

Stewed! How To Overcome A Rivalry

Genesis 25:19-34

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- II. Identify The _____ Of The Conflict (22)**
*22*The children struggled together within her, and she said, "If it is thus, why is this happening to me?" So she went to inquire of the LORD.
- III. Accept God's Sovereign _____ For Us Even If It's Not Our Preference (23)**
*23*And the LORD said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger."
- IV. Acknowledge That We're Born With A Sinful _____ (24-26)**
*24*When her days to give birth were completed, behold, there were twins in her womb. *25*The first came out red, all his body like a hairy cloak, so they called his name Esau. *26*Afterward his brother came out with his hand holding Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them.
- V. Seek To Harmonize Our _____ Not Divide Over Them (27)**
*27*When the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, dwelling in tents.
- VI. Avoid _____ (28)**
*28*Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game, but Rebekah loved Jacob.
- VII. Cover Their Weakness, Don't _____ It (29-34)**
*29*Once when Jacob was cooking stew, Esau came in from the field, and he was exhausted. *30*And Esau said to Jacob, "Let me eat some of that red stew, for I am exhausted!" (Therefore his name was called Edom.^e) *31*Jacob said, "Sell me your birthright now." *32*Esau said, "I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?" *33*Jacob said, "Swear to me now." So he swore to him and sold his birthright to Jacob. *34*Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

Conclusion:

1. Pursue Peace
2. Initiate Forgiveness
3. Pray For Unity In Christ

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VI. Avoid Favoritism (28)

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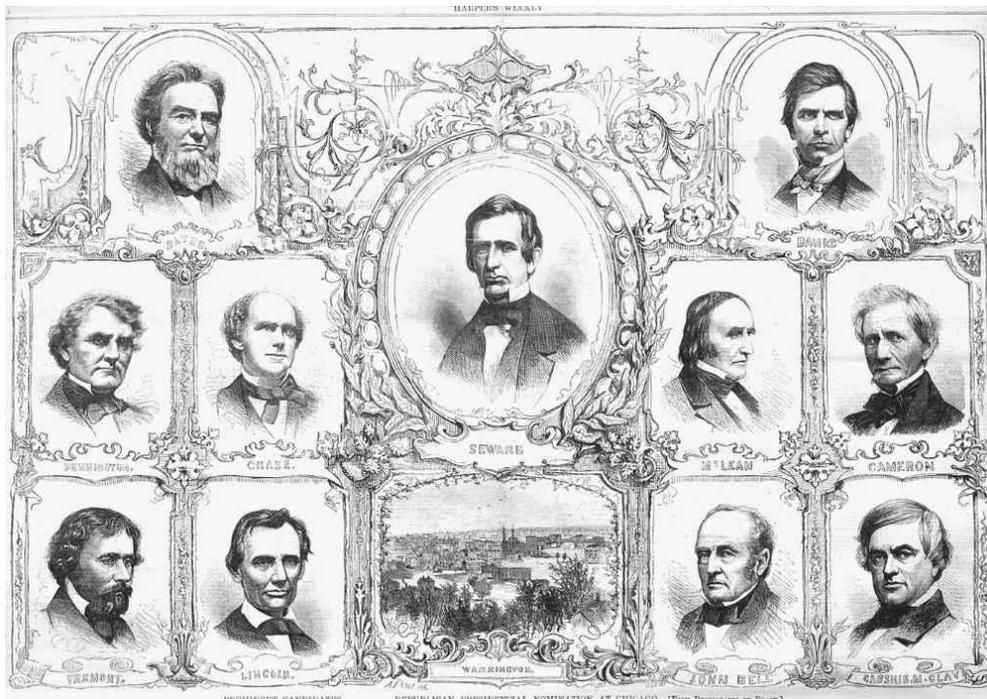
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Introductions:

1. Ie/ Abraham Lincoln had a Team of Rivals
 - Doris Kearns Goodwin wrote: *Team Of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*
 - Edwin Stanton hated Lincoln but Lincoln made him Secretary of War – Lincoln had to overcome bitterness and betrayal
 - Salmon Chase felt he deserved to be President over Lincoln and looked down at his rival, yet Lincoln made him Secretary of the Treasury
 - William Seward also thought he'd be President over Lincoln and Lincoln made him Secretary of State
 - Edward Bates saw Lincoln as incompetent, but Lincoln made him Attorney General



- "That Lincoln, after winning the presidency, **made the unprecedented decision to incorporate his eminent rivals into his political family, the cabinet**, was evidence of a profound self-confidence and a first indication of what would prove to others a most unexpected greatness. Seward became secretary of state, Chase secretary of the treasury, and Bates attorney general. The remaining top posts Lincoln offered to three former Democrats whose stories also inhabit these pages—Gideon Welles, Lincoln's "Neptune," was made secretary of the navy, Montgomery Blair became postmaster general, and Edwin M. Stanton, Lincoln's "Mars," eventually became secretary of war. **Every member of this administration was better known, better educated, and more experienced in public life than Lincoln.** Their presence in the cabinet might have threatened to eclipse the obscure prairie lawyer from Springfield."

