

The Supremacy of the Local Church

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[0 : 0 0] Well, first of all, I would like to say thank you to the many who have, with humility, been willing to attempt to recite passages of Scripture. And it's been a blessing to all of us, hasn't it? Haven't you enjoyed listening to different people get up here? And they bring with them, each of them when they come up here, they bring their individual personalities. And you hear just the way God's made is so different. And I have so appreciated the different recitations from month to month to month. And I want you to know we're going to keep on doing that as we work our way through the book of Ephesians. When I started into it, I thought, well, we'll do one round, and we're in our second round, and there's more rounds to come. I have a little idea that we'll probably be in Ephesians perhaps the remainder of the year. And that means that there are many other opportunities for reciting. Isn't that encouraging? I didn't hear anybody.

Yes! Yeah, right. I'm going for it. While we're talking about that, chapter 5 of Ephesians is available for anybody that would like to do it coming up. Now, you're asking, so when will that be? Sometime in April, May. Okay? That gives all of us plenty of time, doesn't it? Okay? And you understand there's really no pressure. And what I mean by that is that you can come up here and handle that chapter in whatever fashion you want to do it. We have had some read it. We've had the family idea was a new one, wasn't it? I like that. I remember when Pete mentioned to me the thought that he'd had about doing it, and I said, no, that's a great idea. And I really appreciated hearing, did you notice how the kids had such an easy time? How many of you realize that as we get older, the memory work that we used to do in Awana becomes a little more difficult, right? Okay?

So, I am looking for someone at this point to do chapter 5. I have chapter 4 outlined, so please rush me right after the service and let me know. Five or six of you are ready to do...you're doing five? I missed that one. Tish got number 5, and you have number 6, right? Okay, so we're starting on chapter 1 in the third round. Okay? So, if you want to...you're looking at me like, yeah, I'm doing it. I can see it in your eyes, so I'll be catching you afterwards. Good. Okay. Great blessing. I want you to open your Bibles, if you would, and we're going to look at Ephesians chapter 2, beginning there in verse 19. Let me read it to you, and then we'll come to the Lord this morning in prayer.

[2 : 5 8] So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but your fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure being joined together grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In Him, you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Let's pray.

My gracious Father, for us, prayer is not a habit, but is a glad expression of our confidence and dependence on You. For we are mindful of what it says over there in John chapter 15, verse 5, that without me, You can do nothing. And Lord, there's nothing that we want to take credit for in our own power, that has of any spiritual value or note. And so this morning, I would plead with you that your Spirit would work in me, that I might preach your Word with the enabling of your Spirit. And I also pray that your people would receive your Word with the enabling of the Spirit of God, that as it is taught and as it is apprehended in their lives, that your Spirit would take and tap it firmly home in the hearts of all of us, that we, as we allow the Scriptures to make a difference in our lives, would be governed and controlled and formed by it. We're thankful for the blessing we have in prayer. We're thankful for the blessing we have in the ministry of the Spirit of God that indwells each believer. And this morning, it is our desire that we, as we come to You in dependence, would also find You answer and bless that Christ might be exalted among us. And we ask this in His name. Amen. If you were to ask a number of Bible scholars, what is one of the recurring themes to the book of Ephesians, I think without question, you would have almost any of them that you asked mention the

fact that probably one of the recurring themes in the book of Ephesians would be the issue of the doctrine of the local church, the supremacy, the importance of the congregation of believers that are gathered together. And we have a tendency to think about the book of Ephesians as being one of those books that you can go to, particularly when you're talking about marriage. You can go to chapter 5 if it is dealing with relationships with an employer or dealing with the attitudes that children should have towards their parents. We often tend to go to the latter half of the book and focus in on the things that are written there. However, the book of Ephesians begins by building a clear understanding in all of our hearts of the significance and the supremacy of the local church and the fact that we have come to be part of that by the grace and power of God. And on the basis of our relationship with God through faith and our relationship to the body of Christ, the other things that we talk about, namely the marriage issues, the family issues, the relationship issues that we find in chapter 4 and 5, they're all kind of the follow-up to understanding what it means to be part of the body and the bride of Christ. And sadly, we live in a day and age where the supremacy and the significance of the local church is something that is kind of diminished importance and understanding. Let me illustrate it this way and I'll come back to it. If you were to ask yourself the question, do I go to church or do I belong to church? The answer to that question is very telling of whether or not you understand Bible doctrine about the church. Do I go to a church or do I belong to a church? I want us to track just for a moment here at the very beginning some of the passages in

