

What Is a Church?

by Rolfe Barnard

Rolfe Barnard emphasizes the true nature of the church as a community of believers actively participating under Christ's authority to fulfill the Great Commission.

Duration: 56:57

Scripture: Matthew 28:19, Acts 2:38

Topics: "Church"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of being under the discipline of Christ in the church. He explains that this discipline involves repentance, baptism, and submission to the authority of Christ. The preacher also discusses the problem of the absence of Christ in church meetings and urges believers to seek the presence and power of the risen Christ. He shares a personal encounter with a man who had witnessed true revival and emphasizes the need for the manifestation of Christ's power in the church.

Transcript

I don't know how I expected... Oh, wait a minute, wait a minute. I didn't turn it up. I have to have a doctor's degree.

I never did get over here where they had it written out in English. I was trying to find the Baptist anthem. I think it'd be a shame to go through a whole week and not sing the Baptist anthem, and I don't believe it's in here.

That's awful. On Jordan's stormy banks I stand, and cast a wishful eye to Canaan's fair and happy land where my possessions lie. That's the Baptist anthem.

We try to be dignified like you Presbyterians and sing an anthem, but that's about as high as we can get. How many of you ever heard that old song? Huh? Well, don't be bashful. I never heard most of what I've heard you sing, so it's fair.

But that's what's the matter with you. I had a colored church in Dallas that had outgrown its raising and got pretty dignified, and I had a visiting brother come in to the Sunday morning service, and the service got going along, and he got saying, Amen, Hallelujah, praise the Lord. And one of the ushers slipped around while the service was going on, tapped him on the shoulder and said, We don't allow that in this

congregation.

And the brother said, Well, what do you mean? He said, The Spirit of God gets to flow and the Word of God gets precious. I just can't keep from... He said, I like to praise the Lord. Hallelujah.

He said, I just... That's the way I've been taught. And the usher said, He said, The old brother said, I got religion. He said, When we sing, I just can't keep still.

And the usher said, Well, I don't care if your ears got religion. Your dead soul didn't get it here. We don't allow that.

But we had a report in the state paper of the Baptists of Kentucky some years ago where the pastor wrote up a little report of a week or two of meetings. We used to call them revival meetings and have them revival. We called them that.

He said, Brother Joe, speak with somebody who was our evangelist and said he left no problems. And I read it and I said that meant everything is dead when he got there. Stayed dead while he was there.

And still dead because the only place no problems is the cemetery. Isn't that right? It might be a lot to go up and down the lambs there a few days and cause some problems. You'll have to work them out after I leave.

I lay my burden down here tomorrow night, take up another one Monday night in another place, and I'll leave you with some problems. I won't talk to you tonight about the biggest heartache and problem that the professing people of God and church relationship certainly have. And that's the problem of the absence of Christ when the saints meet.

The great absence. Last evening we tried to suggest that we must move back under the discipline of Christ as it's exercised in this church. Gave you the four things that constitute Christ's discipline.

People have repented, been scripturally baptized, they understand the implications, what baptism means, come under the authority of Christ in the church where he's head. Then they are placed under a fourfold discipline as to that which they proclaim, the apostles' doctrine. Fellowship.

No spectators. Nobody paying somebody else to preach, but everybody preaching himself. Fellowship.

Coronaria. Partnership. Nearly 60 years ago Mr. Lenine, Lenin, or whatever his name is, fought the battle in a tenement house in New York City slums.

And he won the battle over one issue, the keeping of membership in the Communist Party small. Thus they have developed now until the fastest growing, most militant, hear me, most like the Book of Acts religion on top side of the earth is the religion of communism. They're the only religion I'm aware of that pays any attention to the Bible today.

We Baptists don't, you Presbyterians don't. But they've taken the Book of Acts as a blueprint. And they keep the membership small and utterly committed.

That's the church, isn't it? That's the reason they've taken the whole outfit. That's right. And it bothers me that they rarely pay attention to the Book of Acts.

We give it lip service, but don't pay attention to it. But they do. No spectators in the Communist Party.

