

The Discipline of Jesus Christ in the Local Church

by Rolfe Barnard

Rolfe Barnard emphasizes the need for repentance and the re-establishment of Jesus Christ's authority in the local church to overcome division and chaos.

Duration: 1:00:16

Scripture: Isaiah 4:2, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 16:18, Matthew 18:20, Matthew 28:19-20, Acts 2:36, Acts 2:47

Topics: "Church Discipline", "Repentance Revival"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the importance of repentance and baptism in the order of the church. He emphasizes that this divine order is not just for the Jews, but for all believers. The preacher expresses his dissatisfaction with the current state of the church and believes that God desires to visit and revive His people. He references the book of Isaiah to introduce his thoughts on this topic. The sermon also touches on the need for steadfastness and discipline in the church, and challenges the notion of dividing the world into heathen and Christian lands.

Transcript

I ask you to hear me as I make a statement that I've been making, but I won't make it again so that you can... I hope it'll be of help to you in hearing me. If I am a God-called evangelist, then I am one of the group of five men whom the Risen Lord gives to the Church. The five or four, I've never known, in Ephesians 4, he gave some, that's the Risen Lord, he gave some apostles, that's not the twelve, and these men are the gifts to the Church, gifts of the Ascended Lord.

He led captivity and gave gifts. Barnabas was one of them, Paul was one, Timothy was one, Titus was one, so forth, Apollos, so forth. He gave some apostles and he gave some prophets.

Now these are gifted men. When I say gifted men, that doesn't mean that they are gifted, but that he has gifted them. The book of Proverbs says, a man's gift shall make room for him.

And if you're a Christian, you have a gift so that you can prosecute the ministry that the Lord has called you into. There's no way on earth you can be a Christian unless you've been given a ministry and a gift so that you can do the job that the Commander-in-Chief has appointed you to do. So these are gifts of the Risen Lord.

He gave some apostles and he gave some prophets. These are not the Old Testament prophets, they are men that we have today, but we've kept our prophets in exile all the days of our lives. And if we haven't exiled them, we've stoned them, we've built monuments to them after we've killed them.

He gave some apostles and he gave some prophets and some evangelists. The Church has been getting along now for sixty-odd years without any evangelists. And some pastors and our teachers.

I do not know whether five men there or four. I'm inclined to think there are five, but many good men say there are just four. The play is on whether the pastor is the pastor and teacher or whether the pastor is one man and the teacher is another.

But the work of these men, like that, they just have one job to do. All five of them have the same job. And that is to perfect or mature the saints for the work of the ministry.

The apostle, the prophet, the evangelist, the pastor, and teacher, or the pastor or a teacher. These are offices. There's a difference between the office of a pastor, the office of an apostle, and the ministry of God's people.

I labor that a little bit. I say that every child of God is called to be a preacher. That's different from being an evangelist, an apostle, a prophet, a pastor, a teacher.

That's a proclaimer of the gospel. That's a preacher. They have one job, and that's to mature you.

Start out, you're genuinely committed to Christ, you're still a little baby, but you'll not stay that way. Amen? And their job is to make mature saints of God, perfect them, mature them, so they can perform the ministry that God has given to them. And in this way, if you'll continue to read in the fourth chapter of Ephesians later, if you're interested, we're going to have a full-grown man.

We're going to have a church come to the fullness of the stature of Jesus Christ. A church through which Jesus Christ can manifest himself in fullness. And that is to take place right here on this earth.

And that must be the goal to which every public preacher, whether he be apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, teacher, will work together until the time when once again Jesus Christ will come back and attend our services. It's been so long since he's graced our services with his presence. We tear into pieces at Beshoga.

We've been having church all of these decades of time in the absence of the living Lord and the Lord of life. Now I said that to say this. I just have one message, and that's repent.

I stick to it. I have said to you that we desperately need that God would be merciful to our assemblies and bring, make manifest the desperate division in all of our congregations over the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. That was the Sunday morning message.

Sunday night, I said that we desperately need it to become manifest. It's already here. This church split wide open over who Jesus is.

