

The Glory of The Church of Jesus Christ

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[0 : 00] We'll consider together this evening those closing verses of chapter 2 in which Paul describes to us the glory of the church of Jesus Christ.

Now, you remember how in verse 18 we saw, verse 18, for through Jesus we both have access in one spirit to the Father. Before that, in verse 17, Jesus, Paul tells us, came and he preached peace to us.

And then in verse 18, for through him we both have access in one spirit to the Father. But now I want us to consider this evening verses 19 to the end of the chapter.

Read it with me. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you, you Christians in Ephesus, you people who have come to know the Lord Jesus and to follow him, you are no longer strangers, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

Remember that saints is not a term that describes super Christians or Christians who are better than others. Saints, the word saint is just another name for someone who loves Jesus.

[1 : 17] That's all it is. It is not, there is no, there is no two tier system in the kingdom of God. Every one of us who loves the Lord is a saint, according to the Bible.

So when Paul says, you are fellow citizens with the saints, in other words, you are a saint yourself. That's what he means. In other words, I am Saint Ivar.

I don't feel like it, but that's what the Bible tells me I am. And you are saint, whatever, you are all entitled. If you believe and love the Lord, you are quite entitled to put saint in front of your name.

That's what you are. That's what the Bible tells us that we are. Saints. And what that means, of course, is the word saint means someone who's holy.

Every Christian needs to be holy. That's what the Bible commands us to be. It's what the Bible says. Be holy. For your Father in heaven is holy. And that's the great objective, the great goal and aim that each one of us have.

[2 : 19] We know that we are not what we should be. And yet God has promised us that we are holy. Now, again, I've taken a detour here, but it's interesting to explain some of what Paul is saying.

You are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God. And what that means is that you are a family member.

You remember what Jesus said when his mother and his brothers wanted to take him away from the house where he was? He said, who are my mother and my brothers?

Those who keep God's word are my brother and my mother and my sister. In other words, his disciples looking around him, he said, you, these are my mother and my brother and my sisters.

In other words, as the Lord looks upon us, you and I tonight, if we love him and follow him, he regards us as his brothers and his sisters in him.

[3 : 18] Now, are we beginning to see, I hope we're beginning to see, not just here, but all the way through this letter, the privileges, the benefits, the joy that there is in being a Christian.

The massive honor that God has conferred upon us, the great joy that there is in knowing and serving and loving God.

Royalty's gold, remember? Royalty's gold. That's what we are. That's what we have. So, let's read on. So then you are no longer stranger, fellow citizens with the saints and household and the members of the household of God.

Then he goes on to say in verse 20, he goes on to say, built on the foundation of his apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus 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.

[4 : 33] Now then, that's what Paul puts in front of us this evening. And that's what I'd like us to concentrate on, hopefully, to gain something from the word of God this evening as we come together in worship.

And of course, our worship is centered on God's word. We're going to see that in a few moments' time. I think I've said before that Paul is passionate about two things.

He's passionate about the gospel. His great aim and objective in life from the day that he met with Jesus on the road to Damascus was to share this gospel with other people.

Woe is me, he said, if I do not preach the gospel. He was driven by it. He lived and wakened and ate and drank the gospel. Every waking moment he was thinking about his work, he was a workaholic, if you like, in that he was filled, he was consumed with the brevity of life.

And he wanted to do as much as he possibly could for the Lord to share Jesus Christ with those who didn't know him. That didn't mean his life was easy. We have this picture of the apostle as someone who, as soon as he went somewhere, he automatically attracted thousands of people and they were all converted.

[5 : 47] That did happen sometimes, but only sometimes. It didn't always happen. There were times when Paul, when people wouldn't listen to him at all. And when it deserted him, even those who appeared to be Christians, it actually deserted him and left him alone.

They wouldn't support him anymore. There were times of great disappointment for the apostle. So don't imagine for a moment that life was always really successful when it was Paul.

He went through exactly the same negative emotions as many a minister and a Christian who's trying, struggling, trying to share the gospel and to preach the gospel and to make it known.

But he was passionate about the gospel. Somehow he knew he was able to never lose sight of the fact that Jesus had called him and sent him into the world to share the name.

And he never lost sight of the reality of that calling. But the other thing that Paul was passionate about was the church. He absolutely loved the church.

