

*"In AND Out"*

**[OPENING SLIDE]**

*"So we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another."*

**Introduction**

The story is told of an old Coast Guard captain, and his chief engineer who were arguing one day over who was the most important person on the ship. To prove their point to each other, they decided to swap places, the chief engineer ascending to the bridge, and the captain descending to the engine room.

Well, several hours later, the captain suddenly appeared on deck, in a complete state of panic, covered with oil and dirt. Waving a monkey wrench above his head, he yelled, "Chief! You have to get down there right away! I can't make her go!"

"Of course you can't," replied the engineer. "I've run the ship aground!"

All Christians are soloists by nature and inclination. Yet, at some point they must learn "the art of playing in God's orchestra." [Franzmann, *Romans*, 220] St. Paul would agree: "It's time to strike up the band." Where, in our text for today, the call goes forth. It beckons the disciples of Jesus to step forward ... to fulfill their holy calling – to come *in*, as well as live *out* this faith with which they have been gifted and to which they have been called.

Yes, let Jesus' Church arise.

**[SLIDE # 2]**

**Main Point: Let Jesus' Church** – that is, *this* church, **increase *in* faith, and *out*** of that faith, offering our bodies as "*living sacrifices*" ... both in service **to the Church and in the world.** [Adapted from Hill, *CPR*, 24:3, 39]

Being *in*, let us move *out*. Amen.

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Well, you are in. Thus it has been declared by way of your Baptism into Christ. Where, we rejoice to *know* that we're in, because God declares it to be so. Our assurance is this: Do you believe in Jesus as your Savior? Then, you're *in*!

Today's text ... is the "now what?" What is that being *in* life going to look like *out there*? "Far from leaving us afloat, drifting in a sea of chaos," says one commentator, "Paul's gospel calls for a clearly ethical life-style." [Craddock, et. al., *Preaching through the Christian Year*, A, 415] Having been taken *in* by a gracious God, the call now sends us to live *out* that faith to which we have been called.

So ... are you *still* in?

Indeed, what a joyous discovery to see “that the Gospel is not a treasure to be stashed [away], but [one] that drives the engines and energies of the lives of all it claims as God’s redeemed people! Grace – energizing, life-enabling – marks the church that works as God intends!” [Strelow, *CPR*, 9:3, 43]

**[SLIDE # 3]** It’s an outward-focused life fueled by a right MOTIVATION.

<sup>1</sup> *I appeal to* [exhort<sup>1</sup>] *you therefore* [i.e. on the basis of that Rock who is Christ, and upon the gift of His grace to you by faith<sup>2</sup>], *brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.*

It is the mercy of God that is the basis for all that we are called to do. What is *more than* implied “is that our lives are continually being offered up before God not as sacrifices to placate an angry God, but as thank offerings in response to a gracious God.” [Craddock, 415]

**[SLIDE # 4]** For “consider God’s mercy. Think of the supreme sacrifice that he made on our behalf. Now respond!” [SSoE, A, 299] In other words, our response to the gospel of God’s grace in our lives is not followed up with “you must, you ought, or you should.” Ours is a Gospel-foundation – with a joyous motivation – what God has done for us in Christ!<sup>3</sup>

That’s what “*in view of God’s mercy*” will do. It gives us joy. It gives us heart. It gives us passion. ... Mercy makes us alive. Mercy is what gives us hope. ... God’s mercy [is] ... our means of exhortation.” [SSoE, A, 304]

Christian musician Scott Wesley Brown captures this sentiment well – of a right-motivated mutual ministry together – in his song entitled “Grace Alone.”

Ev’ry promise we can make, ev’ry prayer and step of faith,  
Ev’ry difference we will make is only by His grace. ...  
Ev’ry soul we long to reach, ev’ry heart we hope to teach,  
Ev’ry-where we share His peace is only by His grace.

Wherein, only by, and in this grace do we become ...

“*Living sacrifices* [contrary to the sacrifices of old] ... *holy* [having been purified in Baptism and set apart for God’s service] ... *and acceptable to God* [because of Jesus’ atoning sacrifice] ... engaged in [work, that is] *worship* ... [work] that is *spiritual*.”

