

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

True Worship, Part 6

Scripture: John 4:20-24

Code: 2009

Open your Bible, if you will, with me this morning to the fourth chapter of John's gospel as we continue our series in worship, looking at this marvelous passage, and drawing out of it the Spirit of God would teach us, that we might worship God as He would be pleased to be worshiped.

Jesus is in conversation with the woman of Samaria in the fourth chapter of John. And we pick up the conversation in verse 20 as the woman speaks. "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe Me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

Now the clear word that comes out of this text is that God seeks true worshipers. God seeks those who will worship Him in a manner that is acceptable to Him. And we've been noting in our study that worship is the theme of history. Worship is the great theme that runs from Genesis through the end of Revelation. Worship is at the very heart and the soul and the core of all of the plan of the ages. God created all of the creatures that He ever created to worship Him. Man rebelled, and God seeks to bring man back to the point of true worship. That is the purpose for the redemptive plan.

Now in understanding worship, it is important that we have a definition. And so we began our series with a simple definition. Worship is giving honor to God, giving honor to God. That's a very simple definition, but that really says it.

Several key points come out of that definition. The first one is that worship is giving. Worship is giving. We are so oriented toward receiving that it's hard for us, I think, to understand that. We live in such a consumptive, selfish, ego-centered society, where everything is for us, for me, that it's hard for us to understand that God wants us to give to Him.

And when we come together as God's redeemed people in the congregation of fellowship, as we are this morning, and we come for the purpose of worship, it is not to receive, it is to give. It is not to get a blessing or to gain something as much as it is to worship, and that is to give to God. When a Jew in the old covenant came to worship, he did not come to take anything, he came to give. He would give

an offering. He would give not only money as was prescribed, but he would offer a sacrifice upon the altar. Everything was geared around giving to God. And that is the essence of worship. It is giving to God, not receiving, that we are concerned with.

Worship then, also, we noted in our definition, is in contrast to ministry. Ministry is that which flows down from God to us. Worship is that which flows up from us to God. And they provide for us a very beautiful balance. As in the Old Testament, there was a prophet who spoke down to us from God, there was a priest also, who spoke up to God on the behalf of man. And those two things are always held in balance.

So, there must be ministry. There must be worship. We noted, I think last time also, that the priority is always in worship. Though there is balance between ministry and worship, worship is the priority. The angels that we saw in Isaiah 6 had six wings; four related to worship, two related to service. Martha was serving and Mary was worshiping. And Jesus said Mary had chosen the better part.

Worship is the priority. It is what we give to God. That's why in Romans 12 when Paul just begins to open the responsibility of the believer, the first thing he says is to "present your bodies a living sacrifice." Worship precedes anything else. We are called, then, to be a worshiping people, to give to God. Yes, we are eager to receive from Him and to minister to one another, but prior to that to give to God.

Having given a definition, we then talked about the first major point, the importance of worship. Why is it important? It is important, we noted from verse 23, because true worshipers are those whom the Father seeks. God seeks true worshipers. Now if God seeks true worshipers, then true worship is important. God seeks true worshipers. This, then, is the priority.

In fact, I'm convinced as we've been seeing all along, that you as a Christian have as a single primary reason to live the fact that you are to worship God. That is what you are: a true worshiper. That is what you are to do, truly worship. That is the very core of the meaning of the existence of a redeemed person. So you are called to be a true worshiper. It is important. It is the very most important thing you do, to worship God. Because that's what God seeks you to do. And even when you serve God, in a very real sense that is a form of worship, isn't it? Because you are honoring Him by obeying His commands relative to service.

The second major point that we looked at was the source of worship. And the source of worship, again, in the same thought, "the Father seeketh such to worship Him." The source, then, is the seeking of the Father. And I believe it is an efficacious seeking. It is a redemptive seeking. It is, if you will, to use the old theological term, an irresistible seeking. God is drawing into His kingdom true worshipers. And when an individual is redeemed, that is the transformation that makes him a true worshiper.

In the New Testament we are redeemed to worship. We are made into true worshipers. That's why we said that maybe the best definition of a Christian is found in Philippians 3:3, where it says there that we are they who "worship God in the spirit." That's a classic definition of a Christian: a worshiper of God, a true worshiper. And Hebrews 10 says since Christ has redeemed us, since His sacrifice has perfected us, since we have been brought into God's presence through a new and living way, "let us draw near."

