

# Week of Meetings 02 Matthew's Call

by David Clifford

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*David Clifford's sermon explores the transformative call of Jesus to Matthew and the implications of faith and servanthood in the Christian life.*

**Duration:** 59:22

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Mark 2:3-5, Mark 2:14-15

**Topics:** "Jesus' Ministry", "Christian Responsibility"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by acknowledging a lack of liberty and energy in the previous session. He then provides a recap of the Gospel according to Mark, explaining that it was written by John Mark. The speaker also mentions a concerning political situation and emphasizes the importance of fulfilling our responsibilities as children of God. The sermon concludes with a reference to Jesus' prediction of his violent death and the purpose of his coming, which was to call sinners and ultimately give his life as a ransom for all.

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## Transcript

Mr. Woolley was talking about celebrating getting older. Well, I think we're a bit different there. I wouldn't want to celebrate getting older.

I think that men are quite different from the ladies in this respect. I mean, when a man has a birthday, he sometimes takes a day off. When a lady has a birthday, she takes a year off.

Anyway, you're an old-timer if you can remember when your wife used to think out a meal instead of thawing out a meal. Those were the good old days, when they used to think out the meals. But the meals here are very good, as a matter of fact, rather too good for me.

And we should have to find ways and means of escaping some of these special meals, like Tuesday midday and that sort of thing. However, we'll see about that. Delighted to bring you the Lord's Word tonight again, and we're going to read from Mark chapter 2, a few verses.

Verse 1. Again Jesus entered into Capernaum after some days, and it was noise that he was in the house. Straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door. And he preached the word unto them.

Verse 14. As he passed by, he saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting at the receipt of custom, said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him.

And it came to pass that as Jesus sat at meal in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples. For there were many, and they followed him. And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans, that is, tax gatherers and sinners? When Jesus heard it, he said unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick.

I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. The disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast. And they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not? Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bride chamber fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.

But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days. No man also soweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment, else the new piece that filled it up take it away from the old, and the rent is made worse. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles, else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred.

But new wine must be put into new bottles. May the Lord bless to us the reading from his word. Now I didn't find much liberty this morning in my introduction to Mark's Gospel.

I don't want you to think that all introductions to a series are as dry and uninteresting as the one we had this morning. I don't know quite what was the matter, except that I'm blaming my tiredness for lack of liberty. One brother was preaching on one occasion, didn't get any liberty, and his voice didn't seem to be coming through the mike or through the speakers, and he turned to one of the elder brothers and said, What's the matter tonight, brother? He said, Oh, it's all right.

He says, there's a screw loose in the speaker. Well, it might be that was the problem this morning. However, I do want to recapitulate, therefore, just for a moment or two, to give you a little idea as to what it was all about.

We remember that the Gospel according to Mark was written by John Mark, John being his original name, and Mark his Roman name that was added later on, as was very often the case. And this was written from Rome, especially for the Romans, and Mark is emphasising the servanthood of our Lord Jesus Christ. You remember in Philippians chapter two, the apostle by the Spirit says that our Lord Jesus, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but emptied himself and became in the form of a servant, and was found in the likeness of men.

He was equal with God, became equal with man, sin apart, and then equal with malefactors in his death. But he emptied himself, it says, and that was, of course, to become the servant of Jehovah. He who was the Son now decided to be the servant and to serve the Father well in bringing to you and me salvation.

He said, here am I, send me, and he said, lo, I come to do thy will, O my God, that is, as thy servant. And now God is saying to all and somebody, as we heard this morning twice over, behold my servant. Now to become the servant of Jehovah, the Lord Jesus must empty himself of something.

But don't get the wrong idea, he did not empty himself of his deity or any of his attributes of deity at all to become the servant of Jehovah, but the something had to go. And this something was his rights and his

prerogatives as God the Son, because he came now to do the Father's will as his servant. And to do that he must not only become one of us, that he might die for us, but he must become obedient unto death.