It's just that the lion and the lamb have made peace where there is no peace. And in order to preserve harmony, we have exiled the Holy Spirit, and we have harmony in our churches at the cost of the absence of the living Lord and the demonstration and power of the Holy Ghost. God knows I'm telling the truth folks.

And then I said that we are desperately divided and we're hauled. And the churches now are fast becoming the greatest enemies of the souls of men on top side of God's earth. Christ is being wounded in the house of his so-called friends, and he's clearly not welcome in the assembly of the people because we are desperately divided over the meaning of what it is to be saved.

And most folks, it's a joke instead of a commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ and his program of redemption. And then I said since I've been here that we are desperately divided and thus we're hauled deep and we're sick as congregations and we're well now helpless. Most of us can't even win our own families to Christ because long since we've come to where we down deep in our hearts do not believe that Christ is an utter necessity.

To us he's a convenience but not a dire necessity. And then last night the message on Christ's demand and certainly that demand is ignored or effaced. It is evaded and rebelled against an all-out utter capitulation to his person and commitment to his program.

Now tonight, tomorrow night I'm going to bring half of a message tonight. It's not exactly fair to some of you who come from everywhere but I can't bring it all tonight. And I want to bring you an optimistic note.

Mine's not a very popular ministry. I'm saying you're all wrong. Repent, see that's not very popular.

And then now Andrew Carnegie says it's a good way to win friends and influence people but that's the task God's given me to do. And I do not consider myself a visitor. I'm a gift if I am an evangelist to the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ and I consider this to be a local expression of the Church of Christ.

I think you're like our Baptist churches to whom I've ministered most of my life. You're terribly out of order. I don't think you need to stay that way.

And I want to address myself tonight to an optimistic note since I've been telling you everything's wrong with you. I want to suggest a remedy because I believe there is a remedy. And I want you to hear me tonight, not agree with me, but listen to me.

Without any pious religiosity I claim that I could not have lasted 36 years as an evangelist crossing the grain of what's called evangelism. I am known in the South by what passes as evangelists today as the greatest enemy of evangelism in America. That's how they're branded.

I am an enemy of what we've called evangelism and I have lifted up my voice all the days of my ministry against it. And yet, subject to pastors for I can't call Brother Duvall and say, I'll come down and preach to you next Sunday. I have to wait for him to call me.

I'm content to do it. But I've never gone anywhere yet to preach except by invitation. And I have to wait, you see, until God or the devil moves on some preacher and says, come over and preach to us.

Now, it wasn't that way in the New Testament, but it is now. I'm saying it's utterly unscriptural that I'd have to wait for an invitation to come and minister here, but it's what we're used to. We've got to do the best we can with what we have until it gets better.

I said that, say this, I want you to listen to me tonight because I think the 36 years entitles me to say it's just possible I may be a God-called evangelist. If so, you need to listen to me. Is that right? And I'm not a visitor.

I'm not an intruder. I'm not meddling. I have a part with the other four in the ministry to God's people.

Isn't that right? So I want you to do your death-level best to hear me, whether you agree with me or not. I believe that the time of glory for the Church of God is future. Our old gray-beard Baptist preachers two generations ago, hardly ever preached a sermon, then they quoted that text from the New Testament.

To Him, that's God, be glory by Christ Jesus in the Church, world without end. Amen! To Him, that's God, be glory by Jesus Christ. In the Church, world without end.

I don't believe that fits us to be there well. And I'm not satisfied with things as they are. And I don't believe they have to stay as they are.

I believe that God's people could begin to mind God and God would quit hiding His face and would come and visit us again. I believe that with all of my heart. And I want to talk tonight and tomorrow night of what light I think I have and share it with you as to how that's going to come to pass.

And I want to begin reading in the book of Isaiah, chapter 4. I'd appreciate it if you'd turn with me now and we'll not stay in Isaiah but this will introduce my thinking to you tonight. I'm going to speak to you tonight on what it means to be under the discipline, the authority of Jesus Christ in the Church. And tomorrow night I'm going to speak to you on the subject what happened on the day of Pentecost can happen in every church and must in your day and mine.

