

The Church

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Date: 16 May 2021

[0:00] And we do acknowledge that some, not in our number, that some, we do live stream our services and I know for some, they genuinely can't be here today, they're not well, they're not feeling well, they've got reasons why they can't be here or others might tune in after the event because of other things, they can't make it.

And we thank God for you that are here today as well as those that might be joining online from elsewhere. Talking about the subject of the church, the church. And friends today this is not your church or my church, it's his church. Amen. It's his church.

And this is what he says in Matthew chapter 16 as he addresses Peter. And he's addressing Peter, he's just confessed faith in the Christ as the foundation stone. Really, Peter's confession was that thou art the Christ, the son of the living God. That was the confession of Peter.

And on that rock, our Lord says, I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. It's his church and he's the one building it. Amen. And the word church in the Greek, it means a group of called out people in effect. The church is God's called out people.

And I know I've spoken on the theme of the church of recent times as well, but it's a subject that bears repeating because it's precious, it's important to God and it should therefore be important to us.

[1:27] Let's learn about what the Bible speaks to us about the church. Of course, we know the church is uniquely really a New Testament concept. But you think back even through the pages of scripture as the congregation of Israel, as the people of Israel assembled, there was something special when God's people got together.

And that's likewise in the New Testament, in the church proper. And as we are part of that church today, even here right now, there's something special when God's people get together.

And we see that in Hebrews 10, where it tells us of the church and the right to tell the Hebrews says this from chapter 10, verse 23. He says, let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, for he is faithful, that promise.

And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works. Let us consider one another, provoke unto love and to good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the matter of some is, but exhausting one another.

In other words, encouraging one another. And so much the more as you see the day approaching. There's a day approaching and look, I don't know what your view of eschatology is, but it's closer today than it was yesterday.

[2:48] Amen. That day is approaching, isn't it? Amen. Amen. And surely tomorrow, if we see tomorrow, it'll be closer still. My friends, that day is approaching and it says for the meantime, we should be assembling, not forsaking.

So why come to church? Here's some good reasons why God's people should get together, why we should get together, at least four. At least four good reasons why we should fellowship, why we should be the assembly.

And number one is, it's a provoking of fellowship. It's a provoking of fellowship. We see the Bible speaks, as we just read just there, in Hebrews 10, verse 24, I think it is.

It says, let us consider one another to provoke unto good works. Love and unto good works. A good reason to fellowship, a good reason to fellowship, a good reason to be the church, is a chance to provoke one another.

Now, it means kind of a stirring. Now, I know there's a few stirrers here. I think my dad's one of them. Now, stirring one another, but you've got to stir in a good way, dad.

[3:53] Now, you stir unto, what is it? To love and to good works. That's what we should be stirring one another unto. And it's a clear-cut command to stir one another, to provoke one another in a good way.

It's God's command to us. And now, some people think of the church as kind of a take it or leave it thing. Some people come to church only three times, three times. When they're hatched, when they're matched, and when they're dispatched.

You know, you get born and they sprinkle water on people, unknowing that that really doesn't affect anything. And then there's a matching, there's the joining in marriage, and then there's the dispatching when you're in the hearse and in the coffin.

Now, friends, let's not leave it to just those three times, amen? The church has a biblical obligation to be faithful in attending church. Because the church isn't the building, it's the people.

The church should assemble. And attend church. Attend. Assemble together. That's the point. Gather together. But friends, we call to that. It's a good thing for us, for our soul, isn't it?

[5:01] That we call to that, to fellowship. A regularly attending fellowship, it's important. It's important, and it's a responsibility for the believer. And so we come to church to stand here because we consider one another.

We consider one another. It's not about being a solo flight. We are a body, a group. We encourage one another. And to do the encouraging of one another, we've got to be with one another.

We love the brethren. Fellowship, the word fellowship means to share. And it's got the sense of the like term here of partner, of companion, of sharing.

When we fellowship is a sharing, we share with one another. We share our experiences. I know we had a testimony of life. It was a real stirring testimony.