**[SLIDE # 5]** Wherein, our Gospel life then flourishes by way of TRANSFORMATION.

<sup>2</sup> *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed* [lit. metamorphosed – like that of the Monarch butterfly] *by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

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<sup>1</sup> A classical Greek term used by military commanders to exhort their troops before marching into battle. [TDNT 5:793-991]

<sup>2</sup> “It’s always the ‘therefores’ of life that make faith concrete and realistic.” [Shaper, *CJ*, July 1993, 256]

<sup>3</sup> “If you don’t get this part right, the rest won’t matter at all! When life’s foundation is rooted in the Gospel, the specifics of the Christ life become pure dynamite!” [Strelow, *CPR* 9:3, 43]

J.B. Phillips in his paraphrase of these verses puts it this way:

*“Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God re-mould your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good, [that it] meets all His demands and moves you toward the goal of true maturity.”*

**[SLIDE # 6]** Wherein, the world *is* pressing in on us ... with its mindless and immoral concerns ... its own need to be fed and cuddled. It presses in on us in an attempt to depose the deposit set forth in God’s Word. It is relentless, seeking to press us into its mold.

But we are, by grace, tied to the Spirit’s means: our Baptism ... His Word! To be transformed is to know that we can rely on God for everything. ... Nothing is too much for Him to accomplish or work in our lives. ... We can put his promises to the test, always confident that he will never let us down! [Malachi 3:10; Romans 4:16; 15:8ff; 2 Corinthians 1:20; 2 Peter 3:9]

*<sup>3</sup> For by the grace given to me [to us] I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each **according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.***

Wherein “the amazing thing about a living sacrifice is that when you give yourself to God, you [physically] don’t die. Instead, you are more alive than ever before.” [Bickle & Nordlie, *The Goal of the Gospel*, 215]

So, with the proper MOTIVATION, and our lives even now being TRANSFORMED, our outward-focused, Gospel-life becomes one of **[SLIDE # 7] COOPERATION.**

*<sup>4</sup> For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, <sup>5</sup> so we [“the church, in all the prodigal variety of our heredities and histories”<sup>4</sup>], **though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.***

**[SLIDE # 8]** For Paul, it’s “Spiritual Anatomy 101” –a body that is one with Christ ... living in, with, and for each other ... a horizontal relationship [“members one of another”] [*motion*], tethered and flowing from a vertical one [“one body in Christ”] [*motion*].

A Body [vv. 6-8] ...

*Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them ... prophecy [or the ability to communicate the Lord’s Word with clarity, forthright, outspoken in spiritual things], **in proportion to our faith** [i.e. based upon God’s Word and the accepted body of Christian doctrine<sup>5</sup>] ... **service** [as to feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick ... practical ... needs-oriented ... conscientious, dedicated, reliable<sup>6</sup>], **in our serving ... teaching ... exhortation** [encouraging] ... **contributes, in generosity** [i.e. with “liberality”<sup>7</sup>] ... **leads, with***

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<sup>4</sup> Franzmann, *Romans*, 221

<sup>5</sup> *SSoE*, A, 303; *contra* one’s own standard of what that faith ought to entail!

<sup>6</sup> Franzmann. Getting its satisfaction in seeing thing completed, regardless of who gets the credit.

<sup>7</sup> Franzmann. Cause-oriented. Able to see the “big picture,” assessing resources, using gifts ... one who takes delight in giving away one’s possessions, and who given the need, gladly would do so.

*zeal*<sup>8</sup> ... *does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness* [lit. “hilariously” – i.e. “not with sullen, gray demeanor that degrades the recipient of the gift and makes ungracious even our most gracious deeds”<sup>9</sup>].

It is a grand and glorious portrait of the church – working together – for a common purpose and goal – to seek out, to serve and to save ... to bless each other, to bless our friends and families ... and to bless our community. Such is the nature of the Church ... the nature of *this* church ... alive ... given a place, a very special place to *cooperate* with Christ ... with one another.

[SLIDE # 9] It's like the movie *Dunkirk*. Where, in the end, the movie seemed to me a story about heroes; not just *one* ... but *many* ... a number of different, but no less important people, each doing their part. The goal of their efforts? To save the soldiers on the beach.

