

Church - Part 3

by Ken Baird

Ken Baird emphasizes the centrality of Christ in the Church and the importance of genuine fellowship among believers.

Duration: 53:20

Scripture: John 10:16, 1 Corinthians 1:3-4, 1 Corinthians 1:10, 1 Corinthians 3:5-15, 1 Corinthians 4:6

Topics: "Church Fellowship", "Simple Faith"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the simplicity of being a New Testament church. He encourages the audience to focus on the Lord Jesus and not get caught up in the complexities of organizing a church. The preacher reminds the listeners that when two or three are gathered in the name of Jesus, He is present among them. He also urges the congregation to approach church fellowship with faith and not judge others based on their gifts or abilities.

Transcript

Before we speak tonight, may we remind you of the question box on the table back there. There was a question in the box tonight, and I took it out and read it, and then I put it back in for C, so we might get a few more questions, perhaps. I don't want that question to be lonely.

Add your questions, please. And we will take them up as nearly as we can in relation to that subject, or that portion of the subject, that the Church, as we can relate it, at least. Now, last night, we were talking about the figures of the Church, divinely given figures, and we were speaking particularly in the Truth for Christians, how that we are related to the Lord Jesus Christ in these different ways in our Church fellowship.

We were noticing, again, by way of just review, that the Church is seen under the figure of a body, of a building, of a bride, and as a flock. I believe we mentioned them. Yes, that's the order that they are in Ephesians.

The body, the building, the bride. And then, when Paul called the Ephesian elders into his presence, it's interesting, and I don't think that it's without significance, that all of these figures of the Church are seen in connection with the Ephesian Church. The Ephesians enjoyed the ministry of the Apostle Paul for about three years, and I think that they were as well taught as any of the churches of the first century.

And, it's interesting to me, and not without significance, that all of these figures are related to Ephesus. In Acts chapter 20, he calls the elders of Ephesus together, and then speaks of the Church as a flock. That they should feed the flock, which is the Church of the living God.

Is it the living God? Let me check on it just a moment. My memory plays tricks on me at times, and I don't want to misquote. I can read it too quickly.

Now, in all of these figures of the Church, Christ has the preeminence. If we think of the Church as a body, then Christ is the head. If we think of the Church as a building, then Christ is the foundation.

If we think of the Church as a bride, then Christ is the groom. If we think of the Church as a flock, then Christ is the shepherd. And, in each of these instances, our Lord Jesus takes the preeminence, and we cannot divorce Christ from the Church.

And, when we talk about the Church, we will talk about our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, we were noticing last night the simplicity of our relation to the Lord Jesus, simply that of the sheep to the shepherd. And, we were dwelling on that last night as we went home.

One mentioned to me as I left, a point that I thought is a good point, a point that I have thought of, and perhaps even you have heard of yourself. That the Lord would have us close to Him. And, when we are close to Him, we will find ourselves close to one another.

Now, our Lord Jesus is the divine gathering center for the Church of God. We notice Matthew chapter 11, and try to connect that with John chapter 10. Let's notice, well, not Matthew chapter 11.

Let's read John 10 first this time. John 10, and then Matthew chapter 18. John chapter 10, verse 16, the Lord says, Another sheep I have, which are not of this foal.

Them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. The word is not foals. It's not the same as the word in the first part of the verse, which is a foal indeed.

Now, Israel was a foal, but the Church is a flock. Israel was held together by an outside influence. Israel was held together by the law, and that law was the middle wall of partition between the Jews and the Gentiles.

And we notice that in the foals, we have a circumference without a center. But in the Church, or in the flock, which speaks of the Church, we have a center without a circumference. The Church is held together by a mutual attraction to the Lord Jesus Christ.

And how blessed is that local group of Christians, that local assembly, who are together by reason of their attraction to the Lord Jesus and by reason of their attraction to those who also love Him. Now, I think that there's a great possibility that we can be gathered together simply as a matter of convenience, rather than a matter of conviction. I'm going to explain what I mean.