Now for most men, for all men except this one, death is a necessity apart from the coming of Christ, but for the Lord Jesus it was an obedience because death had no claim upon him. He was the holy, spotless Lamb of God and the servant of Jehovah in whom there was no sin and no guile and no transgression, pure and holy was he, and he did the Father's will perfectly. So this gospel is emphasising the servanthood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Peter is behind the gospel. Mark travelled with Peter as well as with Paul, and it seems that most of his information about the Lord Jesus and his words and works were gained from Peter. So there is quite a bit about Peter himself, although Peter is not eulogised in any way here, but quite a bit about Peter and his life and his teaching and experience in this gospel.

We were looking at the Lord Jesus in Peter's home life and his business life and in his church life too, and what a blessing Christ brought in every department of his life when he gave the Lord Jesus the right of way. And of course that is always the case. When the Lord Jesus entered Peter's home, we saw this morning, it became a centre for real blessing, not only for his mother-in-law, but for himself and his brother and for all the people of the city.

And then when we came to chapter 2, in our reading just now, we noticed that it was noised abroad that he was in the house, the house in Capernaum, and this still must have been the same house to which the Lord Jesus returned, where Peter and Andrew and the mother-in-law dwelt together. So Peter's home became a centre of real blessing. It was noised that he was in the house.

Now they didn't have to put a flag up to say Jesus is at home today, like they do when the Queen is at home in Buckingham Palace or in Windsor Palace, wherever she is at home. Some friends were talking to me, I think it was only yesterday, or the day before we were having a meal with some friends in Nassau and they were saying that they went to London and three days running they tried to see the Queen and there was no flag flying. And the next day it was noised abroad that the Queen was in the home.

There was a flag flying there, you see, at the top of the mast, denoting that the Queen was at home. But she proved to be the invisible Queen for my friends. They never saw her so they had to resort to glancing at some pictures.

Now by the way, the Lord Jesus is the visible expression of the invisible God, the visible representation of God in his character and especially in his love and grace to the sons of men. And when the Lord Jesus is in the home and when he is in the light, we don't have to put a flag out to say that Jesus lives with us. As a matter of fact, every person who is born again of the Holy Spirit has the Spirit of Jesus indwelling in his heart.

There are fourteen plain, straightforward scriptures to show and prove that everybody who is born again possesses God's Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of the Father and the Son. We will come and make our abode with him, the Father and I, said the Lord Jesus, will come and dwell with the man or the woman that really loves me. And of course, the Holy Spirit of Jesus within is the sign or is the seal in scriptural terminology that we belong to God.

That we belong to God and God is with us and his Spirit being in us is the outward manifestation that we are God's property. It was noise abroad that he was in the house. Oh that the Holy Spirit may so work in and through our individual lives that everybody may know that Jesus lives with us by his Spirit in us and the power of his Spirit manifested through us.

You'll notice this evening there is quite an emphasis on the Christian home. Peter's home became a Christian home because he welcomed Christ into his home and so did Matthew as we shall see in a moment or two. So his presence was known and the whole city gathered around there was no room for them and he preached the word unto them and many were outside.

There's a great contrast to that a little later on in the chapter as we shall see. In chapter 2 of course, a little later on in verses 3 and 4 and 5, there is the case of the man who was sick of a palsy, who was born of four people at the end of verse 3 it says, to this particular house and they weren't able to get in at the door so they got the man down through the flat roof having removed part of it and it says, He, Jesus, seeing their faith, the faith of the four men, said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee. Now please notice that he couldn't see the men, he might have seen their arms letting the man down but he didn't see them but he saw their faith and he honoured their faith and answered their faith and blessed the man.

Now here is a divine principle. God will honour our believing faith for others. This is why we pray.

How does prayer work? Well you believe and God, you believe and you express your belief in believing prayer and God moves by His Spirit and arranges circumstances to bring blessing where it is needed according to your prayer and according to the all-wise God who knows exactly what to give in answer. Remember on one occasion in Luke 8 it is recorded that there were some who came to Jairus who was seeking help for his dying daughter aged 12 and they said to Jairus, Trouble not the master for your daughter is dead. Now fortunately the Lord Jesus overheard that and He said to him, Believe only and she shall be made whole.