[6 : 47] I don't mean the building. We're not talking about the building. When we say go to church, usually what we mean is we want to go down to Kenna Street and go in the front door of the building.

And very often that's the way we think. I suppose I'm as bad as anybody else. So we're thinking that way. That's not the church at all. It doesn't matter what kind of building we're in. It doesn't matter whether we're in a school or whether we're in an assembly hall or whether we're meeting in a house.

As the people in the New Testament did, that was to them the church. The church was a people of God. And Paul never lost sight. And he saw some pretty major disappointments during his time amongst the church.

He saw the church falling out with each other. He had to plead with them sometimes to agree in the Lord. He saw wrong, poisonous teaching creeping into the church, trying to spoil the fellowship.

He saw imposters coming in and hoodwinking Christians. And many of them went away and believed. They swallowed the false gospel that many of them brought. And he was disappointed time after time.

[7 : 57] And if anyone could give up on the church, it could have been the Apostle Paul. If anyone saw the church in its weakness, it was the Apostle Paul.

And yet, anyone who reads the Bible, the New Testament, reads through the letters of Paul, will know that Paul never loses sight of the importance of the church.

Now, when I say importance, perhaps I should have used another word, and that word is preciousness. Because something which is precious is automatically important.

But something which is precious is very often at the same time something which is fragile. Isn't it? Isn't that the case? Many of them, some of us have got ornaments having been passed down through the generations from the 17th or the 18th century or whatever passed through the family line.

And you know that they could break at any moment. And you know that these ornaments, once they're gone, they're finished. Or something else that's precious. The world is full of precious, valuable things.

[9 : 07] And very often, these things are the most fragile things that we have. And God tells us in the Bible that the church is the most precious thing in the world.

So precious that Jesus gave his life. And there's a sense in which that's all we need to know. That alone emphasizes how precious the church is.

So church wasn't just some kind of occupational hazard. It wasn't some kind of convenient way of meeting together on a Sunday so that everyone will hear the same preaching.

It wasn't just some kind of organization as far as the apostle was concerned. It wasn't some kind of business or a council or something like that. This was a collection of the collection of the people of God held together, bound together in a unique, special relationship created by the death of Jesus Christ.

You will not find that anywhere in the world. And here's what he has to say about the church. Now, I know how annoying it is. When a minister decides to go through several passages and he expects you to follow him going through several passages in order for him to prove a point.

[10:31] And I don't do that very often. I hardly do it at all. But I am going to do it now because I want to hammer this point over. Why am I doing this? Because if we're not convinced of how sacrosanct the church is and how unique the church is and how precious, first of all, in the sight of God, the church is, then we're not going to give it the time of day.

You can't expect us to regard the church as something special. If you're not convinced yourself of how special it is to God.

And here's what Paul has to say. Just in this letter alone. I'm not going to go to other places in the Bible. I could easily do that. Other places in the New Testament. I'm just going to confine myself to this letter alone.

So that should be easy for you to look up what I'm talking about. And I just, I would like you to do that. Just for this time only. And just for Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 22.

All you have to do is turn the page back. Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 22. And he put all things under his feet and gave him, this is Jesus, this is what God the Father has given to Jesus.

[11:50] He has given him as head over all things to the church. Now listen to what he says here. This is how important the church is. It's not some kind of organization.

He says, which is his body. The fullness of him who fills all in all.

Paul is talking about Jesus in his fullness. Whatever that means. Perhaps we should have gone into that in a little bit more detail. Perhaps there will be another occasion. Jesus in his fullness.

And he's saying the church is his body. It is as attached to Jesus as the body of someone is attached to the person. Now that should be no surprise to us.

Because Jesus himself said to his disciples, John chapter 15, I am the true vine and you are the branches. That's how much of an attachment there was between Jesus' disciples and the Lord Jesus himself.

[12:52] What has changed during the centuries? Nothing. God's people are still as attached to Jesus Christ this evening as they were when he spoke to them in the upper room.

You are the branches. I am the true vine. So that's the first thing that the apostle says. And then he tells us in chapter 2 and verse 1.

He makes this incredible statement as to the purpose of the church in the world. Chapter 2 and verse 7. Chapter 2 and verse 7.

