

Christ in the Home

Part 1

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[00:00:01] Now can we read together in John's Gospel, Chapter 12.

Gospel by John, Chapter 12, and verse 1.

Then Jesus, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead.

There they made him a supper, and Martha served.

But Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair, and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment.

[00:01:01] Now Romans, Chapter 16.

Chapter 16, and verse 3.

Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my helpers in Christ Jesus, who have for my life laid down their own necks, and to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.

Likewise greet the church that is in their house.

We've read two portions together, one prior to the Lord's death and resurrection and ascension, and the other consequent upon these great events.

[00:02:03] One in a home where he obviously was preeminent, and secondly in another home where obviously he was preeminent, and not only he himself, but his interests.

That's what I want to speak about tonight, the wonderful privilege that we have, husbands and wives in their homes, children too, to have Christ preeminent in our hearts, in our lives, and also the interests of Christ.

Now that's a very great subject.

I don't think we can minimize the importance of homes, because from the beginning of the Bible to

the end, this is emphasized.

Whether we think of Abraham with his tent and his altar, or coming to the New Testament period and find a home like the one occupied by Priscilla and Aquila, we find all through the scriptures this great emphasis upon homes supporting the interests of God or of Christ.

[00:03:08] When we read the Acts of the Apostles, this is so evident. We have the great structure, the temple representative of Judaistic teaching and interest and ceremony, and over against that in humble homes, places where Christ was honored and cherished and where the truth was circulated, and also, thank God, where souls received blessing. So we find this, the humble attitude of those who followed Christ and were seeking to represent his interests, and all this held very tenaciously in the homes of those who believed in him. We find, I believe, in a home the descent of the Holy Spirit. One hundred and twenty people gathered there, must have been a large-sized room, and there they were, and the Holy Spirit descended upon them, linking them with Christ in glory, forming [00:04:01] them into the one body in Christ.

Wonderful event, and thank God that has continued up to the present moment. I mean the company.

Then we find homes where the word of God was preached, like the home of Cornelius, where he gathered his friends together that they might listen to the word of God, and we know the outcome there.

Souls brought to our Lord Jesus Christ and thoroughly committed to his interests. We find homes where hospitality was performed.

We think of Paul and Silas, how they were entertained by the jailer and by Lydia, and we remember an aged disciple lodged the apostle in his home, homes of hospitality and kindness. That's continuing the pattern set by the Lord Jesus himself of kindness and compassion for those who were in need.

We find a home of Philip with his four daughters, his four daughters given to prophesying, and we believe making known the mind of God.

[00:05:03] We find a home where the man worshipped God with his house adjoining the synagogue, got to know Christ, and put on a different direction for the Lord's glory, in many other instances, so that through the acts of the apostles, we find this insistence upon homes and their committal to the interests of the Lord Jesus. If you care to read the first epistle to the Corinthians very carefully, you'll find it again, this thought comes through. We find the house of Chloe so concerned about the abuses in the Corinthian assembly that they took the trouble to write to the apostle and they asked for his help. We find the house of Stephanus baptized, thoroughly committed to the interests of the Lord, and that same house addicted to the service of the saints. We find the saints exhorted to lay by at home as the Lord had prospered them in view of supporting the interests of the Lord as those interests were required. And again, we find Priscilla and Aquila mentioned as a devoted couple, husband and wife together, [00:06:06] and so concerned about the interests of the Lord that they worked together harmoniously in this way.

And this is what I want to speak about, dear brethren. I believe that what I have to say is complementary to what our dear brother brought before us this afternoon in such an effective way. The Lord Jesus with his disciples gathered in the upper room, and he discoursing to them about so

many things so precious to our hearts today, and so effective to them as they embarked on a life of testimony for the Lord in his absence in glory. But the scene is different in John 12, not the gathered disciples, but a home, and a home where he was welcome, and a home where he was preeminent.

He didn't require to wash their feet, and I believe there's a reason for this. He was there in the presence of those who had benefited so greatly from his service [00:07:04] of love.

The dead man Lazarus, I think Mr. Darby's translation so renders it, the dead man Lazarus, a standing witness to the power and greatness of the Lord Jesus, the evidence of his sonship, as we find in Romans 1 by resurrection of dead persons from the dead. And so we find Lazarus a living witness of the Son of God's power.

What a testimony to that glorious person.

And Martha too, all her resentment and all her frustration completely removed.