Goodwin, Doris Kearns. Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln . Simon & Schuster. Kindle Edition.

- “The powerful competitors who had originally disdained Lincoln became colleagues who helped him steer the country through its darkest days. Seward was the first to appreciate Lincoln’s remarkable talents, quickly realizing the futility of his plan to relegate the president to a figurehead role. In the months that followed, **Seward would become Lincoln’s closest friend and advisor in the administration.** Though **Bates initially viewed Lincoln as a well-meaning but incompetent administrator, he eventually concluded that the president was an unmatched leader,** “very near being a perfect man.” Edwin **Stanton, who had treated Lincoln with contempt at their initial acquaintance, developed a great respect** for the commander in chief and was unable to control his tears for weeks after the president’s death. Even Chase, whose restless ambition for the presidency was never realized, at last acknowledged that Lincoln had outmaneuvered him.” (*ibid*)

2. The Sibling Rivalry between Esau & Jacob began in the womb and impact the world today
 - What began in Rebekah’s womb has even led to the Middle East crisis
 - Moses is demonstrating to the Jews their origin and the conflict with their Canaanite enemies – many of whom are descendants of Esau

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- Isaac – he was the only patriarch that was monogamous
- Rebekah was barren
- Isaac prayed for his wife in marriage and was now doing the same for a child
- God answered his prayer
- We have to remember that our rival might be the answer to someone else’s prayer
- If your rival is your sibling and you’re in a Christian family – for sure, your sibling is an answer to God’s prayer
- Isaac was 40 when he married Rebekah
- V. 26 says Isaac was 60 years when he had the kids
- He prayed for her for 20 years!!
- When we start to see our rival as God sees our rival, then we’re less dogmatic about our differences and more humble about our similarities
 - We’re all sinners
 - We’re saved by God’s grace
 - We both deserve hell
- Pray for your rival

II. Identify The Root Of The Conflict (22)

22 The children struggled together within her, and she said, “If it is thus, **why** is this happening to me?” So she went to inquire of the LORD.

- The struggle was very painful
- They were trying to crush each other
- Rebekah is so concerned about her tumultuous womb, she is concerned for her life
 - Art Fruchtenbaum translates this “Why should I live?”
- That also drove Rebekah to prayer
- The question is asked: “**Why** is this happening to me?”
 - Literally: “Why this, I” (Waltke, p. 358)
- Medically, it’s good to go to the doctor and get an ultrasound at this point
- Practically, what is the root of the conflict
- **Identify the source of conflict.**
 - Why don’t you like each other?
 - How did the rivalry develop?
 - What is the root issue of the disagreement?
 - Why do you feel misunderstood?
- The key to resolving the conflict:
 - Not “Who” is right
 - But “What” is right

III. **Accept God’s Sovereign Plan For Us Even If It’s Not Our Preference (23)**

23 And the LORD said to her, “Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger.”

- God answers Rebekah with his sovereign design for the future
- God is planning 2 nations
- The nation of the younger will be dominant over the older
- The nation of Israel would come from the line of Jacob – who is later named “Israel,” himself

Romans 9:6-13 *6*But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, *7*and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” *8*This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring. *9*For this is what the promise said: “About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son.” *10*And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, *11*though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God’s purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls— *12*she was told, “The older will serve the younger.” *13*As it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”

v.6 – “not that the word of God has taken no effect” – God has not backed out on His promises, or become untrustworthy

- but we must see deeper in terms of God’s sovereign purpose and act of mercy

A. **God Choice Is Not Based On Nationality (6) – National Israel vs. Spiritual Israel**

- distinguish National Israel & Spiritual Israel

IE/ Illustrated in **Romans 11:17**

“And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with some became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree.”

