

Are You Destroying the Church

by Francis Chan

Francis Chan's sermon calls believers to recognize the sacredness of the church and the serious consequences of division within it.

Duration: 35:34

Scripture: Numbers 20:12, 2 Samuel 24:15-17, 2 Chronicles 7:1-3, John 17:21, Acts 5:1-11, 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, 1 Corinthians 11:27-30, Ephesians 4:3, Titus 3:10, Hebrews 13:17

Topics: "Church Unity", "Unity in the Church", "The Sacredness of Community"

Description

Francis Chan emphasizes the critical importance of unity within the church, warning against the destructive nature of division and gossip. He reflects on biblical examples of God's severe response to those who treat sacred matters lightly, urging believers to recognize their role as God's temple and the seriousness of their words. Chan calls for repentance and a commitment to protect the unity of the church, highlighting that the world will believe in Christ through the church's oneness. He encourages the congregation to confront divisive behavior and to foster a culture of love and respect among believers.

Transcript

But here's some things the Lord's been teaching me lately about unity. And with that, man, you know what's amazing is even tonight, this morning, John, the pastor of Bethel, you know, upstairs, he preached John 17. You know, we didn't plan this, but even in the middle of John 17, as he's preaching about unity, some people stood up in the service and started yelling at him, like three people at once, just trying to cause, in the middle of preaching John 17.

Look, the enemy's alive and well. If Jesus said that's what's going to create, get the world to believe, then what's the enemy going to be after? Division, right? And this is one of the things I want to talk about tonight. I mean, understand what's going on here is not just a human being talking to another human being, not in God's eyes.

It's something bigger, something sacred. You guys remember the first time you read the story in the Bible about Uzzah? Remember a guy named Uzzah? Okay, let me refresh your memory if you don't remember the story. Uzzah was one of the guys that was carrying the ark, right? Okay, you know what I'm talking about now.

And what happens? He stumbles or someone stumbles and the ark's about to fall. And what does he do? Okay. Remember the first time you heard that story? Did you think to yourself, serves him right? No, right? What was going on in your mind the first time you heard that story? You thought, that's not fair.

Exactly. I would have done the same thing. I think I would have just stabilized it.

Remember the first time you read the story of Moses and remember when Moses struck the rock and God says, speak to the rock. And Moses struck it and water came out. And remember when God said to him, because you didn't treat me as holy, I'm not going to let you enter the promised land.

I still remember the first time I'm reading through that story. And I still remember thinking, he's going to let him in because God himself was so mad at the people. He's not going to get mad at Moses for striking the rock and keep.

So I kept reading, thinking he's going to let him. Okay. Something's going to happen because Moses was so tight with God, right? There was no one on the earth like Moses.

And now you're not going to let him cross into the promised land. You're going to just let him stare at it and say, no, it's like, I thought at that moment, God was going to forgive him and say, you've proven yourself faithful. I forgive you coming to the promised land.

And again, I thought that's not fair. And then recently, when I read about the story of Saul and the old Testament, remember when they were about to go to war and Saul is waiting for Samuel to come and offer the sacrifices before they go to war and Samuel is late. Okay.

He was beyond the seven days that he was supposed to wait for him. And so Saul thinks to himself, well, I don't want to go to war without the sacrifices being offered and Samuel didn't show up. So he's kind of stuck.

Like, do I just go to war? No, I want the blessing of God. So he said to the people, you know what? I'm going to go in and I'm going to offer the sacrifices because I don't want to go to war without God's blessing. We need to make the offerings.

And Saul goes in there, makes the offerings, comes out and Samuel shows up. It's like, what are you doing? He's like, you were late. And God says to Saul, because you did that, I'm going to tear the kingdom away from you.

I'm going, it doesn't feel totally fair to me. I feel like he was trying to do a good thing. Okay.

Now, now let's jump to the new Testament. Ananias and Sapphira. Okay.

Remember the story? They sold some land. They, they come before the apostles. The apostles say, is that all the money? You know, Ananias is like, yeah, that's, that's it.

And I think this is the reading for tomorrow. Right. And, uh, some kind of spoiler alert.

Um, and, uh, he's, he, he says, yeah, that's it. And he says, because you lied, you're going to die. And he dies.

And his wife comes in. He says, Hey, did you give us all the money? She goes, yeah, that was all of it. You're going to die too.