She's there happily serving, and I think the context would show not just Martha and Mary and the Lord Jesus, but three of them, Lazarus, Martha, and Mary, and also the disciples.

An added burden, or should I, an added responsibility in service, but certainly no resentment and [00:08:01] no frustration, Martha in her true place.

And shall we say about Mary, her usual place, happily in the presence of the Lord. We find her in the gospel by Luke sitting at his feet, listening to his word, imbibing it freely, drinking it in, and getting all the gain from it.

And here we find her anointing his feet with this precious ointment, gladly sacrificing what was so precious, giving it to him willingly, without reluctance, and then wiping his feet with her hair, as we know from 1 Corinthians 11, prepared to sacrifice her own glory as a woman in order to show the preeminence of Christ in her heart.

Wonderful picture. And there he is in the center, the object of this company. They made him a supper.

United they were in this great transaction of showing their appreciation of the Lord Jesus Christ. [00:09:01] Now, dear brethren, whatever else we have to say this evening, this is absolutely essential.

That before we can have homes, husbands, wives, children, all united together in connection with the Lord's interest, it's absolutely essential that the preeminence of Christ should be in every heart.

If it isn't, we'll certainly fall down in all the other things that the teaching of the Word of God indicates to us connected with homes. Oh, dear brethren, what an honor that husbands, wives, children can have Christ in their hearts in a preeminent way.

And this is in a context of intense hatred and opposition against the Lord of glory.

If we read the previous chapter, there are those who hated him and they were plotting for his death, intrigue and enmity expressing itself.

And the Lord Jesus withdraws himself from that kind of situation. [00:10:02] He can't minister to that kind of people because they have no interest in him. There is no inlet in their hearts for this kind of teaching that he has. And so he wastes no time with them, withdraws from them, and comes into the atmosphere of love. The place where he was desired, the place where he was wanted, the place where he was honored and cherished in direct contrast to all that Jerusalem represented.

Beautiful picture. And if we read on in the chapter, we find that the same atmosphere of hatred manifests itself when the Jews give commandment that if anybody knows where he is, let us know and we'll apprehend him and then take him to his death. What a joy for the Lord Jesus to find himself in a company like this. It's no different today, dear brethren. There's a world that hates Christ. There's a world that has no interest in his interests. There's a world that has no place for Christ. [00:11:01] Oh, how thankful we are that in our homes there is a place for Christ.

I want to say this, dear brethren, that I believe our homes can be a tremendous support to the gathering together of the saints.

They can affect them in a very helpful way.

Unfortunately, they can adversely affect the gathering of the saints. So we want to be impressed by this, that how we conduct our lives in our homes can very, very definitely affect the gathering of the saints when they gather to his name. And make no mistake about it, this is a very practical matter, a very serious matter, and yet a very privileged matter.

And we want to show how it can operate today. But we do want to dwell on this delightful picture.

Homes where Christ is honored, cherished, where his interests are maintained, and where the glory of his person is supreme.

[00:12:02] Now, as I look around this company, I'm perfectly sure that the homes here are of such a character, that there are homes where Christ is honored. His word is honored, it's read in their homes. His person is honored, they speak about him reverently and affectionately.

There are homes where his interests are treasured and sustained.

Having said that, I think each of us, those of us who have homes, I should say husbands and wives, those who have homes, we would all say that there could be more affection, there could be more reverence, there could be more practice in maintaining the interests of the Lord.

And this is why I want to bring this word before you. There isn't any doubt about the home at Bethany. It's so obvious that they love the Lord Jesus. It's so obvious that they're prepared to work for him, they're prepared to sacrifice for him. He's the center of their thoughts and their operations at this particular moment. [00:13:02] And what a refreshing scene it is when we think of the enmity and the intrigue and the hatred and the corruption that surrounds him. And what a joy to his heart to retreat from all that scene into the presence of those who loved him. Is it any different today? We said already that it isn't. And I believe it's a joy to the Lord to look down on the homes of the saints and see there a place where he is honored and cherished and obeyed.

And oh dear brethren, we want to maintain this.

Remember we said that this was prior to his death and his resurrection and his ascension.

And obviously here in this little company, there is no thought about the church coming into it.

It's Christ preeminent.

It has been said that if you make much of the church, you make much of Christ. And we would say that perhaps is true, but in a sense it's a dangerous kind of expression because it's important to keep Christ first. [00:14:03] The Bible says, I speak as to Christ and as to the assembly.