We can be here, you can be fellowshiping in this local assembly, simply because your parents were here when you were born. Your friends are here. Your relatives are here.

And you would be here without any conviction at all. Now, you can still enjoy this assembly by reason of these truths, or reason of these facts, simply because you were born here. And in circumstances like these, I think we miss a blessing, because the real reason that the people come together in an assembly

is to enjoy the Lord together.

And the Lord would have it that way. Now, in Matthew chapter 18, we see the Lord Jesus, as He is there presented to us, the center of the Church. Matthew chapter 18, verse 20, "...for where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Now, we have the place here, for where two or three are gathered together in my name.

We have the people, where two or three are gathered together in my name. We have the principle, where two or three are gathered together in my name. We have the person, there am I, in the midst of them.

Now, here are all the Church affiliation questions answered in one verse. We have the place, we have the people, we have the principle, and we have the person, who is the center of the people of God. Now, the simplest definition that I know of for a New Testament Church is a group of Christian people gathered together because of their mutual attraction to the Lord Jesus Christ.

He is the gathering center. It should be what we see of Christ in each of us that brings us together around Him. Now, this is a promise.

The Lord Jesus says, for where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. Now, we know that sometimes we come to an assembly meeting expecting to see a certain people. And isn't it lovely that we can have a reasonable assurance that certain people will be there.

That's nice. But really, the person that makes this meeting or any other meeting of the Church so wonderful is the divine presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, you may say that His presence is guaranteed in the person of the Spirit of God.

But I choose to think that our Lord Jesus Christ is omniscient. The veil of time and sense doesn't mean anything to our Lord Jesus Christ. It does to you and me, but it doesn't to Him.

And in His omniscience, He is here. He Himself is the gathering center of His people. He's the shepherd in the flock.

And it should be our attraction to Him where He is indeed made the gathering center. Now, in many instances, and it can take place in principle in this assembly, just as much as it can take place in any denominational circle in the world. Now, there are certain people of certain denominations that when they go to a certain city, they look for a church of that denomination.

Now, they may not have any friends there. They may not have any acquaintances. The place where they go depends upon what is written across the top of that bulletin board.

What church it is. Now, we'll hope it's a good one. But, the law of averages might argue otherwise.

I'm afraid in this day and age. Now, let's not be sectarian about this. Do we go where we go because there is a magnification of the Lord Jesus? Because the Lord Jesus is enjoyed among those people? Is He our gathering center? Are we attracted to Him? Now, I believe that the Lord would have us meet where we are by reason of conviction and not simply convenience.

Now, let me restate that principle again. No man lives to himself nor dies to himself. And there are those that feel that they can get along quite well without Christian fellowship, without, oh, possibly once a week.

But, you know, as we see Christ in one another, we love to come together. Now, it is possible that that's not the motive of our coming here. It should be.

But, it's possible that that's not the motive of our coming here. Is Christ made much of in this place? Is He the gathering center? Did we become conscious of the fact that He would be here tonight in the midst of His people? God wants us gathered around Himself. Our Lord Jesus wants us gathered around Himself.

Now, let's think about these things. Let's not forget these things. That the Lord Jesus Christ is the center of the church.

He is the shepherd. The flock is gathered together around Him. And where you have a group of Christian people who love the Lord and are finding themselves in each other's presence because of that mutual attraction to the Lord Jesus, you have a New Testament church.

That's what it is. The place? Where? Now, it doesn't matter too much where. For the sake of the unsaved, it does matter.

But, for the sake of the Christians, really, it can be an onboard ship. It can be in the catacombs of Rome. It can be in homes, as a matter of fact.

There are a number of places in the New Testament where the writers refer to the church which is in thy house. Now, do you think that that man had a little model of a church building, steeple and all? And the Gothic windows, and perhaps colored paper for glass in the windows? Do you think that that's what he meant when he said, The church in thy house? Of course not. The church is not a building.

