

(The Sufficiency of the Saviour) 2. for Church Life

by Stephen Olford

Stephen Olford emphasizes the sufficiency of the Savior for church life, highlighting the essential qualities of compassion, unity, and forgiveness that should define the local church.

Duration: 57:29

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Colossians 3:12-17, 2 Timothy 4:2

Topics: "Sufficiency Of The Saviour"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of compassion in the life of a Christian. He contrasts the lack of mercy in the ancient world with the transformative power of Jesus, who showed compassion to all. The speaker also highlights the significance of Bible exposition and the role of preaching the word in the church. He encourages a reexamination of worship, emphasizing the need for depth and content in songs. Finally, he emphasizes the importance of performing the work of Christ in both word and deed.

Transcript

In the series, The Sufficiency of the Savior. The sufficiency of the Savior for the church life. And what better preparation could we have than what we've listened to? And that carries us from verse 12 through 17.

That's Colossians chapter 3, Colossians chapter 3, verses 12 through 17. I don't know what version you're following, but I'm reading from the NASB, and I read, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. And then drop down, as we abbreviate the reading, and whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.

Our study, however, will take us right through those verses. And in these six verses, the apostle is addressing the local church. Of course, that refers to the entire church universal, but he is writing to the church at Colossae.

And I am so glad to be ministering on this theme tonight, because from the tip of my head to the sole of my feet, not only because I believe in the Bible, not only because I believe in the head of the church, but

because of my involvement in church life for nearly 40 years now, I believe in the local church and its ministry within its own community, and, of course, through missionaries to the uttermost part of the world. When the Lord Jesus stood on this planet nearly 2,000 years ago, he said, I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against her. And that promise is being fulfilled.

The flag of the church of Jesus Christ flutters in every part of the world. Still more territory to be occupied, but the six continents of our world are represented by the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. And even in a land like China, where the missionaries were thrust out, do you know that the church has multiplied tenfold even without missionaries? And whereas when missionaries left, there were something like three million believers, now it's between 30 and 50 million.

And those statistics occur. James Hudson Taylor, with whom I ministered the word of God throughout New Zealand last year, and who knows more about China than probably anybody else living today, and David Adeny as well, God is working his purposes out, and nothing's going to thwart him. The gates of hell shall not prevail against the church of Jesus Christ.

And with all her factions, with all her failures, with all her foibles today, do you know one of these days, one of these days, that church is going to be presented before the glory of the Father's presence with exceeding joy, and the church is going to be without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. And I'm happy I'm part of that church. And that is what's going to occupy our minds and hearts here tonight.

Would you notice how he starts in this particular passage? He talks about those gathered believers as the elect of God, holy and beloved. The words, of course, are very similar to the introductory words to this epistle, if you jot it down, in chapter one and verse two. Employing the language of the Old Testament, he speaks of the church as the new Israel of God, chosen and set apart and beloved.

And then with characteristic candidness, the Apostle Paul tells us what a local church should be like. What a local church should be like. A local church under the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus, a local church under the Lordship of Christ, has certain characteristics.

And we're going to look at three main ones. First of all, the church must be known by its quality of life in Christ. Its quality of life in Christ.

Notice how he starts. As those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, bearing with one another and forgiving each other. Whoever has a complaint against anyone, just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.

Beloved, you and I only know too well the condition of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ in Australia, in Britain, in the United States of America, or any other part of the world today. And in many, many instances, she's a sight to make one cry and weep. What kind of local church do you represent? Not only in this body here, but the churches from where you come.

What strikes you as you enter into that assembly, into that local church, into that body of believers? Do you detect what I am calling here tonight deliberately quality Christianity? Quality Christianity. So many churches that I know are nothing more than holy huddles. They have no relevance to the world outside.

Some of them are social clubs. Some of them are community centers. And in a sense, that's all right, but that's not all the ministry of the church.

Some of them are just places where people escape from the responsibilities of real life outside. Now Paul is talking about this, and he strikes right at the heart of what we're terming quality Christianity in every local church. And of course, this quality Christianity is not attainable except through the sufficiency of the Lord Jesus.

