

# What will it take to be a unified church?

By Philip Johnston

sermonaudio.com

**Bible Text:** Acts 2:41-47  
**Preached on:** Sunday, November 17, 2019

## **Tabernacle Baptist Church**

2515 E. Innes Street  
Salisbury, NC 28146

**Website:** [www.tabernacleministry.com](http://www.tabernacleministry.com)  
**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/tabernaclebaptist](http://www.sermonaudio.com/tabernaclebaptist)

This morning, I want you to turn to Acts 2.

Brother Jim, did you work for Hallmark? That was amazing and I greatly appreciate that and that was awesome. Do you mind if I get a copy of that? Thank you very much. I thought that was amazing.

Acts 2 this morning. Man, a lot of things happen in the book of Acts this morning. By no means are we going to preach out of the entire book but, man, based on what some Sunday school classes were teaching on this morning and, man, the way the service is going, I have no doubt within myself this is what the Lord would have us to preach. Acts 2, if you would, if you don't mind to stand as we read from the word of God. Acts 2. We're going to start verse 41. The Bible says this,

41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

How would you like to be a part of that church service? Amen. And verse 42,

42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. 43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. 44 And all that believed were together, and had all things common; 45 And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. 46 And they, continuing daily with one accord [I've heard that phrase throughout our service this morning] with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, 47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord [again] added to the church daily such as should be saved.

I want you to notice this morning this is not what I'm preaching on, but I want you to notice who added to the church. Was it man? Was it the music program? It wasn't even the preaching that added to the church but the Lord added to the church. I'm glad the Lord does what he's doing this morning.

Let's pray.

*God, we love you this morning. We're so thankful, Lord, for what we've heard. Lord, we're so thankful, God, for what we've witnessed this morning. We could leave right now and say it's been good to come to church this morning but, Lord, I ask, God, as we transition to the preaching of the word of God, Lord, that you'd hide me behind the cross, Lord. I'm just a man, God, and these people do not want to hear, don't need to hear, Lord, what I have to say but, God, they need to hear from you. Lord, I need to hear from you this morning so, Lord, I'm asking, God, and I'm begging, Lord, that you will just take your word, Lord, that it will not return void, that when we leave this church today, God, we could be different, Lord, than when we came and we'll be careful to give you all the praise, all the honor, and all the glory. In your name we pray. Amen.*

You can be seated this morning.

Man, as I look and I think about Tabernacle Baptist Church, man, great things are happening, aren't they? Man, and I'm not trying here just because, you know, it's our first day as being a pastorate, man, I was thinking last night and I was thinking this morning as I've seen Billy and Jodie as they got in the bus, man, the buses are running, they're picking up kids and we were able to attend RU on Friday night and, man, to think about the RU program, man, our Sunday school program and children's church and, man, all these things that are happening at Tabernacle Baptist Church. If I'm honest with you this morning, there's a lot of churches that don't have a lot of things happening. They're dead, they're dried up, they're on the brink of closing the doors, but I'm thankful this morning that at Tabernacle Baptist Church, man, things are happening. I believe that God is moving, he's got a plan, but I just want to caution you this morning, I want to kind of warn you this morning that on every high mountain of a church, a valley is one step away.

Man, I was thinking about what I was going to preach this morning and I kind of, y'all ever argue with the Lord? I don't know, there's no point to it but I was like, "Lord, are you sure this is what you want me to preach?" And man, I thought about Moses as he was getting ready to cross the Red Sea, I was like, "Man, that would be a great message for today or, man, when the Israelites crossed over Jordan into the Promised, man, that would be such a good message." But I could not get away from this text and as we find our text this morning, man, we think of all the great things that are happening at Tabernacle Baptist Church but, man, if we're not careful, a valley is just one turn away.

You say, "How do you know that?" Because I know how the devil operates. Our Bible tells us how he operates: Satan likes to create division. Satan likes to come in when things are happening, he likes to create division among the people, he likes to maybe tell them, "Hey, why are you not the one teaching? Why are you not the one up there? Why? Why didn't you get to be the one to sing?" You say, "Would he do that?" Absolutely he would. The devil likes to create division.