Earlier on in this chapter. He says, That's the question.

Well, here's the answer. Verse 7, chapter 2. In the coming ages, he might show. In other words, the church exists in order for Jesus Christ to show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

[14:21] That's why we're here tonight. To show the immeasurable riches of his grace in Christ Jesus.

And time after time. The church has to reign itself in. In case it takes a tangent.

And how many times throughout the centuries of the history of Christ's church has the church gone wrong and taken a tangent. And instead of being a demonstration of the immeasurable riches of his grace in Christ Jesus.

The church has become a demonstration of just what we're convicted of. The lesser things that we're convicted of. The things which may be important to you and I.

But as far as the immeasurable riches of grace in Christ Jesus. They obscure it. And how sad it is tonight. When the church, instead of displaying the grace and the riches and the kindness of Jesus Christ on the cross.

[15 : 31] Instead of that, we cloud it over by something of lesser importance. That's what we're here for. And that's how important the church was to the Apostle Paul.

And then we come to what he talked about here. We'll come back to that in a few moments at a time. And so you'll find the next proof in chapter 3 and verse 20.

Where Paul bursts. He explodes. Not in anger. But in adoration. In verse 20.

Now to him, Jesus. Who is able to do far more abundantly. Than all that we ask or think. According to the power at work within us.

To him. Listen to this. Verse 21. Please remember this. To him be glory. In the church. And in Christ Jesus.

[16 : 32] Throughout all generations. Forever. And ever. Amen. That's Paul's great objective. That Christ's glory.

The glory of God. The reality of God. May be manifest. Within. Now we know where it's manifest. We know. In order. If I was to ask you tonight. Where do you go to find the glory of God?

You go to heaven. Because that's where. Where God dwells. But here Paul is saying. That God's glory. Dwells. Within his church. Or ought to.

That's the great objective. And if you're asking. Well why is there such a difference. Between what it should be. And what it is. That's the challenge. This is what.

This is God's word. Now verse. Chapter 4 and verse 1. Here's the nitty gritty. Here's how to achieve. The. Here's how to achieve.

[17 : 30] The function. And the objective. And the aim. Of what the church ought to be. He says this. Verse 2. With all humility and gentleness. With patience. Bearing. With one another in love.

Eager to maintain. The unity of the spirit. In the bond of peace. There is one body. One spirit. Just as you were called. To one hope. That belongs to your call. One Lord.

One faith. One baptism. Are we getting the picture. Of how precious. And how unique. God's people are. In their collection. Now. And then.

And. I'm not going to go through them all. There's one more. There's one more reference. There are other references. And I was going to mention them. But there just isn't time. Chapter 5 and verse 22.

This is the last one. Chapter 5 and verse 22. Here is where. The apostle is. Guiding. Wives and husbands.

[18 : 26] In their relationship. To one another. And a chapter. That has become. A controversial one. And I. Will perhaps. Reach it. In whenever.

We reach it. But here is what he says. Wives submit. To your own husbands. As to the Lord. For the husband. Is the head of the wife. Even as Christ. Is the head of the church. Now. The problem of course.

With that passage. Is that. As soon as you read. The husband. Is the head of the wife. There are some people. And that's all they want. Is here. They close the book. And say. I don't want to hear anymore. Because they've already. Made up their minds.

What that means. It's this. Kind of misogynist. Bible. Once again. It's not. It's not the point at all. That's not the teaching. Of the Bible. At all. Even.

As Christ. Is the head of the church. Oh. Please. Don't stop. Before you read that. Because that makes. All the difference. And that defines.

[19 : 21] The relationship. Between a husband. And a wife. In Jesus. When Paul says. The husband is the head. Or that's not some kind of. Tyrannical.

Cruel sense. It's the loving. Giving sense. In which Jesus. Loved. And gave himself. For. The church.

Look at. As he. As he goes on. Now as the church. Submits to Christ. So also. Wives should submit. In everything to the heart. Again. Defines. The relationship. Between a husband. And a wife. In the Lord.

As that. Of Jesus. And his church. I'm not going to go on too long. Because we're going to come to that. All being well. In time to come. Now. When he goes on. In verse 25. Again. Husbands. Loved your wives.

As. Christ. Loved the church. Now look at what Jesus did. For the church. He gave himself up. For her. That he might sanctify her. Having cleansed her. By the washing of water. And with the word.