Always Christ first and every heart who loves him would say amen to that. Christ first and then the assembly. And so this picture, I believe, would emphasize to us how much we need to be impressed by this. Now again, I'm going to appeal to each one of us here as to the character of blessing that we have received.

We think of Lazarus raised from the dead.

And so we can say, thank God too. We have listened to the voice of the son of God and we have passed from death unto life. We have the knowledge in our souls that we are no longer dead persons. We are living persons. We have the life that our brother was speaking about this afternoon. Thank God for it. And this life we have in his son, glorious person indeed. And because of what he has accomplished on the cross and his power over death and resurrection [00:15:02] and where he is at God's right hand, thank God we can say we have that life. And this life is in his son. Oh, glorious man that he has secured this for us.

And should this not produce in our hearts a desire to follow him, to please him, to sacrifice for him?

Oh, what a mighty lever in every soul that Christ has blessed us, taken us out of death into life and given us an interest in things that are eternal and are pure and holy.

Then we think of Martha and we go back again to Luke's gospel and we find her saying to the Lord, Lord, dost thou not care?

Why, she says, I'm encumbered about with a great deal of serving here. And she says, bid my sister to come and help me.

The Lord very carefully, very quietly says, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful and Mary has chosen that good part that shall [00:16:04] not be taken from her.

Oh, dear Martha, she was a practical woman.

She saw things to be done and she did them, but perhaps not with that singleness of heart that ought to mark one who is filled with Christ. She was concerned about not getting any help from her sister when apparently her sister was wasting her time, but the Lord indicated to her that there was something that was just as necessary as serving and that was sitting listening.

And so the Lord produced to Martha a very practical lesson to be a help for her in future life. It's very

good to see that obviously she had obtained the blessing that came from obedience to listening to his word.

And dear Mary, well, nothing to correct in her. She's listening to his word and she's taking it in, she's appropriating it, and in this delightful passage in John, she's ready to bestow her cherished treasures on her Lord, [00:17:02] on her master, and show how much she loved him.

Not for her a visit to the grave, she anointed his feet.

I believe she was saying that precious life, so pleasurable to God, so pleasurable to us, is going to be given up. I'm going to anoint his feet now. I know he's going to die. I know that he'll rise up from amongst the dead. Why, the experience that she had with the raising of Lazarus was a very definite proof to her.

I am the resurrection and the life. What a testimony he gave to Martha and no doubt carried on to Mary, that he was the one who would be victorious over death. And so she says, I'm going to anoint his feet now to show my appreciation of that wonderful life and I know that when he does die, he'll rise up from amongst the dead. I'm not going to embalm his body against death. Why, she says, he's the living one, he'll conquer death, and I want to express my appreciation [00:18:02] of him now.

Oh, what a wonderful attitude of intelligence and love, Martha's dear sister Mary. Now, dear brethren, there are the features that we see in the house of Bethany, so obviously centered on our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, if we are all Christians here, and I hope we are, I hope we are all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

I hope we have all trusted him as Savior and Lord. I hope we are all thoroughly committed to him in our lives and in our minds and in our affections.

And if we are, then we can answer to these wonderful examples that we see in the house of Bethany.

Wonderful, wonderful blessing to be like them, out of death, adjusted in connection with features that attach to us naturally of resentment and frustration and features of the flesh, and also encouraged and expanded in our affections to the Lord Jesus, what a wonderful home. [00:19:02] Would you like your home to be like that? I would too.

I would like the Lord Jesus to come into my home at any time, and not a scurrying here and there to get things under the carpet or under the cushion, or perhaps in the cupboard, things that shouldn't be there, but a settled home where Christ is honored and esteemed.

Nothing to adjust the privilege of having him as the supreme guest in the home, and all our interests in him, what a privilege. And yet I believe this is what is done spiritually, in the power of the Holy Spirit today, as our thoughts are centered in him.

Now we come to Romans 16.

In this letter of commendation, I think it's well to emphasize this, that the apostle is writing a letter of commendation to Phoebe, or for Phoebe, as she was visiting the Roman [00:20:02] assembly, and also he takes the opportunity to commend others for their service and their love, and also to greet the saints.

We might say in passing that this is something that is so essential amongst the saints of God today.

Dear brethren, don't let it lapse.