He seeing their faith said unto him, The blessing is yours. And Jesus said to him, You believe and she shall be made whole. Now you thought, didn't you, that it all depends upon the faith of the individual whether he is going to be blessed or saved.

But it doesn't all depend upon that. A lot depends on you and me. He said to the father, You believe and she shall be made whole.

And you remember that finally those who were not expressing belief, who laughed Him to scorn were put out and then the miracle happened. There are three principles here in relation to He seeing their faith said unto him, Thy son thy sins be forgiven thee. First of all it is no trouble to the master to bless and save our loved ones.

Trouble not the master. He said believe only. It's no trouble to him.

His purpose and plan is good. He wants to bless not only us but our loved ones too. You believe for them.

Many of you are here tonight because your mothers and maybe your fathers and loved ones prayed earnestly for you and God worked by His Holy Spirit and you could tell lots of stories about that in your personal experience. God honoured your faith in bringing blessing to Him. Of course in the final analysis it is quite true that all have to believe in Jesus for themselves as far as the salvation of the soul is

concerned.

First of all the principle is it's no trouble to the master to bless our loved ones and the second principle is this. Our faith can be the means of the salvation and blessing of our loved ones. So keep on praying and pray believingly.

When you pray each passing day do you pray believing? Do you pray the gospel way? Asking and receiving? Believe only and she shall be made whole. And then He put them, the unbelievers, all out and then the blessing came. God forbid that any of us should stand in the way of the master bringing blessing to our loved ones and children and friends.

Faithlessness is a terrible thing in the church of God, in the local assembly and especially in the heart of the individual. It will ruin his prayer life, ruin his communion with God and ruin blessing in his own life and for a blessing in his family as well. Unbelief is a terrible thing.

I believe God Almighty and I believe He is willing and able to bless all those who call upon His name. We'll answer the prayers of those who pray believingly and send His Spirit to perform the operation in the world and in the hearts of those who need Him. Let us pray in faith believing.

He seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy some thy sins be forgiven thee. Now there was a tremendous change in the life of Peter when he obeyed the call of the Lord Jesus coming after me and I will make you to become fishes of men. And when he opened his home as well as his heart to the Lord Jesus.

There was a great change in Matthew as we read of him just now when he did the same thing. Opened his heart to follow Christ, trusting Him undoubtedly and then opening his home immediately in service for Christ. You see if any man is in Christ he is a new creation.

Old things are passed away and behold all things have become new. And it's most noticeable through the gospels the tremendous and immediate change in the lives of those who start trusting and following the Lord Jesus Christ. And if there's no evidence of new life in Christ then I suggest there is no new life in Christ.

There should be manifestations of the power of the indwelling spirit of Christ in and through the life of every believer in Him. There was a young army officer in Britain some years ago who was addicted to gambling and horse racing and drink and what not. But he was quite a pleasant character as the world goes.

And one day he stood and listened to the gospel and was gloriously converted on the spot. And nobody told him to give up his horses and his gambling but it came automatically. He was a new creation in Christ.

And a young lady acquaintance of his by the name of Lady Betty met him one day and said to him, Captain what is it that I've been hearing about you? And he said, well what is it Lady Betty that you've been hearing about me? Well she said, I hear Captain that you've been converted, is that true? Yes he said, that's perfectly true. Well she said, now come along Captain I'm quite sure that if there were to be a race meeting in the next town tomorrow night you'd be there and you'd be participating and you'd have a little flutter wouldn't you? He said, listen to me Lady Betty when I was a boy I was very fond of marbles. But when I grew up and got to be fond of horses I forgot all about my marbles.

Would you mind going and thinking about that for a while? And she did. Now she was a very pleasant character herself Lady Betty and the centre of attraction wherever she went. She was a very fine whist player, that's a kind of English card game, and a very beautiful dancer and the centre of attraction everywhere.

And then some months after this occasion she herself listening to the gospel by a lady friend was led to Christ. She was gloriously converted, she became a new creation in Christ Jesus and as you can imagine the Captain met her about three months afterwards and said, Lady Betty what is this that I hear about you? And she said, Captain what is it that you hear about me? And he said, well I hear that you've been converted Lady Betty is that true? She said, yes it's perfectly true Captain. Now he said to her, listen Lady Betty I'm quite sure if there were to be a dance in this town tonight you'd be there wouldn't you? She said, now listen Captain when I was a little girl I was very fond of dolls.