Every last one of them, you give them half a chance, he'll preach his belief. Amen? He'll die for it. He'll do anything.

He'll riot in the streets and everything else. Isn't that right? He believes in what he believes. Puts it into action.

That's a good picture of what the New Testament says the church of the Lord Jesus Christ is. Isn't that right? All the days of my little ministry have been characterized by the great absence. Not the presence of the risen Christ, but the absence of him in power.

Manifestation. I never shall forget some years ago, a good number, maybe 20, I forget exactly when, I was in a conference around the gospel in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and I met for the first time a saint of God who remains, until this good hour, the only human being I've ever seen that has actually been there when what we call revival took place. He's still living.

Brother James Stewart, I don't know whether you know him or not, the headquarters of his activities over at Lansdale, Pennsylvania, for many years was in Philadelphia. He's a European evangelist born in Scotland. Nearly 40 years ago in Russia, Czechoslovakia, and especially in Hungary, he was present in Hungary when a whole nation was made conscious of the living Christ.

And I was on the program with this man and I was scared to even speak to him because our gospel and our witness here rattles like an old Ford going down the road, you know, so empty. We talk about revival and the only acquaintance we've ever had with it is by reading about how it happened way back yonder. We've never been present when Christ was free to still be holy and make his presence really manifestly felt.

Everything we've done, we've had to find the substitute for the one thing that's absolutely necessary and that's the presence of Christ for nobody's ever been convicted of his sinfulness until he's been confronted with the living Lord and his holiness. And so we have to have all of our tricks and our zeal and we spawn the generation of church members that are saved but they've never been convicted of sin. They'll tell you they're saved.

They know nothing of the living Lord and they'll all go to hell, I guess, trusting their little experience and that'll break your heart. James Stewart had seen God's Son confront people in the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit. And I remember I'd speak and he'd speak and he's a Scotchman and he didn't have much say to me and I scared of him and I brought the message at the eleven o'clock hour the last day.

He'd spoken at ten and then we were to speak that night and the conference would be over and he came up to me and the first thing he said to me during the conference he said, Mr. Barnard, he said, suppose we go have a spot of tea. I'd like to talk with you a little. Now a spot of tea to a Scotchman in England is about a gallon of tea that you can't stir it with a spoon.

You have to have a knife to cut it with. And then it's a thank you meal. And when we were around the table he said, I don't know whether it was so or not I hoped it was.

He said, I discern that you are a New Testament evangelist. I've wanted to be. I've given my life toward that end.

He said, I discern, I hope he spoke the truth, that you're a New Testament evangelist. He said, My heart goes out to you in America. He said, I do not hate to have to try to be a New Testament evangelist in America where there's no hunger and where there are no New Testament churches.

For he said, evangelism can only be prosecuted by that institution that Jesus gave the task of evangelism to. And that's New Testament churches. I've never forgotten that.

And without any apology I say that not simply the true message is the need of this hour but under God the need of this hour is every institution calling itself a church of Jesus Christ setting its face for coming under the headship and discipline of Christ so that they might do what the Lord gave us to do. Prosecute the grave commission. That's our job, isn't it? That's not the job of an individual.

That's the job of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. And if we halt and all the days of our lives have seen the churches get further and further behind in prosecuting that task we are summoned as the hour is late to set our faces to walk in all the light we have crying to God as we study his word on our knees. It's the only place to study it.

For more wisdom and light to be obedient to his teaching. And all of it is for the one purpose that once again he'll be in the midst of his people. It just won't do to quote the scripture Matthew 18, 20 where two or three are gathered together in my name we say it awfully there am I in the midst of thee and we are always thanking the Lord that we're in his house and he's present with us but he isn't.

He's absent because we've not included in our theology the little term in my name. And we are not under his authority. That's what that means.

We are not willingly, gladly under his discipline. We are not obedient to him. And he'd have to abdicate and cease to be holy and righteous if he smiled on our disobedience.