You say, "Why would he do something like that?" Because I believe that Tabernacle Baptist Church is doing great things for the Lord. I also believe that Tabernacle Baptist Church has alerted the radar of hell. I believe that the cross-hairs of hell itself are now on Tabernacle Baptist Church and, man, I believe that the principalities and powers are now alerting Satan, "Now listen, there's a little church on the side of East Innes Street, man, they're doing something good. Something's going on there. We need to get after them."

You don't believe me, just wait a couple of weeks. The devil himself, man, he may come after you but, man, we think about what... I was reading, talking about Satan, how he creates division. A recent issue of the "National Geographic" included a photograph of a fossil remain of two saber-toothed tigers, they were locked together in combat. To quote the article, "one had bitten deep into the leg-bone of another, a thrust that trapped both in common fate." The cause of death of the two cats is clear. When Christians fight each other, everybody loses. As Paul put it in Galatians, "But if you bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another."

Did you know that in the United States 5,000 churches close every single year? That blows my mind that 5,000 churches can close every year. And it's not because of the preaching, it's not necessarily because of the doctrine, it's not because of the Sunday school teaching, it's because of silly things that Satan wants to create division on. It may be that we wanted to change the color of the carpet. It may be that the temperature is too hot in the season. You say, "Will that stuff create division?" Absolutely. Man, maybe they didn't go in my neck of the woods with the bus. It's these little things that the devil will insert himself. The Bible says it's the small foxes that spoil the vine.

Satan will come and create division, try to split up the church. I think about what Charles Spurgeon, he said, "Satan always hates Christian fellowship. It is his policy to keep Christians apart. Anything which can divide saints from one another, he delights in." Did you hear that? He delights in the division of the saints. He goes on to say, "He attaches far more importance to godly intercourse than we do. Since union is strength, he does his best to promote separation." Corrie ten Boom said this, "Be united with other Christians. A wall loose with bricks is not good but bricks must be cemented together."

I want to preach to you this morning on this: what will it take to be a unified church? What will it take to be a unified church? I hope that you ask yourself this morning. By the way, you're a part of the church. It's not the building. It's not the pulpit. It's not the issues. We are the church. What will it take to be a unified church? The Psalmist said, "Behold how good and how pleasant that the brethren dwell together in unity." Ephesians 4:3 says, "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." You know, that word "endeavoring" means "to try; to strive." We need to strive to be a church of unity. Why? Because the devil is out to divide.

We look at our text this morning, I truly believe we find ourselves in the birthing stage of the church. We know that great things are happening, we know that the Holy Spirit has come down. The prophet Joel as he prophesied as being fulfilled, that God himself will pour his Spirit out upon all men, and we see that the Holy Spirit comes down and, man,

Peter stands up and he begins to preach, man, and thousands of people get saved, and the Bible says, we find the word "church" finally in its true context that the Lord added to the church.

The church is being born, but I think in the context if we're going to be a unified church, there's a couple of things I find in our text. 1. We need to be a singular church. Look at verse 1, the Bible says this in Acts 2, "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place." The word "one accord" means "with one mind; with one accord; with one passion; in harmony working together." It's that they had their personal agendas that they laid down. Man, they had their personal wants, they laid them down. Why? Because they wanted to work together, man, they wanted to get things done. Listen, if Tabernacle Baptist Church is ever going to get things done for the Lord, it's because we have to be a singular church. We need to be one mind, one accord, working together.

Man, I think about the organ. Brother Travis came up to me and I said, "Man, is the organ, how is the sound?" I said, "Jack it up." I said, "Turn it up." And man, we think about the organ as Miss Brea plays and, man, the piano as Miss Lisa plays, and man, we've got the choir up here singing and we've got some sopranos and some tenors and maybe some bass singing and, man, all these different parts, and you've got Travis leading the music. You say, "What does that mean?" Yes, everything has a different role, a different position, but when you put it together, it makes a joyful sound. Listen to me this morning, we all have different spots, we all have different positions, but when they come together for the cause of Christ, listen, it's a sweet savor to the Lord. It furthers the cause of Christ.