Ephesians that talk about the local church. And so go back, if you would, to Ephesians chapter 1, and we're going to just read, and you follow along with me, Ephesians chapter 1, verse 22 and 23. For he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. And I would ask as you are reading or following along with me to ask yourself the question, does this passage speak about the church in an individualized sense, or is it something that refers to the church more as a unit, a body, a collection, a group of which I am a part? I individually, in reference here, or part of the larger, namely the body of Christ. Another passage to look at would be Ephesians chapter 2, verse 21 and 22.

[7 : 58] In whom the whole structure being joined together grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him also, you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Ephesians chapter 3, verse 21. To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever. Amen. Ephesians chapter 4, verse 1 through 6. And I'm not going to read all of the part to you, but I want to remind you, kind of picking up there in verse 4, it says, there is one body, one spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call.

One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. By grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. Ephesians chapter 5, verse 32. However, this mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

Here is Paul in the passage that when we talk about marital issues, we have a tendency to pick up and take that whole section and think of it almost exclusively as being directed towards husband and wife relationship, not understanding that the primary purpose of a wholesome and godly relationship is not for self-benefit, but for the testimony and for the glory of Christ. And he reminds us this passage about man and woman, male and female, husband and wife, it's really something that relates to the glory of Christ. Ephesians chapter 6, verse 18. It says this, praying at all times in the spirit with all prayer and supplication to that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints.

And as you work your way through the book of Ephesians, one of the things that I trust is growing to be a more firm and settled conviction in your mind is that the body of Christ, the local church of which you are a part, is a supremely important factor in your spiritual journey, and it is not something to be taken lightly.

I don't want you to miss that fact for several reasons. For one, Christ's purpose in saving us was not just so that you and I would have fire insurance and kind of a place to go when it's all over. Now, it's well and good that when we die, we who know Christ go where?

[10 : 34] We go to heaven. It's our blessing to have that confidence and certainty. Someone came to me earlier today and said, hey, pastor, I was reading a passage in Philippians where it said, for me to live is Christ and to die is gain. And the individual said, you know what? I began thinking about how that verse relates to what you often say about any better and I'd be dead. I was taking

diabetic classes for the last four weeks. And one of the responsibilities of the facilitator was to try to get the people in the class to kind of relate to each other. And so, she'd make a little small talk and chatter. And so, she made the mistake of saying, hey, Tim, how are you doing today? Guess what I said?

The whole classroom full of diabetics, you know. And diabetics are people there. I was one of the healthiest diabetics there. I want you to know. I mean, and so, I said, any better than I'd be dead. This kind of Paul came across her face and she thought, I am not equipped to be a counselor this morning to deal with this person here. I said, no. I said, no, no, it's good. It's good. You know, the truth of the matter is, is that we who know Christ, I know how the story ends and it's good. It's a blessing. And it's because the Lord Jesus Christ has delivered me from the kingdom of darkness and put him in his kingdom. And Christ wants us to understand that this business of our salvation is not just about fire insurance, but is for the glory and the supremacy of Christ. And that is linked together and wrapped together into the truth that I am part of something bigger than myself. Namely, I'm part of the purposes of God and I'm part of the body of Christ. There's another reason why I really want you to understand that. And it is this, Satan has a strategy that we ought to be aware of. Whatever God says is good and thinks is valuable, Satan's always in the business of trying to do what with it? He's always trying to undermine it, discredit it, pull it apart, destroy it. Whether it has to do with what God ordained sex to be, or whether it has to do with the matter of marriage, whether it has to do with the matter of work.