[20 : 17] So that he might present. The church to himself. In splendor. Without spot. Or wrinkle. Or any such thing. That she might be holy. And without blemish. Now you know. I could go on. I don't want to.

To dwell. On this too much. But I think it's important. To stop for a moment. And just to dwell. To reflect on a moment. On. On how. Things. Are.

You know. We'll talk about this. In a few moments time. I know that things. Throughout the church. Worldwide. Are not what they should be. And it's important. To recognize that. But it's also.

We will never do anything. About it. We will never. Ever improve. Relationships. Between Christians. And one another. And achieve. What the Lord himself. Wants in this world.

Until we see. Until we realize. Until we appreciate. How. Is. How important. And how precious. That God's people are. And the body.

[21 : 13] Of God's people are. To one another. And to the Lord. Himself. Death. Now. What does he tell us here? Ephesians chapter 2. And verse. I just want us to. Dwell on. On his emphasis here.

It was talking about. A building. And he's already said. That we are no longer. Strangers and aliens. We've already seen. That this chapter. Is all about. Alienation. Between Jew. And Gentile.

And that alienation. Is broken. When. Both Jew. And Gentile. Come to faith. In Jesus Christ. They are no longer. They are. They are no longer. Separated. From one another.

Because they are no longer. Separated. From God. But he goes on. In these verses. And he tells us. Several things. He tells us. That we are fellow citizens. With the saints. We've said that already.

Members of the household of God. And he built on the foundation. Of the apostles. And prophets. Jesus Christ. Being the cornerstone. Now then. I want us to look.

[22 : 07] At these verses. Very very briefly. I want us to look. First of all. At this great building. That's been described. To us here. Where God himself. Is the builder. I don't know much.

About building. It fascinates me. When I watch. Someone. Building. A house. I've seen it. On a number of occasions. Whether it's an extension. To a house. Or whether it's a house.

Itself. I would never know. Where to begin. If I had a house. To build. I would be happy. To give it over. To a contractor. But I have. The utmost respect.

For those. Who are able. To build. A house. But I know this much. I know. The first thing. You need. Is a foundation. Jesus himself. Said that.

That anyone. Who listens. To my words. And does not. Put them into practice. Like a man. Who built his house. On the sand. And after building it. When the wind. And the waves. When they beat.

[23 : 01] Against that house. It fell. Because it was built. On the wrong foundation. It was built. On the sand. Now here. Paul tells us. That the house. That God is building.

Has been built. On the foundation. Of the apostles. And the prophets. Now what does he mean. When he tells us. This. The foundation. Is the apostles.

And the prophets. Well we know. Who the apostles were. The twelve apostles. We read about them. In Matthew. Mark. And Luke. And John. If you take away. Judas Iscariot. Of course. And then replace them. With Matthias.

And then you have. The twelve apostles. Now. What was special. About these men. Well it was simply this. That they were. At Jesus side. They received his teaching. And they saw. His resurrection.

They saw him. As the risen. Lord Jesus. And it was to them. That he gave the command. To go into all the world. And to make disciples. Of all nations. Teaching them.

[23 : 55] And here's the bit. They were to teach. Those who came to Jesus. To observe everything. That I have commanded you. In other words. The work. Of the disciples.

Was to teach. Now the prophets. Well. Who were the prophets? Well we know. In the Old Testament. You have people like Isaiah. And Jeremiah. And Elijah. And Elisha.

They were the prophets. Of the Old Testament. I don't believe that. That when Paul talks about. The foundation of the apostles. And the prophets. He's talking about the Old Testament. He's talking about. The New Testament prophets. Now they were.

They were around. At the time of the apostles. You get men like Agabus. For example. In the book of Acts. And God gave them. A special gift. Just as he had given. To Elijah.

And Elisha. And Isaiah. And Jeremiah. Only for that particular time. While the church. Was exploding. And spreading. At that very. Initial time. And it was through them. That God spoke.

[24 : 50] To his church. And that's the important thing. The important thing. Is that the church. Knows. The teaching of God. How do we. Know. The teaching of God.

How do you know. The message. That God wants us to hear. Here we have it. Right here. In the pages of the Bible. In the Old. And the New Testament. Everyone. If you want to know. What the apostles.