They exaggerated how much they gave. When you read that story, don't you read and go, I feel like I've done worse, right? Have you ever exaggerated to me or one of the leaders and Peter, you know, he's saying you lied to the Holy spirit. That's crazy though.

And then what about first Corinthians chapter 11, when it's talking about communion and, and he gives that warning, he says, you better examine the body before you take the bread or a cup, because if you take it in an unworthy manner, he goes, that's why some of you are weak and sick. And a number of you have died. Don't you read that and go, wait, if that happened back then, how come it's not happening today or is it? And we just don't notice it.

Don't you, you look at some of these things and go, wow, but, but what is it? Why are these passages? Why is that story with King as a so bothersome to us? It's because we don't understand this word sacred. Okay. The God says, you don't get it.

You just don't. If I say, don't touch that, that arc, you just don't touch it. It's sacred.

And we don't understand that we're, we're a society of second chances. Come on. That's not that big a deal.

This guy's done worse. I'm not Hitler. I'm not this.

I'm not that. So I'm pretty good. That's the world we grew up in.

And so we don't understand this word sacred. We don't understand when something is of God and he says, don't touch it. You just don't touch it.

Right. And, and, and we, we, we look at what what, what, what Moses did in striking the rock. And God says, you didn't treat me as sacred.

You didn't treat my word as sacred. Saul went into the temple and offer. You don't do that.

I don't care. That's a command from the Lord. You have no right to do that.

And in the same way, taking of the body and blood of Jesus, God sees that as a very sacred thing. There's a story in second Chronicle seven. You don't have to turn there.

Well, you better, someone should turn there because I want to make sure it's second Corinthians, second Chronicle seven. Yeah. It is second Chronicle seven.

Okay. Nevermind. Now you don't have to turn there.

You can read later. Okay. But second Chronicle seven is that passage where they just finished building the temple.

Okay. Do you remember that scene? They just finished building the temple of God. Solomon just finished it.

This is his prayer of dedication. And the Bible says that everyone was outside of the temple and they had put a sacrifice in the middle of the temple. And as everyone was outside, they watched fire come down from heaven and consume the sacrifice.

And then it said the glory of the Lord filled the temple in such a way that no one would dare enter the temple. Okay. If I told you tonight, God told me we can reenact that right here at Bethel.

That'd be pretty cool, huh? Right. And you're like, oh, I'm so glad I came tonight. We texted all your friends.

You so blew it. Right. Because we were outside and we saw fire come out of the sky.

Don't you want to just once see something like that? Don't you sometimes read the old Testament and go, gosh, I'm so jealous. I wish I had seen that. I wish I could have been there because you imagine how terrifying and exciting all at once it would be because the people, it says that everyone fell with their faces to the ground and yet they were worshiping God.

So there's like this. I mean, if we really did that, if we walked outside and we saw fire from heaven come down and then this mysterious, crazy glow coming from inside of this building, we would be outside just terrified, but also so excited. Like, yeah, we prayed for the presence of God and we prayed that he would come and fill his temple and he did.

Right. We would be so freaked out by that instance because it'd be a sacred moment. Could you imagine if that happened and you were there at the temple scene, God's glory filled the place.

Could you imagine picking up a sledgehammer and striking the temple? Would anyone in their right mind dare do that? That would be like the stupidest thing on the planet you could do, right? God's glory fills. Everyone's terrified. We're scared to go in and you just walk up with a sledgehammer and you're about to strike the temple.

What if one of your friends picked up the hammer and they were about to do that? What would you scream? Wouldn't you just beg, put it, what are you thinking? You're insane. No, no, don't do it. Don't do it.

Don't do it. Why? Because this is something that is sacred. What is my point in all of everything I just said is this first Corinthians three verse 16.

Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him for God's temple is holy and you are that temple. This is the word of God. I'm going to read it again.

Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him for God's temple is holy and you are that temple. We talked about what is sacred, what is holy, and God says, you want to know what's holy? You are. You are this temple.

The Bible says, when you got saved, you became like a living stone stacking on top of the other stones, building one temple that is a dwelling place for God. He says it's built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And Jesus Christ himself is the cornerstone.

So it's this one temple that that spans time somehow. Like right now, I'm a living stone connected to other living stones throughout history. I'm connected to Moses.