But when I grew up and learned to dance I forgot all about my dolls. Would you mind going and thinking about that for a little while? And they were both rejoicing in the fact that old things had passed away. Where are your new desires since you found a saviour? Where was the time when worldliness was eliminated from your life through faith in Christ? Where are the expressions of the eternal life or the life of the eternal in and through you? And these two people with whom we have to do in our message tonight were gloriously changed, revolutionised by meeting the Christ.

Have you really met him? Now I had walked life's way with an easy tread. I had followed where comforts and pleasures led until one day in a quiet place I met the Master face to face. I had station and rank and wealth for my goal, much thought for my body and little for my soul.

I'd entered to win in life's big race and I met the Master face to face. And I met him and knew him and I blushed to see that his eyes full of sorrow were fixed on me. And I faltered and fell at his feet that day and my castles all melted and vanished away and melted and vanished.

And in their place nor else did I see but the Master's face. And I cried aloud, O make me meet to follow the path of my wounded feet. My thought is now for the souls of men.

I've lost my life to find his again. And since that day in that quiet place I met the Master face to face. Did you really meet him? Did you really hear him say, Come, follow me.

Did the world grow dim and was your vision filled with his glory and your soul with his saving grace? Did your personal castles all melt away in the sunshine of his love? And you became a new creature, a new creation in Christ Jesus. So here we have now in this portion the call of Matthew and his response and the home of Matthew and his neighbours. Matthew you see, well Levi, Matthew, the same man.

This man Matthew was the quizzling of his day. Not the only one, there were many tax gatherers in the employ of the Roman occupying power. But I think Matthew was a notable one amongst them.

I say quizzling, Mr. Quizzling was the man in Norway who collaborated with the Nazis, you remember. He was a Norwegian but he was in the pay of the occupying power. And now all those who do that sort of disloyal thing are called quizzlings.

And Matthew was one of those, a traitor to his own nation, taking the people's money, his own people's money and giving it to the Romans. So he was despised by them, by his own people. I suppose because he was the proof positive that they themselves were in slavery to the Gentiles and this above everything

else.

They hated very much indeed. They had lost their privileges as the people of God and they were very sore and sorry about it. You know why they lost their privileges as the people of God? Because they failed to understand that alongside their privileges were great and serious responsibilities to God.

God had entrusted them with the Old Testament Scriptures and as his representatives on earth and they had failed and come short of his glory. And they had not accepted their responsibilities. The greater the blessing, the greater the responsibility.

I think you American people have tremendous blessings, more than anyone else generally speaking on the face of the earth. And you have serious responsibilities therefore to God. And unless you fulfil these spiritual responsibilities, something must happen of course, as it did in these New Testament times.

They found themselves in slavery to an occupying power. Let's hope and trust and pray that communism will never gain such ground in this country. But you know, it was touch and go in France the other day.

One of the Jews saw it coming and he said, well I know it's you because they're joining with us. Give me a microphone. He said, I don't know why.

He really scared stiff and it's about time some of us realised, unless we fulfil this, you are here as God's people. Let us make sure we respond to God and to the call of the Saviour in a full sense as Matthew did here. Please note in verse 14, he was willing to renunciate a lucrative calling at the invitation of the Lord Jesus to follow him.

He probably guessed by this time there was something more in life than getting for himself and for the occupying power. Like Zacchaeus, we sing of him, there was a man for whom we read, who lived in days of old, though he was rich. And he was a publican, a tax collector.

He felt his need of something more than gold. Now this was something real. The eyes of the Son of God, God manifest in flesh, met his eyes as he sat at the desk gathering in the money.

Let the whole thing go immediately. This was irresistible. The call of Christ was supreme and he just had to follow the Saviour.

That's a good sign of a genuine conversion to God through faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. He as well as Peter heard the call, come follow. That was all and now everything else grows at the end.

And the Saviour must be followed all the way. Now God doesn't call every one of us to do what he did, to renounce a lucrative calling and go and serve the Master. But I think there would be more people called to do this if they were more willing to do this.