In other words, the response to redemption is worship. Come near God and offer Him the praise that is due His name. We are redeemed to worship. Therefore, the ground, or the basis, or the source of worship is our salvation, our redemption. So, the importance is seen in God's seeking worshipers. The source of worship is seen in God redeeming and saving us to that end.

Now the third point that we looked at is the object of worship, the object. And we saw that, didn't we, in several verses. First of all, verse 21 says "worship the Father." Verse 23, again, twice, "worship the Father." And then verse 24, "God is a Spirit." We are, then, to worship God. And God is defined to us in two terms: first as "Spirit," and secondly as "Father." First as "Spirit," secondly as "Father."

Now we've already discussed God as Spirit, but it's very important that I refresh your memory, so listen very closely. God is, first of all, Spirit. That is, God cannot be confined to a building. He cannot be confined to a temple. He cannot be confined to a grove, as the pagans thought their gods were. He could not be confined to a mountain somewhere. He could not be confined to an image made with hands out of wood, or brass, or gold, or silver, or any other substance.

God cannot be confined to temples made with hands, it says in Acts 7, and also in Acts 17. God is beyond that kind of confinement because He is an ever-living, ever-present, eternal Spirit. He has no flesh and bones. He is a Spirit who is everywhere at all times, pervading the full universe, and on into endless eternity with His conscious presence. God is everywhere at all times. He is the eternal living Spirit.

So, God, then, is to be worshiped as an ever-present Spirit. He is alive at all times. He is everywhere at all times. Therefore, worship becomes a way of life, doesn't it? Every living, breathing moment of life we live in the presence of God. In Acts 17 it says it's "in Him we live, and move, and have our being." We move in the midst of His spiritual presence. Therefore, at all times worship is fitting, and worship is proper because we are in the presence of God. We don't wait to worship to walk into a church. We don't wait to worship to bow our heads and draw our conscious mind into God's throne room, as it were, in prayer. God is everywhere at all times, and therefore to be worshiped everywhere at all times.

And we who have been redeemed are able to fulfill the seeking Father's wish that we worship Him everywhere and at all times.

And so, then, first of all, we worship God, who is the eternal omnipresent Spirit. But we can't stop there. Because three times in the text it says we also "worship the Father," the Father. And that is a further qualification of the object of our worship. Now I want you to listen to what I say because I think most people have misunderstood this concept.

When you think of the term "the Father," you think of God as Father. And I know this because this is the way I thought for many years. You immediately think of God as our loving Father. We worship God as a loving Father. We are His children and He is our Father, and as we worship Him we not only worship Him as this vast, omnipresent, eternal Spirit, but as this intimate, loving, personal Father. And that is true. But that is not what is being discussed in John chapter 4. That is not the issue here. It is not talking about our Father, the Father of believers. That is not the emphasis made here.

The emphasis here is that the Father - now watch this - is the Father in the Trinitarian sense. God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, right? Three in one, the triangle, the trinity: Father, Son, Holy Spirit. It is in that Trinitarian sense that God is designated here as "the Father." It is not primarily in relation to us as His children. It is His essential relationship within the trinity.

Now, He is, then, presented here - now watch this very carefully - as the Father of the Son, and the Son is the Lord Jesus Christ. This is very important. So that when you worship God as Spirit, you worship Him also as Father, not just the Father in a vague sense of all mankind, as the liberals might say, but as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. And you cannot worship God apart from that designation.

Now, you say, "What does all this mean?" Stay with me and you'll see. First and foremost in the New Testament whenever God is discussed as Father, it is as Father of Jesus Christ. I think about 70 times Jesus speaks to God, and every time He comes before God He says, "Father," except one when He was separated on the cross and said, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Every other time He calls Him "Father." It is unique within the trinity that God is the Father and the Son and then the Holy Spirit. And this is an inter-Trinitarian designation.

Now let me show you what it means. It is not that when Jesus says "Father," the emphasis is not that He is a Son in submission as a son might submit to his father, although that's true. The emphasis is not that He is a Son in sameness of essence as a son is with his father. Did you get that? It is talking about the sameness of essence. He is the Son and God is the Father, meaning they both are the same essence. If I am a man, if I am a man from the race, and the tribe, and the people, and the generation, and all of the genetics that have gone into me, and I have a son, my son will be what I

am. It is sameness of essence.