I'm connected to David. I'm connected to Peter and Paul. Jesus is the cornerstone.

Elijah, the prophets, he goes, this is a very holy thing that God is doing. And so if anyone tries to destroy this unity, if anyone's trying to destroy this temple, God says, I will destroy him. This is why I believe in Titus 3.10, it says, warn a divisive person once, warn him again, and then have nothing to do with him.

If anyone's going to try to destroy God's temple, God says, God will destroy him. When God was revealing these things to me, man, I just, I was like, Lord, I am sorry. There are times when I've spoken up and said things too flippantly about other leaders and other churches.

And when I compare to what God struck people dead for, I go, God, I am so sorry. Help me guard my lips. Because when I speak against that brother, I'm taking a sledgehammer to the temple.

That's why if someone is going to gossip to you and say something negative about someone else in the body, man, it is your job. If you love that person to warn him, to put that sledgehammer. Are you insane? Do you know what's going to happen if you destroy God's temple? Are you, are you an idiot? You're, you're seriously going to go after.

That's why if you come from another church, man, don't go telling me anything about what happened over there and how they mistreated you and oh, you poor victim, man, I'm sorry, whatever. But you know what? Let's be very careful about our words. That's why people don't come to me with that stuff.

You know, people boast like, oh, I'm a safe place. No, you're an enabler. You're an unloving enabler.

You might as well put your hand on the sledgehammer with them. So yeah, I can't believe that. Yeah, I can't believe that person.

You are insane. Instead, if you love the person, you're going to put that down. Don't let those words come out of your mouth.

Look at what God says. And don't let Satan get in your head going. Did God really say that? God really say he would destroy you? And I mean, is that really his temple? Read it.

I'm a part of the temple of God. Man, let's be careful with our words. Man, I hear people criticize leaders around our nation.

And I haven't been quick to confront it, but now it's like I'm getting serious. Like, are you crazy? Are you going to bash Rick Warren? This is a guy that loves the Lord. Yeah, you may not agree with everything he does, but man, I'm telling you, he loves Jesus.

Everything I can tell. A supernaturally spirit-filled man. Are you going to attack Mark Driscoll? Are you going to attack John Piper? Are you going to attack Mike Bickle? Are you going to attack some of these expressions in the body of Christ that may look a little... I'm just saying, dude, put that down.

I've met these people and I see their hearts and I hang out with people in these different denominations. I'm like, man, they love Jesus. It looks different for me, but I can see the spirit in them.

So we better be careful. And I'm reading this and I'm thinking, God, how come more people aren't dead? Seriously. I seriously prayed that.

I go, God, I don't get it. You should have struck me dead. And here's what I heard from the Lord.

They haven't been warned. The church hasn't warned people. We listen to gossip.

We listen to people talk about leadership and we don't warn them. We just kind of think that we're being loving by listening and everyone comes as the victim. And so we're just thinking, oh, I'm just being compassionate.

No, you're being disobedient. We need to warn, warn the divisive person, warn them again. And the Bible says have nothing to do with them.

It's like, if you're going to keep striking the temple, then I just need to get away from you because I don't want to be anywhere close to that. See, some of you read that passage and you think, well, I would never say that to another person and I would never distance myself from another person. Well, I'm just telling you what the scripture says, have nothing to do with him.

And I know sometimes in our hearts, we don't want to give up on people. So we say, well, I know we warned him a bunch of times, but this isn't like every other sin. God doesn't say this about adultery.

God doesn't say this about homosexuality. God doesn't say this about swearing, drinking, drugs, but he says, look, with division, I don't play around. You warn a divisive person once, you warn them again, then have nothing to do with him because it's going to be the unity of the church that's going to get the world to believe.

I thought, what if any time, you know, let's say after this, Kelly comes up to me and starts talking bad about Angela, you know, which is a very likely scenario, right? And she's calling all sorts of swear words, you know, like, I know Kelly, calm down, calm down. I know I get that way with Angela too. You know, I used Kelly because it's kind of safe.

Okay. But let's just say that happened, man. What if I was a type of person that seriously loved Kelly You got to stop.

Seriously. Seriously. Let me read this passage to you again.

Put the hammer down. Please tell me you won't do this anymore. Seriously.