I've often advised brethren who have sufficient money to live on for about four lives longer, to give up their money making and give the rest of their lives to the service of Christ and pay their own expenses. A most honourable thing to do. But very few do that.

I met a man in one of the out islands in the Bahamas only the other day. We were thinking of planning an extension Bible school in the southern part of Eleuther and there was a brother there who was a contractor, a building contractor from the States somewhere and he'd retired early. He was paying his own expenses and he was putting on additions to the Lord's work here and there in the Bahamas and in other

countries as well.

I thought that was most honourable. And Matthew at the call of Christ, it was so real, so wonderful to him. This is the day of opportunity he said to himself.

Everything must go from me to Jesus Christ. And he left it all and followed him. One of my students named Mike, this is a student from England, when he was in the college I heard afterwards, had a fortune left to him.

Probably about a hundred thousand dollars, nothing to you maybe, a fortune to an Englishman that would be. And within a few weeks he'd given every penny of it away to the Lord's work. So let's do that.

Because he had given himself and all he had two or three years before to Christ and to his service. Now Mike had one suit, the one he stood up in, and he had two shirts, one to wash and one to wear. He had a very high university degree, a Master in Science.

He came to us and got another degree at Morland's Bible College, theological degree. And he gave away every penny that was given to him and he went to India. And he's been serving the Lord ever since, knocking on the door, door to door in northern India, just telling the people about his Saviour.

And God is calling people like that. And there are men and women today who are giving up lucrative jobs at the Master's call and going to serve him. And there are some people who are very effective therefore, I say therefore advisedly, in their ministry for him.

Because they allow nothing to stand in their way that they might be effective. So he was willing. And he was willing to use his ink and pen for the Lord, because he is the one of course who wrote the Gospel, the first Gospel, Matthew's Gospel, about the kingship of our Lord Jesus Christ, where he is writing to the Jews and emphasising the Kingdom, the Kingdom of God.

He was a writer, you see there, he was sitting at his desk writing. And he put his gift at the Lord's disposal when he started to follow Christ. I wonder if we've ever done that sort of thing.

God doesn't want you to use in his service some gift you haven't got. I ought to say that again, it's terribly important. You're not supposed to take your turn in doing something because it's your turn.

You're supposed to use the gift that God has given you, the way that the Lord opens up for you. And the Lord said to Moses, what is that in thine hand? What you've already got in your hand, Moses, that is what I'm going to use to manifest my presence with you and my power through you. What have you got in your hand now? And he looked in his hand and there was a rod.

He says, the thing that you're using amongst your father-in-law's sheep in your daily job, I want you to use that for me. And I'm delighted when there's a man who's a financier in worldly things, he's an accountant or something like that, and he places his gift at the Lord's disposal, becomes a deacon in the local church and uses his gift in that way. I think God can use that sort of thing very much for his glory.

You've got specialists in each department in the Church of God. He says, what have you got in your hand now? That's the thing I'm going to use. And through this there was a manifestation of God's power, of God's life.

And all could see that God had visited him because he knew what was in his hand already. And when David offered to fight the Philistine, Saul said, now you'd better put on my armour. So he put it on and took it off again.

He said, no thank you very much. He said, I'll go with what is already in my hand. David, what is it you've got in your hand then? He said, the thing that I'm using every day in my ordinary work, looking after the sheep, a sling and a stone, or rather a sling.

The thing that I'm using every day to keep my sheep in the right place and to keep the wild animals away, this is what I'll use in my service for the Lord God of Israel. So with a sling and a stone he the giant loaded lay. And the God that lived in David's time is just the same today if we use what we already have, our present gifts and powers and talents and knowledge in the service of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And this is exactly what Matthew did. Thank God for Matthew's gospel, that he was willing to use his pen and his ink in the Master's service. And he was willing as well to use his home for the Lord.

You'll notice, first of all, the grace of Christ here in calling a national traitor to follow him and to do his will. You know, our Saviour is no respecter of persons. Some of us might have an ugly black spot in our lives.