And that, people, is the heart and soul of the relationship that Jesus constantly expresses with the Father. He is emphasizing the sameness of essence, the oneness of nature. So that God can never be worshiped unless He is worshiped as one and the same with Jesus Christ. So that Jesus says, "No man comes unto God but - " what? " - by Me." You can never worship God at all unless you worship God as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is one with Jesus Christ. It is a statement of deity, of equality.

Now let me show you. You say, "How in the world can you see all of that in those verses when it just says 'Worship the Father'?" Because I know how John uses the term, follow it. Chapter 5 verse 17, and this is a great truth, profound truth, John 5:17. "Jesus answered - " answered the Jews who were persecuting Him for what He did on the Sabbath day. He " - answered them, My Father works hitherto, and I work." And there He is calling the first person of the trinity His Father. And He says, "We work together. My Father and I."

Now what did they think He meant by that? Verse 18. "They sought even the more to kill Him, because He had not only broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was His Father, making Himself - " what? " - equal with God." Right on target, folks. That's exactly what He was saying. When Jesus said, "He is the Father and I am the Son," He was speaking of their equality of essential being, of essence, of nature, of deity. He is God, a very God; as God the Father is God, a very God. They were right on. That's exactly what He was saying.

Look at chapter 10 in John's gospel. And Jesus says in verse 29, "My Father, who gave them to Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand." And now He goes one step further. "I and My Father are one." Again, the Father and the Son, the same essence.

And "the Jews took up stones to stone Him. And He answered them, Many good works have I shown you from My Father; for which of those works do you stone Me? The Jews answered Him, saying, For a good work we stone Thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that Thou, being a man, makest Thyself God." You see, when He said He was the Son of God, and God was His Father, they knew He meant the sameness of essence, deity, equal to God the Father.

The 18th chapter, and Jesus prays to the Father. In verse 1 He says, "Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee: As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him. And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou sent." He equates Himself with the Father, and that eternal life is through knowing Him as much as it is knowing God.

And in verse 5 He says, "Glorify Me with Thine own self with the glory I had with Thee before the world began." Give Me back that prior full glory that I knew before the incarnation, that which is deserving. He was equal with God, and the Father and the Son is the statement of their equality.

In Matthew chapter 11 I just would note one other verse - and there are more that I could show you, but these are samples - Matthew 11:27. Jesus said, "All things are delivered unto Me by My Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, except the Son; and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." And here in that marvelous passage, the Lord is again presenting the unique essential oneness of the Father and the Son. There is an intimacy of knowledge between the Father and the Son that is not available to any human perception. They are one. They are one.

Now listen, you can go back to John 4 if you want. When Jesus calls God "Father," it's not our Father that He has in mind, it's His Father. And it is a blatant, outright statement of His deity, His equality. And that's why He said in John 14, which I didn't read to you, but just will quote. "If you have seen Me, you have seen - " whom? " - the Father." The Father and the Son are one.

Well, why are you doing all of this, John? Just for this. Now listen very carefully. There are people who say they worship God, and to affirm that God is the eternal living Spirit everywhere present, and they are worshipping Him, and they may be saying that He is their Father, and they worship Him as their Father, but if they deny that Jesus Christ is essentially the same as God the Father, their worship is unacceptable. You understand that?

So no one, no time, worships God as Spirit who does not worship God as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. God cannot be defined in any other term. God is not just God up there. He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and there's no other way to define Him or worship Him.

So, when you have the Jehovah's Witnesses, or the liberals who would deny the deity of Jesus Christ yet claim to worship God, it is a lie, because God is non other than the One who is the same with Jesus Christ. And that is the message of the epistles.

Now let me show you how they understood it even if we don't. Look at Ephesians chapter 1 and let's just see some samples of their worship. In Ephesians 1, you have one of the great paeans of praise ever given in the Bible, one of the great benedictions, one of the great statements of glory offered to God. In fact, from verse 3-14 is one sentence without a period. It's just a long list of praise phrases. But it begins this way in verse 3, Ephesians 1:3. "Blessed be the God - " what God? What God? " - the God and Father - " The Father of whom? " - of our Lord Jesus Christ." You see? That is how God is known, and is not known apart from that.