We must have Pentecost again and again and again and again and again. We ought never to meet together if the same thing that happened on Pentecost doesn't take place in our assembly. That's right.

In the book of Isaiah, chapter 4, I read two or three verses, verse 1. And in that day Now here's my interpretation where it's riding off. In that day, that's the day of Antichrist. When that enemy of the gospel that creation of Satan that one who is against Christ that one of whom my Lord spoke when he was here in the flesh I come in my Father's name and you receive me not if another shall come in his own name him you shall receive.

That one for whose appearance I believe nearly every preacher and every church is contributing to the condition that will obtain when Antichrist makes his appearance this world of church members will embrace him and worship his saint. I believe that you and I will see the day when there'll just be two kinds of people in this earth worshipers of the true God and worshipers of Satan. That's what Scripture's coming sometime.

And I believe what we've called evangelism. I believe what we've called the pattern and the order and the rebellion that constitutes the way we conduct ourselves in our churches. Not in the building but as God's professing people.

I believe it's all contributing not to the reception of Christ when he comes back but to the reception of Antichrist. I don't know where it's going now but I believe it with all my heart. I believe these are the days of confusion and battle when the world is made drop with the fornication of hell.

I believe these are serious hours. In that day seven women I believe the seven women stand for what we call Christendom, Church Anity, Presbyterianism, Baptist, Methodist, Congregational, Catholic, just name it. I believe that Almighty God has spewed out Presbyterianism, Baptist, Methodist, the whole outfit.

I believe it. I believe the seven women, seven is the number of fullness. When what passes for Christianity comes to the place the cup is full.

And religion has done its duty. And you know what's going to do it? It's going to give birth to Antichrist. He's going to be the greatest religious leader this world ever saw.

Isn't that right? And this religious world is going to embrace him, have his mark put on their foreheads and bow down and worship. Say Amen. God knows that's awful but it's so.

In that day, seven women shall take hold of one man as Antichrist. And they say, now we're going to keep on being Presbyterians and Baptists and Catholics and Congregationalists. We're going to keep our little doctrines and have our own little programs.

We'll eat our own bread and wear our own apparel. There's just one thing we ask of you. Let us be called by thy name to take away our reproach.

You know, the leaders of the World Council of Churches are serious men. They've got sense enough to know that if this generation of church energy don't hang together, we're going to hang separately. They're saying we must get together.

My conviction is that they're going to succeed. And that that will form the platform upon which Antichrist will be embraced. I don't know whether that's sure or not.

I don't think you're going to, Carl McIntyre and the rest of them, they're fighting them. I don't think they're going to make a dent in them. I think they're going to get bigger all the time.

But that ain't all. The chapter, verse two, says there's going to be another movement. Who knows what this ecumenical movement is? It's growing beliefs and bounds.

And it meets a tremendous scandal, a scandal of divided so-called Christendom. Two, three different kinds of Presbyterian congregations, I think, right here in this town. Isn't that right? Baptists, they've got, I don't know how many, Methodists, just name it.

They're societal. They've got a church on every corner and one in between. They've got splits from splits from splits from splits.

That's awful. That's a scandal. And their ecumenical leaders know it.

And they also know that what we call nations, you folks give money and send somebody to town. There are men over there preaching the gospel. There are men over there making little miniature churches like we've got here.

Too much of it. And the folks over in their countries are saying, you ain't going to go to hell. And the sooner they come home, the better it will be for the salvation of souls.

The biggest scandalous site of hell is what's called our foreign missionary program. That's an awful hard thing, but God knows it's so. You folks can put your money into it.

You ain't going to get nothing of mine, brother. This world is in bad enough shape without sending some little Presbyterians and Baptists and stuff over here to make them just like us. They're bad enough shape,

but God knows I don't want to be like us.

But during that time, running right along by it, there's another movement, and it's described in verse 2. And this is my theology, whether it's right or not. In that same day, while religions flourished world around, and we've established Presbyterianism and Baptists and Methodists and the whole shoot mass in the isles of the sea and the continents of the earth. In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and full of glory.