[12:42] In every place where God has said, this is the way I want it to be, and here's why it's supposed to be that way, Satan turns around and what does he do? He attacks it, doesn't he? He uses his devices and his strategies to take our eyes off of the purposes and the plan and the glory of God and to divert our affections towards things that have nothing to do with eternity and subsequently lead us into the disappointment and ultimate despair that comes with disobedience to his word. And so as we study the scriptures this morning and we're thinking about the body of Christ, I want you to understand that the church is a very, very important thing. And it's clearly presented in the book of Ephesians as its importance is there for us to see. I want to tell you that frankly, Satan has been pretty effective. And it's amazing to find out how many professing believers actually look at their relationship with the church as a place they go rather than a place they belong.

Well, I'll go here because the price is right. That's the way you approach Walmart and Meijer, isn't that right? It's not the body of Christ that's to be treated that way.

And on the heels of our work through the first two chapters of Ephesians, I want us to recognize that what we have been learning is that God had a purpose in saving us. It is his glory. And now we come down to the matter of the doctrine of the local church and its supremacy in our lives.

Now, so I want to follow along with this on the heels of our careful study of God's work in saving us. The Spirit then explains salvation and how it relates to the believer in the church. And we're going to pick up this morning in verses 19, 20, 21, and we're going to mark three particular characteristics that Paul wants us to understand about the local church. Ephesians chapter 2, verse 19 through 21. And the first thing that we see there in verse 19 is that we're part of his kingdom. Look at what it says there. It says, so then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints. It's important for us to remember that earlier in Ephesians chapter 2, and you kind of think back over the things that we've seen, that Paul has taken a great deal of time repeatedly in Ephesians chapter 2 to remind us of where we once were.

How was the condition that you were in prior to your conversion? The Scriptures say you were dead, right? You were a slave to sin. You were abiding under the wrath of God. You were in a miserable place. In fact, one of the passages in Ephesians chapter 2 says that we were without hope. There's no wonder that the world is a pretty desperate and unhappy place when you stop and realize that looming over the horizon for the unbeliever is the absolute certainty that when everything is over, it's not going to be good. How is it going to be for us? It is going to be better. It's going to be blessing.

[15:51] And as we think about this early part of Ephesians, Paul wants us to understand that we came from a place of despair and uncertainty, and there was a time when we were strangers and aliens. That's the term that he uses in verse 19 to kind of summarize the earlier parts of the passage. He says, now, prior to that, you were in this messy situation. Now, he says, the believer is now a fellow citizen in the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God. We're a fellow citizen in the kingdom of God. I know that some of you, as part of your business, have to travel quite a lot. I don't

think anybody has more miles than John Jennings. Are you in here, John, this morning? Oh, there you are. John Jennings travels all over the world. My brother, Mark, is here, and I think, John, he's got you beat. He is worse than you or travels more than you. How's that? Let's go with that one. But I can tell you in the traveling I've done that being a citizen of the United States has some benefits. When I go through customs and I have that little old passport that says, I'm a citizen of the United States of America, there's something going with that little document that says, hey, this is a citizen of a great country, and the country stands behind its citizens. And in this passage, Paul is making the statement, you used to be aliens and strangers. You had no place, no connection, no bond, no privilege associated with. Now, you are a fellow citizen in the kingdom of God. And I want us to recognize that that is a tremendous blessing.