In verse 17 of the same chapter, in Paul's great prayer, he prays that the God - what God? - "The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory." And again, God is qualified as the God who is identified with the Lord Jesus Christ.

In 2 Corinthians 1:3 another illustration. "Blessed be God, - " what God? What God are you worshipping? " - even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." And again you see God is known as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In Philippians chapter 2:9, that great passage, "God is highly exalted." Christ "given Him a name above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow," and so forth. And then in verse 11, "And every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God - " what God? " - the Father." The Father of whom? Of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the only way God can be known.

In Romans 15:6, next to the last chapter, the apostle Paul says, "That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, - " what God? " - even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." You see, beloved, you cannot worship God apart from a recognition that Jesus Christ His Son is equal to God. That's His deity.

You say, "Well, that's all Paul. Did everybody agree with that?" Well, I'll just give you a sample. Peter sure did. First Peter 1:3. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

How about the apostle John? He did, too. Second John verse 3, listen to this. "Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God - " what God? " - the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father." Isn't that great?

You see, God is not just some floating Spirit going through space and anybody can sort of plug in anywhere they want with any particular form they want. God is eternal. God is vast, filling all of eternity, ever present, everywhere to be worshiped at all times, by all people, but the only way you ever come to God is as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And now you know why He had to say, "No man comes unto the Father but by Me."

So, I just tell you that because you can't worship God apart from Jesus Christ. Now look at John 5:23, and I want to give you one other verse. And this is so important. This is the logical conclusion to what I've just said. John 5:23 says, "That all men should honor the Son, - " that's another word for worship " - even as they honor the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father who hath sent Him." Did you get that? We're not only to worship the Father, then, we're to worship whom? The Son.

And that is bound up in John 4 in the fact that God is the Father of the Son. So who's the object of our worship? God the Father, and God the Son. God the Father, God the Son.

Somebody came to me this last week and said, "I've been taught that it's blasphemous to pray to anyone except the Father, is that true?" I said, "No. That's not true." I said, "It sounds like somebody has just gotten a little bit of knowledge, and twisted a few Scriptures, and trying to pass themselves off as a Bible teacher." You can't even worship God the Father unless you worship the Son. You can't even come before God the Father unless you come in the name of the Son. If you're going to pray to the Father, you're praying to the Son. They're one and the same.

If you're going to honor the Father, you're going to honor the Son. If you're going to ask of the Father, you're asking of the Son. If you're going to praise the Father, you're praising the Son. They come together. there's no way to isolate the two. Therefore, without Jesus Christ, no one worships God at all. And if we do worship God, we worship God as Father and as Son. And you have every right to go to the Son, to praise the Son, to petition the Son as you would the Father. We are called upon to worship the Son.

Nothing wrong with that. And I think that's bound up in John 4. And Jesus says it in a way that so fits His humiliation. He doesn't say, "Hey, worship Me." He just affirms worship God as Spirit, who is My Father, of whom I am of the same essence. Therefore you must be worshipping Me. But He doesn't say it. It is that He is true to His humiliation. And yet the conclusion is the same.

And the church knew it. From the earliest years of the church, He was worshiped as Lord. He was confessed as Lord in baptism. He is invoked as Lord in the Christian assembly. He is worshiped as Lord when knees bow before Him. He is petitioned as Lord when we need help and strength. Jesus Christ is Lord. That is the bottom line in all worship. That is the fundamental doctrine. We come to God through Christ. And we come to Christ in coming to God.

You see, when Thomas fell on his knees after the resurrection, looking at Jesus and said, "My Lord and my - " what? " - God," he knew exactly that he was fulfilling the proper perspective of worship. God is to be worshiped, but only can be as He is perceived to be one and the same with His Son, who is also to receive the same honor the Father receives.

So, who do we worship when we gather? We worship the Father and we worship the Son. You say, "What about the Holy Spirit?" Well, there's nothing in Scripture that directly tells us to worship the Holy Spirit, but all worship is energized in the power of the Spirit, isn't it? It is the Spirit that allows us to come into God's presence, Galatians 4 and Romans 8 says. The Spirit allows us to come into God's presence and cry, "Abba Father." It is in the Spirit's power and presence that we have access to worship God.