Like if you keep doing this, I don't even want to be around you because God says he will destroy you. And I've got to be obedient to the word of God. Like I fear God more than I want this friendship.

I want to be obedient to him more than I want this relationship. And I love you. Like, I don't want you destroyed by God.

Do you understand how serious? What if this is the way we spoke to one another? Can you imagine how quickly division would end? See, I used to read those passages, like, like, you know, the John 17 prayer and these passages about unity and this oneness that God wants. And I used to just think, gosh, Lord, I don't know how that's going to happen. How in the world are all these different denominations, all these leaders and all these people that have so many, you know, fights with each other.

How is it going to come together? And then after this was revealed to me, I thought this is it. I can actually see it happening. If I actually have a fear of the Lord and I'm so terrified to destroy his temple.

I'll be much more careful about my words. That doesn't mean I don't go to people and even other leaders and say, hey, I'm really concerned about your belief in this area, but that's between me and them. And to really talk it through with them out of love.

But what if we all got serious about this? Has anyone ever done that to you? Loved you enough to stop you and say, dude, just be quiet right now. Has any of your girlfriends ever come up to you and say, please stop. It's like you're swearing right now.

I can't, I hate this. Like you're just throwing a bunch of F it's so my ears are sensitive to when you strike the temple. I can't handle this.

Look, I know in this room, careless things have been said. We live in a time where the world out there, everyone wants to say the loudest thing possible with the fewest words possible, right? We want to tweet the most outrageous, harsh things. We want to exaggerate and we want to tear down, you know, the strongest person we know.

Like that's just what we do in the world. But what if the church was different? What if we defended each other? And we don't let any unwholesome speech come out of our mouths. Only that which is for the building up.

We live in a time where everyone hates authority. But what if it was different in here? And we're actually grateful to be under a King. And we actually obeyed like Hebrews 13, where we obeyed and honored our leaders.

Because we live in a time where this is something else. I feel like the Lord's revealed to me. He has to come through on his word because we live in a time where you can have all of the elders in complete agreement, you know, and say, look, like with John or something, we say, look, John, we all see this in your life.

But we live in a time of such arrogance that John would go, I don't care. I think you guys are all wrong. It doesn't matter that the godliest men got together and sought after the Lord and prayed and came to, you know, in deep prayer came to this conclusion.

I know better. That's just the world we live in. And so the only way that God can bring unity is if he actually acts and he actually opposes the proud and he actually humbles and he actually destroys.

And I'm just saying, I really believe that time is coming when God himself has listened to all the bickering, all the gossip, all the division, and he's held back because the warning hasn't gone out. And I believe he's telling me, Warren, consider this your first warning. And it's a beautiful thing to repent.

It's a beautiful thing. There's this piece that goes, I'm actually going to speak positive about my brothers and sisters from now on. This could be an amazing place where you just know no one's talking behind my back because they don't allow it there.

They love enough to confront and God's going to destroy anyone who would dare destroy his temple. And I had a wonderful time with the Lord repenting. I hope you guys like repentance.

You know, people go, I don't like change. I'm like, well, that's what repent means. It's change.

If you don't like change, you don't like Christianity. It's all about change. It's all about God.

I don't want to do this anymore. I need a new start. I want to start a new season.

I want to be so filled with the spirit. And I just believe there's, I believe the Lord wants to do something in and through us over these next few weeks. Something new.

That's why we're in this room that we've never been in. That's why we're gathering together on Sunday evenings for a few weeks. Not sure what the Lord is going to do, but we believe as elders the Lord led us to this.

You know, normally at this time we divide into new churches and we just, as we prayed, we're like, there's just something, something's not right. And maybe there's a pruning that needs to take place. Maybe some of you during this time say, you know what? This isn't for me.

I can't, I can't handle that closeness. I can't handle these parameters. I just need to vent, you know? Well, that's okay.

But we can't have that here. You know, it's kind of weird because every year we've kind of doubled in our churches. And this year it's like, okay, we've got these 14 churches.

Let's go to 28. And it's like, oh, there's maybe three churches that are ready to multiply. And it's like, okay, what's going on here? So when I was a kid, I don't know if I ever told you this story, but my, my chore was to water this cherry tree and this peach tree in my backyard.

And there was so much fruit one year that I fertilized it more and sprayed more water on it. And I just watered it faithfully going next year, it's going to be insane. Cherries and peaches everywhere, you know? And there was actually less and then less.