I was looking around last night, man, I was walking around the church praying and I saw these sign-up sheets. Man, people that were signing up to do different things and, man, how amazing it is that when everybody just does a little bit, nobody has to do a lot; that everybody has an important role in the church.

I think about the singular church, Paul told the Galatians, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Jesus Christ." When the church acts single-mindedly, unanimously, in harmony, in unity, and without dissent, they are operating in one accord.

Those of you who read your Bible, you know that, man, it seems like all the time the disciples they were arguing, weren't they? They were always refuting each other. They even asked Jesus this question, they said, "Well, who's going to be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" We know that Jesus, obviously, he begins to talk about those who have child-like faith, and he talks about children but, man, they were always arguing, "Hey, who's going to be the greatest?" We know, man, when you find the resurrection, man, you know that John, I believe it was, man, they were running to the tomb.

They were always refuting and arguing against each other but I do not find in our text this morning, I do not find that they were arguing. Man, couldn't you just see Peter as he

stood up and preached and 3,000 souls got saved and, man, you know, some Baptist will probably pipe up and say, "Why do you get to preach? You denied Jesus, how come you're the one that gets to do it?" Could you see John, "Well, I went all the way with Jesus to the cross, you know, when all of you went away." We don't find that here but, man, I'll tell you just to be honest with you, our churches are full of it, of the bickering and the complaining, and it's not a singular church. Listen, if we're going to get stuff to get – now listen – teamwork makes the dream work. We have to work in singleness of mind if we're going to be a united church.

We need to be a singular church but also I want you to look at chapter 1, verse 14. The Bible says this, Acts 1:14, "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication." If we're going to be a united church, we have to be a church, a singular church but also a supplicating church. You say, "Preacher, what does supplication mean?" It is the process of seeking. It is the process of asking. It is the process of getting on your face. I heard Doug say something this morning at Sunday school class talking about prayer. Man, do you really want it? Do you really? Man, if you really want it that bad, yeah, we'd say, "Man, I want God to bless me. I want God to do things." Then how much time have we spent praying about it? It's easy to put something on Facebook or it's easy to say, "Yeah, preacher, I want it," but do we really? Listen, if we're going to be a church that's united, we have to be a supplicating church.

Let me ask you this: how is your prayer life? And I'm not talking about when we come on Wednesday. By the way, we should come on Wednesday for our prayer service, but I'm talking about you privately, how is your prayer life? I believe, correct me if I'm wrong, we get a prayer bulletin, don't we? I hope that that's not the only time you pray for the church is on Wednesday night. I hope that you take that thing home, man, and you examine the names and the situations and, man, you lift them up in prayer, you supplicate God on their behalf, man, and you just seek God. You say, "Why should I do that?" Because I guarantee you somebody else is doing it for you. In fact, there may not be anybody but I know one who's at the right hand of the Father creating intercession for me and for you.

Listen, we have to be a supplicating church. I cannot rely on Brother David to be praying. I cannot rely on Brother Doug or Brother Shane or the men and the women. Listen, I may not be able to do everything but there is one thing that God has called me to do and it's to be a man of prayer. You may not be able to play an instrument, you may not be able to sing in the choir, you may not be able to teach a Sunday school class, you may not be able to drive a bus, but there is one thing that every person in here can do and it's pray.

We have to be a supplicating church. By the way, I have always found that the wife and kids follow suit. Do you hear me dads, husbands? If anybody is going to pray, we need to be the ones to pray. We need to set the example. D. L. Moody said this, "I'd rather be able to pray than to be a great preacher. Jesus Christ never taught his disciples how to preach but only how to pray." The evangelist Gipsy Smith said this, "We asked what the secret of revival is," he said, "Go home, take a piece of chalk, draw a circle around yourself, then pray, 'Lord, revive everything inside of this circle.'"