Nor is it an organization. We should have mentioned that when we talked about the truth of the church seen as a body. I'll never forget an illustration that Mr. John Watts used once in talking about the church.

And I think I must pass it along to you. It seemed that over in the old country that he was going along the road one day when a donkey with a two-wheeled cart was coming down the road to meet him and the cart was full of potatoes. And the donkey got a little bit excited as he was coming along the road and shied and the wheel hit a rock.

And the spokes of the wheel broke. And when that left that axel down with his son, the axel broke. The block split all apart.

And the potatoes rolled here and there and it threw the donkey clear off of his feet. And it was just general chaos. Mr. Watts used that as an illustration between the organization and the organism.

Now he says the cart, that was an organization. It went to pieces. But the donkey didn't go to pieces.

His eyes didn't go this direction and his tail go this direction and his feet go another direction. He stayed in one piece. You see, he's an organism.

Now the church is not a building and it's certainly not an organization. It's an organism. The life of Christ flows throughout her.

I don't even like to hear the expression I'm going to church. And I don't make a man an offender for a word. I won't put you on my black list if I hear you saying that.

I'll just say, well, he's not very careful. Or she's not very careful as the case may be. I'm not going to church.

I may be going with the church. I may come to a building that we may call a church building but the building is not the church. And it's not an organization.

You don't organize a church. You may come together as Christians around the Lord Jesus and that's all that's necessary. Isn't that delightfully simple? Oh, the simplicity that there is in Christ.

If you don't organize a church, you really got a job on your hands. I feel sorry for you. If you try it.

That's a lot of work. But you know, you don't have to go through a lot of work to really be a New Testament church. All you got to do is just kind of let's talk about the Lord Jesus.

Let's remember Him. Now, perhaps it will be in a trailer someplace. Perhaps it will be here or there.

It's where two or three are gathered together in His name. He said, there am I. In the midst of them. Now, faith makes that real.

Now, if we are not meeting in faith, if we are not grasping these truths, we're missing a blessing. Now, I'm not trying to say that you should go away from here until you learn the blessedness of these things and then come back. I'm glad you're here.

Regardless of whether you're just coming because mom and dad is here or whether you're coming just simply because of conviction. I'm glad that you're here. But you are missing a blessing.

You're not gathered to Christ. Not gathered to the Christians, but to Christ. And I'll tell you, that kind of an assembly doesn't go to pieces.

On that wheel, it's a big rock. Because there is a link of life to the Lord Jesus. And I'll tell you, you don't want to do enough in the company of those who are mutually attracted to Him.

It's so blessedly simple. And men make it so complex. And that's the essence of the church.

Now, I'm not going to take up the historical character of the church tonight. We're going to do that if the Lord will. Well, I just want us to see these things in their simplicity.

My! Think of it. We'll all be able to go home tonight and say this very dogmatically. I was with the Lord tonight.

I was in the presence of the Lord tonight. Because we've gathered in His name and He's promised to be here in our midst. That's what makes it real.

That's what makes it genuine. That's what makes it worthwhile. That is the gathering center of the church.

He is the shepherd. And we are the flock. But remember, the church is a center without a circumference.

Let's don't put a fold around this block. We don't need to. Let's don't put a fence around it.

You know, heaven is not going to be filled with little groups of Christians here and there with a fence all around them. Fence here, fence there, fence there, fence there. It's not going to be that way.

It just isn't going to be that way. Let's be sure that there's no circumference to the church. Christ is the center.

Those that love Him are welcome. It's just as simple as that. Now, as we are drawn to the Lord Jesus, we are drawn to each other.

As the sheep crowd nearer the shepherd, they find themselves nearer to each other. And I would say, I would make bold to say this. If you find yourself wanting a little distance between you and that sheep over there, well, maybe you're not as close to the Lord as you should be.

Because as we crowd around Him, as we're attracted to Him, I think we'll be attracted to everything that we see in our brethren of Christ. And I think that we will find more in them of Christ than perhaps we noticed before. If we look, we generally see what we look for.