And so, the Spirit is a part of worship. The Spirit is the driving energy and power in all of true worship. And we would not set that aside. We would not deny that reality that the Spirit is the energy of worship. And we would also as a corollary have to say that if the Spirit is equal to the Son and equal to the Father, He's worthy to be worshiped, also, right? Although the Scripture does not point that out to us as such, it's a necessary observation. The Holy Spirit is called "the Spirit of God" in many passages. In Romans 8, He is called "the Spirit of Christ." He is simply the radiation of God the Father, the radiation of God the Son, and is worthy of worship as such. So don't hesitate to worship the Spirit as well as the Son and the Father.

But in the uniqueness of the Spirit's ministry, as we see it defined in the church age, the Holy Spirit calls us to the Son, the Son calls us to the Father. And so there's a sense in which the Spirit wants us to worship the Son, and the Son wants us to worship the Father, and yet all are worthy to be worshiped.

And so what is it saying in John 4? Who is the object of worship? God. But not some vague Spirit, some floating God undefined or called by any name you want to call Him, but the God who is the Father. The Father of whom? The Father of all mankind? No. No. The Father of the Lord Jesus Christ; one in essence with Him. And as we worship Him, we worship the Son, as well. It is fitting, beloved, that our hearts go out in worship to Jesus Christ as well as the Father.

In the 14th chapter of Revelation I want to show you a great scene. Revelation 14:1. "And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on Mount Zion - " and of course, Mount Zion for the Jew is most likely a symbol of heaven. And so this is kind of a vision of heaven that John has. And he sees the "Lamb," and the Lamb is Christ, "the Lamb that was slain from before the foundation of the world," "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world." He sees the Lamb. And the Lamb is Christ.

"And with Him 144,000, having His Father's name written in their foreheads. And a voice from heaven, like a voice of many waters, and like the voice of a great thunder: and the voice of harpers harping with their harps: and they sang as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures, - " who are angels " - and the elders: - " who I believe represent the church " - and no man could learn that song but the 144,000, who were redeemed from the earth."

Now here you have a picture of worship. You have these redeemed special emissaries of God used for the proclamation of the gospel during the time of the tribulation. And they're pouring out praise to the Lamb, to the Lamb, and that is none other than Christ. Worshiping Jesus Christ is fitting. It is right. It is proper. And even though in His humiliation in John 4, He doesn't come right out and say, "Worship Me," it's bound up in the concept that He is one with the Father, and no man comes to the Father but through Him, but through Him.

And so we have every reason, and every right, in fact, we have every command to come to the Father through the Son in the Spirit. True Trinitarian worship. And I don't know about you, but when I think of what the Spirit of God does in my life, in bringing me to God, in empowering me for service, in energizing me for worship, I cannot help but respond to give glory and adoration to the Spirit, as well as the Son, as well as the Father. That's the focus of worship.

That's why I'm concerned about people who just vaguely worship God. And I'm also concerned about the kind of people whose worship seems to terminate at the Son. It just goes to Christ. It's sort of the Jesus approach, and never gets beyond that. And I also worry about that which inordinately and incessantly focuses only on the Holy Spirit. We are to worship God, but God as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the energy and the power of the blessed Holy Spirit.

Now, I want to give you a fourth point this morning, and I'll save the final one for next time. We've talked about the importance of worship. We've talked about the source of worship, our redemption. We've talked about the object of worship, the trinity. And now I want to talk about the sphere of worship, the sphere of worship. We could call it the place. Where do we worship? Where do we worship?

Clearly in the Old Testament they worshiped in temples, tabernacles, very specified geographical locations. But notice verse 21, the woman has said, "We Samaritans worship in Mount Gerizim," which is up in the north. "You Jews worship in Jerusalem," Mount Moriah. And she's sort of saying, "Which is the right place?" And Jesus says, "Woman, believe Me, the hour cometh, when she shall neither in this mountain, - " that is Mount Gerizim " - or at Jerusalem, worship the Father." Neither one. In other words, He says, "Very soon, neither one will be the place." They're both going to be eliminated.