Listen, failure is not final. You listen to the Master's call tonight and get up and follow him and leave all for his dear faith and you'll find his grace will be manifest in your life and sufficient for you as well. Notice also the wisdom of Christ in calling a man to follow him who knew Aramaic and Greek and was a gifted writer.

And the Saviour, when we trust him and follow him, makes no mistakes. He'll lead us on in his service to greater things and bless us and make us to be a blessing. Well, secondly, the home of Matthew and his neighbours.

I said he was willing, thirdly, to use his home for the Lord as well as his ink and pen for the Lord. I'm going to read you that verse again. He said unto him, follow me and he arose and followed him.

He came to pass that as Jesus sat at his, at his Levi's, Matthew's house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples. There were many and they followed him. Twice over it says many.

Now evidently he was a wealthy man. He had quite a big home. But as Peter put his small home at the Lord's disposal, Matthew immediately, he got up to follow the Lord, put his large home at the Lord's disposal.

And we were given, when we were in Seacliff, Long Island, New York, some months ago, we were given a nice home to use, a nice little home by the assembly there for the months we were in the district. We felt we should use our home, our little home, for the Lord. And you know, you'd be surprised how it worked out.

People in our street, Adam's Street, Seacliff, came unto the sound of the word in our home, people who'd never heard the gospel before, people who couldn't find where John's gospel was in the New Testament, because we all gave them all a New Testament, you know. And of course we didn't make them embarrassed. We were very diplomatic and careful about that.

And there was a Roman Catholic lady who became quite friendly with my wife and she heard the gospel on many an occasion. And these people were brought unto the sound of the gospel, because we were able to do that thing. And I was, some years ago, in a very big home, in the same area.

And there were loads and loads of people brought in from the other big homes in the area, into this home. And there they heard the gospel by Stephen Alford. I think this is a great opportunity, and Matthew and Peter here show us the way.

His first act, Matthew's first act, as a follower of the Lord Jesus, was to entertain Jesus in his own home. You remember the first act of Saul of Tarsus, when he was met by the risen Christ, was to pray. The Lord appeared to Ananias and said, I want you to go and meet a man called Saul.

Is he from Tarsus, Lord? Yes. Oh, I'm not going to see him. Is it terror? A holy terror.

It's all right, Ananias. He's a chosen vessel for me, to bear my name to the Gentiles. You go and meet Saul of Tarsus.

You'll find it's all right. He's really been changed, for behold, he prayed. It's interesting to see the first thing that happened in the lives of some of these who met the Saviour and decided to follow him.

And notice how Ananias took the Lord at his word, and he didn't go to the house where Saul was and meet him and say, excuse me, are you Saul of Tarsus? Yes. Well, oh thou Saul of Tarsus and troubler of the good Christian people, I have a word, a serious word from the Lord for you. Nothing like that.

He stuck out his hand and he said, brother! Saul took the Lord at his word. God expects us always to do that, to take him at his word and go in his name. Nothing doubting.

And in this case, his first thing was to entertain the Saviour in his home. If you'll pardon a personal note, we've had great joy entertaining the Lord's servants, because we've had a lot of privileges this way through the years. Being in Bible college work, we've had the Lord's servants from all over the country and all over the world.

We've got a book with their names in and their pictures in and a brief history about most of them and it's most inspiring, but not just interesting and inspiring to us, to have their names in a book and to boast about it and say we had so and so in our home. No, sir. Our three children today, while you are sitting here, this is the Lord's day, our three children are serving the Lord.

They're all happily engaged in his service, two of them full time. They were tremendously blessed by the visit of these leading brethren, gifted evangelists, able teachers, missionaries from around the world. We all sat at the table together.

We didn't stick the kids in the kitchen and eat at the dining room table ourselves with these illustrious visitors. We all got in together and the children got some tremendous help, I'm sure they did, from these servants of the Lord. And some of them wrote in the book, inasmuch you've done this to the least of one of my little ones, you've done it unto me.

Now I could never write that in anybody's book. One of the Lord's little ones, me? So I just put the word inasmuch. And there are guest books around the world with my signature and the word inasmuch in them.