We encourage that. If you've got a testimony, see me. We'll see if we can encourage through that testimony. Share what God has done for you. I know there's some folk who've got a testimony of what God's been doing for them.

[6:03] And it's good to share that because we can encourage one another that way. When we fellowship, we receive strength and edification and encouragement to do our Christian duty.

And God's always intended that we get together as brothers and sisters from every nation, tribe and tongue and people. Amen. We're brothers and sisters. We've got the one Father, our Heavenly Father, don't we?

Amen. And Christ forever changes our relationships with each other when we trust Him as our Saviour and Lord. He's especially our Master.

And we develop those relationships with those who love Him too. Though they're different from us, we've got a wonderful special bond. The bond of love. The bond of salvation.

We're one family under God. Under His Lordship. And God melds us together, doesn't He? He knits us together in love. What a picture. Now the family of God is a bit of a strange bunch, you could say.

[7:04] Just look at that. The kinds of people that God drew to form that family, that early church that was formerly demon-possessed people.

There was tax collectors and doctors and fishermen. There was political radicals like the Zealots. Sons of Thunder. There was doubters for a time like Thomas.

Former prostitutes. There was easily frightened people. You could consider Timothy such that he had some fears. There was Gentiles. There was Jews. There was Samaritans. There was old.

There was young. There was male and female. Educated. Not so educated. Extroverts. Introverts. Poor and rich. Black or white.

Or any state in between. And tall or small. Friends, we're one body. Amen? We're drawn together just like that body that was the early church. And in Christ we've become, it says, brothers and sisters in Christ.

[8:06] Only God can take all that kind of mishmash and make it one family, couldn't he? God does it by his grace. And for God there's no such thing as an unimportant person in his family.

All of us have a special place and have an importance of value. Such that Christ would pay his precious blood, pour it out for us. So we might think, who am I?

I'm just one person. What would the church be if I wasn't here? Now if we all thought like that, there'd be no one here, wouldn't there? You know, one person with God is the majority. And one person can still make a huge difference.

You might think, especially, you know, if it's a big gathering, you might think, who am I? I'm just, in this number, I'm just insignificant. But even history tells us how one person can make a massive difference.

For example, one vote gave Oliver Cromwell control of England. That was a massive difference that was made there. One vote gave America the English language instead of German.

[9:07] Imagine that, we could be speaking German over there at the moment. In 1875, one vote changed France from a monarchy to a republic. And in 1923, one vote gave Adolf Hitler leadership of the Nazi party.

Now one person can make a huge difference, for good or bad, amen? And so you might think, who am I? You're important. One person with God. One person can mean so much in the world.

How much more then can one person mean in God's family? You're very precious to Him. So, assemble. Provoke one another. It's a good thing. Encourage.

And be encouraged. Exhort. And keep on exhorting. It's been said, a church is not an art gallery for the exhibition of eminent saints, but a hospital for the sick sinners to be cured.

There was a time where there was an elderly man who could be seen every morning trudging to church without fail, day after day.

[10:12] And everyone on the block knew that he was dead. He couldn't hear a word. Now, I'm not sure. I know there's someone who's testified. They can't hear half of what I say either. Hopefully I'm speaking loud enough.

They can hear this. But everyone thought this man, he's so deaf. Why is he even at church? He can't hear a word. He can't hear a word of what the prince is saying, or even the songs they're singing, the choir, the sermon.

And one cynical neighbor asked the man, why do you go to church each Sunday when you can't hear a word? And the humble man replied, I come each week to let people know which side I'm on. You know, it's important, isn't it? To let people know which side you're on. An elderly grandmother had to go to work in spite of arthritis, and she was a cleaner in a big city hotel, and on the job at the stroke of six every morning.

And one of the guests said to her, so you wash the floor six mornings a week? And then he added, well, at least on Sunday morning you can sleep in. I hope you get plenty of rest that day.

[11:11] And the grandmother looked at him with a smile and said, no, that's the morning I get up early too to take my grandchildren to church. And the stranger paused, wouldn't it help you to keep going if you slept in that one morning a week and the elderly lady leans her back on her knees, her red hands in the pail of water there as she was doing the cleaning.