That's the movement I'm interested in. And the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are esteemed of Israel. I believe that's the movement of the Spirit of God in your day and mine.

I don't believe he's going to pay attention to Presbyterianism or Baptists or Methodists or nothing of that. It's been what I don't believe. I see it breaking out all over the world.

That's the movement I need. And I won't be in on that. I know about you, but I'm not going to waste one minute fighting that great big ecumenical.

Every time I throw a stone at it, it gets twice as big. Somebody else, maybe God wants them to do that. I don't know.

But for me, I'm just interested in this little movement. Because the Lord has always been the God of the rare. And I'm interested, and I see it springing up everywhere.

This is the most optimistic hour I ever saw in my 64 years. It's not all black now. Thank God in that day when all hell's popping, when Antichrist is raised again, when the harlot and her daughters are riding, giving that fellow a ride on the back of the nations.

God's going to be working too. The branch of the Lord shall be glorious and beautiful. And I think that's what I just talked to you about in Ephesians 4. I believe the church of Jesus Christ is going to be made manifest here on this earth.

I ain't talking about the Presbyterians or the Baptists, because this ain't a church. I hope there's a church within it. Baptists ain't a Baptist church on earth.

It's a church. It's a congregation. This is a Presbyterian congregation.

Maybe the Lord's got a church. If he's got two people in here that know him, then he's got a church in the congregation. Is that right? And I'm interested in that church within our congregation.

Don't pay attention to your denomination. I guess I've been troubled with my Baptist. I got a cancellation the day before I got up here because Baptists found out I preached for folks like you.

That's the truth. That's the truth. We've got Baptists.

I did what they said I couldn't preach to them but I was a Baptist and Bible Presbyterian the same way down our way. Boy, they won't hardly speak to you unless you're a Bible Presbyterian. That's right.

Well, you won't be that way. I can't see that. I'm interested in this little group here and that little group over there and getting together, brother.

Amen? That community is trying to get everybody together and they're going to do it. And I want to be in that little gang of people that are the called-out saints of God. And we're scattered and outnumbered and defeated.

Bless God, I believe God is going to make His people manifest. And the branch of Jehovah is going to be beautiful and glorious right in the time when hell is popping here on this earth. Now, I don't know whether it interferes with your doctrine or if it does.

You come up at the service and apologize and then I'll forgive you. Is that all right? Now, that's just the introduction. Let's turn to the Book of Acts, will you? I want to tell you what discipline I'll just show you.

It's in the Bible. It's not mine. But I believe that the Lord is going to make His true church That's silly.

His true church. Well, His church is the one that is. But I'm going to believe He's going to manifest it so you can tell it.

See what I mean? So the world Those are the people of God. That's what my Lord prayed for. I pray that they may be one so that the world may know what the Thou hast sent me.

That's what I'm asking. I believe the Lord's going to do it. And I believe He's going to use me just a little bit to make it possible.

I invite you to get in on that too. Wonderful if the Lord used you to do something, wouldn't it? But that's what He does, isn't it? I believe it's going to come to pass by the Lord Jesus Christ reasserting and enforcing His headship, His discipline, His authority in the local congregation. I believe the Lord's going to split our congregation wide open.

And there's one way to split a crowd quicker than any other way. Exercise authority. You'll either bow to it or you'll rebel, won't you? Huh? A child will either submit to the authority of his father and mother or he'll rebel.

Is that right? A citizen will either submit to the authority of the government or he'll rebel. Is that right? A human being will submit to the authority of Jesus Christ or he won't! In this life, is that right? And the best index to the character of a nation, a home, a congregation or a nation is their reaction to properly constituted authority. Isn't that right? And I wish that I could say now that it's just our nation socially that's being torn to pieces because men and women, boys and girls are rebelling against everything that smells like authority.

But that's what's tearing our churches up too. That's what's tearing our homes up too. That's why I wonder it'd be interesting if I was smart and I could unlock what's going on.

How many broken-hearted parents there are in this house tonight because your children utterly rebel against the authority God has demanded that you exercise over them. All hell's taking place in our homes. Broken-hearted mothers and fathers.