And prophets taught. You simply open your Bible. There it is. Right in front of you. You want to know. The God's. God's will tonight. God's message to you. You want to know. What he wants to say to you.

You don't sit in a darkened room. Waiting for a voice to come. You open your Bible. You turn the light on. And you open the Bible. You start reading. That's how. You find out. The voice. And the plan.

And the purpose. Of God. And if you're looking for. A good church. Say you're on holiday. Say you're even not on holiday. If you want to make sure. That this is a good church.

[25 : 45] And I hope it is. It's not perfect. By any means. Many. Many. Things are wrong. And I'm as eager. As anyone. To make. The kind of progress. That we need.

In order to identify. What is wrong. And we're always doing that. Because we'll never be perfect. In this world. But if you're asking the question. What is a good church. There's where you begin. What's the foundation.

You don't. You don't look at how attractive. The building is. Or how. How entertaining. The service is. You ask this. Very first. Question is. What's the teaching.

How biblical. Is the teaching. How close to the Bible. Is the teaching. In that church. Because that's what the church. Is all about. Remember. Jesus said to his disciples. Go into all the world. And. Make disciples of all nations. Teaching them. Teaching them. To observe everything. That I have commanded you. Now listen. Let me ask you this. If you're. In any. Any doubt. As to how important this is.

[26 : 41] How has your Christian life. Changed. How does. Your Christian life. Change. How do we. Adapt. In the way that we build.

In the way that we. Follow Jesus. How do we. Modify ourselves. How do we. Do we. How do we. Change. Every Christian.

Needs to change. If you're a Christian. Tonight. You're not changing. There's something wrong. How do I know that. Because. My Bible tells me. Romans chapter 8.

And verse 28. That. If I have been called. By the Lord. And predestinated. By the Lord. I am fashioned. God is fashioning me. And molding me.

Into the image. Of his son. In other words. The purpose. And the plan. For God. Of God. For every single. Child of his. Is that we become more. And more. And more.

[27 : 38] Like. Jesus Christ. And you. You and I. Can't do that. Without changing. We have to change. Our habits. We have to. Every so often. Discover. That there's one more thing.

One more ugly side. To my personality. That needs to change. I need to confess it to God. I need to turn to the Lord. And I need to discipline myself. To walk away from it. And to ask that the Lord. Will be making more.

And more. Like. Himself. That's how we change. How does that happen? It happens by being taught. Don't ever. Underestimate. What happens to a person.

In the church. Don't ever. Underestimate it. You know. Some of us. Have been. Have been going to church. Since we were knee high. Like myself. I've taken to church. From the time.

I was tiny. And some of us. Of course. Are so familiar with it. Familiarity. Sometimes breeds contempt. And we don't realize. As much as others. Of how powerful. God's word is.

[28 : 31] It's the most powerful influence. In our lives. And some people give up. After a few years. They don't feel. That influence. On their lives anymore. They think that they've heard enough.

Or that they've heard everything. That there is to hear. That's the biggest mistake. You can make. You're listening to the wrong voice. And you're doing yourself. A great harm. If you upset yourself. From hearing. God's word. Being preached. There is something. Very special. About that. And that's not to say that. That the preacher.

Is as good as he could be. Or as. Or even. Or even. Good at all. What's important is. What he has in his hands. And what he's telling you. What he's sharing with you.

And he's breaking open. God's word. And that's what's going to. Give you your feeding. And going to give you. Your nourishment. That's the foundation. But then. The source.

[29 : 29] Of course. Paul carries on. He talks about the foundation. And then he talks about. Christ Jesus himself. Being the cornerstone. Now you might ask. Well why is. Why is Jesus. Not the foundation.

Surely. Jesus should be the foundation. Well I'll tell you. Why is not the foundation. Because. He plays an even more important part. Than the foundation. And a more visible part. Than the foundation. You see the foundation.

Is not seen. But the cornerstone is. Now I again. Let me confess my ignorance. About house building. I have no idea. But I know this much. Because I looked it up.

The cornerstone. Is the single. Most important. Element. In a building. You might. Disagree with me. If you're builders. But I don't think you will. What was the cornerstone.

