

The Christian's responsibilities

Part 2

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[00:00:01] Now will you turn please to 1st Corinthians chapter 1, the first epistle to the Corinthians chapter 1. And we'll read from verse 1. Paul called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God and Sosthenes our brother unto the church of God which is at Corinth to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus called saints with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord both theirs and ours. And verse 9. God is faithful by whom you were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Now chapter 3 and verse 16. Know ye not [00:01:14] that ye are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy. For the temple of God is holy which temple ye are. Now chapter 12 and verse 12. Chapter 12 and verse 12. For as the body is one and hath many members and all the members of that one body being many are one body so also is Christ. For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body whether we be Jews or Gentiles whether we be bond or free and have [00:02:07] been all made to drink into one spirit. For the body is not one member but many. If the foot shall because I am not the hand I am not of the body is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say because I am not the eye I am not of the body is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member where were the body? But now are they many members yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand I have no need of thee nor again the head to the feet I have no need of you. Nay much more those members of the body which seem to be more feeble and necessary. [00:03:03] And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable upon these we bestow more abundant honor. And our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need but God hath tempered the body together having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked. That there should be no schism in the body but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer all the members suffer with it. Or one member be honored all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ and members in particular.

I don't think we can do better than have a good long look at an actual church in the early days [00:04:07] of the Christian Church's testimony upon earth to understand something of the blessing of such a position and also the responsibilities that belong to it. And as we said last night if we understand a little of the privileges that belong to the Christian company then the responsibilities will flow from them in a much easier way. Or should I say there will be more desire on our part to fulfill the responsibilities if we appreciate the privileges. To go back a little into the acts of the Apostles we remember how Paul and his companions went to the city of Corinth and there they preached the gospel. It wasn't an easy task for them they met with opposition but they had tremendous help

[00:05:03] from the Lord Jesus. He said to Paul now Paul you keep on preaching I have much people in this place that seems to indicate to me the purpose of the Lord Jesus the purpose of God taking account of those who are going to be saved and form the church in Corinth. And so Paul preached the gospel and people were converted. All those people who were converted before their conversion had a common relationship they were all sinners. But after they got converted they became a church, an assembly in the city of Corinth. Now this is one thing that we want to state at the outset that for any church to represent itself as belonging to God and for God and to have a mixed communion of saved persons and unsaved is a denial of the truth of the Word of God. [00:06:03] Those who formed a church at Corinth were people who were saved their sins were forgiven and they received the gift of the Holy Spirit. And sad to say and we must say it plainly that today there are companies of professing believers mixed with them some true ones but unfortunately many unsaved people and who partake the Lord's Supper partake of the privileges and this is a denial of the truth of God. We could not possibly countenance such a company claiming to be a church representing God. The New Testament churches in the main were composed of people who profess Christ in a living vital way and possessed the Holy Spirit. There was the possibility of professors without life but in those days it was very very abnormal indeed. And so the church at Corinth was composed [00:07:07] of people who had confessed Christ and you remember in chapter 6 of this epistle Paul describes a catalogue of sins depravities wickedness he says such were some of you and that indicates clearly that those who composed the Corinthian assembly were once sinners but were cleansed they were they were washed they were sanctified they were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of God. Now we want to state this very definitely at the outset that a New Testament church is composed of true believers this is the ideal normal situation for any company of believers professing to be an assembly a gathered out company for the Lord. So we begin with this in chapter 1 unto the church of God in Corinth. What a dignified [00:08:12] appellation for any company of believers the church of God in Corinth. Now if a letter were addressed to the church of God in Carlisle where would it go? Well that's a good question. Where would it go? The church of God in Corinth? The church of God in Carlisle? Very very difficult to find out where it would go today. There would be many claimants many people might claim to be the church of God in Carlisle. We believe that the Bible teaches us that in any given locality in any given area every true believer indwelt by the Holy Spirit forms the church in that area. They may not [00:09:06] be gathered on the ground of that church they may not understand the teaching connected with the church but in the eye of God every true believer forms the church in that given area. In Corinth it was simple there were no divisions not in an outward way unfortunately there were divisions in the company but there were no outward divisions Christians meeting in different halls under different names none of that in the city of Corinth there was the church of God in Corinth and that's a wonderful appellation I say it again. Let's think for a moment of the city of Corinth. It was a wicked city given up to depraved practices as we find in our modern world. To Corinthianize was a term used for people who were wicked and depraved and oh how wonderful that in [00:10:08] the midst of that city there was a little company I don't know how many but it was large or small I'm saying a little company I suppose relatively speaking it was but there was that company and God looked upon it with the greatest of favor they were the very apple of his eye. Here was one company where the interests of God was centered. God was concerned about this company he had blessed it through Christ they were formed according to his mind and will and now his interests centered above all else in that little company. There might have been intellectual people I suppose they would have them in that day, entertainers, professional people, rich people, poor people, all kinds of people just the same as we have today but in the midst of them all there [00:11:01] was the church of God. Now we have to say a little about this. The term church assembly simply means people who are called out. Now what were they called out from and what were they called out to are good questions to ask. First of all they were called out from Judaism which was a form of belief