Now that is not to deny the place of the Old Testament temple and tabernacle. That is not to deny the reality of the ceremonial system or the sacrificial system. That is not to deny all of the emblems, and pictures, and so forth that God gave them. But what it's saying is this. There's coming a time when those symbols will pass away. There won't need to be a physical tabernacle or a physical temple anymore. There won't need to be any more sacrifices, any more priests. Why? Because the time is coming when every individual will be a living temple. Every individual will be a living priest. And the sacrifice that Christ offers will be the one full final permanent sacrifice that ends all sacrifices, right?

Now, there was nothing wrong with those symbols, but they were only symbols. God never did just confine Himself to the temple or the tabernacle. God was never limited to that. They were just prodders of the mind. They were just symbols. They weren't the reality. They were just the symbols.

But God says, Christ says, “in the new covenant, even the symbols are going to go inside,” as it were. Even the things that you focus on will be internal, rather than external. And so there will come to an end, these things that have identified themselves with the places of worship.

And you know, when Jesus died, the temple was rent from the top to the bottom, split open, everybody could walk right into the holy of holies. And in 70 A.D., the whole temple was destroyed and wiped out. The Samaritan temple was destroyed before Christ. That whole system has come to an end. Now there are still some Samaritans who worship up there, but they’re not worshipping God because that isn’t the way you do it. That system ended.

You say, “Well, then, if it isn’t in a temple, and it isn’t in a special physical building, and all of that, where do we worship God? Where is the sphere?” All right, let’s establish this to begin with. You’re a temple yourself. First Corinthians 6. “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit?” Right? You’re the living temple of the Holy Spirit. You say, “You mean I can worship Him right here?” That’s right. Everywhere you go, God goes, in a very living residential presence. You mean, “I can worship Him anywhere?” That’s right.

You can worship Him at the beach. You can worship Him in the mountains. You can worship Him driving down the road. You can sit under a tree. You can take a walk in the woods. You can go in the country. You can worship God in your living room. You can worship the Lord sitting on your porch looking at the stars, or smelling the fresh flowers in the morning. You can worship God anywhere you are, under any kind of circumstance or condition, because you are a living breathing temple in which God dwells. The sphere is unlimited.

You say, “Now, does that mean I don’t need to come to church?” Yes, in one sense, it means that you don’t need to come to church to worship God. But let me see if I can’t give you another dimension.

There is a place today. There is a building today - maybe you don’t know about this building - but there is a building today where God does uniquely meet with His people apart from the individuals. There is a very special building where He meets with His people. I’d like you to see what building it is, so turn to Ephesians 2:19. Now here Paul describes the Christian in some very graphic terms. He describes them - now watch this word - collectively. He sees the Christians not as individual temples, sort of running around disconnected, but he sees them collectively.

And first of all, he says in verse 19, “You are no more strangers and sojourners, but fellowcitizens with the saints.” He sees them all linked together as fellow citizens in the kingdom of light. We’re all fellow citizens. We have that in common. We have common citizenship.

Then he says we also belong to “the household of God.” Now it’s getting more intimate. We’re a family. We’re a family. So there is something to be said for our coming together, isn’t there? We are

linked by common citizenship. We are linked by common blood as family. But then look at verse 20. "And we are built - " and now all of a sudden we are a building. "And we are built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, with Jesus Christ the chief corner stone; - " and we are " - the building fitly framed together that grows up to be a holy temple in the Lord: In whom we collectively are built together for a house of God through the Spirit."

God has a building. You know what that building is? It is the visible living assembly of the redeemed saints. When we come together like this, beloved, we constitute the temple of God in a unique way. We are not only individual temples, but collectively we are one great temple in which God dwells.

In 1 Peter 2:5 it says, "Ye are living stones, built up spiritual house." Living stones. And when we come together like this, we constitute a place of worship where God manifests Himself in ways unique to our assembly that He cannot manifest Himself when we are alone. For He moves to us through others.

In 2 Corinthians 6:16 Paul says, "Ye are - " collectively again " - the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them." God moves in our midst, beloved, when we come together. God moves with His wonderful presence.

In 1 Corinthians 3:9 it says, "Ye are God's building." Ye are God's building. In verse 16, "Ye are the temple of God."

And in Hebrews chapter 10 it says that since "a new and living way" has been made, and since we are to "draw near" and worship, let us "not forsake the assembling of ourselves - " what's the next word? " - together." Why? Because when we come together in a marvelous, unique way, we become the living temple of God.