And I want to talk a little while tonight of that instance in the scripture where in a local church we described it last night the only church that existed at that time the only local representative of the body of Christ expression is a better word Church of Jerusalem Acts 2 that 120 members start with and in one day 3,000 were added to them and the reason was that Christ visited that assembly. And in the Holy Spirit that's the Spirit's job to take the things of Christ and make them real and to reveal Christ. Isn't that right? And he did.

And the people weren't convicted by the Holy Spirit. They were convicted by being confronted by the living Lord. It was the job of the Spirit to make Christ manifest.

But the Holy Spirit can't convict anybody of the Holy but it's only the person that's ever been convicted of his sinfulness is the one who confronts men as the Holy Spirit makes him real. In the book of Ephesians if you'll turn to it quickly I want to just start here briefly tonight and call your attention again to verse 13 of Ephesians chapter 4. That chapter you know is a tremendous chapter and we call to your attention verse 11 and 12. And I read it again and I'll take time to read the whole chapter.

It's very familiar to you I trust. The risen Lord gave some apostles and some prophets and some evangelists and some pastors and our teachers for the maturing, the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry. The comma there is clearly misplaced.

For the edifying of the body of Christ. What's all this for? Just to fill up some space? No sir. Look at verse 13.

Till we all come in the unity of the faith it'll take the ministry of these five men to bring God's people into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a what? A mature, a perfect, mature man unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. That's our goal isn't it? Whose goal is it? Every member of the body of Christ. Huh? God's given five gifted men, given them offices or four if the pastor is the pastor and teacher, art and teacher.

If that's just one, four or five, I don't know which it is. And he does that for the purpose of making good deacons or let's say good servants, good ministers out of the people. And he does that that we'll come to the unity of the faith not split fourteen hundred ways over what we believe.

Unto the knowledge of the Son of God and we know him only in proportion as we obey him. You can't come to know Christ any other way except by obedience. Unto a mature man.

Oh, that's the purpose of it. Unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. Ladies and gentlemen, if that isn't the goal of the public ministry, the session and the people of this congregation, you set your sights below that which has been set before you.

You see what I mean? How did you expect when you got something to work for and live for? Life's worth living. I say shame on us for being content to accept things as they are when the church, out of order as it is, divided and mangled and bruised and wounded and well not helpless now. I would summon the quotation of the saint at Spurgeon, give me hungry souls that cannot rest while the crown rites of our adorable Lord are rejected and denied in this world.

In the first book of Corinthians, at chapter 14, you quickly turn to it. I want to show you a church in order, what will happen when it meets. Just to whet our appetites, if it happens, and the record of it's given in the New Testament, I say we must not be satisfied until it takes place amongst us.

If there's one thing that we're not obeying about, under God, let's go to do it. If there's one thing that would hinder this, let's get rid of it. Here in the 14th chapter of 1 Corinthians, I can't take the time, I'm so long-winded, I always just get started when it's time to quit.

But you read the book of 1 Corinthians, read it over and over again, and you'll find the remedy for everything that can possibly be wrong for your congregation. Don't go to some book some old Puritan wrote, go to the Apostle Paul. If there was ever a congregation out of order, this is it.

And the remedy is applied. It's right in the book. It's not in the Westminster Confession of Faith, or the Baptist Philadelphia Confession, but it's in the book, God's book.

The old Presbyterians who started you folks out wouldn't have known a church if they'd have met it in the road. Same with us Baptist folks. They knew something, but they didn't know a thing on God's earth about a church.

Go back to THE book! It's better than our Baptist Confessions of Faith. There's no error in this book, brother. There isn't in any man wrote.

Huh? That make you mad? It tickles me. You bet Presbyterians Ray and Jane about some folks have added to the Westminster Confession of Faith. Well, you didn't pay no attention to any of it.

Much. You didn't even know it existed until they got the change in it. And you'd be in 10,000 times better shape than you are now if you'd paid a little attention to the Westminster Confession of Faith.