in God and approach to God that had now been set aside because of the incoming of Christ and the revelation that came through him and of course his death and resurrection and ascension to God's right hand. And then there were the pagans those who worshipped idols and people who were Jews and people who were pagans who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ separated themselves from those [00:12:03] things. They became Christians, they were baptized to the name of the Lord and by virtue of that they were saying we have no more to do with Judaism, we have no more to do with paganism, we are baptized to the name of the Lord, we are really concerned now about his interests and so this gathered out company was separated to the interest of the Lord in Corinth. Now if this were in practice today it would be very wonderful, the impact upon the world would be powerful indeed in Carlisle, in all the cities and towns that we have in England and Scotland and throughout the whole world. Wonderful to find this thing in practice but praise God it is being practiced that there are believers who feel that the call of God is so powerful to them that it gives them the desire to separate from things [00:13:05] that are wrong, things that don't add up to scripture, separate from these things to gather simply to the name of the Lord owning no headship but Christ's, owning no power but the Holy Spirit and no authority but the Word of God. Oh you say that's too idealistic, it doesn't work, praise God it does. When Christians are prepared in humility to answer to the truth of God, yes praise God it works. If it didn't, if we found that we attempted to do these things, to meet together simply as believers relying upon the Christ and the Holy Spirit and all the resource that God gives and the authority of the Word, if we attempted to do these things and they didn't work it would be an indication to us that it was all rubbish but it's not because we've proved by experience that these things do operate, that these things are real, living and vital and those people in Corinth [00:14:05] experienced it in a very wonderful way. So when you read in the Bible about the Church of God in any place and there are quite a few of them mentioned and there are seven addresses to seven different churches in the first three chapters the book of Revelation then we can think of this, a company gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus representing the interests of God and the interests of Christ and separate from everything that's contrary to the claims of the claims of God. That's what it was in Corinth, that's what it should be today and what pertained in Corinth and in Ephesus and Colossae and Philadelphia all the same, no variation. There might be a variation in expression but in practice and in truth they would all be the same and they [00:15:01] would be united to each other in faith and in support as we hope we shall see later on. No idea that the Lord would impose certain directions for one church in one area and then another set of directions for another church in another area and both at variance with each other, unthinkable. The Lord the head in glory supplies all that is necessary for every church wherever it is for his glory and for their blessing. So the Church of God in Corinth was a called-out company but then Paul says they were sanctified in Christ Jesus. Before we touch that we ought to say that this church that was gathered out now had a relationship to God and a relationship to each other. They were no longer Jews, they were no longer pagans, they were blessed in exactly the same way, owned the [00:16:03] same Lord, indwelt by the same Spirit and so were capacitated to represent God and here was a wonderful relationship that they had that wasn't formed by human organization. This was a divine arrangement. It was God who gave the directions, it was God who gave the blessing and it's God who maintains such a position. It's not a man and it's very very important to see that. They didn't gather to the name of Paul, great man that Paul was. They didn't gather to the gospel that he preached, great gospel as it was. They gathered to a divine person, the Lord Jesus Christ and when empowered by a divine person, the Holy Spirit according to the purpose of a divine person, God our Father. Very very important to keep this in mind and so we find that this relationship that they had to God was expressed in their dealings with each other. They were all blessed the same [00:17:05] way and knowing these things had a desire to express what was true for God and true for Christ. Now this sanctified company, the root meaning of the word is set apart, not called apart but set apart and this again is a divine arrangement and all those who were set

