

## ARE YOU A BROKEN PART?

By Margo Pitrone

**Theme:** We are the Body; Growing in Christ

**Call to Worship:** Christian Relationships, #812, SDA Hymnal

**Opening Song:** Love Divine, #191, SDA Hymnal

**Closing Song:** Lord I Want to Be a Christian, #319, SDA Hymnal

**Primary Bible Text:** Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-16

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The day was spectacularly beautiful! It was not only the kind of day perfect for a walk, but for a race. And the entire countryside was in anticipation of this yearly event, the premier car race of the world, the Grand Prix. Mario Andretti, the famed race car driver, winner of three previous Grand Prix races, was ready for the race. He was the leading contender, and the crowd's favorite. Though he was nervous, he was not afraid; he had gone over every inch of his car, and it appeared to be in perfect condition. All he needed was to drive to the best of his ability.

The French countryside was bathed in sunlight as the crowd watched the cars come to the starting line. There was a silence in that crowd, palpable even over the engines being revved. The flag dropped, and the cars roared out. Mario Andretti was in the lead, and cars flocked close behind, as the grueling race began. Along the race course, throughout the countryside, people were lined up by the roads to watch the event.

Mario Andretti loved racing, and he loved the crowds. The Grand Prix is still his favorite race because the people of the country become so much a part of the event. As he drove, he concentrated on not only the crowds, but on his car. It was very important to him that he know every sound of his vehicle, for any change in movement or sound could be fatal to him or his vehicle. Mile after mile, hour after hour, the race continued. The world's top racers were here, yet none came close to Mario Andretti; the news was already proclaiming Andretti the winner if he stayed in his present condition—both car and man seeming untired.

Suddenly, the crowd gasped and then screamed as Andretti's car spun out of control. It flipped, and burst into flames. Pieces of the car were strewn along the road, bystanders were injured, and the car appeared to be a living tomb. It had happened so quickly, what had gone wrong?

Mario Andretti was raced to the nearest burn center, and the pieces of his car were collected to be studied for what might have gone wrong. As many of you know, Mario Andretti survived the accident, but his car did not. It took many weeks before the cause of the wreck was known; and when it became known, it was surprising. A tiny fracture in one of the pistons had caused the engine to overheat, and then explode. It was such a tiny piece, it appeared to be unimportant. It had been overlooked by manufacturers, mechanics, and even Mario Andretti himself; yet it injured several bystanders, destroyed a car, and almost cost Mario Andretti his life. I think this small broken part was very significant.

I would like to speak with you this morning about apparently insignificant broken parts. Please turn with me in your Bibles to Ephesians, chapter 4. I will be reading verses 1-7 and 11-16. The exhortation of Paul here is seen as being addressed to more than the Ephesians, since the early manuscripts do not contain any address to the Ephesians, only to Christians in general. Most scholars believe this was a letter addressed to all of the Asian churches to which Paul had ministered. The message is to anyone who calls themselves by the name of Christ. For me, that makes the message even more powerful. It was given to any going by the name of Christ. Are there any here this morning who go by the name of Christ, Christian? Then the message of the book of Ephesians applies to you. Paul is pointing to the person of Christ, and how that Person is to be seen in the life of the church.

What does Paul say about the life of the church? He pleads for us "to lead a life worthy of the calling to which we have been called." To what life have we been called? To one of "lowliness and meekness, with patience, with love toward one another, eager to maintain unity of the Spirit in a bond

of peace." This is a call to corporate unity, as well as individual unity. We as a church are to be lowly, patient and unified before the world; we as individuals are to be the same with each other. We have been called to represent to the world one body and one Spirit, and we are to present one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God our Father.

This calling is not an easy one to fill, is it? I look at myself, I look at my church, and it can be discouraging. Yet, I do call myself a Christian, as do you, so this message is for me and for you.

As we go into the holiday season and approach a new year, I am going to challenge you about your corporate and individual faith. I have to. In looking at this passage, I realize I am not meek, I am not patient, and I am not in unity with the Spirit as I should be, nor do I have the peace I know God wants to give me. And to be honest, I know that there are many here this morning who are not meek, who are not patient, and who are not in unity either with the Spirit or with each other. We are not always a people of peace. We often do not represent to the world one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one hope.

These words may be harsh, but I have to speak them. We are a family. And unless we take this passage seriously, we are in danger of not being used as God intends us to be used. The purpose of the church is to present to the world the love and unity of God our Father. We cannot live up to that calling unless there is healing in our lives and in our church. For some there are differences that may have remained unresolved for years; some of us maybe are unhappy about a teacher, or one of the pastors, or even something the board of elders has done, or not done. And there is the constant tension that we all experience between those who are labelled "liberal" and those who are labelled "conservative." And I ask myself, "Are we leading a life worthy of the calling to which we have been called?" Are we patient and forbearing with one another, willing to love one another in spite of our differences? Do we love each other? If I asked you to look around you right now, could you look at those seated near you and

love them, as Christ loves us? Because if you can't we have no hope of being a body that will grow in unity and love.