And how much better then if you'd have skipped over it and gone clear back to the Bible. Huh? I just want to read this verse 23. 14th to 1st Corinthians Therefore, the whole church be come together in one place.

You see, the church in Corinth they had the advantage most didn't have but one. But there's already so numerous they couldn't meet together. See what I mean? They didn't have any meeting place.

The only way they could get the whole church together some I met out in Sister Jones' home. Some I met over yonder. But every once in a while I said the whole outfit ought to get together.

Amen? Of course we can't now because we differ doctrinally in 10,000 ways. Brother, another Baptist somebody asked him how'd you meet and come out? He said, well, we didn't do any good but thank God the Methodist didn't either. You know? But it's the whole church be come together in the one place.

I have lots of fun down south making fun of some of our language. People go out and invite ring, knock, knock, knock. We're having meetings down at our church wish you'd come to church tonight.

Now isn't that silly? That means the church is a building. Ain't no such thing. It's a bunch of people.

And ain't no way on earth you could attend church. You just show your ignorance when you invite somebody to come to church. I can understand how the church can go to some place to have a prayer meeting or skin a mule or do something.

But I can't see how anybody could attend church. Now isn't that silly? But tomorrow you'll invite somebody to attend church, won't you? It shows that you don't know about what a church is. Us Baptists, about as bad as you Presbyterians are.

That's bad. It shows that we think a church is a place. No, a church is made up of some called out people.

And they can meet together. The people can meet in this place, can't they? Or they could meet if you ever got saved down here on the square. Fixed it so the Salvation Army and everybody else wasn't the only folks bashing out tracks on the street and down to jail and that way.

Of course, I don't know about you Presbyterians, but the Baptists say that God doesn't call women to preach, but I say if you're saved, He did. He didn't call you to be a pastor, don't believe me. But you see, or anybody called you to preach, how come you women don't go down to jail to preach up a storm? You young people.

You say you're saved. Who are you preaching to? You men. Well, since we've been knee-high to a dirt, we've been paying Brother Duvall to preach for us.

We ain't done no preaching ourselves in Westchester fixing the split hill wide open because the churches have been doing everything except what the Lord told us to do. Not to build a place and call it a church and invite people to come, but to come here and in the spirit of the old Quakers, they were right on one thing at least. The service begins when the meeting ends.

When the whole church becomes together into one place and all speak with tongues and there come in those that are unlearned or unbelievers, will they not say that you're married? But if they come in and all

prophesy, and that's exactly what a church does. Every member of it prophesies. He proclaims the word of God.

That's what happened on the day of Pentecost. If all prophesy, fellowship, partnership unto Christ, discipline, no spectators, no lookers on, everybody involved in obeying the commission Christ gave us. Prosecuting the ministry God gave you with a gift.

He gave you so you could. That's a church. The old Puritans knew more about the gospel in a minute than we'll know in a year.

But that's all they knew. They didn't have the slavish conception of a church. John Calvin and John Owen, those great men, they said a church is a place where the gospel is preached, the sacraments observed.

And some of them said where discipline is maintained. But they identified a church with a public preaching place. They were dead wrong.

No, ladies and gentlemen, a church is a bunch of people who've been saved by grace and commission to evangelize the world. Isn't that right? And they've got no business assembling in what we call a church house or anything else except to sharpen their tools to abide in the Lord in obedience to the great commission. See what I mean? This is simple, but we don't pay attention to it.

All the days of our lives we've identified a church as a place where the gospel is preached. If there's one place in Westchester where the gospel is not to be preached, it's in a church house. No, sir.

The gospel is to be preached where people are who do not know the Lord. And they're not in your church house. Amen? And you say, hadn't God blessed in spite of our ignorance? Yes, but brother, he's shutting us up now until we're going to have to come to an obedience like we never dreamed.

It's in the day when people flock to hear a Puritan preacher. This is the day when people get converted and feel no need of anything else. And where half of this church hadn't showed up during this meeting, they've got other fish to fry.