And then pretty soon there was like nothing on that tree. And I'm thinking, man, I'm watering it so much more faithfully. Honestly, that, it was a mystery.

I, it wasn't until probably about 10 years ago when I was like 40 that someone taught me about pruning. I know that sounds ridiculous to you, but I didn't know. I just thought, man, the more you water it, the bigger it'll get.

It's going to be awesome. Be a ton of fruit next year. It's just going to keep increasing in fruit.

And it's like, no, you've got to prune it. I'm like, what? Like you cut off and then, you know, and then I was like, oh, that's why I see those trees sometimes where it's like bare down to like hardly anything. And what was so beautiful now just looks so barren and ugly, right? And it's almost heartbreaking where you're like, oh, that was such a beautiful tree, but it had to be trimmed down.

The, the branches that bore no fruit were actually sucking all the energy out of the tree. And that's why the Bible even talks about that, how God cuts off every branch. It doesn't bear fruit, but the ones that are fruitful, he trims clean.

So there'll be even more fruitful. And so I don't know if that's what the Lord is going to do in these next few weeks is maybe trim us down. I'm okay with that.

I get it because I just want to get together with a group of people that are going to love each other deeply and say, I want unity. It's like, Kelly, shut up about Angela. Okay.

I want unity. And I'm sorry to be so harsh with you, but I'm just tired of it. You know, it's just, but what if there was just some of that going on here and some repentance starting tonight.

I have found that revival start with prayer and repentance. Okay. We want to just jump in, do some miracles, Lord, grow our church.

Well, let us repent first. God trim me clean. I want to be that branch that bears fruit.

And if I bear fruit, then if I'm going to bear fruit, I need to get rid of this bitterness. I got to get rid of this anger. I've got to get rid of this arrogance.

I've got to get rid of some of this speech that's come out of my mouth and I've got to confess it to the Lord. I've got to really beg him and say, God, I grabbed a sledgehammer and went after your temple, your sacred temple. And I am so sorry.

I feel like we just need some space right now individually to pray. I don't know, John, if you could just play something softly and, but can we just spend some time right now repenting before God, picture God in this room, knowing picture God, God of the universe, who struck a man dead for touching his arc, who killed 70,000 people because David took a census, who had the ground open up and swallow people alive for their grumbling. And now he says, you're that temple.

And if anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. You want to be on the right side of his protection. That's an awesome thing to think.

No way. I'm a part of this temple. Amazing privilege.

Right now, as the Lord, as the Holy Spirit brings to mind things you've said and done, confess that to him right now. I'll bring you and you just took a shower. It's like all of that is gone.

Now I confessed it to the Lord and because I confessed it, he's faithful and just forgive me my sin and cleanse me from all unrighteousness. Thank God that he's been patient with us. He has been so patient with us.

And now through this warning, it's a time of cleansing, but it's exciting. I mean, to go, gosh, I'm a part of this temple that spans hundreds, thousands of years. And if anyone tries to destroy this thing that I'm a part of, God's going to destroy him.

I guess an awesome thing to know you're protected by God, isn't it? I'm on the right side. I'm a block in that temple and no one better dare touch this temple because God's watching. It's a beautiful thing.

And as we pursue unity as a church, there's a promise that goes with that, that people are going to start believing. And so as we just start building together and becoming one, I hope that's what you're seeking. And so we don't see church as an hour a week where you go to a room and sit like this and then walk away.

That's why we're having you meet in your homes and going, no, you've got to become one with these people. God wants us to display a supernatural oneness that the world can't have. They can't have fellowship with God.

Unless you walk in the light, you can't have fellowship. But the Bible says if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we'll have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all unrighteousness. And so that's why we spend this time confessing first.

So next week we can come back and we can minister to one another. We have real fellowship with one another. And this week, spending the week just repenting and cleansing ourselves of this and seeking unity with one another so we can see God move in mighty ways.

Now, let's not stay in this place of sorrow. Let's worship him. I believe God is so pleased.

God is so pleased when we come to him like we just did and just confessed what he already knows. God, you know what I said about him. You know what I said about her.

You know what I've said in the past about previous church experiences, previous leadership. I'm done. Forgive me and make things right.

And now he wants us to worship him. So, John, if you just lead us into the presence of God.

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