All the rules seem to have gone out the window. All the platitudes are gone. And God knows what a day will bring forth in this nation.

They're liable to tear the whole thing up tomorrow night. You never know. And our churches are hotbeds of lawlessness.

People who are in terrible rebellion against that doctrine that every denomination and every congregation swears on a stack of Bibles they desperately and really believe that the great head of the church is the Lord Jesus Christ. That it belongs to him that he purchased it with his own blood. And that he rules it.

And that to be a member of the body of Christ is to be under the rule and authority of the great head of the church. And I verily believe that the Lord is going to come to the rescue of the church. I believe he's going to reassert and exercise his authority.

And he's going to do that by raising up pastors and people who will no longer evade the fact that he delegates some of his authority to his church and demands that the church exercise the authority he's delegated to it. Not evade it. See what I mean? And that brings us to discipline.

Authority. And here we have it in Acts chapter 2. I'm going to give you a brief outline of it tonight and tomorrow night. We're going to pursue it a little further.

I think this is fundamental. I think this is hopeful. Acts chapter 2. I think you'd scarce find a Bible teacher that wouldn't agree to this.

Gives us the divine order of the church of Jesus Christ. The church, of course, was not organized as started on the day of Pentecost. It was in existence.

It's the creation of the Lord in the days when he was here in the flesh. I believe the church became a church in the 20th chapter of John when the risen Lord breathed life, breathed on them and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. That's what I believe.

I don't know. I believe it was formed as a church for witness empowered on the day of Pentecost. And so in the book of Acts, the church is a group of people who've been filled with the Spirit as a group.

For the church that is not as a congregation full of the Spirit is not a church. God knows the Lord never authorized any group call himself a church if they haven't been made full of the Holy Ghost. This world's in bad enough shape without us operating on them in our own strength.

And of course, filled with the Holy Ghost, they were full of Christ and they just filled the city of Jerusalem with the wonderful works of God. That's the gospel, isn't it? And the folks said, What in God's name is the matter of these folks? They must be drunk. And Peter said, No, we're not drunk.

We haven't had time to get drunk. But this is that which Joel said. And they got a little taste of it.

And then Peter got up and this is the first time a church ever preached the gospel. I remind you that the man who stands behind this pulpit isn't the fellow who's called to preach the gospel. It's this church that has given the commission to preach the gospel.

If you're paying a man to preach the gospel, far are you a million miles wrong. That's your job as a church. Amen? That's the truth.

You don't believe that, but that's so. We got that from the Puritans, but they're dead wrong. The only man in this congregation not supposed to preach is your pastor.

He's supposed to make preachers out of you. That's right, folks. That's his job.

The folks to be preached to are out yonder. They're not here. The day when people crowded our church buildings to hear the gospel is now.

Maybe we'll face that someday and we'll start doing what God's been trying to tell us to do all the time. The place to preach the gospel. Every time you need a fellow, get him to stand still long enough to listen to you.

Amen? Where he is. That's where the gospel goes. And after the first gospel sermon was preached, Peter stood up and who stood up? The 11 stood with him.

It wasn't one man message, see? And he preached. Who'd he talk about? He talked about that fellow they'd just crucified, didn't he? And after he'd wound up his sermon with verse 36, he told them who that Jesus that had been recently crucified by them right there in that city. What this was all about, he brought his message to a conclusion in these words.

Verse 36, Therefore let all the house of Israel know as a matter of fact that that same Jesus whom ye crucified, God's made Him both Lord and Messiah. Then, I want to give you an outline so I'll have time to do tonight. Then, Peter said unto them.

Unto who? Well, verse 37, Now when they heard this, Heard what? That the man approved of God, Jesus Christ, the man sent from God, Jesus Christ, the man they crucified, Jesus Christ, God had raised Him, Jesus Christ, and made Him Lord and Messiah. When they heard that, they were stabbed in their hearts. And they said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Note the answer.

This may invade you in theology, but note the answer. Here's the first thing about the order of the church. Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized.

Now I was taught that this was a transition period, and that's just for the Jews. Don't you believe a word of it. This is the divine order.