The principle of letters of commendation are so essential in our communications with each other that we might be able to identify each other as those who desire to walk according to the truth, separate from the confusion that exists in Christendom today. And if it was so important in the early days of the Christian church, it's equally important today in days of tremendous confusion.

So Paul, he writes about this devoted couple, Priscilla and Aquila.

It's a common saying, or I should say it's well known, that they are mentioned six times [00:21:01] in the New Testament, three times Aquila is mentioned first, and three times Priscilla is mentioned first, indicating the balance that was held in this delightful couple, husband and wife, so united together in the interest of the Lord.

Now it's not only the Lord personally, thank God for that, but it's Christ and his church.

And as we read this short section about Priscilla and Aquila, we find Paul saying that all the assemblies were so indebted to Priscilla and Aquila for their service, and he himself was greatly indebted to them. But also in their home, the assembly was gathered and performed the various functions connected with it.

What a privilege. What a dignified home. And this is what I want to speak about in relation to them, that they were thoroughly committed to the glory of Christ and to his interests upon earth.

[00:22:01] Now first of all, they came into contact with the great vessel who was used by the Holy Spirit to bring out the truth of the church in such a distinctive way, Paul, who was given the truth of the mystery that saints on earth are united to each other and to Christ in glory, forming the body of Christ, something unheard of in Old Testament times, but now manifested and given to this great servant of the Lord Jesus, the apostle Paul. And Priscilla and Aquila were early brought into contact with him, and he took them with him on his journeys and placed great confidence in them in directing them to go to certain assemblies and perform various functions there. Obviously, the apostle, with his discernment and wisdom, was able to see the value of this husband and wife, and he used them accordingly.

There is one incident that indicates how able they were in relation to this matter, and that's in connection with Apollos. [00:23:01] They remember that he knew about the Lord Jesus, but only in connection with the baptism of John.

He obviously didn't understand the truth of Christ glorified and all that was connected with that.

And so when he was ministering, it came out in his ministry that he was defective in this particular

point.

So Priscilla and Aquila, without doing what our brother said this afternoon, Apollos, we want to quote a scripture to you and prove to you that you're wrong, they took him to themselves.

And it seems to me that that would cover the suggestion that they took him home with them. And in the quietness of their home, and in the privacy of their home, and in the love and hospitality of their home, they unfolded to him the way of God more perfectly.

Delightful attitude.

Not an overbearing attitude, but an attitude of love.

And I think this shows the character of Priscilla and Aquila in their ability to help the saints of God in relation to Christ personally, and in relation to his interests.

[00:24:03] Now when we speak about the assembly, I think there is always a danger, and we must face it, that its truth is only operative in the particular company to which I'm connected. That's a very, very bad danger to fall into.

I would say, of course, that we trust that the companies that we are connected with are seeking to maintain the truth of Christ and the assembly as revealed in scripture. And yet we mustn't think that that is the only way that we are to think of the assembly. The assembly is so great and glorious, and so varied in its expression, that we must always have in our minds that it is Christ's assembly, and we hold that in our thoughts more than anything else.

I'm not seeking to press any sectarian attitude, neither am I seeking to press any particular attitude that would make us feel, well, it doesn't matter as long as we're Christians. That's another danger that we mustn't fall into. [00:25:01] It is the truth concerning Christ and his assembly that must govern our attitude at all times, and if it doesn't, we are liable to fall into error of one kind or another. But Priscilla and Aquila most definitely had the interests of Christ and the assembly in their hearts.

Now this perhaps was exemplified in the most striking way when the assembly was in their house.

That is, those who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and gathered to his name did so in their home.

What a wonderful privilege. I don't know if they had a large home or a small home, and there's no good speculating. It tells us simply that the church was in their home. Now you can think of the breaking of bread, you can think of prayer, the prophesying of the ministry of the word, administration and discipline in connection with the name of the Lord, and all this maintained in their home by the company that gathered there to [00:26:04] the name of the Lord Jesus. What a responsibility.

There would be nothing in that home to divert the minds of the gathered saints away from the particular purpose.

They wouldn't be looking round at things that might be there that would occupy their hearts and minds.

I'm sure the home would be of such a character and the attitude of the believers would be of such a kind that their thoughts would be focused on the reason for gathering together, either to the breaking of bread or, as we said, prayer in relation to the interests of God and his Christ, or also the unfolding of the word of God and also the care that's connected with the practical outworking of the truth of the church. All these things occupied in that home.