- some of, but not all, the tree branches (Israel) breaks off, but a remnant remains that is rooted in Christ
- wild olive tree – Gentiles – grafted in to this main trunk of Christ

ie/ the pruner sovereignly decides which branches go and which branches stay

- sovereignly decides what he wants to graft in

B. **God Choice Is Not Based On Family (7-9) – Ishmael vs. Isaac**

- parents – do not rest easy thinking your child is automatically going to heaven because you and your spouse are faithful believers
- because you take them to church every week does not mean you stop praying for them and evangelize them
- Abraham had kids with another wife, Keturah (6 sons)
- through a handmaiden, his first born was Ishmael
- yet none of them was the chosen seed
- only Isaac, born through Sarah, was the chosen seed
- point being that just being a descendent of Abraham guaranteed being chosen

v.8 “children of flesh” – lit. born ones of flesh
“children of God” – lit. born ones of God

- just because your born in the flesh to a spiritual family doesn't make you spiritual
- John 3** – You must be born **again**
- born of God spiritually

C. **God's Choice Is Not Based On Merit (10-11a) – Good or Evil**

- not of works, but of Him who calls
- Esau – 1st born – had the traditional family privilege to possess the blessing and honor as the preeminent heir of his father
- but God chose Jacob – not because he was better
 - Jacob was a deceiver, a whiner, manipulator
 - nothing good in Jacob to choose him

- God chose Jacob not because of tradition or merit, but His sovereign choice
- some think because they have a good moral transcript or a good religious resume, that God owes it to you to pick you
- God does not choose the obvious
- Advantages are deceptive
 - ie/ Lucille Ball – told to hang it up in show business early on – no talent
 - ie/ Michael Jordan – cut 2x from HS BB team
 - ie Tom Sellick – Hollywood hunk in Magnun P.I. a decade ago – rejected 2x on the dating game
- everyone thought they had no advantage – but advantages are deceptive
- God chose Paul – who considered himself the chief of sinners
- but the Apostle Paul hadn't met me yet – I'd give him a run for that "chief of sinners" title – I'm **not** proud to say that either

D. God's Choice Is Based On God's Sovereignty (11b-13)

1. God's Purpose Is Established (11b)
 - He has His eternal plan – that is based on His pleasure, His choice, His mercy, His grace, His glory
2. God's Grace Is Exhibited (11c)
 - "not of works"
 - can't claim privileges
 - can't cite resume or transcripts
 - can't recall religious duties
 - boasting about works gives you glory, not God
3. God's Call Is Effected (11d)
 - Him who calls
 - call – God's declarative act
 - ie/ flip a coin – you may the call – heads or tails
 - God made the declarative call – Jacob, not Esau

4. God's Sovereignty Is Exercised (12)

- God chose the older to serve the younger
- but what about the tradition of the younger serving the older
- God is the sovereign – King of Kings, Lord of Lords – you do what He says even if it breaks your habit, tradition, structure
- problem for perfectionists is that God never fits His plan into their plan

5. God's Love Is Expressed (13)

-- Jacob loved, Esau hated – strong words

- not hate as an enemy
- word used as a contrast to His loving choice

ie/ Jesus – love God, hate parents

- not literally mean hate your parents
- but figuratively – so devoted to Christ, any other relationship would be rejected as a priority

- here Jacob is chosen, Esau is rejected

- This doesn't sit well with the older Esau – he was older, he should be blessed
- Esau was in conflict with God's will
- But God would bless him

- But rivalry develops because of jealousy and envy
- Not accepting God's will

- **Discontent = Not recognizing the goodness of God in your life leading to the belief that you lack something in life**

- Jerry Bridges makes us question how we handle circumstances beyond our ability to change:
 - An unfulfilling or low-paying job
 - Singleness well into midlife or beyond
 - Inability to bear children
 - An unhappy marriage
 - Physical disabilities
 - Continual poor health

The Folly Of Discontentment - by Jeremy Burroughs (Puritan preacher in the 1600's):

1. *It takes away the present comfort of what you have, because you have not something that you would have.*

- *What a foolish thing is this, that because I have not got what I want, I will not enjoy the comfort of what I have!*
2. *By all your discontent you cannot help yourselves, you cannot help yourselves, you cannot get anything by it.*
 - *Who by taking care can add one cubit to his stature, or make one hair that is white to be black?*
 3. *Discontent and murmuring eats out the good and sweetness of a mercy before its comes.*
 - *Discontent is like a worm that eats the meat out of the nut, and then when the meat is eaten out of it, you have the shell.*
 4. *Discontent makes our affliction a great deal worse than otherwise it would be.*

1 Timothy 6:5-11 ⁵and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain. ⁶But godliness with **contentment** is great gain. ⁷For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. ⁸But if we have food and clothing, we will be **content** with that. ⁹People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. ¹¹But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.