And as we heard tonight, our glorious Lord in all his fullness wants to indwell not only the individual believer, but the body of believers, which incidentally is an interesting thing for you who are students of the word, for invariably Paul uses the plural. Even in this epistle to the Colossians, that favorite verse of mine, Christ in you, you as a body, you in the plural, you the hope of glory. Now, what are the characteristics of this quality Christianity? Paul chooses seven right here.

And I believe in the inspiration of the holy scriptures. I believe in the reliability and authority of God's word, and that these words are not just chosen haphazardly. And Paul chooses these seven.

Let's look at them together. First of all, compassion. He says, put on a heart of compassion.

Anthropologists largely judge a man's race by his skull. The Christian must judge a man's race by his heart. If there was one thing the ancient world didn't know anything about, it was mercy.

It was mercy. They showed no mercy to animals, and very often showed no mercy to people. When anybody got in the way, or anybody became a nuisance, they were liquidated right away.

But the Lord Jesus changed all this when He came into the world. He could never look upon human need. He could never look upon a crowd of people without being moved with compassion.

I'll never forget when Billy Graham came to New York City in 1957. He graciously asked me to come from my church at that time in London City, Duke Street Baptist Church, to help him in the crusade. And I went over to that great city of New York, and it was my first experience for many, many weeks helping him in that great crusade, the marathon crusade of all crusades.

No crusade in all his history ran as long as that crusade. He stayed at the New Yorker Hotel, and every day at four o'clock I went up to pray with him, go through his sermon notes, giving him structure, illustrations, help, and praying together as he preached night after night until he almost dropped on one occasion. He was so weary.

But I'll never forget the beginning of that crusade. He said to me, Stephen, let's go to the top of the hotel. And he had a private elevator out of his room that went right to the very top of that hotel.

We stood together and looked across that great city. Throughout my years there, it was something like 13.6 million metropolitan New York, eight million alone in Manhattan, now even more than that. But we were up there on those parapets of the New Yorker Hotel.

And I said, Billy, this city needs Jesus. And God has sent you to offer Christ to this city. And suddenly I heard those deep, deep sighs of a man about to burst.

And I looked to my right, and there was dear Billy Graham sobbing his heart out, big tears rolling down his face, and crying to God, God, God, have mercy on New York. Oh, God, give us this city. Oh, God, give us compassion for the sinners in this great city.

I'll never forget that. That's how the Lord Jesus reacted to multitudes when he saw them, and to people, a heart of compassion. Have you, beloved brother, sister, a heart of compassion? Because when you bring a whole body of people together in that compassion, in that sense of identification with human needs, for that's what it really means.

Barclay tells us it actually means getting into the skin of another. It's not just pity. It's more than pity.

It's identification with the hurts and needs of others, getting into other people's skins. I'll tell you, you have a quality that the world cannot match anywhere. Is that how people feel when they walk into your church? Not only compassion, notice kindness, put on kindness.

Archbishop Trench calls this a lovely word for a lovely quality. Josephus uses it to describe Isaac, the man who dug wells and gave them away for nothing. You'll read that in Genesis 26.

William Barclay tells us that it's associated with wine, which has grown mellow with age and has lost its harshness. It's the word that the Lord Jesus used when he said, come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for my yoke is easy.

That's our word. That's our word. My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

It's a beautiful, beautiful garment to put on, the garment of kindness, of kindness. Are you a kind Christian? Are you a kind church? Look at the next word, humility. Put on humility.

This is the temper of mind which affects the testament of ourselves. It's closely linked, by the way, to the very word we've just been talking about, kindness, for it takes an unselfish views of the interests of others. This word, humility, is a very important word in the New Testament.

Andrew Murray has written a little book on humility. It's so thin, you can hold it between your two fingers like that. I read it at least once a year, but I challenge anyone to read it through at one sitting.

One chapter, and you're on your knees. Humility. You see, humility is not only the disposition of Christ, but it's the discipline of ourselves.

It's the disposition of Christ because it's the mind of Christ. Christ living in me. That's the whole meaning of that fabulous and wonderful second chapter of Philippians.