Now of course they haven't entertained angels unawares when they've entertained me, more like elephants unawares. But what a tremendous blessing it is to receive Christian fellowship in the homes of God's people when they accept you as the Lord himself. When I was here preaching some fourteen months ago, the last message I believe was on Philemon.

And Paul said to Philemon in that letter, now he said, prepare a place for me, get a room ready for me. And virtually we're saying this, but in between times, I'm sending Onesimus to you, give him my room, receive him as myself. And inasmuch as you receive him, you're receiving me.

And what a wonderful thing it is to have the Saviour in your home in the form of one of his servants from here or there or anywhere. Now that's not a hint. I get too much Christian fellowship.

But I think it's a message for some of us to make quite sure that we entertain the Lord Jesus in our homes in the form of his servants and put our homes at the Lord's disposal. Now you have given your home to the Lord, haven't you? I mean your carpet, it isn't yours, is it? It's the Lord's. You're not keeping that for yourself, are you? I mean that lovely piece of furniture there, it isn't yours, is it? You mean to say you're a Christian and you're keeping that for yourself? Hold on to nothing, give it all to Christ tonight.

Let him come into the home and take possession of the lot and then say, now Lord, use it in your service, it's all yours. And you'd be surprised how the Lord will plan things to do that very thing. And when you take your wife home tonight, kneel on the carpet and give it to God.

And while you're there give everything else and the house itself and yourself afresh to the Lord. You'd be surprised how the Lord will plan things for his glory in your life and in your home. So the next thing he did was to introduce his friends and his neighbours into his spacious home.

What a contrast this is to Peter's little house by the seaside. There's only about seven people to get in the house I imagine. And when one or two more came with somebody sick they'd just have to go on top and let him down through the roof.

It's such a small house and all the people, all the city was gathered together round the door. They couldn't get inside in such a small place. Never mind, it doesn't matter, the Lord was inside and the blessing came.

Whether it's a small house or a big one, like Matthew's, he had a big spacious place. There were many people there and he said that twice over. Crowds of people came into his home.

I was in a home on Friday night and this brother has got a restaurant and he's got a big home at the back, a lovely big home. And he said to him, Brethren, come into my home. In his home, as he put it, at the Lord's disposal.

What a very practical and sensible and spiritual thing this is to do. Well now, there are some who criticise that the Lord Jesus explained his grace in being in this home and having fellowship with publicans and sinners. First of all, he said that he came to seek sinners, not righteous people.

As if there were any righteous people. He knew very well there weren't any. But those who will acknowledge his sinnership, their sinnership, are the ones who receive his blessing and enjoy fellowship with him.

And he eats with them. Now you see, the Lord Jesus was holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners. Well you say, how could he be separate from sinners if he ate and drank with publicans and sinners, tax gatherers and sinners? Well you see, a lot of people have taken New Testament separation to mean isolation.

It doesn't mean anything like that at all. We're not supposed to isolate ourselves from non-Christians. No, the Lord Jesus never did.

He was separate in heart. That's where his separation lay, in his heart. He was separate from sinners, but he ate and he drank with sinners.

You are supposed to mix with your neighbours and unconverted friends for the sake of being a spiritual blessing to them. You and I are supposed to open our homes to them to get them under the sound of the gospel just like Matthew did when he met the Lord and Peter in his small way in his little home. You know there is a new movement abroad in this country and in Britain and other parts of the world as well.

And lots of neighbours are being brought under the sound of the gospel in their own district, in their own street by the one Christian family in their own opening their home to a bible study, a coffee hour or a gospel sermon. Or a gospel meeting of some way or another. I know a lot of you know a lot about this, but it is a movement of the Holy Spirit.

You could invite some people for 39 years to a service like this, they wouldn't come. But you live in their street and you go along and give them a nice invitation card that you buy yourself out of your own pocket money. To invite them along and you make a nice coffee supper for them or something, I don't know what you call these things in your country.

But you invite them to come and have a time with you and they'll come along and they'll enjoy the fellowship. They'll even take part in the discussion around the scriptures pretending that they know something about the bible. You know very well they don't.