The cornerstone. Was placed. Directly on. The foundation. Now the apostle. Is talking about the temple. He's got in mind the temple. Which was the glorious. Most glorious. Building in Jerusalem. This was the building. That everyone talked about.

[30 : 26] And everybody boasted about. Because it was so. Fabulous. But they tell me. That the temple. In Jerusalem. At that time. Had a massive. Massive. Cornerstone.

And very often. The cornerstone. Had engravings on it. Because it was the most important stone. In the structure. And that was so. Because. It defined.

The straightness. Of the walls. It was on the corner. So it defined this wall. And it defined that wall. And it also defined. The straightness. Of the upper wall. How vertical it was.

It's. Now every time. I begin to talk technical. In the pulpit. Somebody will come up. Afterwards. And they will either. Add to what I'm saying. Or else correct me.

That's fine. That's okay. But I think we're getting the message. That's the important thing. That the cornerstone. Was the visible definition. Of what the building.

[31 : 22] Was going to look like. And how straight. You get the cornerstone wrong. The whole building. Is. Squint. Has to come down again. But the cornerstone. If it's right. And here's the greatest cornerstone.

Of all Jesus Christ. He defines. Everything is attached to him. Everything is with reference. To him. The walls. The bricks.

The shape of the building. Everything is. With reference. To Jesus Christ. The church. Must be Christ. Centered. We must never.

Ever. Lose sight. Of what Jesus. Has done. For us. Mark number two. Of a. Of a Christ. Of a church. Of a good. Healthy churches.

Is it Christ. Centered. Does it preach. The cross. It's easy. You know. One of the biggest dangers. That ministers faces. Is. Is developing. Their own.

[32 : 17] Kind of. Hobby horses. I hope I don't have any. But it's dead easy. In the ministry. To kind of. Latch on to a subject. That you see in the Bible. And you. You start becoming. Obsessed about it.

And you preach it. Time and again. But that's not what the church. Is all about at all. It's not about our obsessions. Or our hobby horses. It's about Jesus.

Because if I fail. To make Jesus. Known to you. And you're not a Christian. Christian. And if you go out that door.

And you're still not a Christian. And you haven't. The way hasn't been made clear to you. I have failed you. And I have done you a great wrong.

That's how important it is. But it's the same. With ourselves. With all of us. We must be a gospel. Christ center church.

[33 : 18] One which is. One which wants more than anything else. To share the message of Jesus Christ. With. Whoever comes in that door.

And whoever we meet. As individuals. Because remember. The work of the church. Doesn't begin and end. On a Sunday. When we come in. And go out that door. The work of the church. Continues. I've said this before.

Every one of us. Is a witness. To Jesus Christ. And the idea. Of us coming here today. Is to be infused. And to be reminded. Of our duty. And our privilege.

To go amongst the people. With whom God has placed us. And when there's opportunity. And we pray for the opportunity. I dare you this evening. I'm daring you this evening. Pray to the Lord. To give you an opportunity. This week. To speak to someone. About the Lord. I'm putting that challenge. In front of you. And you pray that prayer.

[34 : 13] Pray that the Lord. Will give you that opportunity. See what happens. Because I've prayed it. And I'll tell you. Sometimes I pray. And I wish I hadn't. Because it brings me.

Into all kinds. Of awkward situations. Where you're having to think. What am I going to say? I'm telling you. Every one of us. Has the opportunity.

From time to time. If we believe. And if we love the Lord Jesus. Surely that's what we want. What happened to Levi? Remember Levi? With the disciple. The Lord said to him. Come and follow me. He came to follow. Next thing. He was inviting. All his friends. And his mates. To his house. And inviting Jesus. At the same time. And J.C. Ryle said. Anyone who comes to.

The first thing that happens. To a person who comes. To follow Jesus. Is that they want. They want everyone. To follow him. Is that not the case? If you don't want. Other people. To follow Jesus.

[35 : 08] Then. If that's not your real burden. Then there's something wrong. Maybe we have to pray something. Before we pray for the opportunity. And that's to pray. That we all want the opportunity. Surely.

Surely. And that's what the church is all about. It's about preaching Jesus Christ. It's about dwelling on him. Dwelling on his. His coming into the world. And who he was.

His teaching. The reason why he came into the world. But we mustn't ever stop at his teaching. The teaching of Jesus. Never saved anyone. Might be shocked at that.