She said, oh, it's going to church on Sundays that keeps me going the other six days of the week. You know, it keeps us going, doesn't it? It keeps our faith going. It keeps our encouragement going to be with God's people.

And we see in the Word of God, it talks about the early church in Acts chapter 2 from 41 through 47. It paints a picture of what the early church was like.

And we can read much more in the context here. But picking it up from verse 41, it says that they gladly received his word and they were baptized. The same day there were added unto them about 3,000 souls.

And then it says, They were devoted to this.

[12:21] They devoted themselves. They continued steadfastly to this. They were devoted. Devotion is a good thing to have as a Bible believer. It's a key word.

And that devotion encompassed numbers of things. And we see their devotion, that they were steadfastly continuing. They were devoted to the apostles' teaching. They were devoted to fellowship.

They were devoted to breaking a bread. Remembering the Lord's Supper. They were devoted to prayer. And they were devoted to meeting one another's needs. And the goal of every member was

to be devoted to the others.

The early church cared for one another. We see they practically cared. It's important. We see how they loved one another. The people of the day said of the church.

See how they loved one another. It was an outstanding feature of the church. And in him we become, as we've said, brothers and sisters together.

[13:23] One family. In spite of all the other differences. So we can come, no matter what our culture or background. Now even people like me, homies, are in the family of God.

From every culture, every persuasion, every tribe, kindred, tongue and nation. Friends, and our new family bonds will last forever. And we are more connected spiritually than some of our family who do not know the Lord.

And friends, do we truly love our Lord? If so, we'd love his brethren too. Brothers and sisters of God. And then we will watch and come to church as often as we can.

Someone has said, there's a particular church where they serve coffee. And it was always served after the sermon. Now, we've been not doing that of late because of the COVID, but there's probably a good reason why we could probably start that again soon.

But having a bit of after service refreshments is a good thing. But in this church, they were talking about the coffee being served after the sermon. A minister asked one of the smaller members of the congregation, one of the kids, if they knew why they had this time of coffee.

[14:37] You know, meaning for encouragement really and fellowship. And without hesitation, the youngster replied to wake people up before they have to drive home. You know, it's like, hope you don't need a coffee after this one.

But friends, we've got to provoke one another, don't we? Provoke one another, shouldn't we? To love and to good works. God's people should get together for provoking in a good way.

And we know some people are provoking in a bad way. You don't want that. There's some people that provoke and you think, oh, they put people off our church or any church. You get people that, you know, stick their noses up in the air, you know, look funny through slanty eyes at you, you know, give you a bit of a dirty look because you might be sat in their chair or something.

We don't want to be provoking in that way, do we? Let's not be like that. But we want to provoke unto love and to good works. Amen? Another good reason why God's people should get together is for praising.

For praising. It says that in 2 Thessalonians 2. Paul writes to the Thessalonians, he says, Now we besiege you brethren by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and by our gathering unto Him.

[15:46] Our gathering together unto Him. He says that it's a time of meeting with God. And let's not just have a meeting, let's meet with God. Amen? We can have meetings galore, we can have meeting after meeting and we can rattle off all the meeting times, but it's not so much about having the meeting, it's about meeting with Him.

That's what matters. Meet with God. And when we do that, there's praise that comes out of our lips. In Hebrews 2 verse 12, it says, I will declare thy name unto my brethren in the midst of the church or in the midst of the assembly, in the midst of the congregation.

It says, In the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. When we get together, there's praise, isn't it? We provoke to praise, to worship, to honour and lift up our Lord and sing songs with doctrine and truth from our hearts.

When we get together, let's worship our God. And He has promised that He's with us as we get together. Do we act as if He were bodily present? Well, He is.

In effect, He is. He is present. Another reason, number three here, is why we should get together as a church is for proclaiming the Word of God.

[17:04] It says, And the next Sabbath day came almost the whole city together. Wouldn't that be good? To hear the Word of God. There was a proclaiming of the Word of God, God's Word.