Prayer is mentioned 500 times in your Bible. The Bible says, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." It doesn't say a little bit, it doesn't say somewhat, but the Bible says it availeth much. I hope that, man, when you pray, man, that you want to avail much before the Lord.

A supplicating church. I think about the story of the noble king who was having – and if I've told this illustration here before, y'all forgive me – but I think about the story of the king, man, he was having an important meeting and he had all the noblemen there, he had all of the servants there, he had all the important princes and princesses there from all of the other countrysides and, man, he had the big feast. There was a big meeting for the day and as he had the guards posted at the door, he said, "Listen, do not let anybody in here to disrupt this meeting." And as they began to discuss the affairs of different things and, aw, man, it was such a royal dinner, all of a sudden there was a commotion in the back and you could see the guard as he reached down and he said, "Stop! Come back!" as this little boy had pierced through the guards and ran. He said, "You don't understand, son, the king's in there!" The little boy turned and said, "He may be your king but he's my father."

I want to tell you this morning you have access to the Father. The Bible says that we can come boldly to the throne. Listen, I don't know your circumstance, listen, you may have had a horrible background, listen, I truly believe that there are probably some kids who maybe sat here that may not have a daddy that loves them. Listen, your physical father may have let you down but I'm here to report to you this morning that there's a God in heaven regardless of how your father treated you, that loves you, he cares for you, and he died for you.

A supplicating church. Philippians says, "Be careful for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known unto God." Matthew 21:13, "My house shall be called the house of prayer." Mark 9, "And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting." Jeremiah 33:3, "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not."

When Hudson Taylor was sailing to China to begin his missionary work, his ship was in great danger. The wind had died and the current was carrying them toward a sunken reef which were inhabited by cannibals. They got so close that they could actually see these cannibals building fires on the shore. Everything they tried was to no avail. In his journal, Taylor recorded what happened next. "The Captain said to me, 'Well, we have done everything that can be done.' A thought occurred to Hudson, and I replied, 'No, there is one thing we have not done yet.' 'What is that?' he queried. 'Four of us on board are Christians. Let us each retire to his own cabin, and in agreed prayer ask the Lord to give us immediately a breeze.' Taylor prayed briefly and then, certain that the answer was coming, went up on the deck and asked the first officer to let down the sails. 'What would be the good of that?' he replied. I told him we had been asking a wind from God; that it was coming immediately. Within minutes the wind did began to blow, and it carried them safely past the reefs. Taylor wrote: Thus God encouraged me ere landing on China's

shores to bring every variety of need to Him in prayer, and to expect that He would honour the name of the Lord Jesus and give the help each emergency required."

Listen, church, if you get anything out of this, listen: we have got to be a church of prayer. We have to be a supplicating church. If we're going to be a united church, we must be a singular church, one mind, one accord, and we must be a supplicating church with a powerful prayer life but also we need to be a saturated church. Look at verse 4 of Acts 2. The Bible says this, "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." Now here's what we need to understand: we know that this was a one-time event. This was when the Holy Spirit indwelt them. But do you know the Bible says that when we get saved, we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God. If you are here and you are saved, you have God himself living on the inside of you. But the Bible commands us, there's a different command that we should be filled with the Spirit of God. We need to be filled. You see, they didn't have that in the Old Testament. They would pray that the Holy Spirit would come upon them. That's what Saul said, the Holy Spirit would come upon him and then it would leave. David said, "Search me." He wanted the Holy Spirit. But listen, if we're in the church age, if you are saved, you're part of the church, you have God living inside of you.

Paul told the Ephesian church, "Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess but be ye filled with the Spirit." Acts 6 says, "Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report." Remember they were, what I believe, choosing the first deacons of the church, by the way, I'm thankful for the deacons of Tabernacle Baptist Church. I'm thankful for their hard work. When they were doing this in Acts, they said, "Listen, you need to look out among you seven men of honest report full of the Holy Spirit." Full of the Holy Spirit of God. By the way, that's not just for the deacons, that's for everybody. We all need to be filled with the Spirit of God. You say, "Preacher, what is that?" Being filled is the process of dying to self. It is the process of dying to what I want, to what you want. It's the process of dying to self, our desires, our needs. It's laying down what we think is best.