The teaching of Jesus. Never saved anyone. I say that because there are some people. Who think. As long as I listen to the sermon on the mount. I'll be okay. As long as I keep the beatitudes. As long as I'm poor in spirit. As long as I'm a peacemaker. As long as I'm pure in heart. As long as I try my best. To do what Jesus. Says to do on the sermon on the mount. Then surely I can't do any more than that.

[36 : 07] I can tell you right now. That will never save you. Because you know what? You'll never be. Because being poor in spirit. It leads you to see. That you have nothing. And that you can't.

Be the kind of person that God wants you to be. And the only way. For you to be saved. Is for you to be washed and cleansed. And set free by Jesus and his death. That's why I'm saying.

It is not the teaching of Jesus. The teaching always points us to. What Jesus came to do. Which was to lay down his life at Calvary. That's what saves us.

You'll never please God by your own efforts. Not even by listening to Jesus. And thinking. That somehow or other you can achieve salvation.

By keeping his word perfectly. You can't do it. What you need to come is to come to Calvary. After being on the Sermon on the Mount. And after being convicted of how much you need him.

[37 : 04] You walk all the way to Calvary. And then you see what he has done. In order to save. And to set free. And to change our lives. We need to be born again.

You need to be born again. You need to know the Lord. In your own life. And in your own. And in your own. Experience. And then he.

Then he goes on. He talks about. He talks about the church being joined together. He reminds us that.

The church is a joined up building. A joined body. He tells us elsewhere. That we are interdependent upon one another. The eye cannot say to the hand.

I have no need of you. The hand can't say to the foot. Because I'm not a foot. I can't do anything. Everyone. Is joined. To one another. In him.

[38 : 00] He says. You are being built together. Built together. And it meant. You. Look at what he says. In whom the whole.

In him. Verse 22. You also. You also. Just in case. Anyone gets the impression. That they can be spectators. About what God is doing. In the rest of the world. And just be detached.

And what no one says. Paul. You are part of this. And if that is true for the Ephesians. It's true for Stornoway as well. We are part. Of the building.

And the construction. Of God's. House. In. This. World. Everyone. Has a part. To play. Everyone. Joined. To one another.

And joined. To Jesus Christ. Christ. Himself. And that's where the challenge lies. Isn't it? To behave.

[38 : 56] And to conduct ourselves. As a. As a. Fellowship. Of God's. People. I say this to everyone. Who comes. Comes in that door. And wants to become a member.

It's what's said to them. Every time. That you are now part. Of the fellowship. Of this congregation. And that means. A fantastic privilege. And being part of.

This great. Global movement. Of God's people. In which God is. Building up his church. But it means. That we have a part. To play. God has given us.

Gifts. And abilities. He's given us. Opportunities. To become involved. With what he is doing. And it's our prayer tonight.

That God will bring. That God will. So enthuse us. There's nothing worse. Than a person. Who gives themselves. Just by lip service. Or by just out of duty.

[39 : 50] We need to be enthusiastic. This evening. We need to love. The Lord. And his people. And it's not always easy. To love God's people. We're all so different. We all have different personalities.

And chemistries. And different ideas. And opinions. And some of us are one way. Some of us are another. There's a diversity. Diversity. I know that this word. Diversity. Has become a bit of a bad word.

It's not a bad word at all. It's in the Bible. First Corinthians chapter 12. Every one of us is different. Different gifts. And abilities. And opportunities. Works of service.

To the Lord. You in your small corner. And I in mine. Letting our light shine. Before men. So that they see our good works. And glorify.

Their father. In heaven. And it's not just about us either. In our small corner. It's about others. What does he say here? He says in him.

[40 : 47] The whole structure. Do you know what that means? The whole structure. Extended beyond Jerusalem. And extended beyond Ephesus. And Corinth. And even Rome itself.

And eventually the gospel. Spread. All the way across western Europe. And even eastern Europe. And eventually to Asia. And to Africa. And to the ends of the earth.

And today. I know what people. I know. And to some extent. I agree with them. So very well to talk about. The whole structure. Joined together. The body of Christ.

But that's not the way it is. Is it? The church is so fragmented. And divided. Is there ever a day. When the church. That's supposed to be so. One. In the Lord Jesus.