Wherein, for some, it was to clear the skies of enemy plains. For others, it was to tend to the wounded. For others, it was to pilot their small fishing vessels into dangerous waters, and evacuate those they could. For still others, it was simply to serve sandwiches. Different people, with different gifts, but one goal – to serve and save humanity. If that isn't a picture of the Church – *this* church, I don't know what is!

Wherein, even now ...

*“Like living stones [says Peter] ... we are being built into a spiritual house ... offering spiritual sacrifices to God through [our Lord and Savior] Jesus Christ.”* [1 Peter 2:5]

Some of us may be diamonds, pearls, silver, onyx. Others of us may be gold, sapphires, rubies or bronze. Still others may be lead, platinum, tin, or sandstone. All the while others, are brick, slate, concrete, granite. [Bickle & Nordlie, 220] Whatever your shape ... “no member is solitary; no member is expendable.” [Franzmann, 221]

As to the gifts Paul mentions, it's just a sampling, in no way intended to be exhaustive – the type of gifts that you might find in any church ... “the ‘bread and butter’ of any congregation that intends to function and prosper in a troubled world.” [SSoE, A, 302]

[SLIDE # 10] However, you note them, any of the gifts listed are OUTWARD focused.

All of them are ONGOING [as indicated by the present participle]. It's not, “I've done my act of service, so I'm done.”

All of these gifts are ORIGINAL – i.e. no one person possesses them all.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> SSoE, A, 303; 1 Corinthians 14:3, 31; 14:25 Task-oriented. Organized, authoritative, decisive, good at follow-through. Also good at delegating responsibility and getting things done through others.

<sup>9</sup> Franzmann; “without remorse or second-thoughts, nagging doubts” [SSoE, A, 304].

Feelings-oriented. Highly sensitive to others in need; compassionate and affirming. Good at listening, caring, and “being present” when someone is hurting.

<sup>10</sup> “To boast is to idolize yourself; to deny your gifts is ... a slap in God's face [1 Corinthians 12:7-11].” [Strelow, 44]

Finally, the gifts, God-given, are OBSERVED by others ... by “*generosity ... cheerfulness.*”

There is no burden here ... only joyful service. Wherein, our COOPERATION freely flows from a right MOTIVATION ... thereby governed by the joyous and perpetual TRANSFORMATION of the saints of God!

What a portrait of the Church ... of each a necessary part ... each unique ... each a treasure. “What resources, power, potential, love!” [Strelow, 44]

### Conclusion

#### [SLIDE # 11]

*“In a certain field, within a 500-mile radius of 2/3 of this nation’s population, lie the vestiges, **and a memorial**, of a hand full of people who gave their lives to save many.”*

You know the story well. **United Airlines Flight 93**, a domestic passenger flight from Newark to San Francisco, hijacked as part of the September 11 attacks in 2001. Over 40 minutes into the flight, with the cockpit breached, the pilots overpowered, and the plane in the hands of those who would do us harm, several passengers and crew members, who learned about the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, via cell-phone, decided to mount an assault against the hijackers and gain control of the aircraft.

Whereby subsequent analysis of the flight recorders revealed how the actions taken by a few prevented the aircraft from reaching the hijackers' intended target, thought to be either the White House or United States Capitol. A common field one day, a field of honor forever.

So also the Church, the Body of Christ. Where, in that body, “we need each other to be healthy and whole,” says one commentator. “Our church needs your distinctive gifts that God has given you.” Whereby, “God works through you by His Spirit to serve others, and He works through others to serve you. We are interdependent.” [Peter, *CJ*, 28:3, 306]

Where, as mentioned in this past Friday’s online devotion, the human body can live without many of its parts. It will adapt. It will accommodate for that which it lacks. But that is *not* what the Church of Jesus Christ was created and redeemed to be – one that accommodates and adapts for lack of its parts. For we were created and redeemed for so much more. That out of a proper MOTIVATION, and the Holy Spirit’s continued TRANSFORMATION, we *will* dwell in COOPERATION ... a people who are *in*, so that we may live *out* the calling to which we have been called ... a people who enter into worship, only, in turn [SLIDE # 12] to depart to serve.

One “*living ... holy ... acceptable ... worshipful*” people who are all *in* all to go *out*.

*Amen.*