Turn over, if you will, to Philippians chapter 3, verse 20. Philippians chapter 3, verse 20. But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

I mean, we live here in America, and we enjoy the blessings and the benefits of this country. There are many, many of them. But the truth of the matter is, is that as the songwriter said, this world is not my home, I'm what? I'm just a passing through. And beloved, the day is coming when you and I will enjoy the blessing of being citizens in the eternal city and having Christ as our Lord and Savior and enjoy His presence forevermore. And as we think about it, it's important for us to remember that while we are temporal citizens here, the best is yet to come. And I want you to recognize that in that eternal state that you and I are going to enjoy, there will be no more disputes over injustice. You will not turn on the news and determine by the channel junk that you're listening to, which side of the aisle they support. You will not hear the crass, manipulative arguments over one side or the other. It will be under the reign and lordship of Christ, and all things will be in complete balance and perfect, and there will be no injustice, no crime, no suffering, no heartache. Furthermore, on the day of His appearing, our status will be something that is outstanding.

And I want you to look, if you will, turn now, if you will, to 1 Peter chapter 2. 1 Peter chapter 2, verse 9 and 10. Interesting that 1 Peter talks about what we are presently, but understand that these things are going to be fully realized in the day to come. It says, you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. What is the blessing that I have in salvation? It is that I am His child, and I have been appointed a position and an authority and a responsibility that is unique in blessing. And here it just reminds us, listen, you're not who you think you are. You're more important than that. You are a royal priesthood, a chosen race, a holy nation, a people for His own possession. And the Scriptures remind us when we sit there kind of thinking with a sour spirit, so what is this all about, and who am I, and why are things going as they are? Hold it. It's much better than you actually think. And I would encourage you, if you find yourself sitting here today, or through this last week you found yourself overwhelmed by the prospect of the life that you're enduring at the moment, remind yourself of what you really are.

You are part of the plan of God, and you are chosen and blessed and incredibly gifted by virtue of His kindness. Now, there's a second picture that I want us to see, going back to the passage in Ephesians. It says, first of all, that we are citizens, but then it also goes on and says this, that we're part of His family. Look at what it says there in verse 19, we are members of the household of God. Members of the household of God. Now, when it uses that word household, it's not talking about just the structure, the building, you know, that lot that your house is sitting on. It's actually talking about a group that are gathered around one person who is the Father and the one who is in charge of that group.

[21 : 18] And I want you to understand that by virtue of your salvation as a believer, you are part of the family of God, and you have God as your Father. It's important to recognize that. The idea is not about the place we live, but the idea is about the person that we belong to and the person we're connected to. Now, a workman, a serviceman may come into your home, and he may do some work for you.

He may even sit down. You can invite him. He's going to stay over and try to work on the washing machine or whatever else, and lunchtime is a, hey, have a sandwich with us. He may even use your facilities, get a glass of water from your refrigerator, but when it's all over, what does he do? He goes home. He's not part of the family. And here in the passage, it reminds us that because of our salvation and because of the Lord Jesus Christ, you and I are part of the family of God.

Now, the bonds of family are something that are special. They're lasting, and being a family member brings blessing and privilege, doesn't it? Because you're part of the family, you're accepted. Now, does the family recognize that you might be a little different than the rest of them? And the answer is what? Oh, yes. I will never forget. I was over speaking with the youth group, and I won't mention who it was that said it, but the individual commented, well, we're going to be having a family reunion and pray for me because there are some weird people in our family. I'm not looking over in the direction of where the person is at this point because I really, I just got the biggest chuckle out of that. And after it was my turn, I said, hey, you know what? I don't know of any family that doesn't have a lot of weird people in it. And the truth of the matter is, is we're all weird, aren't we?

But we're family. We're family. And because we're family, you accept one another. Not only that you're accepted, but you're also included in the things that are part of the family. When you have a family dinner, guess who gets invited? Family. Now, individuals may not show up because of their job or some certain pre-scheduled appointment, but because you're family, you're invited to be part of it. Because you're family, you're also expected to help and be involved in what's going on.

And being family doesn't grant you the right of being self-indulged and irresponsible. It calls you to be part of what that group is doing and to engage in that business. I want you to understand that because we're part of God's family, we have some incredible blessings that are worth marking.