I was thinking about that song that Brother Travis and Brea were singing. You think about when that ship, man, when it's out in the ocean, man, the captain, most of the time, he knows what he's doing, don't he? And then I'm sure there are times that he thinks he knows where he's going but then he can see that little beacon flashing and he says, "Wait a minute, I'm going in the wrong direction."

Do you know what being filled with the Spirit of God is? It's laying down what you want and what I want, and what you think you need, and what I think I need, and saying, "Lord, it's not about me but it's all about you." Being filled, being a saturated church, filled with the Spirit of God, being filled is the process of dying to self. Listen, church, there aren't any super-Christians in here. I hate to be the bearer of bad news but if Paul said, "If I haven't arrived," we haven't either. And every morning that our head comes off that pillow, we have to make a decision, "Today, am I going to yield myself to the Spirit of God or am I going to do what Philip Johnston wants?" It's an everyday decision that we must make.

We lay down what we think is best. There's a lot of people that think they know what's best. Y'all know some of them? Man, they know, they know what's best for everything. Can I just admit a deficiency to you this morning? I do not know what's best for Tabernacle Baptist Church. I don't have some big blueprints, some big agenda, man, of how everything is going to go. I don't have a 5 year or a 10 year plan. I don't have a clue but here's what I do know: I know that I serve a God that can see tomorrow and see next week, and if I just say, "Lord, I'm going to die to myself. I'm not going to do what I want to do, but you know what's best for Tabernacle Baptist Church. Help me to die to myself that way you can fulfill and you can accomplish what needs to happen." Being filled with the Spirit of God. Listen, I don't necessarily want to do it the way that that church down the road does it, or maybe that church down the road or, man, the way we used to. I want to do it the way that God wants it done.

A saturated church, being filled. It's not a question of how much the Holy Spirit do we have. Did you know when you got saved, you're going to get as much Holy Spirit as you've ever got. But it's not a question of how much of the Holy Spirit do we have, it's how much does he have of you. Does he have every area of your life? By the way, if you only give the Lord certain parts, he has none of you.

Being filled, being a saturated church. Romans 6 says this, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead." Listen, when we got saved, we were dead in our trespasses and sin but the moment we got saved, we became alive. Jesus says, "I come to give you life but not only give you life but to give you life more abundantly." But Paul told the Roman church, he says, "yield yourselves unto God, as your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." Galatians 5:16, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." Charles Spurgeon said this, "Without the Spirit of God, we cannot do anything. We are as ships without wind, branches without sap, coals without fire. We are useless."

Romans 15, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace." Listen, man, I'll be honest with you, I've seen some miserable church people, people who are depressed, people who don't have any joy. They don't have any hope. You want to know how as a believer how you can have joy? He tells them in Romans 15, "the God of hope fill you." If we're filled, listen, we can have joy. If we're filled with the Spirit, man, we can have hope, we can have peace.

Speaking to a large audience, D. L. Moody held up a glass and asked, "How can I get the air out of this glass?" One man shouted, "Suck it out with a pump." Moody replied, "That would create a vacuum and shatter the glass." After numerous other suggestions, Moody smiled, picked up with a pitcher of water and filled the glass. "There," he said, "all the air is now removed." He then went on to explain that the victory in the Christian life is not accomplished by sucking out sin here and there but it's being filled with the Spirit of God.



Listen, I remember something Brother Doug said on Friday night. He said, "Listen, the more Christ that we have in us, there's less room for sin." Less room for sin.

Being filled with the Spirit of God. We ought to be filled with the Spirit before we arrive so that he can work freely in our church. Galatians 5 says, "the fruit of the Spirit is love," I believe we've got a sign about that somewhere around here, "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." If you don't have those, there's a good opportunity or a good chance you're not filled with the Spirit of God.