You see? And that's par for the course all over America. No! If the whole church were to come together in one place and all speak with tongues and blah, blah, blah, they'll say they're crazy, but if all prophesy, he gave some apostles, some prophets. Every child of God is in that word prophet.

You're to be a proclaimer, a foreteller of the word. Amen? If all prophesy, and there come in one that believe is not or one unlearned, what happens to it? Suppose this church meets together here. And it's full of people who are not in rebellion against that which God has called them to be and do.

I'll tell you what will happen. Somebody else will be present. If all prophesy, and there come in one that believe is not or one unlearned, you know what happens to him? He's convinced of all.

He's judged of all. And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest. And so falling down on his face, he will worship.

And he'll go back to Westchester Square and report that God is in you of a truth. That's how people get saved. When God manifests himself in Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and confronts men, that's the only way the secrets of men's hearts come out and they're convinced of their sinfulness.

And it's the only thing that'll break the stubborn will of a rebel like you and me and cause them to fall down and do what? Worship God. You ain't saved unless that's happened to you. Don't that make you hungry? It does me.

Well, it happened on the day of Pentecost, didn't it? What happened? The Holy Spirit came who sent him, the Lord Jesus Christ. That's why he said, what for? To make Christ's presence felt. That's his job.

And when the shields fell, what'd they do? They went out and proclaimed the wonderful works of God. Woo! They filled that town. They didn't brag on themselves, tell their experience.

They told what God had done. Your experience is not the power of God and the salvation to all who believe. The gospel is.

Oh, God help us. Every last one of them, 120 people, that's all the members they had, that's a church in order, brother. That's a church under Christ's discipline.

What'd they do it? Proclaiming the wonderful works of God. Woo! They did it in such a wonderful way that people gathered there of all sorts of tongues and languages used from everywhere. Thirteen different gangs, wasn't it? I believe thirteen.

They heard what? They heard the wonderful works of God proclaimed so they could understand it in their own language. And, of course, that caused a little stir. And they began to ask questions and enabled Peter and the eleven to stand up with him and talk about Christ.

You and I answering questions nobody's asking. It's hard to do. What happened? How come? Now, when they heard this, as many as were stabbed in their hearts, cried out, men and brethren, what must we do? I'll tell you what.

They were confronted with the fact that they were sitting on a stolen throne. They were making out like they were God. But that's the essence of sin.

Sin isn't getting drunk or committing adultery. That's sins. Sin is being God yourself.

Now, a man will give of himself for some cause. He'll even sacrifice. But he'll not dethrone himself.

That's what has to happen in order to save. Not give a thousand dollars to missions or throw yourself in front of a car to keep a young child from getting killed. Unsafe man will do that.

Apart from the grace of God, none of us will dethrone ourselves, abdicate, resign and be in God. Because if just one person got right to sit on the throne, that's the Lord Jesus Christ. And that's what these folks faced.

No wonder they cried out what must we do. Ladies and gentlemen, five minutes, five seconds after I get through preaching tonight, some of you will be laughing and talking about the corn crop. The levity, the familiarity of even our services today shows the blindness, the depth of the blindness of our hearts.

Read the Bible and every instance in the Bible where a human being was confronted by God in the Old Testament or our God in Christ in the New. A deep feeling of awe and reverence and fear. Acts 7 said, The Lord of glory appeared unto our father Abraham.

That's how old Abraham got saved. He was confronted by God. And in the Old Testament it said, When the Lord appeared to our father Abraham when he is an idol worshipper back over yonder in Tiran.

And he spoke to Abraham. Abraham stretched himself out on the ground so he could listen. When God appeared to Moses in the burning bush, covered his eyes in fear lest he look on.

When Moses said in Exodus 33, Show me thy glory. God said, Well, if I did it, I'll tell you what I'll do. Go down there in that rock that's got a cliff in it and hide in there.

And when I pass, find my glory. I'll let you see just a little glimpse of my hind part. That's all you can see.

When Saul of Tarsus was confronted by the Lord of glory, it left him blind and prostrate. Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? The easy familiarity of this hour, the lack of the sense of holy awe even in our assemblies is proof that this one person doesn't meet with us. For if you ever are confronted with him, with Isaiah, when I saw the Lord, I could do nothing but say, Woe is me.