And as great scholars have pointed out, and especially the newest commentary that's just come out, Hawthorne's great commentary on Philippians points out that that's a beautiful hymn, and it's not intended to be a doctrinal statement or a theological statement to be debated. It is an ethical, it's an ethical application. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, and then that mind is unfolded.

A disposition that leads us to die in order that we might live. It took him to the death of the cross, wherefore God highly exalted him, and you will never live until you know how to die. But it's also a discipline because the scripture teaches us to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt us in due season.

So this humility should be seen in all our behavior patterns day by day. Humility in the church. Oh, what a contrast to the arrogance and pride and righteousness and my right as a member that we hear so often in churches today.

Look at the next one. Patience. Put on patience.

J. Hudson Taylor once said that there are three requirements for every missionary. He used to go to Keswick to recruit young people for the mission field. He used to say, is Jesus Christ Lord of your life? And if he didn't get the right answer, he would say, remember young man, he's Lord of all.

Or he's not Lord at all. And then he would say, if you mean to be a missionary, you need three qualifications. The first is patience.

The second is patience. And the third is patience. And I want to tell you that's a quality we need in our churches today.

We live in an impatient world. That's why everything we buy is instant or instantaneous. Instant postum, instant coffee, instant tea, instant everything.

Patience. Paul is talking about patience for the long pull. Most people can endure for a little while, but they give up after that.

The patience of Christ is that which bears all the way with our human frailties and never lets down, never lets down. Patience. Come a little closer home.

Forbearance. Bearing with one another. Here is a precious word indeed.

While it's difficult to translate into our English with all accuracy, its main meaning is very manifest. And I've given it as my own definition. I call it long temperedness, long temperedness.

It's the elastic love which covers a multitude of sins without complacency on the one side or compromise on the other. It's possible to love. It's possible to love all the little irregularities, notwithstanding of my brother, my sister, my wife, my child, without complacency and without compromise.

That's our forbearance. And then he comes to the crunching word of all. Forgivingness.

Forgivingness. Forgiving each other. Whoever has a complaint against anyone, just as the Lord Jesus forgave you.

Paul describes this quality Christianity and moves higher and higher and higher and higher until he touches what I believe is the greatest word to be preached all across Australia. Forgivingness. Forgivingness.

Show me any church that has a problem and I'll tell you the solution. Forgivingness. Tell me any home that has a problem here tonight.

We'll be dealing with that tomorrow night. Any home that has a problem. The solution.

Forgivingness. The ability to just say, Sorry, darling. Sorry.

And I mean it. Sorry. Sorry.

Sorry. Show me any deacon group that's split down the middle. Is there a solution? Yes.

Forgivingness. And I want to tell you more revivals have broken upon the church throughout the years than I could go right off into one hour's lecture on that alone. Just because people were willing to forgive each other.

And by the way, the Lord Jesus reminded us in the Sermon on the Mount, and it's backed up right here. If we don't forgive one another, forget it, my brother. You can come to church until you drop in your grave.

You will not move one inch in your Christian life. Not one inch in your Christian life. Heaven is shot.

The heavens are as brass. Because if you don't forgive your brother, your sister, your husband, your wife, your children, your pastor, your deacons, if you don't forgive them their trespasses, neither will your Heavenly Father forgive you. Period.

That's why it's put at the very climax here. Forgivingness. Forgivingness.

These are the ingredients that make up quality Christianity. This quality spiritual life, my brother, is what should characterize the Church of Jesus Christ today. Today.

Not just when she's spotless, without spot or wrinkle, but today. Right there in Colossae. Right there in Ephesus.

Right there in Thessalonica. Right there in Brisbane. But quickly, let's move on to the next characteristic.

The Church must be known by its quality of life, yes. But secondly, the Church must be known by its unity of life in Christ. And of course that follows.

That follows. Given those seven qualities, unity is inevitable. And so he says, beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity, and let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body, and be thankful.

Where the membership of a local church enjoys quality Christianity, there is experience what Paul describes here as the perfect bond of unity. In Jesus Christ we are one, whether we accept it or not. Oh, I want to say that again.