May God help us to look for Christ in our brethren. And then we will be attracted to them. Now, these things we have been studying have been found in the book of Ephesians.

And in the book of Ephesians, we see the position or the juxtaposition of the church to Christ, if I may use that big word. How we are related to the Lord Jesus in these various figures that the Spirit of God has given us to illustrate the church. Now, in the book of Corinthians, we see the practices of the church brought before us.

We've mentioned before, and I'll repeat it, although I'm fearful every time I repeat these things. I'm reminded of a story. I must tell you this.

I was working with a lad in a camp, in a Bible camp. And this boy had no spiritual background. He just came from a heathen atmosphere.

But he was bright. Brighter than I thought. So I was going over these things one day, and I wanted him to be sure that he knew what the fundamentals of the gospel were before he got saved.

He knew why he was getting saved. That he was a sinner. And I was going over these things painstakingly.

And just as carefully as I could. And I went over the ground very thoroughly. But I didn't have the privilege of pointing the lad to Christ that day.

And the next day I saw him. And I said, well, do you want to visit some more? Yeah, let's talk. He says, alright, let's go over here and talk.

So I started in where I left off the day before. And he says, okay, you wore that out yesterday. Well, I decided maybe this boy was a little farther along than I thought.

So we went on from there. Now I don't want to wear these points out with you. But the Ephesian epistle is a Catholic epistle.

And so is the Corinthian epistle. It's for all the church of God. Let's notice again 1 Corinthians chapter 1. 1 Corinthians chapter 1. Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God and sauced beneath our brother, unto the church which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints with all that in every place, all upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.

Now this is addressed to the church of Corinth. But it includes in its scope all that in every place, all upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours. Now I suppose that Ephesus was in the highest state of spirituality.

And Paul, in writing to the Ephesian Christians, gives them a very lofty view of all the purposes of God. But not so with Corinth. I suppose that Corinth was at the very bottom of the ladder, spiritually.

And our Lord Jesus, our Paul, the apostle Paul, in writing to them, doesn't give any of these, or I say doesn't give any, that's not the prime purpose of the Corinthian epistles to exalt the name of Christ. And we don't see that high truth that we do in the Ephesian epistle. As a matter of fact, the apostle Paul says, I was determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

As far as Paul was concerned, all he wanted to bring before these Corinthians was the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. And he doesn't follow Him up in the glory, as he does in the Ephesian epistle. But in the epistles to the Corinthians, those people that thought they knew so much, and yet their moral standards were so low.

They were quarreling, they were doing everything, absolutely everything, after the flesh. And they were reasoning after the flesh, they were carnal in their outlook, they were babes in Christ, he calls them babes. Everything was wrong at Corinth.

And say, this is interesting too, since I've made that point, he calls them saints. He says, Call saints with all that in every place is called upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours. Isn't it odd that he calls this church saints? Now, we are saints.

We should act like saints, not angels. Not angel. I'm no angel, but I'm a saint.

Just call me Saint Tim, if you want to, because I'm a saint. So are you. Set apart to God, that's what the word saint means.

It comes from the same word as sanctified, the same root. A saint is one who is set apart to God, and you and I are set apart to God. Now, in correcting all the evils at Corinth, the apostle Paul furnishes a scriptural precedent for all the evils of the church of all time.

Everything was wrong at Corinth, but Paul writes to correct these evils, and in correcting them, you and I have a scriptural example of how these evils should be corrected in the church today. So, whereas we have in the Ephesian epistles the position of the church, in the Corinthian epistles we have the practices of the church. Now, this is going to be interesting.

This is going to be practical. We started out this series of meetings with the thought that we are given to tradition, and we, in this assembly, follow traditions. But that is not a bad word.

Some of the traditions are based upon direct revelations of the word of God. Some are based upon principles that are outlined in the word of God. And then some are based simply on human convenience.

Now, I suppose that I should give an example of these different traditions. I think I will now. I'll just show what I mean.