Dear brethren, that's a wonderful kind of home to have.

It may be that in many parts of the world this is going on, the so-called underground [00:27:02] church, where they can't come together as we do this evening. Oh, dear brethren, how resolute and how energetic and continuous we should be in our prayers for our brethren who are being persecuted. I'm sure in their homes, without any kind of embellishment, these dear brethren meet together in quietness and simplicity to do the things that we've been speaking of. Wonderful privilege on their part, and so the interests of Christ are very much kept alive, perhaps in a greater way than in countries where there is freedom and liberty to meet together.

Very sad that it should be so.

And so these dear brethren met together in the home of Priscilla and Aquila.

Is my home like that?

Could I invite the brethren along to my home to remember the Lord, and there wouldn't be conditions in my home that would detract from this great event? Would the brethren pray freely in my home without being in any way occupied with things [00:28:04] around them, or in the ministry of the Word, or in care, in administration and discipline?

I trust it would be a home that these things could be carried on. Would it be in yours? I trust it would be so. What a privilege to have our homes available for the interests of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then you say, what about the gospel? Well, I'm perfectly sure that every person who formed that company would be concerned about other persons accepting the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior, and they in turn enjoying the privileges that belong to those who gather to the name of the Lord Jesus. And so out from that home there would be a stream of evangelical messages, messages that would reach the unconverted and be a blessing to them. And so, dear brethren, they would be perfectly in accord with Ephesians 4, that the foundation, the apostles and prophets, the foundation was laid in their ministry concerning Christ, [00:29:05] and then the activity of the pastor-teachers would be to teach those that the evangelists brought in.

Oh, how successful the enemy has been in divorcing the truth of the assembly from the preaching of the gospel.

The scriptures, they don't divorce them, they have them together. And Ephesians 4 is the portion that clearly indicates this, that the evangelist is working hand-in-hand with the apostles, prophets and pastor-teachers, all with a view till we reach the finality that the scriptures indicate, leading us to Christ and his glory, working together harmoniously.

And so we believe that company in the home of Priscilla and Aquila would certainly be of that character.

We said already that three times Priscilla is mentioned first and three times Aquila is mentioned first, and indicating the proper balance in husband and wife. [00:30:03] And where scripture speaks about the husband being the head, that doesn't mean that he's a tyrant, that he's overbearing, not at all.

He's extremely responsible for direction and control in his home, a very, very responsible position indeed.

And the wife, she has her place and honor in being subject to her husband, and being under his control and guidance, so contributing to what the scriptures indicate is a Christian home set up in order for the glory of Christ and of God.

Now, to help us in this, I would say, read Psalm 128, and there you see an ideal brother.

And the qualifications of being such an ideal husband is he fears the Lord.

And because he fears the Lord, his home is ordered, he's blessed in his home with his [00:31:03] wife and children, he's blessed in his occupation, he's blessed amongst the people of God, he's blessed by God himself.

So there is the responsibility for every head of every home, fearing the Lord.

Now that means, I believe, obedience to the Lord, I believe it means reverence for the Lord, I believe it means subjection to his will.

Then if we want a patterned sister, then we read the last chapter of the book of Proverbs. The woman, the virtuous woman, the woman of worth, and she also fears the Lord.

So the same qualities are necessary in the wife as in the husband, and so the scriptures would teach us that the ideal home is when husband and wife fear the Lord and unitedly seek to represent him.

Now I say as a husband, have I failed?

[00:32:02] What do I do if I have failed as a husband? Obviously the first thing to do is to get on my knees and confess my failure to the Lord in exactly the same way as I would confess any other failure.

There is no difference. Oh, let us be preserved from thinking that any failure in the home can be glossed over lightly because it doesn't reach the public eye.

God sees us, we are under the eye of God, and any failure in the home must be confessed in exactly the same way as any public failure.

And if the wife fails in her responsibilities, she has exactly the same recourse for help and for blessing, to confess it, and perhaps something that we're not prone to do, to confess it to each other, that we might not fall into the same snare again and so avoid anything that would hinder the interest of the Lord. I believe with all my heart that Aquila and Priscilla would be such a couple, so concerned [00:33:05] about doing what was right for the Lord that they would be so harmoniously knitted together, united in the interest of the Lord, that this is the way they govern their lives. Delightful prospect

indeed.