And so when you come into this place on the Lord's Day with a heart set to worship, and you gather with others of like precious faith, God is here in a marvelous and real way to accept our worship. We are not a building made with stone. We are a building made with living flesh.

Yes, you can worship God any place. You can worship God out in the isolation of privacy all alone. But you must also worship God in the assembly of His redeemed people, so that you can, as it says in Hebrews 10:24, stimulate "one another to love and good works." You won't survive out there by yourself. We need the collective assembly. We need the living stones piled one upon the other which constitute the habitation of the living God.

So, worshiping God is not really a geographical issue, but that doesn't mean there's no congregation. That doesn't mean there's no special building. That doesn't mean there's no special place. You must come together with God's redeemed people. We don't need special priests, and we don't need

sacrifices, and we don't need masses. that's the error of the Roman Catholic system. We are living priests. The sacrifice has once for all been offered. We have immediate access to God on our own. We are His living temple. That's why it says that Peter says that the church is the house of God. And he doesn't mean the building, he means the living stones, the people.

And so I say this to you. You need to be here on the Lord's Day. That's right. You need to be here on the Lord's Day. When God instituted His worship to take place on the first day of the week, He did it so that we'd be faithful to it. If there's anything in your life that you need to be faithful to, it's this. You will not survive out there alone. Besides, you're flying in the face of the demand of God to forsake not the assembling of yourselves together. That stimulation is critical in your life.

That affirmation that comes when you're in the presence of God's redeemed people, that unique and wondrous ministry that the Spirit of God accomplishes, which He cannot accomplish in your isolation, is something that you must respond to. Each Lord's Day, each first day of the week, should find you in the place of worshiping God with His redeemed people. To forsake that is to put yourself outside.

I always remember the man who didn't attend church very faithfully. And the pastor went to see him, and he was sitting before a fire that was being warmed by the coals. The coals were red hot, and the fire was warm, and it was a cold winter day. And he said to him, "My friend, I don't see you at the church on the Lord's Day. You come only when it's convenient for you, only when you feel like you need to, and you miss so very often. I just wish you'd come all the time." And the man didn't seem to be getting the message.

So, he said, "Let me show you something." He took the tongs beside the fireplace, pulled open the screen, and reached in and began to separate all the coals, separated them so that none was touching the others. And in a matter of moments, they were all died out. He said, "My friend, that's what's happening in your life. As soon as you isolate yourself from the rest, the fire goes out."

It's really important not only that we worship God everywhere at all time, but that we come together in the assembly of His redeemed people to stimulate one another to love and good works, and to honor and worship God. I don't like to allow a week to go by in my life when I haven't set aside a special time to worship God with His people. Neither should you. Be faithful. Let's bow in prayer.

Some of you may be saying to yourself, "You know, this is all very interesting but I came this morning with a broken heart because my marriage is on the rocks, or I've got children that are a problem, or I just lost my job, or I just found out I have cancer, Or I'm not feeling well, or I'm lonely, or I can't pay my bills. What does all this have to do with that?" And I would suggest to you that it has everything to do with that because the Bible says if you "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, all these things shall be added unto you."

I think that very often the reason everything else seems to be falling apart is because we're not the worshipers that God seeks. And if we would worship God in spirit and in truth, everything else would fall into the special care of the Lord, who is pleased with our worship. Get the perspective right. Abandon yourself. Offer yourself as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is an act of spiritual worship, and let God take care of the rest.

For some of us Christians, this means a fresh and new commitment, not only to worship the Lord everywhere and at all times, but in the assembly of His redeemed people and to be faithful about it. That just grieves my heart so much when people don't understand how utterly important it is to worship God with His people faithfully.

Father, bring into the prayer room those that You would have to come. Minister to all of our hearts as we meditate on the fact that You call us to worship, to true worship. May we renew our covenant to worship You at everywhere and all times, and as well to be faithful to the assembly of that living temple where You meet us in such a special way.

Thank You for all that we've been able to offer You, for our songs, our words of praise, our thoughts, our hearts, for the confession. We thank You that You have opened Your Word and helped us to understand how better to worship You. And so accept our worship from this hour, Lord, and as we go from this place may it leave its mark on all that we say and do and think, that Jesus may be glorified. We pray in His blessed name. Amen.

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