A. W. Tozer said, "The Spirit-filled life is not a special deluxe edition of Christianity, it is part and parcel of the very plan for God in his people." Listen, church, God's plan for you is to be filled with him, to be a saturated church, to be filled with the Spirit of God.

Listen, I've tried to do things when I'm not filled with the Spirit, I've tried to do them in my own work, I've tried to do it my way, listen, and it just ends up in a horrible mess. But I have found, man, when I wake up and say, "Lord, I want to be filled with you this morning," man, God is up there, he's moving things around and he says, "Here, I want you here." And man, we can just sit back and see the sovereignty of God at work and we can trust God because he sees the big picture.

Man, I think of Stephen. How many y'all know Stephen in the Bible in Acts? And man, I think about Stephen, a man of boldness. Man, what an encouragement. And I remember Stephen as he stood up to them old Pharisees and he began to preach the gospel. What is the gospel? The death, the burial and the resurrection. Then he looks at them and says, "The one that you crucified." The Bible says that they were pricked in their heart. The Bible even says that they began to gnash on with their teeth. They were so mad at this man because he was calling them out. The Bible says that they grabbed Stephen and took him out and they began to pick up rocks to stone him to death.

You know, we don't like to think about that, do we? We like to send our kids to paint a picture of Noah's ark, and we like to kind of child-over things, but can you imagine with me, I mean, someone picking up a rock and that's how they kill you as it crushes your bones and your skull. And I'm not trying to be vulgar this morning, I'm just trying to tell you what the Bible says. The Bible says they just took him out and stoned him to death but the Bible says that Stephen looked up, the Bible says that he was full of the Holy Ghost. And as they were throwing the rocks at him, the Bible says Stephen, being a man full of the Holy Ghost, looked up and saw Jesus standing, and the Bible says that Stephen said, "Lay not this sin to their charge." And he went to sleep.

Listen, I know that there are times that we go through life and, man, it feels like people are persecuting us and throwing rocks at us and, man, Tabernacle Baptist Church has been through some valleys but, listen, when there are times that life throws rocks at you, we ought to be people who are full of the Holy Ghost, people that are filled with the Spirit of God and say, "By the grace of God, I'm not going to look to my right, I'm not going to look to my left, but I'm going to look at Jesus Christ."

Being filled with the Spirit of God. A saturated church. If we're going to be a united church, we need to be a singular church, one accord, one mind, harmony, supplicating church, people that are of prayer, a saturated church, people that are filled with the Spirit of God, but we also need to be a spreading church. I want you to look at verse 21 of Acts 2 and the Bible says this, "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain," verse 24, "Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it." I want you to look at verse 32, "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear."

You say, "What is that?" Peter standing up, he's preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ to these people. He's preaching the gospel, man, it was how Jesus was born of a virgin, how he walked on this earth for some 33 ½ years, how he was put on a cross, how he was killed, how they tried to take his life but the Bible says that he gave up the ghost, he was put in a borrowed tomb. Why was he in a borrowed tomb? Because he didn't intend on staying there. Listen, and on the third day Jesus got up out of the tomb. That's what Peter was preaching and if, listen, if Tabernacle is going to be a united church, the gospel of Jesus Christ has to be in the forefront. We have to be a spreading church. That's what Peter would go on preaching the gospel.

Listen, I can't change people, and we can exhaust ourselves trying to change people, man, our family and our friends, people at RU. Something I love about RU, I was reading through the curriculum and on the front page it says, "By the way, this curriculum can't change you but it can point you to the truth." And the Bible says, "If ye know the truth," John 8, "it shall," not set you free, "make you free." But listen, we can't change people, church. There's only one thing that can, it's the gospel of Jesus Christ. It has to be on the forefront of Tabernacle Baptist Church. We have to be a spreading church. Listen we have to spread the gospel not only in Salisbury but, man, all throughout Rowan County and Spencer and Granite Quarry and all these places. Listen, the gospel has to be on the forefront.