Now, the fact that we come to remember the Lord Jesus every Lord's Day morning and gather together around Him, that is a tradition. It's a lovely tradition. And it's based upon the direct revelation of the word of

God.

Paul speaks of it in the 11th chapter of Corinthians to those saints. And he speaks of it as a revelation from the Lord given to the church. Thank God for that.

Now, that is a revelation directly given to the church of God. Now, in connection with our remembrance of the Lord, there are some practices or traditions that we follow that are based upon scriptural principles. We give thanks for the bread first.

And then we give thanks for the cup. Now, the Lord hasn't told us what order we're to thank Him for nor what order we're to take those emblems in. But, if we follow scriptural principles, we will notice that in the word of God the bread is always mentioned first.

Except in one instance and the supper itself is not in view in that instance. Now, this is following a scriptural principle. Now, there are traditions that we follow in connection with the remembrance of the Lord.

And they're simply for our convenience. I'm going to give you an example of one. We don't play the instrument to remember the Lord by.

Why not? Well, I was in a meeting where it might have helped. But, I'll tell you, I would just as soon leave it out. I'll tell you why.

I feel sorry for anybody that has to sit on the piano bench for an hour. I don't think that that's fair to that person. Because, he sits there and he makes my back tired to think about it.

Sit there on that bench for an hour playing a hymn when it's given out. I don't think it's advisable. And then I certainly wouldn't want them getting up and setting down each time the hymn was given out.

I think that in deference to that pianist that they should be permitted to sit in a comfortable chair and relax and remember the Lord just like we do. But now, you can't find scripture that says a thing about it. Not a thing about it.

That's a tradition which we simply follow of our own convenience. There are other traditional features about the remembrance of the Lord which are simply human convenience. I like to see it broken up once in a while.

I heard of a sister who went home one morning and she said to her husband, Well, we had a sandwich meeting this morning. And her husband said, What? What do you mean by that? We had a sandwich meeting. She says a prayer and a hymn and a prayer and a hymn and a prayer and a hymn.

Now, that's a sandwich meeting. That's probably a double or triple decker, but it's a sandwich meeting. Now, you know, I like to see the versatile spirit of God in our morning meeting.

I don't know how I got started on this. Well, I do too. I'm illustrating the differences in tradition that are based upon the Word of God and simply for human convenience.

Now, I know a meeting where the same brother opens the meeting every Lord's Day morning and the same brother closes. He's there. You know, I said to myself one morning, I'm going to break this up.

So I was getting ready to open up with prayer. And before I could open up with prayer, that brother was on his feet. And you know, I enjoyed his prayer so much, I said, thank you, Lord, for not letting me get on my feet.

He was prepared! And I wasn't. And if I had got up on my feet that morning, I would have got up with a wrong motive in mind. But when the Spirit of God and all His versatility and all His varied leading is in a meeting, there will be a blessed, blessed liberty.

And it won't be a sandwich meeting. Maybe you'll have bread and they'll get together and they'll start praying and one brother will pray and the other brother will pray and lots of good thoughts. Well, so much for that.

Now, in these traditions that we carry on, those that are not necessarily sacred, I don't see any particular need of changing them just for the sake of changing them. Now, if there's a good reason, all right. If there's a good reason that appeals to all or perhaps most of the people there, fine.

But if it upsets some people, don't change. Because we want them there to remember the Lord without being upset. Well, so much for that.

Now, I think the first thing that is taken up in the Corinthian epistles is the divisions among the people of God. Shall we read in this first chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians? Verse 3, Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God always on your behalf for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ, that in everything ye are enriched by him in all utterance and in all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you so that ye come behind in no gifts waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ who shall also confirm you unto the end that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God is faithful by whom ye were called under the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, that there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Cloy, that there are contentions among you.

Now this I say that every one of you saith, I am of Paul, thy of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you but Crispus and Gaius, lest any should say that I have baptized in my own name. And I baptized also the household of Stephano.

Beside, I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the troth of Christ should be made of none effect. Now there are two ordinances given us in the epistle to the first Corinthians.