Philippians 1:15-18 ¹⁵ Some indeed preach Christ even from **envy** and strife, and some also from goodwill: ¹⁶ The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; ¹⁷ but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. ¹⁸ What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.

ie/ F.B. Meyer shares the story of his struggle with jealousy being in the same London town as Charles Spurgeon who drew great crowds across the town. Then in 1904, G. Campbell Morgan, an American, took a church in London which drew great attention – as Morgan was a world-wide known Bible expositor.

Meyer: “It was easy to pray for the success of G. Campbell Morgan when he was in America. But when he came to England and took a church near to mine, it was something different. The old Adam in me was inclined to jealousy, but I got my heel upon his head, and whether I felt right toward my friend, I determined to act right.”

Meyer prayed daily about reviving his pulpit as he worried about losing members to these 2 hot preachers. God brought him to a point of contentment where he was able to write: “See how the Lord helped me out of my difficulty. He (Spurgeon) and Mr. Morgan were so popular, and drew such crowds, that our church

1. Contentment Is Learned

Philippians 4:11 ¹¹I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.

- Contentment isn't natural to man, it is learned
- It requires a continual mindset of focusing on being satisfied with our relationship with God
- Puritan Richard Baxter: "Ask your hearts seriously whether God in Christ be enough for them, or not? If they say, no, they renounce him and all their hope of heaven; for no man takes God for his God that takes him not for his portion, and as enough for him: if they say, yea, then you have enough to stop the mouth of your fleshly desires, while your hearts confess that they have enough in God. Should that soul that hath a filial interest in God, and an inheritance in eternal life, be eager for any conveniences and contentments to the flesh? If God be not enough for you, you will never have enough. Turn to him more, and know him better, if you would have a satisfied mind." ("Directions Against Sinful Desires and Discontent," <http://www.puritansermons.com/baxter/baxter21.htm>)

2. **Contentment Is Independent Of Our Circumstance**

Philippians 4:11b-12a ^{11b} whatever the circumstances. ^{12a} I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty.

- "Contentment is surrender. Paul could be content, he could be patient, because he had given up any right or demand on the people and circumstances around him. For us, when life goes wrong, our impatience shouts, 'It's not my way, not my timing, not my outcome!' Contentment, on the other hand, holds out open hands before a holy God and says, 'God, Your way, Your timing, Your outcome.'" (Timothy Sanford, "Learning Contentment," Discipleship Journal, Issue #97 January/February 1997)

3. **Contentment Is Possible In Every Situation**

Philippians 4:12b ^{12b} I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.

- Poor vs. Rich
- Single vs. Dating/Marriage
- Last generation X-Box vs. New generation X-Box
- Strict family vs. permissive family
- Church focusing on God's righteousness vs. World focusing on sin

4. **Contentment Is Finding Strength In God To Be Satisfied In Every Circumstance (13)**

Philippians 4:13 ¹³ I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

- When we are unable to produce an inner attitude of contentment, we come to God and He gives us the ability to be content
- Is salvation enough, or are we expecting something else from God?
- Is seeking after God boring compared to the world? Then you haven't really found God. He's more exciting than what the world has to offer.
- That's why "FAITH" is important.

2 Corinthians 9:8 ⁸And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work

IV. Acknowledge That We're Born With A Sinful Nature (24-26)

*24*When her days to give birth were completed, behold, there were twins in her womb. *25*The first came out red, all his body like a hairy cloak, so they called his name Esau. *26*Afterward his brother came out with his hand holding Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them.

- "Esau" = hairy, fitting for his animal nature
 - Allen Ross: "Esau's appearance – more like an animal of the field than an ordinary baby – prompted his naming." (*Creation & Blessing*, p. 440)
 - "Red" – basis of the nation named after him – Edom
- "Jacob" = heel tripper
 - the one who trips another by the heel, "trip up, defraud" (Ross)
 - ie/ when I was playing tackle football, I didn't want to smash into another with my body – I looked for the cheap way to get a guy down – trip their legs, grab their heel, if possible
 - Isaac & Rebekah didn't name him with a negative impacting name – it was neutral – but it would describe Jacob's character.
 - The name may have had a connotation of "protect" (Ross, p. 441)
- Jacob came out hanging onto his twin's heel
- I don't know what the medical term for that would be
- But it sure shows his personality and it's prophetic for how they would grow up
- Ie/ When Pastor Sen's wife, June, would work with me as a new Christian, she called me "Jacob" because I was a manipulator and didn't walk by faith. It took a few years before she told me that I was now an Israel.
- Acknowledge that we're sinners. We have a desire to elevate ourselves at another's expense.