Now I want to speak about a few homes of a positive character so that we might get help from them.

I don't want to speak very long on the negative side, but it's necessary to do so. We'll do that in a few minutes in the end.

We referred at the beginning to Abraham and his altar. What a delightful picture of that man. What kind of home had he been brought up in? An idolatrous home.

The Bible tells us that the father of Abraham was an idolater, and that was the kind of home that Abraham was reared in.

He was accustomed to idolatry with all its wicked, evil ways that were practiced in those days and still practice today.

And so out from that home he went because he obeyed the call of God. [00:34:06] The God of glory appeared unto him, and that call, of course, it completely set him free from every other tie, and on his way he went as a pilgrim.

And we find that he had a tent indicating his pilgrim character, and he had an altar indicating his worship of God.

Now I'm sure that every time that Abraham looked at that altar, it reminded him of the God of glory.

Every time he looked at it, it reminded him that he could only approach that God on the basis of sacrifice, and also would remind him of a character of life that was consistent with this sacrifice, this approach in worship. Now, dear brethren, if we can transfer that to our own homes. Oh, what a wonder, as we've been singing together, to be a pilgrim in this world. We're not here forever. [00:35:01] Who would want to be here forever in a world like this? Surely our desires are set on brighter things above, as we so often sing. And I believe what our brother was bringing before us this afternoon was just to remind us of this, that the Lord was preparing his own in view of his absence, but also, oh, how wonderful, the reminder to them that he was coming back. He wasn't going to leave them. He was coming back to conduct them into the Father's house himself. Precious promise. And we're all waiting for that. But until that does happen, how precious to be here in this pilgrim character, turning aside from the things that would hinder and be found here with homes where Christ is honored and glorified.

And so Abram, with his tent, would remind us of this, the pilgrim on his way to the place that God had promised him, and in the meantime, as he journeyed, worshiping God. Oh, how seldom this takes place in our homes. [00:36:01] I shouldn't say that, really, because I don't know all the homes here. Perhaps there are homes here that are greatly given to the worship of God and praise God that it may be so and may be continued with added incentive and force. But I would think, generally speaking, that we are more accustomed to pray for our need and the varied need that we have, and perhaps pray for those who are suffering. That may be the character of our prayers, more so than the worship of our great and glorious God.

But when it does happen, what a wonderful thing it is when we forget our need, and perhaps forget

for the moment the need of others, and we are occupied with the greatness of God and the way he has made himself known to us in Christ, and that on the basis of his death and resurrection and the place that he occupies in glory. Oh, how wonderful that in our homes we can worship God.

There is a positive feature in our homes to be cultivated and to be followed more and more. [00:37:03] Perhaps there is the joyous occasion when a few come along together and we gather round and we sing the songs of Zion, or perhaps, what's the name of our hymn book again?

Songs, spiritual songs, or any other company of hymns or compiling of hymns that raises our hearts above this weary world and occupies us with Christ in glory and all the precious things that he is the centre of.

Very happy occasion, and I believe that there perhaps we reach worship, and oh that it might be more so in these last days.

We find it often said, we don't gather together and sing so much as we used to do. Why is that?

We've still got plenty to sing about, and it's a very, very happy occasion when the saints can forget all else and meet together and sing in the homes, a most elevating thing, most happy thing, to sing together about the Lord Jesus Christ and the things of which [00:38:06] he is the centre.

Then we find a man who had a home, and that home was very definitely marked by prayer, and I'm referring to Daniel. You remember there were those who united themselves together with a very definite intent to destroy Daniel, and when that man of God knew that the thing was now definite and he was subjected to danger, the law had been passed, he went into his home, he opened his window, as he always did.

It wasn't an unusual thing, it wasn't a crisis in his life that drove him to his knees. It was his usual custom, and so he opened his window and he prayed as he did aforetime.

We speak about bad habits, and of course we want to get rid of them, whatever they might be, but there are good habits, and this was one that Daniel had, and he carried it [00:39:01] out faithfully day by day, praying to God three times.

Now that doesn't necessarily guide us, we can pray 33 times if we wish, and what a wonderful thing it is if we can pray as often as we possibly can. Now there was a house of prayer, not the assembly, not the temple, but the house that was devoted to this activity.

He was in captivity, not much chance of things progressing there in Babylon, but Daniel never forgot that the name of God was centered in Jerusalem.