The first one is baptism, and the other ordinance, of course, is the remembrance of the Lord. Now please notice in verse 14 that the apostle Paul does not say, I thank God that none of you were baptized, but Crispus and Gaius. No, he doesn't say that.

He says, I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius. He isn't thanking God that they weren't baptized. Thank God they were baptized.

Now there is a second Christendom today that is trying to take baptism away from you and me, and I believe that they're absolutely wrong in doing it with their ultra-dispensationalism, and they'd take the Lord's Supper away from us, too, if they could. They're going to have a time getting that away from me in baptism as well. Now notice this.

The primary purpose of the apostle Paul was not to baptize, but he does not say that he thanks God that they were not baptized. He doesn't say that at all. What he is thankful of is that he did not baptize any more than those who he named here, so that they wouldn't say, well, Paul baptized me.

He baptized me, and that's Paul in a place of special reverence above any others that were connected with the Corinthian church. That's why Paul was thankful that he had baptized no more of these people than those which he had baptized. Now, the apostle Paul is very, very diplomatic here.

Now, actually, these leaders, the leaders whom he, well, he mentions himself, an Apollos. Now, this I see that every one of you says, I am a Paul, and I am Apollos, and I am Cephas, and I am Christ. They were even making Christ a point of division, which is terrible.

Now, these weren't the real leaders that were in Paul. It's been pointed out a good many times before that Paul in his diplomacy uses himself, an Apollos and Cephas, as a kind of an example, but the real leaders were themselves Corinthians. Notice, please, in the fourth chapter of 1 Corinthians, he says in verse 6, And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes, that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another.

Now, here is the real crux of the matter, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another. Now, I don't believe that Paul and Apollos and Cephas were the real points of division here. I don't believe that they were the leaders of this division at all.

He just uses, for the sake of diplomacy, he uses his name, Apollos' name, and Cephas' name as an example. He does that in diplomacy, not to name the real leaders. He says, I have in a figure transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes.

He didn't want to embarrass them. But there were those in Corinth that were following human leaders. Now, you and I are prone to hero worship, but that's a juvenile part of the state.

Now, in Christendom today, the divisions that have come in among the people of God have been because they have followed human leaders. And those men were real men of God, entitled to the respect of the people of God, but certainly not to the point of dividing the church of God. And that is still going on in the world today.

Men follow others. We are prone to hero worship, but this is childlike in character. The Apostle says, in the third chapter, notice with me please, the third chapter of 1 Corinthians, in the matter of divisions among the people of God.

He says, And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk and not with meat, for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal, for whereas there is among you envy and strife and divisions, are ye not carnal and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos, are ye not carnal? God gave us the spiritual maturity not to follow human leaders, not to be worshipers of men.

God doesn't want it. It displaces Him, and He doesn't want it. And it's juvenile in character.

Now, I know that when I was first saved, I saw men as trees walking. Oh, I'm telling you, when I first knew the Lord Jesus Christ, some men loomed very, very large in my vision. But you know, after we grow older and after we get attached to the Lord Jesus Christ, men don't seem so large.

And then, of course, after we live around them for about 40 years, we do begin to learn a few of their faults. But as far as I was concerned when God first saved me, none of the Christians had faults. They were the elite.

They were just like angels. But, of course, we know different from experience. Now, I believe in respecting Christian people, but not to the extent of being juvenile about it.

I knew of a young man when he was first saved. I'm not going to tell you the young man's name, but I'm going to tell you who he imitated. He was a worshiper of Alp Gibbs.

Well, Alp Gibbs really cut quite a swath. And Alp Gibbs was really quite a man of God. But all I had to do when that young man preached was just close my eyes and I could hear Alp Gibbs.

I could hear him just as plain as Alp Gibbs, as the fact that Alp Gibbs was on the platform. Well, Alp Gibbs is an exemplary man. But God wouldn't have your mind and your eye on Alp Gibbs.