[23 : 54] For one, because we're part of God's family, God hears our prayers. I love that privilege. How does the example prayer begin? How does it start? Our Father who art in heaven.

Does a child have a right to ask dad for things that a stranger and an alien don't have a right to ask? Absolutely. And remember when Jesus was talking about prayer, he said, listen, your father, if you were to go to him and ask for bread, he wouldn't give you a stone. And you ask for fish, he wouldn't give you a snake. He said, listen, if your earthly father is going to take care of your needs that way, won't your heavenly father go one better? Absolutely. And because God is our father, you and I have the right of asking for the needs that we have. Now, by the way, does that mean that he answers every time we ask? No. And I'm very thankful in retrospect that he did not grant me many of the things that at one time I thought I wanted. He has granted, according to his wisdom, everything that I need for life and godliness, and he has brought into my life those things that have helped me grow, even on occasion when I didn't think at all that's what I needed or wanted.

Secondly, the father takes care of our needs. When we come to him, we come with confidence that he will meet the needs that we have. Turn over just for a second to 1 Peter 5, verse 7.

The father cares for our needs, 1 Peter 5, verse 7. Take a look at it yourself so you can mark this. Make a note in your Bible because there'll probably come a time where you find yourself uncertain, concerned with while things are going to go, and will you have your needs met? 1 Peter 5, verse 7. Casting all your anxieties upon him, because what? He cares for you. By the way, does he know what you're going through? He does. Can I tell you that he knows what you're going to go through before you know what you're going to go through?

And he already has ordained the outcome of it. Isn't that true? Romans chapter 8, what's it say? All things work together for good. He is in the business of doing what is best for you, and yet, he says, when you find yourself anxious and you find yourself worried and concerned about how things are going to turn out, bring it to him. Let him know that you care and that you're concerned. And he says, casting all those anxieties on him, put them over on him because he cares for you. He loves you with an unconditional and unchanging love. Furthermore, I want you to understand that our Father deals with our weaknesses and corrects us for our good. Turn to Hebrews chapter 12.

[26 : 52] Earlier this week, I was kind of meditating upon some of the issues of life, and I was stopping to think of over 64 years, the number of different times that I found myself in situations where, at the moment, I thought things were pretty bad and pretty hard. And I began to think, you know what, Lord? It seems, now I couldn't say with absolute authority, but it seems that most of the valuable lessons I've learned I've learned in hardship. And then I thought to myself, that abstract mind thinking the way it does, I thought, so most hardships have been good in the outcome, so why haven't I picked up on that earlier in the process? Because usually, when hardships come, guess how Tim Kenoyer tends to react?

Oh, Lord, why are you doing this to me? What did you, what did I do? You know what I mean? How many of you are like that? You know, it's like the hardship comes, and the first thing you think is, so how do I get out of this? Lord, why are you doing this to me? And I began to remind myself, hold it,

God is doing this for my good.

Hebrews chapter 12, verse 7, it is for discipline that you have to endure. Now, let me read that again slowly. It is for discipline that you have to endure. Can we choose to not endure for a short period of time? Everybody smile at me because I'm going to tell you something you already know. Look up.

You can choose to walk away at the moment from the discipline you're enduring. Is that a wise idea? Listen, you can walk away, but he'll find you again. And so here it says, it's for discipline that you stay with it because God is doing something good. And if you decide you're going to take a, how is it in college, you could withdraw from the class, right? Withdraw from the class didn't mean you didn't have to take it later, did it? If you wanted to graduate, what did you have to do? You had to take it again somewhere else. And I would encourage you that it's better to stay in the class and say, all right, Lord, help me suck it up and get it done and learn the lessons you have for me. It says here, for discipline that you have to endure, God is treating you as sons.

For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? Play forward a little bit to verse 10. And I would encourage you, this is one to underline. It's a good one. For they disciplined us, talking about our fathers, our earthly fathers, for a short time as it seemed best to them.