Never to be satisfied again with having to say what was the truth. I'm a man of unclean lips and dwell in the midst. Never be satisfied until at the call of God which comes to all when he says, Who will go for me? It's silly to talk about being saved unless you've heard that call and responded, Here am I. Send me.

People who've made a decision, accepted a creed, believed the doctrine, done something, can evade this. But if you're ever confronted with God, you'll do exactly, you can do no less than Saul of Tarsus. You can do no less than Abraham.

You can do no less than Moses. You can do no less than Isaiah. I come back to tell you the idea that you can be saved and not be a missionary is the silliest thing that has ever spawned in hell.

And on the day of Pentecost, men were confronted with the living Lord, who is the Lord of life. They were faced with the act of God, the most tremendous thing I've ever read in my life. Let all the house of Israel, Acts 2.36, know as a matter of fact that the same Jesus whom you've crucified, God hath made him.

That's the act of God. That's what God did about the one who went willingly on a cross to hang in the place of sinners. Men had their part.

They, with wicked hands, laid hold of him and nailed him to a tree. God had something, too. He raised him and put him in charge of everything.

And the Spirit of God made that Jesus presence and power felt. And Jesus revealed himself in that local church and 3,000 souls were faced with the confrontation of the living Lord. And they cried out.

Nothing short of that is the need of this hour. Our whole problem, ladies and gentlemen, is that we meet and we go through the motions and he's not there. And it will somewhat sober us to remember that it is solemnly true that we cannot command his presence.

Consider at least one awful evidence of the great absence of the living Lord in this generation and in our congregations. It's the vice of familiarity, the common use of Christ, of seeking to use him as a means to our own ends. But we don't have any such option.

Christ never permitted anybody to be commonly familiar with him. And if you know him, you wouldn't be familiar. You'd be reverent.

You remember your old gray-headed great-grandfather had a long beard and he did the praying for the local church and it had taken 30 minutes to address the beard. Did you ever hear anybody pray like that? Oh, those old-timers. They didn't rush into the presence of the Lord.

They knew you couldn't. The more men came to know who Jesus Christ was, the less familiar with him they were. Now, those who didn't know him were very familiar.

If you'd ask them, Who's that fellow, Jesus? Oh, he's Joseph's son. We're acquainted with him. We know his brother's sister.

If you'd ask old Simon Peter, with holy awe, he'd say, We believe that he's the Messiah. When we begin to sense afresh that it was part of the mission of Christ that he left nothing undisturbed by his presence, then, God help us, we'll face his absence with deep humility and longing. All that we do in seeking to be obedient to his commission to us waits on his presence.

Can't get anybody saved. Can't do a single thing unless he's present. After I've done and said all I can, the situation remains calm and undisturbed for a solid week here.

You and me put together in such a terrible state of disobedience, we couldn't even get a good fuss going. No disturbance. The Lord Jesus Christ hadn't come around to disturb anybody.

You nice Presbyterian, you sweet, you look at me, or run fast enough I could shake hands with some of you at the back door. But you haven't been disturbed. And the reason we haven't been disturbed is Christ has not been present.

He has disturbed us from the top of our head to the bottom of our feet. If he visited this assembly, he would, brother. He'd shake us till our teeth would run.

If he visited our assembly as an unsaved man, could not be in one of our services and go away lost. But he can now, can't he? We can logically arrange all that we know about revealed truth, and yet he'll not be present. God help us if we're going to do service to the demands, to the doctrine, the teaching of the sovereignty of God.

It demands that we realize we cannot command God. The evidence of such recognition would be that the vice of familiarity, a common way of speaking of him, of thinking that he's at our command would be purged from our thinking and conversation. God help us.

We are dying for lack of the disturbing presence of him who was set for the rise and fall of men in the bespoken again, who disturbs everything he confronts. We are desperately dying because our confession of faith is a million miles less than the confession of the demons of Christ be. They would say, We know who thou art, thou holy one of God.