apart were called saints. If they belong to the sanctified company they were saints. Now today the idea in one large company of professing Christians is that a person becomes a saint after many many years of inquiry and it's finally established that miracles have been done by this person or something remarkable has been done in their lives and they're entitled to have before their name the little words ST, [00:18:02] the little letters ST. They're a saint. This is as far removed from the Bible as it's possible to be. If you belong to the sanctified company you're a saint. This is a divine appellation that we find and it simply means that you too are positionally holy in being set aside in this place. You're holy because God has made you holy. I was nearly going to say intrinsically holy, that would be wrong. They were made positionally holy through the death of Christ and through the call of God and they're set apart in holiness to represent God. Now then that does raise very very great responsibilities. If we have a position of holiness before God we are called upon to be true to that and we need holy lives. My that's something in a depraved world. You cannot listen to a radio or [00:19:05] pick up a newspaper but be impressed with the amount of filth that's in this wretched world. The violence, the filth, the corruption is getting worse and worse and worse becoming a pit, a sink of iniquity. In the midst of such conditions and they did exist in Corinth as they exist today perhaps in a far greater way because it's more cultured filth today than it was paganized filth in that day and dear friends you are called upon and I am called upon to be holy in accord with our position. It's an honored place to be set apart by God in holiness, a very honored place indeed, a tremendous honor but also a tremendous responsibility to be true to that in our everyday lives because there's no such thing as going to church on Sunday and feel that we've [00:20:08] fulfilled all our responsibilities. I know the Church of God at Corinth consisted of persons, not a building like this or any other building, it consisted of persons and those persons every day of their lives represented God not just when they came together, every day of their lives they were looked upon as representing God in their work and wherever they went they were representing God and as sanctified set apart for God they were to live lives of holiness. That's a big challenge, it is to me and I'm sure it is to you in our words, in our ways and in our thoughts to be in practice in consistency with the position that God gives to us. Raises many questions as to what we do with our lives and then we find as we move down to chapter 9, verse 9 rather, [00:21:10] God is faithful by whom you were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Here is something else that marked that little company, they were looked upon as a fellowship. Now what does this word mean? Very very simply it means equal partaking, there isn't someone who has a greater part in the fellowship than another, they are all called into the fellowship of God's Son. Now let me explain this very simply, when the Lord Jesus was here on earth he called to himself 12 disciples, he had many disciples, there were many many disciples followed the Lord. We read about him sending out 70, he appeared unto 500 brethren at once, not necessarily called disciples but many [00:22:08] people followed the Lord Jesus. Out of them all he chose 12 and they were with him and he was central to them. They weren't gathered together because of any natural desires on their part, oh I like him and I like her and so on, not that kind of thing, they were drawn together by a common power, the call of the Lord and the attraction that was in the Lord and his ability to hold them together. Oh there was envy amongst them, some were wanting the chief place, there were many faults amongst them but he kept them together while I was with you, lacked ye anything? He provided for them, cared for them, he was central to this little company. Well when he left them, went on high, they had a commission and that was to occupy the place that he had occupied, [00:23:02] that now they were responsible to administer the truths that he had taught them. He was still the center of the fellowship but on that wonderful day of Pentecost, 120 gathered in that upper room and the Holy Spirit came down and the house of God and the body of Christ were formed by the descent of the Holy Spirit and then the preaching on Pentecost and 3,000 souls were saved and they continued steadfastly in the Apostles fellowship and teaching, breaking of bread and prayers. In other words they were joined to that little company of which Christ was the center and all