God said he would place his name there, and he did, and in that wonderful prayer of Solomon on the day of dedication, there was provision made then for those in captivity to look towards the place where God had placed his name, and those who prayed towards that place, prayed to God, they would be heard, they would be answered, and they would be blessed. And so Daniel was taking account of that, he put it into practice, and we know the result. [00:40:05] All those enemies were destroyed, and the man of God was preserved, and he carried on with his work for God's glory, house of prayer. I trust, dear brethren, that our homes are marked by prayer, whether we do it as

husband and wife, whether we do it individually, whether we do it when there is company gathered together, how important it is to pray. I believe that heaven looks upon such homes with the greatest possible favor. Children, don't let it be irksome to you when your parents ask you to kneel down in prayer. Consider it a privilege to be with them. We have a wonderful example at the end of one of the chapters in the Acts of the Apostles, I think it's chapter 20, where they all went down, and they kneeled down, I believe husbands and wives and children, young people, all kneeling down together with the great apostle before he departed from them for the last time. So children, if your parents do ask you to pray, pray happily with them, listen to the [00:41:06] prayers, perhaps you're privileged to join your prayers to theirs. Heaven looks with favor upon a praying home. Now, there isn't a specific house mentioned in Deuteronomy chapter 6 and chapter 11, but there are instructions there for the very important truth of the word of God being in the home in a very prominent way.

And says Moses in his writing, let me quote it correctly, it's so wrong to trust one's memory and say the wrong thing.

Chapter 6 of Deuteronomy, and we'll read from verse 4, hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord, and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart and with all thy soul and with all thy might, and these words which I command thee this day shall be in [00:42:03] thine heart.

Our brother reminded us of this this afternoon, the heart and its importance in the word of God. And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up, and thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes, and thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house and on thy gates.

Now without going into the detail of all these expressions, it's perfectly obvious that the word of God is to have a foremost place in our homes.

Mr. McIntosh, in one of his books, has a very solemn statement to make. He says, what mean the well-thumbed newspaper and the dust-covered Bible upon the shelf?

Very solemn expression, that. The well-thumbed newspaper and the dust-covered Bible upon the shelf.

[00:43:05] I hope that our homes are not like that, that our Bibles are relegated to a place of very little importance, if any importance, and other things have a greater importance. Oh, how necessary it is for the word of God to have an important place in our homes, husband and wife reading it together when they have opportunity, and with the children, too, as opportunity occurs, private reading of the word of God, and not only reading it, but letting the word have its effect upon our lives. Deuteronomy says, bind it upon your hands.

Your service is to be governed by what you read in the word of God. Bind it upon your eyes.

What you look upon is to be governed by the word of God. Let it be when you rise up in the morning and when you lie down at night. Your whole day is to be governed by the word of God. [00:44:01] Let it be mailed upon the posts of thy doors. There's to be a testimony to those who are outside, the people in this home, they love the word of God. They are governed by it, they follow it, they believe that this is the most important instruction that they can have.

And so you can see from Deuteronomy chapter 6, and I think again emphasized in chapter 11, that the word of God is to have a preeminent place in the whole.

I ought to have said that those verses that we read, verses 4 and 5, are so necessary for the fulfillment of this, that you love God with all your heart and with all your mind and with all your soul. And so what follows is complimentary. God first, and then his word. Why? That reminds us of what Paul said to the Ephesian elders. I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified through faith which is in Christ. Now, the last home that we want to refer to is a home where everything is ordered according [00:45:11] to the mind of the Lord. I'm referring now to the house of Stephanus.

It was a baptized house, that is, that each member in that home was baptized to the name of the Lord Jesus, not simply as a technical means, but really indicating that they wanted to be connected with the one who was rejected here upon earth, and they wanted to be identified with his interests in the fullest possible manner. And every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ ought to be baptized, that's so perfectly clear in scripture.

And then we find that not only was the house baptized, but it was addicted to the service of the saints. There was a house completely given over to the interests of the Lord Jesus. And so all his interests were carefully followed and protected by the house of Stephanus. Now there are four positive homes, and oh dear brethren, let us take our cue from them. [00:46:06] A house where there is worship, a house where there is prayer, a house where the word of God is maintained, and a house where the Lord's interests are very carefully guarded. Now I want to go back to an original statement, that what we have in our homes affects the gathering together of the saints.