And so, God helping us when someone preaches they're delivering God's Word, faithfully exhorting from the Word of God. It says, Exhort one another, not just for the preacher, but for all of us, one another, to provoke, to exhort, to encourage.

As we get together, we're able to do that. Paul exhorts the Ephesian elders in Acts 20, verse 28. He says, And when we get together, there's a feeding.

Hopefully we get a feed for our soul. We get something wholesome from that nutritious Word of God, that nourishment from the Scriptures, from knowing more of Him, from being encouraged in our faith.

1 Corinthians 4, 17, Paul says, I sent to you Timothy, who's my beloved son and faithful in the Lord. He shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach everywhere, in every church.

[18:28] So teaching, there's that exhorting, there's that feeding, there's that teaching. Paul says, we get that teaching as we come. And friends, don't limit it to just some of those two.

I know for some it's a bit too difficult, maybe distance-wise, but if you're able, come to the teaching times. I know at our Bible study we had pretty low numbers Wednesday night, I've got to confess, but if you're able, come along.

It's how we can encourage one another. We get around the Word of God. And it's getting together, it's encouraging one another. You can give your input and receive.

It's not just a receiving, it's participating. We learn about God in the assembly. And we strengthen our faith as we hear and study God's Word. Take it in, let it feed our soul.

And God's Word, it encourages us, it strengthens us, it helps us, it blesses us, it inspires us, it's God's truth, it blesses us and challenges us. There was a man who refused to attend church and a minister checked up on him and he got a bit heated and a pastor asked him, what was wrong?

[19:42] And he answered, I don't go to church because every time I do, they throw something at me. And what do you mean, the preacher asked. The man said, when I was just a baby, my parents took me to church and the minister threw water on me.

And when I got married, the wedding ceremony took place and they threw rice on me. And then hearing this, the pastor said, well, I hope the next time you go won't be the time they throw dirt on you.

You know, friends, there's good reasons to go to church. You know, don't leave it to those kind of special moments, but let it be something you're consistent with. And so we've seen reasons for church is that provoking.

Join in that. That praising. That proclaiming of God's word. And a fourth one is praying. In Acts 4.31, we read how when they got together, they prayed.

The place was shaken. Where they were assembled together and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and they spake the word of God with boldness. When they prayed, it says, the place was shaken.

[20:50] Amen. When they were assembled together. So coming together to pray is a good thing. It's like a discipline thing. Sometimes we've got the prayer meeting, but every meeting is a prayer meeting, isn't it?

Every time, we can pray. We can pray, oh, you're praying right now. I've been going to pray for one another. We can pray that we'll be encouraged, that we can pray for any needs. And we can pray for personal prayers.

prayers. This time, maybe after the meeting proper, you might say g'day to someone and say, how can I pray for you? You know, that's a good thing to do, isn't it? There could be someone who needs your prayers right here, right now, in this meeting.

And you can share in prayer for them, pray for them, pray for one another. It's a good godly thing to do. In Acts 12, it says, as Peter was in prison, it says, prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.

So we can pray for others. We can pray without ceasing. So don't wait for the meeting to pray. Pray without ceasing. Prayer was made without ceasing of the church.

[21:54] So attend church, defend church, extend church, commend church. The early church had its share of squabbles and disagreements, but they stuck together.

It's a wonder they made it. Isn't it all the heresies and controversies and all of the conflict at times through church history? Look, the church has never been perfect as such.

It's always been a group of people, fallible, failing, frail humans. And yeah, we can see the church grow for God's glory.

It's been said when a group of thoroughbred horses face a tack, they stand in circle facing each other with their back legs they kick out at the enemy. That's a good thing to do, isn't it?

We should be together kicking out at the enemy. Donkeys do just the opposite. They face the enemy and they kick each other. People, people don't be a donkey today. How often does the church do just that?

[22:54] They ignore the real enemy and they start attacking fellow believers. Let's not be like that. You know, criticize the pastor, yes, when he needs it. But tell me if you've got something I need to improve on.

I'd love to get positive, constructive feedback. Amen? But friends, let's not criticize the church. Love the church. It's God's institution. We're God's family.