[29 : 52] And short time is true. Most of us probably were under our fathers or are under and will be under our fathers' direct authority until we're about what? About 18, you go off to college and, you know, you're more or less on your own, right? It says here, they will discipline us for a short time, as seemed best. But look at what it says now. But he's, talking about God, disciplines us for our good that we may be, that we may share in his holiness. I like the way it reads in another translation, that we may be partakers of his holiness. So why is God putting heat on you as a believer? So that you may grow in holiness, that you may grow to have the character and heart of God in that particular situation. Having holiness or godliness means that I am in that situation acting and behaving and thinking in a fashion that's like God. How do I get there? How do I develop that mindset and that heart? It is by going through the adversity and the challenge that I begin to develop the character of God and I begin to learn in the circumstances. And so I want you to understand, as you look here and you think about the blessing of being part of a family, recognize that God is your father and it's an incredible blessing to be part of the family of God. Now that brings me to one more image that I want you to recognize in Ephesians chapter 2. There in verse 21 it says, in whom the whole structure being joined together grows into a holy temple. We are part of his kingdom, we are part of his family, and we are part of his temple. Do you follow the growing intensity or theological significance of those three units? You're a citizen, you're a family member, you're a place of worship.

When it says that we are being developed to be the temple, I want you to recognize that for the Old Testament saint, the temple was the very center of their thinking and their moral and cultural universe. It was the place that God chose to dwell among His people and to reveal Himself and manifest His glory on the earth. And the Old Testament temple was a particular place. It was in Jerusalem, wasn't it? That's where the Old Testament temple was. The New Testament temple is a people rather than a place. And when you hear me say something like that, one of the things that I trust is going through your mind is, yeah, where is that? Turn in your Bible, if you would, to 1 Corinthians chapter 3, verse 16. 1 Corinthians chapter 3, verse 16. Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's spirit dwells in you? Now, there are two different ways this temple imagery is used here in chapter 3 and again in chapter 6. And chapter 6 is talking more about our body personally being the temple of the

Holy Ghost. And it's talking about the reason that we ought not to engage in immorality is because our body belongs to Him and it's a place of His worship. In this passage in 1 Corinthians 3, it is talking about the congregation being the temple of God and it is talking again about the seriousness of which we ought to view that reality. Look, if you would, again, at 1 Corinthians chapter 6.

And just make reference to that so you can make the connection. In 1 Corinthians chapter 6, verse 16, it says, We as believers are the temple of God. We are the place where God is worshiped. And, beloved, the body of Christ, the local congregation, is the place where He is worshiped. And when do we worship God? How do we do that? One of the things that is obvious is when we gather together for corporate worship. And when we sing together and we express our thanksgiving and praise to God, we're worshipping Him. Isn't that right? But where else do we worship Him? We worship Him when we're at work, don't we? And when you are engaged in doing your work

responsibly and joyfully, not as a grump, but as someone who is gainfully employed by Christ for His glory. You're not working where you are to get a check. You're working where you are to make Jesus look good. Right? And when we engage in working in such a fashion, we worship God and other people look at us and say, whoa, what's going on with you? I am a worshiper of the Lord God Almighty, and the way I worship should be evident to everyone.

[35 : 28] When you're at home and you're a mother folding laundry, can that be worship? What's the answer? The third basket in particular. You know, and you're doing, it seems like, and the more you have, the more laundry you have. How many of you understand that? Remember the good old days? I tell you what, empty nesters is a fun place to be. But you know, folding laundry, cooking supper, getting up at night with the baby, these are all acts that glorify God when they're done with the right heart and for His glory.

Now, I want you to understand that the foundation of the church rests upon the Word of God. Look at what it says going back to that passage in Ephesians. Ephesians chapter 2, and it's important for us to recognize this. It says, the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the cornerstone. And what is being said in that passage is that the thing that adds or that brings stability and clarity to the structure or to the body of Christ is not just a bunch of people gathered together, having a good old time, kind of feeling good about each other. The thing that gives us structure and stability is the Word of God that is our foundation. When it talks about the apostles and the prophets, it is referring to the fact that those were the individuals to whom the authoritative Word of God was given. Over in Acts chapter 2, verse 42, it says that they gathered daily for the apostles' doctrine. It's talking about the teaching that the doctrine that Christ gave to the apostles and the apostles passed on to the early church. And so, the thing that is our structure is not, hey, we just happen to like each other. Our structure is the Word of God itself.