It wasn't a slip of a tongue. In Jesus Christ, if we are truly born again, we are one. Whether we accept it or not, I cannot what label you wear.

If you are born again, even you may not see the way I do, or I don't see the way you do, if you are actually born again on the basis of the redemptive work of Christ, and you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, I'm your brother, and you are my brother. And we're one. And we're one.

But the problem is not so much the fact of our oneness, but the enjoyment of our oneness. And that's why in the corresponding passage in Ephesians, Paul says right here, he says, keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. You notice he doesn't say make the unity.

He doesn't say make the unity. The unity has to be made once and for all. But he says keep it.

And that word is a military term. Guard it. Guard it with guns.

Guard it with bayonets, as it were. Don't let the enemy come in. Fight back Satan and keep this wonderful, wonderful gift God has given his church.

It's the gift of unity. I heard John Stott, probably one of the greatest Bible teachers of our day, give Bible readings at Keswick a few years ago when I shared the ministry with him on Ephesians. Four mighty Bible readings on Ephesians.

And he made this one statement that I haven't forgotten. He said, I don't believe there's anything that grieves the heart of our priestly Christ in heaven than the disunity on earth of his church. That seamless garment being torn asunder by his people here upon earth.

If I could borrow Jacob's ladder and climb right into the throne room of heaven tonight, I know I would hear my priestly king and priest, yes, praying the prayer of John 17. Father, Father, make them one. Make them one.

Make them one that the world may believe that you sent them. Unity. Now, what is this unity? Look with me quickly at the verses that follow.

It's a unity of spirit. Will you notice that? The unity of spirit. Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.

God is love. But God is spirit. And when we're united in love, we're united in spirit, and vice versa.

This is not an emotional attempt of carnal men and women to try and make it up by just holding hands and singing choruses. No, it's far deeper than that. It is the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit by which people are united in the bond of peace.

Or to quote Dr. William Barclay again, love is the binding power which holds the whole Christian body together. The tendency of any body of people is sooner or later to fly apart. But love is the one bond which will hold them together in an unbreakable fellowship.

That's why in the early church the heathen looked on and said, see how these Christians love one another. Alas, alas, the world looks on today and says, see how these Christians hate one another. See how these Christians assassinate one another in terms of their character.

You know, amongst Orientals, dressing was always completed with one piece of clothing known as a sash or a girdle. This garment put all the other pieces of clothing together in their proper place and for their proper purpose. And this is exactly what happens when the Holy Spirit binds us together in love.

Let me read it to you in the Revised Standard Version. Put on love which binds everything together in perfect harmony. Oh, I love that.

I love that. It's a unity of spirit. But notice also it's a unity of soul.

And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts. Now, Paul employs a picture here that's drawn from the athletic arena.

It's a word from which we get our term umpire, or if you prefer, arbitrator, one who settles the final decision in any matter of dispute. I know cricket, and I love cricket, and I followed cricket in the old days in England, and you know all about cricket. And now your other games, you have these months of the year, such as rugby and so on.

But I don't think I've ever seen anything more dramatic regarding an umpire than a good old American baseball game. And I don't know if you watch those games on television or you've been to America, but I want to tell you something. A man's either in or out by the decision of that umpire.

When he says out, you're out. When he says safe or in, you're in. You argue and you're out.

You're out. Do you know something? That broke in upon my soul. So often we dispute and we argue instead of bringing our lives under the sovereignty of Jesus and saying, Lord, you make the decision in this through your word by your Holy Spirit.

It's not at this level. We need to crown you Lord. And I'm reminded that when Paul wrote to Rome over matters that we would laugh about in many ways and yet were just as stupid, matters that were dividing the church at Rome, having to do with meat, food, whether you were a vegetarian or whether you're a all-diet man, and holy days, holy seasons, and here's a church about to be split asunder about these matters.

And you notice Paul doesn't condemn one group or condone the other, either the strong or the weak. He says, no man liveth unto himself and no man dieth unto himself. The answer to this situation is simply this.

To this end, both Christ rose and revived. Died, rose, and revived, that he might be Lord. And it's in that very context that Paul says, crown him as Lord, and you're going to discover these matters will find their solution and resolution.