And this is what God's going to bring His churches back to. Listen to me now. If this is strange to you, I don't know.

But don't spit it out until you chew it just a little harder. This is serious. Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins.

And what will happen? You shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. How is it that people still trying to get the gift of the Holy Ghost have to claim their saves? That's their price. If you'd repented and been properly baptized, that would have been settled, Johnny, on the spot.

In the New Testament, when people got filled with the Holy Spirit, when? When they came up out of the waters of baptism, you sprinkled, you spread the tear, just so it meant the same thing. It's happening on the mission fields now, where the real gospel is being preached. And how long is this going to last? How long is this to be the way to become a member of a group that's already got the gift of the Spirit and doing business for the Lord? Well, it's going to last this far, for the promise is unto you, and then it's to your children, and then it's to all that are far off, and then it's even as many as the Lord our God shall what? Call.

If you still call in sinners, the promise is good for the day. Repentance. Repentance looks to what God's done about Jesus Christ.

What men do, you had a part in it, you crucified the Son of God. Amen? What God do, he raised him, made him Lord and Messiah. What repentance? Agreeing with God's act.

I bow to it. What's baptism? It's submission to the Lord as his authority is exercised on the church. That's exactly what baptism is.

You Presbyterians better get baptized. Most of us Baptists never have. To us it's just a ritual.

And our Baptist churches are full of people in rebellion against the discipline of Jesus Christ as it's exercised in the local church. So they've never been baptized. How do you know that baptism means to come under the rule and the authority of Jesus Christ? Well, three reasons.

Baptism is the only way you can make a public profession of faith in Christ. You walk in the aisle and say, Jesus saved me. That don't count.

I'm going, let's make God willing, back to the Virgin Islands where I was several years ago. They rented the ballpark and all the Baptist churches on the islands are going to get together and we're going to try to get somebody to God. And I was there years ago and they took me out to the Caribbean Sea where anybody who asks for baptism on that island knows that he can't get married or buried if he's ever baptized.

And when a Christian who's been baptized dies, they take him and throw him in the waters of the Caribbean and the sharks and the alligators eat him. That's the God's truth. They don't count your profession over there.

It's just like we all hear about Christian over there living like the devil. But when you come to the place that you're willing and anxious for it to be publicly known that you've been captured and conquered and brought in under the sweet rule, I'll be rejected, Lord of glory, Jesus Christ. It's a white horse, a different color.

It's got to come back now. I'm going back over there and on the kind of invitation I won't ask anybody, they'll walk by and say, Jesus saved them. I'll say, ask these churches to baptize you.

The world can't see your faith, but it can see your baptism. And baptism means that I'm another captive of King Jesus and I'm coming willingly under his rule in the church. I say, you Presbyterians, you tickle death by Jesus being at the right hand of God and he's there.

But in the spirit, he's the head of the church. And it's my nice to say, oh boy, I'm glad he's Lord. It's a white horse, a different colored mind in the local church.

That's what it means to be baptized. Now, you know that's what it means. That's something you've sunk up, oh no.

Of course, this goes on as long as God's still calling sinners in the second place. First place, it's the only way you can publicly profess faith. Second place, it's to continue to live this good hour.

And the third place, look what happened to the ones that were baptized. They joined. They were joined to something.

And they were prepared to fit right in. Skipping a few verses, well, and with many other words, did he testify and exhort, save yourselves from this untoward generation. How? He's explaining what he meant by repentance and baptism.

Then they that gladly received his word were baptized, and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And what did they do? Well, I'll tell you what they do down at the church in Winston-Salem, where I remember they get converted Sunday morning, devote them in as candidates for baptism, and they ain't even back preaching that night. I know a Baptist church in the South that baptizes over a thousand people every year, and they don't have a bit more in the congregation of any service than they had ten years ago.

Why, bless God, listen to me. These folks repented and got baptized, got baptized into something. And when they got in it, the scriptures say they did what? They continued steadfastly in four things.

These four things describe the authority and the discipline of Christ's church. I wish I hadn't taken all my time, but I'm going to continue tomorrow night if you're interested. This is vital to me.