I think of J. C. Ryle said this, he said, "When we preach Christ crucified, we have no reason to stammer or stutter or hesitate or apologize. There is nothing in the gospel of which we have to be ashamed." Paul said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ." Let me ask you this: when you go to work, are you ashamed of the gospel? When we go to school, are we ashamed of the gospel? Are you ashamed of it?

Someone also said unity, we're talking about being a united church, unity without the gospel is a worthless unity. If we don't have the gospel in the forefront of Tabernacle Baptist Church, what's the point? We're just turning to some Moose Lodge, some club

when we gather. If gospel is not present at church, it's pointless. We might as well throw our Bibles away and go home. The Gospel of Jesus Christ, we have to be a spreading church.

If we're going to be a united church, we need to be a singular church. We have to work together, church. We have to be supplicating, people of prayer, saturated, filled with the Spirit of God, spreading church, man, people, that we have the gospel on the forefront, but we also need to be a sharing church. I'm almost done. A sharing church. Look at verse 44. The Bible says this, "And all that believed were together, and had all things common." How in the world can you get a bunch of Christians together and have everything in common? I mean, really, you think about it. I'll tell you why: it's because of Jesus Christ, when we lay our wants and our needs down.

But the verse continues, "they had all things common," verse 45, "And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need." If you're honest with yourself this morning, God's been good to you. He's been good to me. Before we ever came here, our family grew and, man, we had this little Jeep Patriot that has one back seat. We now had three children and all the mommas in here, you know, trying to shove three car seats in one back row, it's not the most pleasant thing that ever happened in your life. And I remember as we were doing some traveling, this couple said, "Hey, why don't y'all just borrow our minivan and make it a little bit easier on you." A good couple in our church. In fact, they came down with us to help us unload some things in the house where we lived. But I remember as the weeks went on, they let us borrow that minivan, listen, his name was Brother Tim and he said, "Listen, Philip, I want to say that minivan, I'm going to give you a really good deal on." He said, "I'll sell it to you for \$3,500." I said, "Praise the Lord!" You know, we needed it and all that great stuff and it was well below. I said, "Thank you so much."

So the day came, man, he met me at the house. I went and got the money and we ended up, I don't have \$3,500 just floating around, by the way, we had sold our Jeep to get that money to go toward that minivan. And man, we had that money there and Brother Tim came in, him and his wife, and I began to fill out the title and he said, "All right, here's what I want to do. I want to sell this van for you for \$3,450." No, he said, "I want to sell it to you for \$50 dollars." I said, "Brother Tim, are you serious?" He said, "Yeah, the Lord told me to do it." He said, "I don't argue with the Lord when it comes to this." He said, "Here's what I also want to do. I want to sell it to you for \$50 but I also want to give you \$50 gas money." And he gave us that van. I said, "Brother Tim, you can't do this." He said, "Listen," this is an old standard, an old precious saying of God, he said, "I've learned when the Lord tells me to do something, I do it. I'm doing what the Lord told me to do."

When we think of this church in the book of Acts as a sharing church, listen, when we give our tithes, when we give our talents, we give our treasures, we give our time, we're not giving to other people, we're giving to the Lord. I can't stand, sometimes it's irritating, man, when we give money but we put an agenda behind it. "I'm going to put this here but it needs to do X, Y." No, no, no, no. When I give my money, I'm giving to the Lord. I'm

giving to him. Man, I think about the RU program just gave to a young lady back at my home church to go to the Rockford Home. Listen, when we give to situations, listen, it's not like, "All right, you'd better complete it and come home." No. When we give, we give to the Lord. "Lord, this is your money." By the way, the money that I have is not even mine, it's just money he's allowed me to steward. It's just money that he's allowed me to manage.