He must be arbitrator, not only in the home, not only in the church, but in the council churches, wherever churches come together in an assembly such as we've just had over the past week. Unity of spirit, unity of soul, and I love this, unity of body. You are called in one body.

Be thankful. Now much has been written on body life. My dear friend Ray Steadman has written an outstanding book, and we've come to a new understanding of what we mean by body life, the discernment and development and deployment of gifts in the church, and understanding each other within the church, and recognizing that everyone has a place in the church.

Of course, Paul dealt with this in the first century, and especially in his epistle to the Corinthians, where he says that we are indivisibly joined to Christ, and we are indispensably dependent on each other. The eye can't say to the nose, I have no need of you, nor can the ear say to the mouth, I have no need of you. The hand can't say to the foot, I have no need of you, and so we could go on.

We are indivisibly joined to Christ, and we are indispensably dependent on each other. The eye can't say to the nose, I have no need of you, nor can the ear say to the mouth, I have no need of you. The hand can't say to the foot, I have no need of you, and so we could go on.

We're indivisibly linked to our common head, and we're interdependently dependent on one another. And I want to say something. When a church sees that truth, all jealousies are over.

All jealousies are over. As I said at the assembly, God never makes duplicates, he only makes originals, and your place within the church is a place that he has foreordained before the universe was ever brought into existence, and you have a place right there. Now, have you recognized that one body? And have you said, yes, I recognize that hand.

I see that hand. God made that hand. God made that leg.

God made that eye. God made that nose. And he didn't make them to compete with each other.

They're one body. Get on your knees and thank him. Be thankful.

Be thankful. You are called in one body. Be thankful.

Be thankful. Nothing unifies Christians more than to recognize that we need each other, and are meant for each other. And once we grasp this truth, I repeat, I'll tell you, half the problems of the church are resolved.

How beautiful to be able to drop on my knees and say, Lord Jesus, I thank you for Ron. I thank you for Patricia. And I thank you for the manifold gifts you have endowed them with.

And I thank you, Lord, for the complimentary ministry to the preaching of your word. Lord, I thank you. I thank you.

I thank you. That brings a harmony into our ministries. As I put it, this annihilates jealousy.

It stimulates unity. To do so is to accept the fact that God has made us one body. What right have we to disembowel that body by jealousy, by pride, by bickering, by vying one with the other? To do so affirms our oneness in one body and assures our unity and harmony in the ministry.

But there's a third characteristic, and it's on this I want to major especially tonight as briefly as I possibly can, because I see how the time is slipping away. Verses 16 through 17. Just keep your eye on those verses.

We'll go through them. The quality and unity of life in the church leads to the ministry. Notice the order.

Quality first, unity next, then ministry. How often we reverse those. But not so here.

Not so here. The quality and unity of life in Christ naturally leads to the ministry of life in Christ. And in these two verses, Paul sets out what I believe to be essentially the ministry of the church.

Now obviously we could break that down and move out of the one context into wider contexts and show the outflinging of these ministries, even to the ends of the earth. But here are the essential ones. Number one, we will proclaim the word of Christ.

Let me repeat that. We will proclaim the word of Christ. We start right with the pulpit.

We start right with the word. Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you with all wisdom. Now the word of Christ here may mean that which is spoken by Christ or that which is spoken of Christ.

And exegetes agree that either of these can be true. I want to take them both. In either case, we're confronted with the revealed word of God in Christ Jesus, and that refers to the ministry of the word of God in the local church.

In the local church. To me, even the position of this pulpit is significant tonight. The pulpit is not over there or over there.

It's right here. It's at the center of worship. And a central pulpit is absolutely essential in its symbolic significance, but it must be true in our entire life of the church.

We start with the word, and everything flows from that. Everything flows from that. Everything flows from that.

Many of you are familiar with the name of Dr. Harold Ockingay, probably one of the most brilliant men the Lord gave the Church of Jesus Christ in the last century in America as a pastor, Ph.D., Fac. II, earned a doctorate. He was a pastor for many, many years of the famous Park Street Church in Boston.