We are dying from the stuff we call assurance of salvation. It would do us good to remember that Christ had twelve original disciples, and the only one who had the kind of assurance of salvation you've got was a fellow by the name of Judas Iscariot. He's the one that went out and hanged himself and went to hell.

Oh, God help us. You think anybody is going to listen to you, Brother Barnard? Pay any attention. Calling back to the message of a crucified in throne living Lord who is Lord of life, and calling people back to come willingly, voluntarily, gladly under the discipline of that one in the local church.

I don't know. What good would it do? Just one thing. We'd experience the presence of Christ.

We'd experience the presence of Christ. Numbers of you talk to me of your heartbreak, your children are lost. You can't save them.

They won't even pay any attention to you when you talk to them. They say, I'm all right. The only way on earth they'll ever be convicted of their sinfulness is in the presence of Christ.

With Simon Peter, they'll say, depart from me, I'm a sinful man. Oh, I believe the Lord left the church the glorious privilege of being a company of people in which and through which he could manifest himself in all the glory of his person and the perfection of his work. And as I leave these weeknight services and your gracious pastors put up with me, I challenge you, everything that's the matter with us is explainable in just one thing.

In the absence of Christ. Amen. Every problem we got will be solved.

How? With the presence of Christ. Amen. What can we do about it? Walk under his blessed headship.

Obedient to his every teaching. Amen. I want to sing a verse or two of my song, 707.

I want to sing it, ask you to sing it as a congregation, congregations represented here. Surely our prayer ought to be, surely it is, Lord, we just can't get the job done unless you're in our midst, can we? We can't be your witness in this old godless world unless we manifest, unless you're with us. Amen.

Pass me not as a congregation, as an individual, while on others thou art calling, do not pass us by. Amen. Well, let's just sing it as a prayer and then we'll go.

Pass me not as a congregation, as an individual, while on others thou art calling, do not pass us by. Savior, Savior, hear my humble cry, while on others thou art calling, do not pass me by. Sing this second one as a prayer, are you? I don't believe, I may have my theology all wrong, I don't know.

Don't ask you to believe a word I preach, just ask you to listen to me. I'm not responsible for you to do whatever you do about my message. That's between you and the Lord.

I can't react for you. See? I don't know whether it's so or not, I just think it is. I'm just a little old man.

I'm not God. You know that. For a week you've been gracious enough to listen to me.

That's the fastest step to silence. I'll have to meet you at the judgment. I'll have to give an account there from the message.

You'll have to give an account for how you heard. Huh? Isn't that right? Isn't that right? But under God, I think a congregation can be obedient to the great head. Not perfect.

I can't preach perfectly, but I can preach. Can't you see? Huh? I can't sing perfectly, but I can sing. I can't do anything perfectly, but I can't be perfectly holy, but I can be holy.

Amen? Say, well, you're talking about a perfect church. No, I'm talking about obedient church. It'll not be perfect, and that's the reason it has to have a head, and the head is the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's the reason we have to be under authority because we're not perfect. But I am hungry, and as I'll be leaving, many of your friends have visited from other congregations. You'll not be here tomorrow.

God bless you. I'll see you at the judgment. I'll never see you again.

And the Lord don't judge us by what we accomplish. He judges us by our obedience to Him. I'd rather fail trying to get back under the discipline of Christ than to say it can't be done.

I'll try. And you? Let's sing for the last verse. The benediction left me at thy throne of mercy.

Thank God. Amen. It is a throne of mercy.

He wouldn't bat you over the head if you came and said, Lord, I've been dumb and ignorant. That preacher is. Please forgive me.

He'd say, well, I'm the God of a new start. That's the God in a clean slate. Amen.

Isn't that right? All right. Sing it. The benediction left me at thy throne of mercy.

What I am is free to be. Nearly every condemnation has my unbelief. Savior, Savior, hear my humble cry.

Why on earth do I fall to the past behind? Thank you so much. Good night.

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