the teaching that the Lord had given to them was passed on to those who were brought into this fellowship. That's how I understand that in Corinth these new believers were added to this [00:24:05] fellowship, Christ was central to it, the Son of God in all his dignity, in all his greatness, they were brought into that and they had a common partaking in that, a common partaking in the privileges and also a common partaking in the responsibilities. I've often said this dear brethren, what kind of partner would you have in business if you had one that said I want to share all the profits but I'm not going to do any work? You would say well I don't want that kind of person to be a partner. Unfortunately that can often pertain in the Christian company, wanting to partake of the privileges, the remembrance of the Lord and other privileges that pertain to the Christian company but not prepared to do anything in a practical way in connection with the [00:25:02] responsibilities, that's not fellowship. Fellowship is a common partaking. Now the first thing is the dignity of this fellowship, it's the fellowship of God's Son. Today we have many fellowships, many names are connected with fellowships, we have nothing to say about them in a disparaging way, their object is good, a desire to teach the young perhaps, desire to reach the unconverted, many ways are employed and sometimes the name fellowship is attached to them. In the Bible as far as I can understand this is the only fellowship that it countenances, a fellowship where Christ is central, where it takes character from him, his glory, his person, that's the glory of it, his teaching is the substance of it and his direction is the control of it and so this is a very wonderful [00:26:01] fellowship indeed. And then to think of the responsibilities that belong to it as we've already said, the partaking in the responsibilities that belong to it, that is if there's work to be done you don't say well it's Joe Boggs, he's the man for that job. No, we, every one of us, the onus is definitely upon us, each individual to see the work that's to be done and to partake of all the responsibilities belonging to it. For instance, in the building of the wall in the days of Nehemiah there were many, if I can use the term fellowship in that day, there were many who were banded together with one object, they wanted to see the wall built and the interests of the Lord protected and there were some who built a piece opposite their house, very good thing to do. There were others who weren't content with building one piece, they built two pieces and unfortunately [00:27:05] there were some who did nothing. The nobles, they never put their shoulder to the work, very very sad indeed. Now that to me is not a perfect picture of fellowship but I'll tell you what it is. When God gave instructions for the building of a tabernacle, all the people were involved, the women, the men, and they all brought something and they were all willing-hearted and it was such a wonderful response that Moses said, enough, there's plenty here to deal with the matter. Well, that was a wonderful expression of fellowship. All were involved in this and that's what fellowship means in any Christian company that gathers to the name of the Lord. A wonderful appreciation of the privileges and the dignity and greatness of Christ and then the answer to it in seeking to do [00:28:01] that which belongs to the fellowship for the interests of the Lord. Fellowship is a very wonderful thing, it always means fellow partaking or common partaking, not one standing out above another but all contributing to this matter. Now we move on to chapter 3. Know ye not that ye are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are? In architecture, not that I know anything about it but I do know this, in architecture today you'll still find the statement Corinthian columns and it's obtained from those wonderful temples that were in existence in [00:29:01] Paul's day and were scattered throughout the city of Corinth and these temples were employed in heathen worship, the worshipping of idols, idols that men had made and that was an insult to God and affront to God. Oh, read the Bible carefully and see how often idolatry is referred to and see how often God condemns it, wicked thing, idolatry. I believe it's one of the reasons of the decline of the Christian testimony in our land where so many heathen idols are being worshipped, so many heathen temples are being raised in so-called Christian Britain but in Corinth these temples existed. Now Paul uses the same figure, I don't think the figure here is the temple that Solomon built, I think it's in direct contrast to those idol

temples where idols were worshipped. Now says Paul, look at them, beautiful edifices, marvelous buildings, tremendous ornamentation, very attractive [00:30:06] to the eye, everything sensual, the music, the incense and the wonderful decorations connected with the idol, everything to attract the senses. Now he says ye are the temple of God and he doesn't say you should be, he says ye are, ye are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. Now here's another wonderful way in which Christians in Corinth were in relationship with God, they formed a dwelling place for himself that by his spirit he dwelt in that company in Corinth. He couldn't possibly dwell in those idol temples, they were an affront to him. When the Jews or the Israelites raised a temple in the temple of Solomon in Jerusalem, God couldn't stay there, the [00:31:01] glory of God left the scene, it departed never to return until the future when the glory will come into the temple built and as we find in the book of Ezekiel. But God could never dwell in those idol temples but he could dwell in this company in Corinth. Here was a place where he was welcome, where he could dwell, sin was put away, the Holy Spirit was active, his interests were held, Christ was honored, here was one company where he could dwell and he says God, Paul says ye are the temple of God and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you and he says this temple is holy.

It's good if you don't read it because it's not nice to read, it's defiling to read but if you read church history and read about the practices that were connected with idol temples or even [00:32:04] read pagan authors, the licentious, depraved, wicked, evil things that went on in those idol temples, it was just absolute filth. Now says Paul you're a direct contrast to that, you're holy, ye are holy, this temple that is reared for God is a holy temple, it's not a temple of stones and pillars and gold and silver, it's living persons, persons forming a dwelling place for God where he is known. Now it seems to me that this is a tremendous thing for any of us to take account of as Christians, that when we meet together here is a place where God can dwell by his Spirit. Isn't that tremendous? Isn't that marvelous that the eternal God, the living God could make his presence known to us today by his Spirit as we gather together simply in this character as the [00:33:06] temple of God? It's wonderful, it is indeed marvelous that such a great and wonderful God should deign to dwell amongst us by his Spirit, make his presence known so that we might be reverential towards him, that we might worship him and that too our holy lives are in keeping with the position that we have, oh how wonderful. Those priests who operated in the idol temples were given over to every form of wickedness. Can those who form the temple allow themselves to be governed by any form of wickedness in a practiced way, in a deliberate way, day by day as those heathen worshipers did? No. The temple of God is holy, which temple ye are in your life by an [00:34:04] abhorrence of evil. Sometimes you're not so much concerned about God seeing us, we're very concerned about the brethren seeing us or our neighbors seeing us, very, very concerned and might be very, very free and easy when we think that nobody sees us and forget that God sees us whatever we do or wherever we are. And so holiness in the sight of God is an abhorrence of evil. Doesn't matter what form that evil takes, you can have refined evil, you can have depraved evil, but they're all evil, all forms of evil in opposition to God. The temple of God is holy, which temple ye are. And so I think it's a wonderful thing to take account of that in the city of Corinth there were believers who formed the temple of God, God dwelt there, God was worshipped and there was a [00:35:02] corresponding condition in the lives of those who formed his temple. Now we move over to chapter 12. It's impossible to speak about all the details of the relationships that Christians had with each other in this epistle, time's nearly gone, but we want to say a few words about this figure that Paul employs, the body. Now we ought to say here that we do not find a presentation of Christ as head of the body. There is a reference to head, but it's not Christ as head of the body, it's just the figure of a body. And from that Paul says now ye are the body of Christ, that is in Corinth this company was the body of Christ, that is they were there to represent him, they were there to [00:36:06] express him and also to express in their relations with each other that which was