It's quite evident that they don't, but that's what they're there for, so that you can preach the truth to them as it is in Jesus. The man who is now the principal of the Morelands Bible College in Britain that I used to represent, Dr. Copley. Very gifted man, university lecturer, Manchester University, and lecturing universities in your country as well.

He started a few years ago a neighbours meeting in his own home. There is a flourishing church there now, a flourishing assembly and he just had the people next door come in. They so much enjoyed it he had the people the other side come in and people know their own came in.

Now there's a big flourishing church there even after about six or seven years and that's how it all started. This movement is a movement of God's Holy Spirit I'm quite sure. Not only did he explain that he came to seek sinners and not only did he show that his separation was in heart, but also he spoke about the fact that he was going to die and of course die for sinners.

And this here is unveiled language, but it's pretty evident to me in verse 20. They were talking about fasting and it's a very interesting subject which we cannot go into tonight. I might give you a couple of sentences about it and that's all.

And he said to them, the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away. Now that word in the Greek means a violent taking away, taking away with force and I'm sure he had in mind the death by which he was going to die upon the cross of Calvary. This was the first hint of his passion and suffering and death from the lips of the Saviour.

Thank God he not only came to call publicans and fishermen and sinners to follow him, but he came to die and to give his life a ransom for many that you and I might be long to God. You know the essence of fasting is self-discipline, having others in mind. It's not the formalism of the ascetic, but it is the voluntary subordination of the physical with others in mind.

I am so taken up with the service of Christ, with the blessing of others, with getting my neighbours under the sound of his truth and so on, that I am denying myself having them in mind. This of course is the mind of the Saviour. We saw this when some time ago we were studying Philippians 2. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.

We found from verse 4 that it was an unselfish mind for he thought not on his own interests, but on the interests of others. And he had you in his mind and me in his mind when he left the realms of glory and came to this sin-cursed earth to die, to bring us back to God. And this is the idea behind fasting.

There are some crazy and hazy ideas on the subject these days, but God gives us his plain explanation of the doctrine in Isaiah 58. They said, well we are your people Lord and we've not only gone to the prayer meeting and kept the ordinances, but we've even fasted as well. God said, but you haven't done the right kind of fast.

But they said we've covered ourselves with sackcloth and ashes and we've gone without some meals. No, he said, that's not the right kind of fast. Is it such a fast that I have chosen, a day for a man to afflict his soul? Will he spread sackcloth and ashes under him and walk mournfully before the Lord? That's not it, he said.

Is it not this, to deal thy bread to the hungry, bring the poor of a caste out to thy house where thou seest the naked that thou cover him. Hide not thyself from thine own flesh. Deal thy bread to the hungry, in other words, bless others.

Be taken up with others' interests and others' needs, so the mind of Christ shall be seen in you. And that is God's explanation of the doctrine of fasting. He was speaking here about new wine being put in old bottles and how foolish that is.

And I'm sure he had in mind the new wine of grace which will not mix with the old wine of the law, Judaism. Thank God we are dead to the law through the death of Christ and the life of Christ and alive unto God in him. They fasted because the law said they should.

Christians fast when they are so taken up with Christ and his service, in the service for others, that they do not think of themselves. Well there's a lot in chapter 2 but I think especially the Lord has seen fit to impress upon our hearts, I trust, the fact that there must be evidences of our new life in Christ. You say you are following him, well let us by his grace show it.

Let us open our hearts to him altogether, let us follow him all the way. Let us open our homes and place everything we have at his disposal, living for others, so Christ shall be glorified through us all. Let us pray.

Let us take a moment of silent prayer. Maybe we feel led to yield to the Saviour's call tonight. Come ye after me.

Pray from the heart and say, Lord I will follow thee by your grace. Pray from the heart and say, Lord I will trust thee as my Saviour and as the Lord of my life. I give myself to thee.

I give my home, my home to thee. I give my all to thee. Take my love.

My Lord I pour at thy feet its treasure store. Pray that. Take my self and I will be ever, only, all for thee.

Lord as we yield our hearts are finding peace long sought and Father and God we thank thee in the Saviour's name. And may the all sufficient graces of the Saviour be with us all in all our need and in all our circumstances and in all our lives as we follow him all the way for his name's sake.

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