He was the founder of Christianity Today alongside Billy Graham and Carl Henry. He was the founder of Fuller Seminary in its days when it was unquestioned for orthodoxy and scholarship. After 25 years of the life of Christianity Today, he had an interview with the editor, and he was asked, what is the secret of all ministry, and what is the secret of your ministry as you reflect back over 25 years? He said, the pulpit and an open Bible.

He was asked, well, what is the most important, what is the most important service of the church? He said, Wednesday night, Wednesday night. He said, Sunday morning, in our culture, the churches just fill up, I open the Word of God, and I preach. But God knows I never give the same amount of time and prayer to Sunday morning, or indeed Sunday evening, with a packed church of students from the University of Harvard, MIT, and all the rest.

I don't even give time to that service as I do to Wednesday night, to Wednesday night. He said, Wednesday night, I expect my church to be full anyway, but he said, it's one solid hour of exposition of biblical truth. And everything that flowed to the far ends of the earth, and they had the biggest missionary conference of any church for many, many years, and sent hundreds of missionaries to the field.

Thousands of students converted, who are now at the highest positions in the land. He said, it all started in our Bible study on Wednesday night. Now, that's a matter of convenience.

Some people have a Tuesday or a Thursday, but he maintained that the crucial service of his church was the in-depth Bible exposition. That was true of Campbell Morgan, that was true of Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones, and very humbly I can say that's true of Calvary Baptist Church. How thrilled when we had a thousand people for our Wednesday Bible study and prayer meeting.

That's where it all starts. That's why Paul, just about to depart, hands the torch over to his young brother Timothy, and he says, Timothy, I've said many things to you, but my final word to you is this, preach the word. Do the work of an evangelist.

That's my final word to you. Sure, come, bring the parchments, bring the books. I'm cold in this cell.

I need a little warmth, and to the end I'm going to be a student of the word. Bring those books, bring those parchments, but my final word to you is, preach the word, preach the word, do the work of an evangelist. Proclamation, proclamation, invitation, proclamation.

That's the word put across in its convictive, corrective, and constructive ministrations, because the word says, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doubt. But then, don't leave it at that. Harvest what you preach.

Harvest what you preach. Bring people to commitment. Bring people to commitment.

If it's saints, bring them to surrender. If it's sinners, bring them to repentance. Harvest the work.

Do the work of an evangelist. That's what an evangelist is. An evangelist is a herald of the truth, but essentially a man who harvests the truth, harvests the results of proclamation.

Preach the word. Do the work of an evangelist. And so Paul says here, let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom.

Make sure that that word goes right down deep and produces fruit, dwells in you richly, producing richness of life. The second great ministry of the church is worship. Not only will we proclaim the word of Christ, we will promote the worship of Christ.

And so the word goes on saying, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, or singing with thankfulness, virtually with grace, as we shall see in a moment, in your hearts to the Lord. Worship is essential in the church of Christ, if we're to glorify God as individuals or as a congregation. Worship is sadly lacking in most of our churches today.

And this I say with a sweep right across the world. Sadly lacking. There is pomp without power.

There is motion without unction. Simply stated, worship is sharing of Christ. We'll see that in just a moment.

And then it's singing to Christ under the control of the Holy Spirit. Notice the phrase, with thankfulness in your hearts to God, better rendered with grace to God, or in the grace of God. Only God can give us the grace to worship him right.

Now, the Ephesians epistle picks us up and deals with it a little more fully, because we have there that beautiful passage that I love to quote. Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father. God reminds us, of course, in the words of our Lord Jesus, that they that worship the Father must worship him in spirit and in truth.

And essentially this means two things. First of all, with this grace of the Spirit, we are to share of Christ. We are to share of Christ, his attributes, his essential qualities, his glorious, glorious virtues, and moral qualities.

Yes, we're to revel in those in the word. And notice we're to do it, we're to do it, even in singing, teaching and admonishing one another. Before we can sing to Christ, we must share of Christ.

This is what is meant here by teaching one another and warning one another through theology and hymnology. And we all know this, but when you take great theology and marry it to great hymnology, it goes up in great doxology. And that's what worship is all about.