All over the world now, anybody's got sense enough coming out of the rain to recognize there's no such thing as heathen lands and Christian lands, and no more heathen land in the world than this one. There isn't a spot of ground on this earth that isn't pagan to the core now. There isn't a congregation on earth that isn't in a missionary situation.

You're next door neighbors. You can't even reach them with the gospel, can you? Wait a minute. We baptize people in our churches, us Baptists do.

I don't know enough about you to talk about you. But from what I've seen in a week as your guest, I kind of think you're about as guilty as we are. You baptize folks into the fellowship of your church just at having the slightest idea of what it means to be a member of the church.

And whatever else can be said, these Jews, they could baptize them the same day because they are raised on the meaning of repentance and baptism. That's right, huh? They knew what it meant. And all over the country now, churches are having to come to what our missionaries, as any count, did long years ago in what we call the mission fields.

You walk down the aisle and say, I'm going to be baptized. I'm going to be a member of this church. It's okay.

We'll teach you for about a year. That blessed young Stephen Oldford in Calvary Church in New York City takes eight months now. One of you pressed in, go over there and join up.

He'll teach you if you'll come to their school for eight months. And then after eight months, if you kind of act like you know what it's all about, they'll make you a member. If you don't, they won't.

For the worst thing that can happen to any person is to have him think that he's a member of the church that Jesus bought with his own blood when he don't know what it's all about. Because he's as sure for hell and hell as he can be. There's one thing that's certain.

This generation of church members are going to go to hell unless they're already saved. Because there ain't no voice except the voice of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit that can do anything for you and you won't listen to him. Hear me? It's time we start and start it all over again and see to it that we're true to the souls of men.

That they understand what repentance and baptism means. It means bowing to the rule of Christ and coming under that rule in a local church. And a fellow who's bowed and is willing to be taught so that the Lordship of Christ will mean more to him tomorrow than it does today and more to him the next day than it does that day.

Until he grows more and more into the likeness of Christ. That's what salvation's all about. That's got to be done again.

See what I'm talking about? And this is happening all over the country. These folks continued steadfastly. I'll quit.

They continued steadfastly in the activity of Christ's church. The activity of Christ's church is four things. The learning, the proclamation of what? The Apostles' Doctrine.

Second, in fellowship, that koinonia, partnership. The priesthood of believers. Third, worship, the breaking of bread.

Worship in the New Testament church always is around the Lord's table. You can call this eleven o'clock hour Sunday morning worship service, but it ain't so. You worship around the Lord's table.

Boy, we might have sinned because we don't worship around this table. And prayer. Prayer.

That's all there is to a church. I'm going to ask you to stay with me another minute or two. How's the Lord going to bring blessing? And he's going to fix it so that you can't be a member of his church if they ever have a meeting and you ain't there.

Isn't it something to claim to be a member of the Bible Christian church, and there's been one service this week, that any member of this church could have been present, and he wasn't. See, that member is in rebellion against the discipline of this church. Isn't that right? I want to read you what one of the early church fathers said, before I let you go, about church attendance.

In an early church document, the old father said, When thou teachest, command and remind the people that they be constant in the assembly of the church, so that ye be not hindered and made smaller by one little member of the body of Christ. Do not deprive our Savior of his members. Do not mangle and scatter his body.

Now, staying away when the church meets sounds mighty innocent. You got a headache? Well, if you have, come to the Lord's house. The headache will go away.

Well, I've got to stay home with the kids. Well, you and the kids just have to go on to hell, I reckon. We're talking about discipline now.

Well, now, you Presbyterians wouldn't be a member of the church where you had to be present when the church met, would you? So you'll quit and just leave God's people there. Then we'll start getting somewhere. So that's what it means to be under the discipline of the Lord.

Now, I'm not saying that this church has perfect discipline. But I'm saying this congregation has got to start with what you've got. And if you wouldn't be under the authority of Christ as far as you've got light, He ain't going to give you no more light.