Romans 3:9,14-18

9 "There is no one righteous, not even one;
14 "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness."
15 "Their feet are swift to shed blood;
16 ruin and misery mark their ways,
17 and the way of peace they do not know."
18 "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

V. Seek To Harmonize Our Differences Not Divide Over Them (27)

*27*When the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, dwelling in tents.

- Esau: Skillful hunter, an outdoors man
- Jacob: homebody, quiet (civilized, fine), cultured

- Differences are good – not a reason for division
- You have a hunter and a cook – that’s a pretty good team
- But **PRIDE** creeps in – Esau prided himself in being a tough outdoorsman, Jacob spent his days perfecting recipes for the Food Channel
- Pride magnified their differences to a point of incompatibility
 - Will Kyrie really be better off without LeBron?
 - Were Kobe and Shaq better off without each other?
 - President Lincoln

“This, then, is a story of Lincoln’s political genius revealed through his extraordinary array of personal qualities that enabled him **to form friendships with men who had previously opposed him; to repair injured feelings that, left untended, might have escalated into permanent hostility**; to assume responsibility for the failures of subordinates; to share credit with ease; and to learn from mistakes. He possessed an acute understanding of the sources of power inherent in the presidency, an unparalleled ability to keep his governing coalition intact, a tough-minded appreciation of the need to protect his presidential prerogatives, and a masterful sense of timing. **His success in dealing with the strong egos of the men in his cabinet suggests that in the hands of a truly great politician the qualities we generally associate with decency and morality—kindness, sensitivity, compassion, honesty, and empathy**—can also be impressive political resources.”

Goodwin, Doris Kearns. Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln . Simon & Schuster. Kindle Edition.

VI. Avoid Favoritism (28)

28 *Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game, but Rebekah loved Jacob.*

- Isaac favored Esau because as a hunter, he brought him fresh game
- Waltke: “Adam fails in eating, Noah in drinking, and Isaac, a gourmand, in tasting.” (p. 363)
- Here we see a distinct parental favoritism

James 2:4 “Have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts”

- when one is favored – the other struggles with lack of acceptance
- ie/ Luke 15 – prodigal son returns – party thrown – older brother gets jealous
- Do you think this helped the brothers and their natural differences or made their rivalry even stronger?

VII. Cover Their Weakness, Don't Exploit It (29-34)

29 Once when Jacob was cooking stew, Esau came in from the field, and he was exhausted. *30* And Esau said to Jacob, "Let me eat some of that red stew, for I am exhausted!" (Therefore his name was called Edom.^e) *31* Jacob said, "Sell me your birthright now." *32* Esau said, "I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?" *33* Jacob said, "Swear to me now." So he swore to him and sold his birthright to Jacob. *34* Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

- Esau is **exhausted**
 - He was probably discouraged from coming up empty
- V. 30 "quick, let me have some stew" – Esau is **impulsive**
 - Esau kept repeating "red stuff, red stuff"
 - Play on words: "Red Stuff" = *adom* (red)
 - Edom (his nation) would be named after his red hair and desire for red stew
- V. 32 "I'm about to die" = Esau is also **faithless, thus desperate**
 - a faithless person isn't trusting God to provide their need
 - Both Esau was faithless and Jacob too (manipulate)
- Jacob, instead of helping his brother and sympathizing with his situation, takes advantages of his brother's weakness
- Birthright – the rights of the firstborn – position of honor (Gen 43:33; 49:3), privilege, responsibility, and succession
 - The oldest son always inherits a double portion
 - So if there are only 2 sons, the oldest gets it all
 - If there are 3 sons, the oldest gets the double portion and the other 2 split 1 portion
 - If there are 10 sons, the oldest gets double and the other 9 sons split 8 portions
 - The oldest also receives a special blessing
- Esau, as a hunter, would lay a trap for prey
- Jacob, a plotter, would lay a trap for his brother
- Cooking what might be lentil (red) stew
- Esau would grow to despise this birthright

Conclusion:

1. Pursue Peace

Hebrews 12:14 Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord:

2. Initiate Forgiveness

Matthew 5:24 Leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

- Can't come to worship the Lord or offer sacrifices if our heart is not right with another brother or sister. That's a sin and sin blocks our worship with God.

3. Pray For Unity In Christ

Colossians 1:20-22 ²⁰and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. ²¹And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled ²²in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight—

- Our rivalry unties the binds that Christ paid for in our unity