus died before the Lord arrived. Why did He wait? The Lord said, “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God” (v. 4). The Lord never met a need according to the need, but according to will of God. Paul was also like this, and we ourselves must be such a person. We need to meet a person’s need according to the will of God. Paul confronted the situations, not according to the situations themselves, but according to the will of God. Paul raised up brothers, not for the brothers themselves, but for the will of God. Brothers need to be raised up, but we should raise them up for the will of God. The will of God became the focus, the center, the energizing element, even the reason of his sweat and tears in all his endeavoring. Paul could say, “I live and I labor according to the will of God.” This was Paul’s labor and it must also be our labor. This was Paul’s service and, in like manner, this must also be our service.

In the Local Churches

The apostle Paul’s labor was specific. Here he wrote to the church of God which is in Corinth. How marvelous, he labored with a local church. We should not always like to visit and be invited to so many different places. We have to learn to be with a local church. Even if the very Christ had committed to him the whole earth as his field, he still would have needed to go from one place to another (that is, from one local church to another

local church.) In England there is a statue of John Wesley with a quote, “The world is my parish.” On one hand it is quite striking, but actually Wesley was missing something. For us it is not the world but the local church which is our field. It is not “the world is my parish,” but “the local church is my parish.” Even if we have the whole earth, we must be with a local church. Without the local church, nothing works.

Even if the Lord had committed Paul with the whole earth as his field, he would still have needed to labor in the local church. He would still have need to go from one local church to another.

The practicality of his labor, in principle, still would have been with a local church. The local church is where the Lord can find His abode practically. The local church is where the saints can be properly nurtured and educated, and where they can come to the maturity of their operation. Sometimes we become superstitious, thinking that trainings and conferences can accomplish more than they can. Trainings and conferences help us, but our real growth takes place in our local church. When we were younger, our school could give us help, but our real growth was at home. In the same way, trainings and conferences can give us help, but our real growth is in our locality. We should love our local church, because that is where we really grow. Then when we come to a training such as this it is for help. We come to trainings for help, and then we go back to our local church to grow.

The local church bears the Lord’s testimony. If you take away the local churches it seems that God will have to re-declare, “Heaven is my throne, and the earth the footstool for My feet. Where then is the house that you will build for Me, where is the place of My rest?” (Isa. 66:1). Today, as in Paul’s day, God’s abode is with the local churches. We have to learn to love the church we are in. It may be a very small church, with only a few saints gathering as the Lord’s testimony. But we still have to say, “I love the local church I’m in.”

Paul treasured the local churches, whether they were sweet and prevailing, as the church in Philippi, or whether they were

degraded in appearance and frustrated in practicality, as the church in Corinth. Paul realized that to have a healthy labor one must be with a local church practically. Would we like to be with the church in Philippi, or with the church in Corinth? The answer should be, “Neither! I would rather be with the church where the Lord has put me!”

We always love the church in some other place. We might think, “Isn’t the church in such-and-such a place wonderful?” But someone from that church would say, “No!” We think another church is prevailing, but someone from there would say it is defeated. Which church is good? The church we are in is actually the best for us. That is why the Lord has placed us there.

With High Expectations

How amazing that in Paul’s sight he didn’t focus on the problems, weaknesses, frustrations, and degraded situations. Rather, he saw the saints as the Lord saw them. Do we ever see a brother as the Lord sees him? We often see the brothers according to the flesh. If we don’t see the saints as the Lord sees them, we can never serve. Are we thankful for the brothers the Lord has put us with? The Lord has given us the best companions He can provide, but He still needs us to see it. We must see the brothers as the Lord sees them. When we see the saints, do we see some hope, or do we feel, “These saints are hopeless”? Do we have the expectation for them, “I am sure you will love the Lord so much. You will give yourself to the Lord so much. You will grow so much in truth and in life.” If we don’t have this, we will never serve properly. If we want to serve properly we must always be thankful for the saints we are with. If we see the brothers as the Lord sees them, then our whole view of the church life will become so different.

He considered the saints as the Lord considered them. He viewed the saints according to the will of God, according to the work of Christ, and according to the gift of the Spirit. The Triune God is here. Paul viewed the saints according to the Triune God. Paul

saw the church as God saw the church. The divine constitution in him caused him to be so one with his very Lord, Christ. He realized that without this view toward the church, toward the saints, he could never serve.