But I'm saying that when you absent yourself from any meeting when the people of this congregation say we'll meet. See what I mean? I've actually talked to church members of congregations where I've preached and said they haven't meeting. They.

Not me, but they. Why, this generation of church members decides whether or not they'll attend the services they're committed to attend. Did you know that? They're in rebellion.

And the Lord starts enforcing that, honey. And He'll enforce it by the pastor and the elders and whoever has authority around here enforcing it. And you say, ain't no pastor and elders going to tell me what to do.

I know. You're going to split hell wide open, too. You ain't going to let God or nobody else tell you you've got to do something.

But if you was under the rule of Christ in the local church, you would. And you'd be tickled to death about it. Who was supposed to have the meetings this week? Just me and the pastor and some of the members if their belly didn't ache and they'd show up? Or was the Bible Presbyterian congregation supposed to have these services? Huh? Is that right? Now, boy, wouldn't we have lots of fun if the Lord raised up some elders and some deacons and some pastors that start discharging the authority that God's invested in them.

Man, I'd see you Presbyterians running, you wouldn't stop. And you'll run right smack into hell and go across the street and join a church where it's a joke to be a professing Christian. But that's how God's going to start doing something, brother.

You mean tell me when the saints meet together that you ain't one of them and you don't like the company of the saints? Huh? Huh? Thirty-five years ago I went to Toronto, Canada to preach for Dr. Shields in Jarvis Street. I just a kid. And he was the white-haired orator of Canada, the Spurgeon of Canada.

And he was so gentle with a young preacher. And God blessed. He told me how every Sunday night they come to the Lord's table and all the members sign the register.

And if you miss three of them purposely, you're no longer a member of the church. They don't have to have a meeting, you're just out. Huh? You mean tell me it wouldn't be a wonderful, wonderful privilege if the Lord said I'm going to spread the table, folks.

Won't you come have supper with me? You mean tell me you wouldn't say, Oh, we're going to have the Lord's table tonight. He's going to sit the head out of it. He's the host.

We're his guests through his shed blood. Hallelujah. Us Baptists, we have the Lord's table about once a year and get through it just quick as we can.

You know. Huh? Just to be absent is to mangle and scatter the body of Christ. Amen? That has the trumpet sound of judgment day.

Well, I've got to quit. I've preached too long. I haven't got started.

I hope you can hear me, whether so or not, tomorrow night. Let us stand. How new or strange anything I said tonight is to you.

Sometimes the preacher just doesn't know. I would not hurt you. I would help you if I knew how.

But I dismiss you tonight. You're kind to listen. Well, this one's all.

I don't see why every congregation in the world couldn't say, By the grace of God, as God will give us life, we're going to start moving in the direction of being under Christ's discipline and the proclamation of his gospel, the apostolic doctrine. All of us joining hands in partnership, fellows in the same ship. Amen? His program, I'm a part of it.

Amen? If he wants me to just sweep the church building, that's all right. Somebody's got to sweep it, but I'm going to get in on this thing. Amen? Worship.

Where we examine ourselves, get right with our brothers. You couldn't have a church for us if you observed the Lord's table rightly, could you? Couldn't have these splits that are the scandal if we properly came to the Lord's table, could we? That's time to examine ourselves and to discern the Lord's body and that the Lord's body is his church, you know, and not produce schism in it. That's awful, isn't it? And then prayer.

Ladies and gentlemen, why couldn't we have congregations that part of their activity was to meet together, not some of them, but the congregation, and pray, O God, visit thy people. That's the activity of the church. And to be under Christ's discipline is to be under the discipline of the apostles' doctrine.

That's Christ. Partnership, worship, prayer. God bless you.

Now, Father in bloodstained Jesus' name, we commit ourselves to this service. Take out of it all that's just of the preacher, but we think some of it's of the truth. And we believe it can be done, we see it done in some places, and we're hungry for the presence of the living Lord.

It's only when men are confronted with him that they'll say, woe is me. Have mercy on me, O God. Once again assert and exercise the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ as he delegates it to his church.

Make the church once again a company of people who are tickled to death to be under the rule of Christ and find that his yoke is easy and his burden is light. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thank you so much.

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