And the church is not perfect. It's really a society of sinners in a way, isn't it? We're imperfect people saved by the grace of God by faith. And it's the only organization I know of that you have to profess to be bad before you can join.

You've got to say, I'm a sinner. I need a savior. You're welcome. You're welcome. Just say, I'm a sinner. That's the qualification. I need Jesus to save my soul.

It's a society of sinners that call on the grace of God and receive by faith that finished work of the cross. It's a society of sinners who've realized they're sinners and abandoned themselves together to do something for the glory of God.

[24:00] God drawing us together to be his people, it's a precious thing. So we ought to love the church. Why should we love the church? One really great reason is because the Lord Jesus loves the church, doesn't he?

He's loved the church and he's given himself for it. I'm not talking about giving himself for buildings, but for people. You and I who are saved and a part of his church were the object of his love and what he loves we ought to love.

Now there's tensions in churches, we know that sometimes, but just as there are in a family, we all stick together, don't we? We all stick together. And, you know, some have the thought, and I know there's one comment we got yesterday, I'm not sure if it was Peter or Paul I was with, they said, oh, I can be a Christian without going to church.

And I said, yeah, in theory, yeah, that's true in theory, isn't it? I mean, it's technically true, technically true, but imagine being a soldier without an army.

I mean, honestly, can you imagine that? Or, you know, you can picture all sorts of other kind of scenarios where we're better together and God wants us to be together.

[25:24] And, unfortunately, faithfulness and words like commitment and loyalty, reliability, are no longer considered as essential. It's like, I don't know what it is with things these days, it seems more so.

And as believers, faithfulness is important. And I'm preaching to it converted because you're here. But, there's that sense where when we're together, we please God, it's a good thing. And it's good for your soul.

And, you being here is good for others around you too. Because you're not just here for yourself. Amen? One characteristic that should mark Christians is faithfulness. Now, I'm not going to beat you over the head and say you've got to be at every single meeting and I'm going to be on your back every time you're not here.

But, it's that sense where there's a faithfulness because we want to be faithful, don't we? And it should mark us because it marks God. He's faithful, isn't he? Isn't he faithful? Amen.

And you come to church to meet with your brothers and sisters in Christ, there's a sense where Christ is present in a way that is different. It's not that he's not present when you go home and sit in your lounge room, but there's that sense where we gather together is especially present as we gather in his name.

[26:42] So, there's no substitute for that assembling together. And again, this is not to condemn people who might take the occasional Sunday off, they're not well, whatever it be.

There's reasons why that can happen. We're not like that, that you've got to, that I'm putting a burden on your back that it's impossible to carry. But we need to think of the church, it's special, it's important, and especially so as we've got that personal relationship with our Lord.

But going to church doesn't make us a Christian, either. Some might, you might say, well, I'm at church every Sunday. Well, that's a good thing, but it doesn't save you.

It's very, very important to understand that. You know, like Billy Sunday said, going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than taking a wheelbarrow into a garage makes it a car. There's that sense where you could come to church morning and night, midweek, every night, and miss heaven. Because it's not about that. And, and when we're witnessing at times on the Saturdays, you get people that say they're a Christian and then you, then you kind of just dig a little bit deeper.

[27:55] You know, if you were to face the Almighty, you stand before His heavenly throne and He says, why should I let you into my heaven? And some people say things like, well, I've been pretty good.

I've not been too bad. Or, you know, well, I go to church or, I think I'm going to be okay. I hope I'm going to get to heaven. I hope He's going to let me into heaven.

And we say, look, it's not of that. It's, do you know Jesus as your Saviour and Lord? Do you believe Jesus died on the cross for your sins?

Do you believe and trust Him to be your own personal Saviour? To trust Him that He died on the cross for your sin? You paid for it there? Fully paid for it?

And you trust and confess Him as your Saviour? That's what stays. That's what stays. But God's people, it's a good thing to get together. There's a provoking there.

[28:51] There's a praising. There's a proclaiming of His Word. There's a praying. Now here's another challenging kind of set of reasons people might use.