When we look at Corinth, would we have any hope? Suppose we say hypothetically that there are about two hundred saints in Corinth, divided into four camps of fifty saints each. The first camp has fornication and immorality. The second camp has idol worship. In the third camp the sisters are taking the lead, and the brothers are arguing about how the sisters should wear head-coverings. The fourth camp has heresy, declaring that there is no resurrection. Then meanwhile all of these camps are divided against each other. And then some of the saints are even coming to the Lord's table drunk! It seems that not one person in Corinth is normal. Would we still have any hope for this situation? Would we have any burden for such a church? If we were Paul we would give them up. We would say, "I have raised up other churches. I can forget about this one." We would have no hope. This kind of church offends the Lord so much. How can the Lord do anything more with this group of people? Yet Paul saw them so differently. He saw them as God saw them. Without this view Paul could never serve.

Actually, in appearance, every saint in a local church is a problem. Every desirous one can become a frustration. Problems are not always as frustrating as desirous ones. When people love the Lord, they often become our frustration. They may call us in the middle of night and wake us up so that we can pray with them. Every gifted one is a potential difficulty. We can say, in appearance, that all the local churches are hopeless because they are composed of the regenerated, but not yet transformed and conformed, ones. We are all regenerated, but are we transformed? A little. Are we conformed? Almost zero. So we become problems. The serving life is not a rosy life. Rather it is a hard delivery, a hard travail. That is why Paul said in Galatians, "My children, with whom I travail again in birth until Christ is formed in you" (Gal. 4:19). What a sight, what a glory, that Paul was not discouraged. Rather, the degraded situation of

this local church generated a more abundant love in him. Paul said to the Corinthians, “that you would know the love which I have more abundantly toward you” (2 Cor. 2:4).

Paul saw the church as God saw it. This is similar to the story of Balaam in the Old Testament. When Balaam was asked to curse the Israelites, all he could say was, “He [God] has not beheld iniquity in Jacob, nor has He seen trouble in Israel” (Num. 23:21a). God saw the Israelites, who were really terrible, yet He saw nothing wrong with them. He beheld no iniquity there. The church is like this. We may see all the problems in the church, but God would say, “The church is so lovely.”

A local church is not only positionally sanctified but also called. The saints have not only been sanctified in Christ Jesus positionally, but they are also called with a view to sanctification dispositionally - called saints. Paul’s realization was, “You are called saints. You are going to be dispositionally sanctified.” How crystal clear was Paul. The degraded situation had not overwhelmed or swallowed him. When he saw a believer, he saw hope. Can we say that? “When I see a believer, I see hope! When I see the saints in the church, I see hope!” We shouldn’t say, “That brother is too old. And that other brother has a dispositional problem.” When we see a brother, we should see hope. He had the ability to see a local church as God sees it. This ability must also be all the serving ones’ ability. If we want to serve, we must have this ability. Otherwise we can never serve. The discouragement will take away all our zealousness, burden, and exercise. When you are young, you are zealous and say, “I’m going to serve!” But the discouragement will take this zealousness away. That is why we must see the brothers as God sees them.

With a View to the Body of Christ

The apostle Paul served a local church yet he was serving the Body of Christ. This epistle was written to the church in Corinth, yet it was addressed also to all those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place. While the local churches were the practicality of his serving life, the Body of Christ was his vision. Paul could say, “When I serve in the local church, I see the Body of Christ.” He realized that in practicality he must help the local churches, and therefore, he must serve a local church in a specific time. He also realized that to serve a specific church was to serve the Body of Christ. The growth of a saint or the growth of a local church in reality is the growth of the Body. When we grow, our growth is the growth of the Body. Surely the local churches are mostly practical while the Body is mostly abstract. Instead of “abstract” we could use the word “spiritual,” but we must realize that the local churches are actually very spiritual. They are spiritual with their practicality. For this reason it is probably better to say, “the local churches are mostly practical, while the Body is mostly abstract.” If one cannot love the brother he sees he cannot love the unseen God. Similarly, if you cannot love the local church you are in, how can you love the Body of Christ? Our love, our appreciation, our giving to the Body of Christ must begin with the brother beside us. If we love and appreciate the Body of Christ, then we must love and appreciate the brothers beside us.

What a marvelous picture portrayed in the beginning of this long epistle: an apostle exercising his apostleship with a divinely constituted commitment, according to the will of God, laboring in a local church with high expectations, yet with the Body of Christ in view.

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