That's what worship is all about. But when we know how to share of Christ, something happens. Something happens.

We've got to sing. We've got to sing. So with the grace of the Spirit, we must not only share of Christ through the word, but we must sing to Christ.

In our worship, we must use psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing to God. And from the very beginning, the church was a singing church, a singing church. One of the earliest descriptions of a church service we have on record anywhere is that of Pliny, the Roman governor of Dithynia, who reported to the emperor, and I quote, and I love this statement, they meet at dawn to sing a hymn to Christ as God.

They meet at dawn to sing a hymn to Christ as God. And the hymns they sang were undoubtedly the old psalms of the Hebrew hymnbook. We call it today the Treasury of David and others.

They also used spiritual songs. There were odes and poems which conveyed spiritual truths. There were the hymns.

Some of them we find right in our New Testament that the Holy Spirit has incorporated into the inerrant word. Whether accompanied by instruments or sung a cappella, all singing was an act of worship to God. And I want to say very simply, and I want to say very sincerely, if you want to know what I mean by this aspect of my message tonight, you had it demonstrated before I spoke, before I spoke.

That's worship. That's worship in music. We need to recapture this aspect of worship today.

It's true that singing is the in thing, but how much of it is true worship? So often our songs lack content and depth and are popular only because of catchy tune. It is time to re-examine what the New Testament really means by worship. By worship.

So, we must proclaim the word of Christ. We must promote the worship of Christ. And finally, we must perform the work of Christ.

And that's our closing verse. Whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father. To me, there's no greater verse in all the New Testament and its complementary version and Ephesians that should be written all around the church.

That's the motto of Christian service. It covers the whole gamut of church life, from the solemn service of Christian baptism, the celebration of the Lord's Supper, the preaching of a gospel, the visitation of the sick and lonely, down to the simplest duties and details of picking up hymn books and doing the chores and catering of any church in any culture in any century. But two things should characterize all work.

And with this, I close. Notice two things. One, the presence or power of the Lord Jesus, which activates service.

And the other is the pleasure and privilege to serve the Lord Jesus. Will you look at those two? Notice the two things which determine work in word or deed. The presence and pleasure of the Lord Jesus.

The presence of the Lord Jesus should activate our work. Do all in the name, in the name of the Lord Jesus. The name speaks of His being, His nature and power.

When the Lord Jesus sent out His disciples, He said, preach in the name, baptize in the name, pray in the name, lay hands on in the name. It's always in the name. And the name, I repeat, speaks of His being and nature and power.

Without Him we can do nothing. Hence our theme, Christ all in all. His sufficiency in us and through us to do what otherwise we could never achieve.

And so much work in the church is work for Christ instead of the work of Christ. Hudson Taylor said, I went to China and I tried to work for God and I failed. Then I tried to work with God and I failed.

And then He broke me. And by the indwelling life of Jesus, the exchange life, I let Him work in me and through me. And then I saw blessing.

That's the whole purpose of these days, of learning the wonder of the meaning of the incarnation. Not just God stepping into human life for thirty-three and a half years, but through Christ's death and resurrection and ascension and the descent of the Holy Spirit, that same life being lived in me and through me in everything I do, in everything I say. But my last thought as I leave you tonight is giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

Not just His presence in everything I say and do, but His pleasure, but His pleasure. His presence activates. His pleasure motivates.

That was the passion of our Lord Jesus all through His life. He said, there's nothing, nothing I do except that which pleases the Father. I do always those things that please Him.

And I don't believe any service counts for God. If I can't bow my head and say, thank you Father, thank you for that privilege, thank you for that pleasure of serving you. Now sharing with Ron and Pat one of the great movements of the Spirit we had in our years at Calvary Baptist Church.

I went to a church that was very, very seriously divided. The less said about that, the better. I had to start right from scratch to try and build a new fellowship there under the ministry of the Word of God.

One of the first things we instituted was a hot night of prayer. And for fourteen years I could say to the glory of God every first Friday of the month, every first Friday of the month, whether I was on vacation, whether I was sick, or whether I was indisposed to not be able to be there, it never failed to take place. In an upper room that could seat five to six hundred people, we had a hot night of prayer.