He would have your mind and your eye upon Christ. And if you have your eyes upon men, sooner or later you're going to be disappointed. It's juvenile to follow the leading of men.

It's just like one boy saying to another boy, My dad can whip your dad. Well, let's don't be this. He called them this.

They were rallying around their leaders. And you never saw a division among the people of God. But what there were leaders involved.

May God keep our eyes off the men and keep them on the Lord. That's where we may safely repose our eyes. Where our eyes may safely repose.

Now, this still goes on in Christendom. I remember as a boy that I attended the church of my grandmother. It was a good old Scotch church and I'm not going to name it.

You probably know what it is now. But there was a preacher there in that church and he was a gentleman. He was refined, he looked dignified, and he dressed well, and he had a wonderful voice and a wonderful delivery.

And I just laughed as a child in trance. Well, you know, finally he was transferred away from that church and I, Popham, had dropped out of everything. As far as I was concerned, the world had come to an end.

Now, you know, that was childish and you have to smile when you say that. As a matter of fact, he came back once a visit later. I cried all through the sermon because I thought, well, he's not saying.

This isn't going to last. He's not saying. But I had my eyes on a man.

God wouldn't have our eyes upon man. He would have our eyes upon Christ. But you know that that is taking place in Christendom today.

And unfortunately, it's not entirely among children. Unfortunately, in many instances, it's the sisters who think that that man's immortal. Now, I say this, and I say it with all reverence and with all charity.

I verily believe that there are some pastors in this world that are receiving some worship that should go to the Lord Jesus Christ. And I don't think God would have it. And I don't think He would have it any place along the line, between any extremes that we could construct.

God wants our eyes upon the Lord Jesus and not upon men. When we do, there will be division. Now, there are several phases of this truth to be considered.

I don't know where to start. Our time is about up. I think probably it might be well to bring out the fact that in the third chapter of 1 Corinthians, that he brings out the judgment seat of Christ as... I want you to see this in its connection.

He says in the fifth verse of the third chapter, who then is Paul and who is Pauleth but ministers by whom he believeth. Even as the Lord gave to every man, I have planted that Paul hath watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither is he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase.

Now, he that planteth and he that watereth are one, and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor. And then he takes up the truth of the judgment seat of Christ. Why? Why is the judgment seat of Christ introduced into the third chapter of 1 Corinthians? I'll tell you why.

These Corinthians wanted to be sure that their leaders got proper recognition. The apostle Paul says they'll get proper recognition. They'll get it at the judgment seat of Christ.

Not now, but at the judgment seat of Christ. Christ is going to be the judge of recognition. And the recognition is based not upon gift, but upon labor.

Now, you attach significance to gifts. God doesn't. The rewards at the judgment seat of Christ are not based upon gifts.

They're based upon labor. They're based upon work. Our God is not so unjust that he gifts one man above another and then rewards that man because he's gifted him.

God doesn't act that way. And the rewards at the judgment seat of Christ are not based upon gifts. They're based upon labor, upon work, upon what we have been willing to do for the Lord.

Now, that puts us all on the same basis. Absolutely. We judge a man so often by the gift angle.

And I don't believe that God would have us do that. I think he'd have us remember from the seventh verse of the fourth chapter of 1 Corinthians, and with this we'll close, he would have us remember when he says in verse 6, we've read it, and these things brethren I have in a figure transferred to myself and will pause for your sakes, that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another, for who maketh he to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory if thou hadst not received it? We've got nothing to boast about. Now, we can thank God for the gifts of the church.

I thank God for men whose ministries shaped my Christian character in my formative years, and still shaping it incidentally. Thank God for gifts like that. But get beyond the gifts.

The gifts of the giver. The Lord himself, not to the gifts, for none of us have anything that we didn't receive. Our God himself is the giver.

Now, we're going to have to quit tonight. There is another consideration in connection with this truth of human leadership and hero worship and all the rest that goes with it, eventually ending more or less in division, but we'll have to consider them at a later time. Brother Russ Farwell, would you please close, sir, with a word of prayer?

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