Was there ever a day. In the history of mankind. When it was so. Fragmented. You're right. I can't deny that.

[41 : 47] And I can't pretend. It's a good thing either. It's not. Jesus said. In John chapter 17. He said. That the glory.

That you have given me. I have given to them. That they may be one. Even as we. Are one. I can't pretend to know all the reasons.

Some of them are understandable. Some of them completely. Inexplicable. No excuse. Tonight. There is no reason. Why.

Some churches are divided from one another. They believe the same thing. Preach the same gospel. Love the same Bible. They even worship in the same way. And yet.

They're divided. I can't explain that at all. There are many things. About me. And other situations in the world.

[42 : 48] That I can't explain. And that in fact. Are wrong. I only have to look at my own heart. To find out wrong things. But that doesn't mean. That. I'm not a saved person. And neither does it mean.

That God has given up. Just because things are wrong. That's the grace of God. That he works with us. Despite. Our failures.

And our sinfulness. In this world. God. And if God was going to hold against us. All our wrongs. None of us would be here. And the fact tonight is this.

And I'm not making an excuse of this at all. This is not an excuse. The fact tonight is this. That whilst the church. Has never been so fragmented.

In the world. There have never been. So many Christians. In the world. There has never been a time.

[43 : 47] In the whole of the history of humankind. When more people. Have come to Christ. So what that tells me. Is not that I can be complacent. I'm not complacent at all.

But it tells me. That God is gracious. And God is going to do his work. He's going to build his building. He's going to. He's going to continue.

To lay stone. After stone. After stone. Until the building is finished. And we know. One thing is for sure. That at the end of the day.

His people. Definitely. Will be one. And will want to be. There won't be any forced. Unity. It'll be. The joyous.

Most joyous occasion. But that means. That doesn't mean of course. That we don't work towards it. In this world. I was at a conference this week. Just a great experience.

[44 : 45] It was. I wasn't particularly looking forward to it. I don't know why. I just didn't. I had no experience. Of this kind of thing before. It took in.

People from. Churches. All over the place. Like. Croatia. And. Russia. And. Italy. And. Spain. And. India. And. Spain. All over. This part of the world. respace i'm being sweet certification. I would. just such a delight. They believe the same Lord as I do. I would have any of them in this pulpit. I wish I could. I wish I could have taken some of them back here this evening and listened to the way in which they preach the gospel and be enthused by the way they love the Lord. It's absolutely fantastic to listen. It's a real rebuke when you meet people and many of the most enthusiastic believers are those who have to suffer the greatest hardships.

They know what it's like to do what Paul and to face prison and hardship. Real persecution for the sake of the Lord. They've got no money for them. It's no problem for me to get to Edinburgh. No problem.

[46 : 01] The church pays for it. That's no problem at all because a certain number of delegates were sent. We were hosting it. Quite rightly so. Quite rightly so. I'm so glad we did it. It was such a great experience.

But for them one man said all his savings he spent on just getting there. And he said to us all it was worth it.

Just to see what God was doing in other parts of the world and to be part and to be reminded of his part in the body of Christ and to have fellowship with his brethren in the Lord.

That's what the church is all about. Make no mistake the gates of hell will not prevail against what God has started. It may be obscure.

We may lose sight of it. We may become so insular in our own wee problems in our own wee worlds that we lose sight. But don't lose sight of the fact that God is working in many, many places in the world.

[47 : 06] In fact, in every place of the world the gospel is spreading this evening and people, listen to this, people are hearing the gospel for the first time and they are following Jesus.

They hear the gospel and they listen to Jesus and they become followers. you have heard the gospel hundreds of times and you have never begun to follow him.

You explain that to me. No. Don't explain it to me. Explain it to the Lord. Let's pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Our Father in heaven, we ask now that you will bless our time together around your word.

We pray, O Lord, that you will enrich us through the word. And I pray, Lord, tonight that you will apply your word to our hearts and give us to go into this world and into the circumstance in which you've placed us with a renewed renewed zeal and a renewed reminder that though heaven and earth will pass away, your word will never pass away.

[48 : 33] And so, Lord, we pray that you will continue to do your work in all of the world this evening and touch hearts and bless the gospel wherever it goes out. In Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.