It goes on and says that the church is built up by His Spirit. Look at the passage. It says, in whom the whole structure being together, joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

And it says, in Him, you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. How is it, ultimately, that people are added to the church and become an organic, connected part of the body of Christ? It is through the Spirit of God. He is the one who brings them to salvation.

He is the one that knits them together to be part of the congregation and to be there for the sake of the glory of Christ. Mark one other thing. It says there that the church is the dwelling place of God.

[38 : 03] The dwelling place of God. It says, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, built together into a dwelling place of God. So who is the dwelling place of God? Are you listening? It is us together. That's who it is.

That is a pretty hard concept to grasp when you stop and think about it in the reality of who you see in the mirror. Isn't that right? But it is a Bible truth whether you accept it or not.

And by the way, it's a smart thing to act according to Bible truth rather than the way I feel.

How many of you have learned that your feelings are pretty suspect? I think it was almond joy.

Sometimes I feel like a nut. Sometimes I don't. You know what I mean?

My point is, is that our feelings are pretty vulnerable, are they not? Sometimes I feel really warm and fuzzy about all of you guys.

[39 : 17] Sometimes I don't. Hey, look at me. My feelings come through a very imperfect and fragile heart.

And it's the Word of God that tells me. God the Father saved me for His glory.

God the Father. And knit me together with another group of people to be part of a team that makes Him look good. And I come together to worship Christ with you.

Recognizing your frailty and accepting the humanity that we are together, realizing that He is at work in us for the glory and the goodness of the supremacy of Christ.

So let me close with some practical truths applied. If the church, the local body, is this important to Christ, is the local church that important in your thinking?

[40 : 48] Remember I said there's an enemy that is doing his level best to rob us of the beauty and the wisdom of every word of God.

He has destroyed men and women through his lies about what moral purity involves. He has destroyed men and women in his lies about what marriage is.

And he is destroying people who are professing believers with his profoundly effective lies about what the local church is. Is the word of God of first and foremost importance in your relationship

with the bride of Christ?

And so when you find yourself at odds, and can I tell you, if you're around God's people long enough, you're going to find yourself at odds. How many of you got that figured out? When you find yourself at odds, are you going to play it through according to the word of God, or are you going to carry on like you are part of Walmart's program?

I'll go when there's a smiley face around a certain corner, and it all depends on what I'm getting out of it. Third, is the church somewhere you go or somewhere you belong?

[42 : 19] Fourth, is the church a relationship that you're engaged in because of what you're getting or the place in which you invest for the glory of Christ?

Let me read the passage and close. So then, you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the cornerstone in whom the whole structure being joined together grows into a holy temple to God.

In him also, you are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Let's close in prayer.

Our Father, as we've studied the Scriptures together, I'm reminded of the very true statement that the purpose of preaching is really not to entertain, but to bring people to a point of saying yes or no to God.

[43 : 51] And this morning, I know for a fact that there are some here today that have a marginal relationship with the body of Christ. There are some today that have allowed circumstances and situations to discolor their affection for what you died for and rose again.

There are some here that do not know Christ, and presently, their pride interferes with their humility that would declare, I stand condemned before a holy God, and I need Jesus Christ as my Savior.

And Father, I would ask that you would work in the lives of your people that Christ Jesus might be exalted by obedience and willing submission on the part of those who are genuine converts and by conversion and brokenness in the lives of those who do not know Christ as their personal Savior.

Do this, that Christ might be glorified, and that's our prayer. Amen. Let's stand together as John leads us in singing. Let's stand. If we would please