But before I sound like we are hopeless, I would like to go on and address what the rest of the passage offers as to how to live as a Christian body. Verse 7 points to the grace that is offered to each of us through Christ. We do not try to be loving on our own, nor do we through our own will power become meek and patient and unified. The promise is here; Christ has promised each of us gifts. It is here that the significance of each part of the body become prominent; it is here that we see it is important to have every part working properly in order to have success in what we were created to be. And it is here we see that seemingly insignificant broken parts can destroy the rest of the body.

Verse 11 describes what each of our gifts are: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, and the building up of the body of Christ. So often we think that ministry belongs to the pastors, or the evangelists, or to the conference. Because of this view, individual members have lost sight of their own importance in the functioning of this body. We are each, men and women, ministers of the gospel, any work done to build up the body of Christ is a ministry. Each person in this building right now is essential to the proper functioning of this church! Just as surely as Mario Andretti's car was destroyed by the malfunction of a tiny part of his engine, we as a church can be destroyed by the malfunction of even one of our own members. Because each is essential to our growth, it is essential that each part be maintained. I would like to ask you this morning: Are you a broken part?

What can we as a church body do with the broken parts? There are two sides to this question. First, we need to ask ourselves if we are a broken part; and if we are, we need to be repaired. Repair may come by your being able to make something right with another person, or it may be that you need to go see someone to help with the repair; or it may be as basic as recognizing that not all is right with

God. The second side of this question is: Are we, the corporate church body, as aware of each other as we should be? There are usually signs when there is a broken part; are we listening, looking, and helping when we see that someone is experiencing brokenness? What are we willing to do to help with the repair? There are also many of us who are broken who do not appear to be, and though we may remain hidden from the mechanics, there will be effects of that broken part.

The passage goes on to describe the reason for unity, the need for every part of our body to be working properly. It is for us to gain knowledge of the Son of God, to reach spiritual maturity, and to measure to the stature of the fullness of Christ. We need to be like Christ with each other, with the world. Do you know what Christ was like? *Desire of Ages*, p. 90, tells us that Jesus brought a purer atmosphere in His home, and that He was like leaven amid the elements of society. "Harmless and undefiled, He walked among the thoughtless, the rude, the uncourteous; amid the unjust publicans, the reckless prodigals, the unrighteous Samaritans, the heathen soldiers, the rough peasants. He spoke a word of sympathy here and a word of comfort there as He saw men weary, yet compelled to carry heavy burdens. He taught all to look upon themselves as endowed with precious talents. He passed by no human being as worthless, but sought to apply the saving remedy to every soul. Those whom He thus helped were convinced that here was One in whom they could trust with perfect confidence. He would not betray the secrets they poured into His sympathizing ear." This is what we are called to be with each other. And in order to be that, we must be willing to accept the grace and the gift given to each of us. We also need to be less thin-skinned, more sure of our relationship with God and with each other.

This surety will keep us from being tossed about by every wind of doctrine, and from the deceitfulness of humans, as verse 14 mentions. It is only the Christian who stands firm in relationship to God, filled with love, that can remain unmoved no matter what others may say about them. And it is

only this sort of Christian who has the right to speak the truth. Verse 15 says that the message of truth will always be spoken in love, and done only in a manner which will allow ourselves and each other to grow into Christ. Every one of us this morning is challenged to grow into Christ, for Jesus to become so much a part of us that we are indistinguishable from Christ.

The power of the illustration Paul uses in verse 16 is like a grand finale at fireworks for the Fourth of July. Every word of the passage has been beautiful and thought provoking, but in verse 16 Paul gives the real show. We are the body—Christ is the head. It is the *whole* body, joined and knit together by *every* joint with which it is supplied, when *each* part is working properly; then and only then will the body grow and upbuild itself! Then and only then will we be worthy of the calling to which we have been called. There is no insignificant part in this body!!

Martin Luther once said, "The church that functions only because of its leadership will soon die. Unless the church remains its people, it will become apathetic. Christ intended that each person claiming to be His would also take up His ministry. The most destructive act Christianity has done for itself is to remove ministry from the hands of each member and place it in the hands of church leadership. The work of God will be finished, and the person of Christ fully reflected when, and only when, each person within Christianity is wholly committed to Christ and to each other."

I pray for healing for any brokenness I may have within myself this morning. I pray for healing for any of you here who may also have brokenness in your life. That brokenness may be destructive for us as individuals, or as a church; and I desire, deeply desire, for us to be healthy and mature Christians. But, most of all, I pray for us to lead a life worthy of the calling to which we have been called as a church family.

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**Bio Information on Sermon Writer:** Marge Pitrone was raised in Ile Ife, Nigeria until 6 years old, then lived in Michigan for the next 16 years. She graduated from Andrews University with a B.S. in

Social Work and from Princeton Theological Seminary and, at the time this sermon was written (when the sermon project was initiated in the mid 90s), was pastoring in the United States.