If we have homes where the Lord's interests are not cherished, how can we expect the gathering of the saints to be profitable, to be living, to be powerful?

But if we come from our homes into the gathering to the name of the Lord Jesus, then we find that there is an atmosphere of love and power that is conducive to free worship and the free expression of the mind of the Lord. I say without hesitation, dear brethren, not only from observation but from experience, [00:47:01] that what is in the home affects the assembly.

And we all need to pay attention to this. We don't come together in a congregational way where things are organized. We come together to be subject to the leading of the Spirit and the guidance of the Lord. If we are not right in our homes, how can we expect the free activity of the Spirit and the help of the Lord as we gather to his name? And so in a practical sense, if husband and wife are quarreling at home before they come together, gather to the name of the Lord, how can they possibly be right? How can they possibly be subject to the Lord and to the Spirit? If there is collusion and evil in the home, such as we have in Arantias and Sapphira, how is it possible to have blessing in the assembly? These are very, very important things. And for a few minutes, I want to show from Scripture that what goes on in our homes can adversely affect the gathering.

[00:48:02] We've spoken about the positive signs. The first, and it's the most important, is in the book of Joshua. You remember that God gave instructions for the destruction of Jericho, and that all the metals, the valuable things, were to be gathered together, and then these would be dedicated to the Lord.

Well, there was one man who disobeyed, Achan.

He saw, he coveted, he took, and he hid.

And he hid those things in the tent. He saw the wedge of gold and the silver and the Babylonian garment, and he took them and he hid them in his tent.

Great contrast from the beloved servant of God that we read of in Acts 20 when he says, I have coveted no man's silver or gold or apparel.

What a contrast.

Well, the Lord spoke to Joshua, and he didn't say, Achan has sinned.

He said, Israel has sinned.

And when Israel went out to fight the enemies of the Lord, they were defeated. [00:49:05] And why were they defeated? Because in the tent, in the home of Achan, there was a wedge of gold and some silver and a Babylonian garment that ought not to have been there. And so that failure affected the saints of God to such an extent that they were defeated in battle.

And not only so, but when God's discipline came upon the company, many, many people lost their lives.

I think that portion indisputably shows that what is in our homes of a wrong character can adversely affect the saints of God when they are together. The positive side in answer to that is the tents of the children of Israel were gathered round the tabernacle and were in full support of it.

The other statement is in the book of Haggai, when the saints were recovered from Babylon to rebuild the wall and the temple, and particularly Haggai is dealing with the temple. The prophet has to say to them, why are you so concerned about the well-being of your [00:50:04] own homes and the house of God lies in waste, showing clearly that over-occupation with the things of our own homes can lead to apathy that our brother mentioned this afternoon and even weakness and spiritual death in the gatherings of the saints. Selfishness, I believe, in connection with Haggai's word, selfishness so concerned about time and other things in our own homes and not concerned about the gathering together of the saints. In the New Testament, we have two instances, first of all Ananias and Sapphira that we have already mentioned. When they kept back part of the proceeds to themselves, they were robbing what belonged to God.

They were also setting a bad example, and their lives were taken from them, and so the assembly suffered in that respect. There was collusion and evil, husband and wife knew perfectly what they were doing, that it was wrong, but they were prepared to do what was wrong, and so judgment came [00:51:04] upon them.

Oh, what a sad thing to find such a home. And lastly, in 1 Timothy 3, we are reminded that if there is a man who desires to work amongst the saints of God as one who cares for them, an overseer, bishop, an elder, whatever name you like to give him, he is disqualified from performing that service if he can't control his own home. If a man can't control his own children, his own home, and lead it

correctly, he is not qualified to lead or guide or care for the saints of God. Solemn, solemn responsibility.

So dear friends, we haven't dwelt very much on the negative side, but sufficiently has been said to indicate the seriousness of not being overzealous or overattentive as to home conditions.

And I would lay it upon my heart, as I trust the Lord lays it upon yours, that we need to pay attention to our homes, that the proper conditions prevail there in honesty, in righteousness, [00:52:06] in devotion to the Lord, that what the atmosphere that obtains there might be carried over into the gathering of the saints when we gather to his name. Just one word in closing, the Lord said to the disciples in Matthew 10, when you go into a city, look for the homes that are worthy, the worthy homes. Now let us end on that note, that we all want to have worthy homes, and I think the best way to do that would be to adopt the saying of Joshua at the end of the book of Joshua, As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.