Don't stay away from church because it rains. You go to work in the rain because it's hot. It's hot at your house too because it's cold.

It's warm and friendly inside because no one invited you. People go to the movies without being begged because your job makes you tired. You may lose your job because there are hypocrites. You associate with them daily because you have company. They will admire your loyalty if you bring them along. Or just tell them to wait until you get back. What's more important?

Because you worry about your clothes. Our church is supposed to be a fashion parade. Come to Him. Now there's one faithful member, it's called, who wrote to the pastor and he said this, Dear Pastor, you often stress attendance at worship as being very important for the Christian but I think a person has a right to miss now and then.

[30:04] I think every person ought to be excused for the following reasons and the number of times indicated. Christmas, the Sunday before or after one. New Year's, you know, there's a party on.

Party lasted too long. There's another one. Easter, of course you've got to get away for the holidays. Oh, Australia Day weekend. It's a national holiday after all. That's another one.

Anzac Day weekend, need to get away, of course. Queen's Birthday weekend, need to visit somebody. The school's closing, you know, end of the holes.

The kids need a break. The school's open, likewise. Family reunions, just a family thing. Yeah. We can put lots of numbers there, couldn't we?

They put two for that one. Family reunions. You sleep late. Saturday night activities, you just sleep in. Maybe allow four Sundays there.

[31:02] Guests in the family, oh, maybe allow four. Anniversary, one. Sickness, one for each of the family members, five of those. Business trips, that's a must.

Three of those. Holidays. Oh, I've got to say. Holidays, three weeks off there, that's three Sundays. Bad weather, ice, snow, rain. Oh, no snow to worry about here.

Clouds, you know, just too hot. Can't be bothered. Sport, take five Sundays off the sport.

Unexpected company, just can't walk out. Well, you could say, I see I've got a commitment.

Daylight savings, miss two Sundays for that. You know, put the clocks forward, clocks back. I'll give you lots of excuses here. You've got to use them now. There's a special on TV, you know, some

great footy game or something.

Allow three of those. So this faithful member said this, adding these all up, pastor, that leaves only two Sundays per year. So you can count on us to be in church on the fourth Sunday in February and the third Sunday in August, unless providentially hindered.

[32:06] Sincerely, faithful member. Of course, that's, that's not including when you might just feel too, too busy, too tired. I mean, let's face it, we can all think of reasons why, you know, even, even loved ones of mine, even me, we have reasons why we think, oh, do I have to?

But of course, that, we need to think, what really counts? Doesn't it? Isn't it important? Don't be like that member of the orchestra who played the piccolo.

They play this little tiny instrument, the piccolo, and the famous conductor was leading the orchestra, all the instruments and voices joining in this full voice, and the thundering organ, the role of the percussion, the blare of the horns, and in the midst of all this din, one man who played the piccolo, he was far up in the corner, he said to himself, doesn't matter what I do, my little instrument doesn't matter, and he stopped playing, and suddenly the great conductor flung up his arms, and he brought the rehearsal to a complete standstill, where is the piccolo?

He cried, God listens for our share in the orchestra, no matter how small that share may be.

Friends, you might think, I'm an insignificant Christian, you're important, he died for you, you're saved, his son, his daughter, you're a brother and sister in Christ, it's good to get together.

Now I know some of you have probably heard this one before, so bear with me, but it bears repeating, and I hate to repeat myself, and I know sometimes I do, but sometimes, some things bear repeating.

[33:50] And this is how someone described the church of God, and his role in it, he said he's a soldier in the army of God. He says, I'm a soldier in the army of God, the Lord Jesus Christ is my commanding officer, the Holy Bible is my code of conduct, faith, prayer, and the word are my weapons of warfare, I've been taught by the Holy Spirit, trained by experience, tried by adversity, and tested by fire, I'm a volunteer in the army, his army, and I'm enlisted for eternity.

I will either retire in this army, at the rapture, or die in this army, but I will not get out, sell out, be talked out, or pushed out, I'm faithful, reliable, capable, and dependable.