This church was a sharing church. 2 Corinthians 9:6 says, "But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." How do you handle giving your time when you come to the church, when you come to the house of God to do certain things? Do you, "Well, nobody else is going to do it so I'm going to have to do it." Or is there something down inside of us that says, "Praise God, I get to serve." When you come and play an instrument or sing in a choir, whatever the task is, do we do it grudgingly? When we give money in the offering plate, do we do it grudgingly? Or do we say, "Lord, what an honor and a privilege it is to serve you."

If we're going to be a united church, we ought to be a sharing church. A sharing church. Listen, I just don't want you to miss out on the blessings of God. Proverbs 3:9 says, "Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase." And I was reading a story that said in its early days Dallas Theological Seminary was in critical need of \$10,000 to keep the work going. During a prayer meeting, renowned Bible teacher, Harry Ironside, a lecturer at the school, prayed, "Lord, you own the cattle on a thousand hills. Please sell some of those cattle to help us meet this need." Shortly after the prayer meeting, a check for \$10,000 arrived at the school, sent days earlier by a friend who had no idea of the urgent need or of Ironside's prayer, the man simply said, "The money came from some cows that I sold." \$10,000.

Let me ask you this: can God trust you with time? The Bible says redeeming the time because the days are evil. It's by the grace of God that I woke up this morning. Why? Because the Lord allowed me to live another day. Can he trust you with time? Can he trust you with your talent? Every single one of you in here this morning, you have a talent. Don't let the devil, don't let somebody else tell you you don't. You have a specific part, a specific place at Tabernacle Baptist Church. Can God trust you with that talent? Can God trust you with your treasure? A sharing church.

Lastly and I'm done, if we're going to be a united church, Tabernacle, we need to be a steadfast church. I want you to look at verse 42. The Bible says this, "And they continued," and I want to stop right there. Do you know how easy it would have been, Brother Dave, just to close the doors of Tabernacle and say, "Man, we've been praying, the Lord still hasn't given us anybody." A brother was talking about patience earlier this morning, man, let's just close the doors, let's all just go somewhere. Do you know how easy that would have been? But you didn't do that, you continued even when it didn't feel like the Lord maybe was going to answer a prayer, didn't feel like it, man, when Paul was chained between those two prisoners, he probably didn't think the angel was going to

come to him that night. But you continued and if we're going to be a united church, we must be a steadfast church.

Verse 42, "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." That word "steadfast" means "unwavering." It gives us the idea of a ship that is out in the ocean and a storm comes, but because that ship is anchored so deep in the ocean floor, that the storm comes and the winds come and the waves beat against the side of that ship, because the anchor is dropped down, that ship does not waver. It does not matter what the world says, it does not matter what Dr. Phil says or Oprah or all these people, or Donald Trump, or Hillary, it doesn't matter what they say how the church should operate. Listen, regardless that the storms come, regardless of the wind that comes, Tabernacle Baptist Church needs to drop their anchor and say, "By the grace of God we're going to be an unwavering steadfast church." Steadfast church.

I'm going to ask Miss Lisa, the pianist, to come and play. Listen, church, hard times have come and they will go. There's no doubt in my mind. 1 Corinthians 15:58. Miss Lisa, you start playing as soon as you can. 1 Corinthians 15:58 says this, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain." Have you ever felt like your labor is in vain? "Man, the pastor didn't appreciate me. He didn't shake my hand. Deacon So-and-so or Mrs. So-and-so, they didn't send me a card or send me a text." Can I just tell you this? Listen, it doesn't matter, the Lord says your labor is not in vain. I'm glad that God keeps the record.

Herman Edwards is the colorful coach, or was the coach of Kansas City Chiefs. When it came to his thoughts on teamwork he said this, "The players that play on this football team will play for the name on the side of the helmet, not for the name on the back of their jersey."

We need to be a singular church, one mind, one accord, a supplicating church. How is your prayer life this morning? A saturated church filled with the Spirit of God. A spreading church that the gospel is on the forefront. A sharing church. Can God trust you with the time, talent and treasure he's allowed you to manage? And we need to be a steadfast church, unmoveable.