Say, why not the whole night? Because at twelve thirty, no more transportation left Manhattan. And people lived way out in the suburbs. So we made it a hot night of prayer from seven until twelve.

Seven and then twelve. And I want to tell you, those are the greatest hours I can ever remember in my ministry at Calvary, because people came and went as they were able. Not everybody had to be the same time.

Some people came in half hour before midnight, but they converged there. It wasn't a stated meeting of the church. It was left entirely open to those whose hearts God would touch.

And throughout a half night of prayer, some seven hundred people would come to pray, possibly. On another occasion, perhaps only three or four hundred. Three or four hundred.

But you know what happened? We got to prayer all right, but suddenly the Lord dealt with me about the matter of thanksgiving. Of thanksgiving. God dealt with me about the matter of thanksgiving.

Were we truly thankful for the privilege of ever being the children of God, of ever serving Him, of ever being part of the body? And so we all decided as a group that the first two hours, whatever followed after that, the first two hours would be only for thanksgiving. Only for thanksgiving. You know what? We had the biggest shock of our lives.

Somebody would get up and pray and thank the Lord for being saved, and sit down again. Somebody would get up, thank the Lord for the joy of leading a soul to Christ, and sit down. And in a few moments, absolute silence.

You know why? They didn't have anything to be thankful about. And nobody could dare get up six times and repeat the same prayer. The same words.

The Spirit of God fell upon us one night, and from thanksgiving we went to utter brokenness, and we wept, and we repented, and we confessed that here we were, Christians, who didn't even know what to give thanks for. And God dealt with us at depth. And that was the whole turning point in our ministry.

Whole turning point in our ministry. It led to a tremendous revival. Weeks after that, I want to tell you, two hours was too short.

We spilled right over. Just one torrent of thanks for souls saved, for the wonders of His grace, for the joy of being a Christian, for the insights into His Word. And it was thrilling to hear people get up one after another and thank God for encounters they had had through the week, and for the souls they led to Jesus Christ, for reconciliation in the home, for reconciliation between brothers and sisters, just praising and thanking God.

And I want to tell you, God inhabits the praises of Israel. God came down. God came down.

God came down. And I believe the true thing that should motivate all Christian work is His presence that activates it, because without it we can do nothing. His pleasure which motivates it.

The sheer pleasure of sitting under the ministry of the Word of God this week, each Sunday, of doing anything for Him. We Gentiles, sinners, under the curse, bound for hell, gloriously redeemed by the precious blood, we should be lending praises to our eternal Lord. And it's in the light of that I want us to leave this place tonight saying to ourselves, can I really thank Him? Can I really thank Him? Or is God doing me a favor? You know something? I've made a sacrifice to be here this week.

God ought to be jolly well glad about that. You see, it changes your whole concept of God, and it changes your whole concept of service. It changes your whole concept of living.

This is the ministry of the Church. God grant grace to proclaim the Word of Christ, promote the worship of Christ, perform the work of Christ, until the day when the whole Church will be presented without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. The quality, the unity, the ministry of the local Church under His Lordship, living through His sufficiency.

Let us pray. Our time is up, but we're going to sing a hymn tonight, and each night until Thursday. And unless I say anything to the contrary, I would like to leave the altar open, the mercy seat.

If anyone would like to come and just kneel for a few moments during the singing of this hymn and return to their seat, please do so. If you want to remain there and be counseled at the conclusion of the service,

by all means do so. If any one of these nights I suggest that we have a brief after-meeting and some instruction, well that will be indicated.

But I believe a series like this ought to be a time where we express some response to what God has said. If God has touched you last night, or any of the nights of the assembly, and you'd like to just come forward quietly and kneel just in the presence of God, and then sit back to your seat without counseling or anything else, you do so. But if you desire help, just remain there and we'll be available at the conclusion of the service.

Lord, seal with your Holy Spirit your word to our hearts here tonight, and grant that you will have your way, your full, undisputed, unconditional way in all of our lives. For your dear name's sake, amen.

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