If my God needs me, I am there. If he needs me in the Sunday school, to teach children, to work with the youth, to help adults, or just to sit and learn, he can use me, because I'm here.

I'm a soldier, I'm not a baby, I do not need to be pampered, pats it, primed up, pumped up, picked up, or pepped up. I am a soldier. No one has called, has to call me, remind me, visit me, write me, entice me, or lure me.

I'm a soldier, I'm not a win. I'm in place, saluting my king, obeying his orders, praising his name, building his kingdom. No one has to send me gifts, or food, or candy, or cards, or give me handouts.

[35:19] I don't need to be cuddled, cradled, cared for, or catered to.

I'm committed. I cannot have my feelings hurt, bad enough, to turn me around. I cannot be discouraged enough, to turn me aside.

I cannot lose enough, to cause me to quit. When Jesus called me, into this army, I had nothing. And if I end up with nothing, I will still come out even.

I will win. My God will supply all my needs. I am more than a conqueror. I will always triumph. I can do all things through Christ. Devils cannot defeat me.

People cannot delusion me. Weather cannot weary me. Sickness cannot stop me. Battles cannot beat me. Money cannot buy me. Governments cannot silence me.

And hell cannot handle me. I am a soldier. Even death cannot destroy me. For when my commander calls me, from this battlefield, he will promote me to a captain, and then bring me back, to rule this world with him.

[36:17] I am a soldier in the army, and I'm marching, claiming victory. I will not give up. I will not turn around. I am a soldier, marching heaven bound.

Here I stand. Will you stand with me? Now friends, there's a lot of truth to that, isn't there? There's a sense where, we are soldiers in the army of God. We are in this battle zone of life.

And friends, we must stand together, as the army of God. And if you've trusted Christ as your Lord, you're enlisted already. So the question is, are you on active duty, serving the Lord faithfully, daily, on duty, 24 by 7?

That's what soldiers do. Or are you reserve status? And that's, I used to be in the army reserves, and they only serve when they're caught upon. Or, you know, like the, the Christian soldiers, they, they report for duty, Christmas and Easter.

Or are you, are you on active duty? Or are you AWOL? Absolutely without the Lord. Now the holiest moment of the church service, is when God's people, go out the church door, into the world, to be the church.

[37:30] To be the church. We don't go to church, so much as we are the church. I just want to encourage you this morning. Firstly, make sure, you're saved.

That's, that's what matters. Coming to church, does not make you a Christian. Don't make that mistake. You know, we, we love people coming, who, are searching.

It's a good place to search for God. And he says, if you search for me, with all your heart, you will find me. He, he's, he's there to talk to, to call on, to know him.

You might say, preacher, this is, this is hitting a button for me. I know I'm not a Christian yet. Please see me straight after the service. You know, grab me, buttonhole me and say, I want to get saved. Tell me how. Oh, you know, not that I'm the answer for everything, but I do know enough to tell you that. And there's others sitting near you that know the Lord. And you might say, I really want to know God.

[38:28] I want to know, I want to know that I know that I'm going to heaven. I want to know that I'm saved. Friends, you can know that for sure. The Bible shows you how. Believe on him. And we'll guide you, we'll bless you, we'll help you.

Take that step of faith. And then, as God's people, each one, some of you are older and more learned than me, than others. We've all got a part to play.

Those that are older in the faith, those that are younger, let's encourage one another. Provoking, praising, praying, proclaiming the word. Let's pray.

Lord, we thank you for your precious word and its promises that we are such that you call us soldiers in your army. Lord, bless us each one. Our families, our needs, our hearts, Lord, for souls to be one in this city and beyond.

Lord, for needs here and afar, in other countries too. Lord, work a work in your people. Those that are watching, and we know for some, they just honestly can't get here because of ill health.

[39:35] Lord, stir them up, encourage them, that even in their housebound situation, they can still play a part in blessing others in other ways.

Lord, we thank you for every soul here. Lord, be lifted up, we pray, in our own hearts and lives. For your glory.

Lord Jesus, we pray. Amen. Amen.