pleasing to God and pleasing to Christ. Now if we think of the church of Corinth as a house, it's quite possible that people could come and say yes, we are true believers, I said at the beginning it would be very abnormal because there was power to detect that in that day as we see in the case of Peter, how he detected somebody who was counterfeit. But anyone could profess in an outward way, they would be breaking bread, they would be partaking of the privileges, but they wouldn't be real, they would be professors. Now that can never take place in connection with the body, the reason is we can look at verse 18 of chapter 12 where it says and now have God set the members, [00:37:10] every one of them in the body as it has pleased him. Now that verse clearly indicates to us that no member can be in the body who is an unbeliever, impossible. God would never set an unbeliever in the body, God only sets in the body members that are real and true and vital and that's a very important distinction to remember that in the house, yes, there could be members, there could be people professing to be real Christians, accepted as real Christians on their own testimony and yet unfortunately be unreal. But this is impossible in connection with the body for two reasons, in the work of the spirit in verse 13, by one spirit are we all baptized into one body whether [00:38:10] we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free and have been all made to drink into one spirit. There is the activity of the Holy Spirit, he baptizes all the members into one body and God sets the members in the body as it pleases him. So the body is a divine arrangement and shuts out and excludes anything that's extraneous or erroneous. So it's very very important to keep in mind this distinction. In chapter 5 of this epistle we find that there was a man who was behaving in an outrageous way and he was excommunicated from the company. He was not put out of the body, that's impossible, but he was deprived of the privileges that belong to the [00:39:04] house of God in its testimony here upon earth. Doesn't matter, suppose I did something that was wrong and I was excommunicated from the company of believers, I would be deprived of opportunities to serve the Lord or to do things to remember the Lord and other things. I would be deprived of that privilege but I wouldn't be excluded from the body if I'm a true believer, that's impossible. Oh how wonderful then the presentation of this truth because it indicates believers united together and they are all interdependent upon each other. One member cannot say because I'm not that member, well I'm not of the body. That's a very low understanding of the truth of the body. And another one says I'm the I, so I'm the body. That's one member claiming all the [00:40:02] greatness to himself, absolutely wrong. And the truth of the body indicates there's no such thing in the Bible as a one-man ministry. The body is looked upon as one company of Christians just as the human body is absolutely dependent upon each of its members. The hands, the feet, and all the members of the body, all related to each other, all working together, and all for the common end of expressing what comes from the head. Although we don't find here the head presented as Christ, the head of the body, but simply the head in its normal setting as part of the body, controlling and directing. Oh dear brethren, if this truth were known and practiced there wouldn't be the Church of England, the Church of Scotland, Baptist, Methodist, Brethren, all kinds of different Christians under different labels. There wouldn't be such a thing. It says [00:41:08] in verse 25 that there should be no schism in the body or no division in the body. What we say today in the testimony of Christianity is a public disgrace to the name of Christ and to the name of God. It's a denial of the truth of God, and I often feel that we are not sufficiently humiliated by the disgrace to the name of the Lord Jesus, that which is so precious to him, so real to him, so vital to him, should be divided and broken as it is. Certainly a denial of the body of Christ. And no matter how much we endeavor, those who understand the truth of the body, those who understand something of its principles and its workings, no matter how much we endeavor [00:42:03] to do this, if there are many, many other Christians in the area, real members of the body of Christ, and they're not working together with us in this matter, the expression of the truth must be impaired. It must be. And so, oh dear friends, how much we should pray for a revival of interest of this wonderful truth that Christians, all Christians, are interdependent upon each other and should be working

together under the control and direction of the head and the authority of the Word of God, no one-man ministry, no independence, guided and controlled by the Word of God. Can it be realized? Yes, it can in every measure where you and I and other believers put it into practice in our lives. The Bible says clearly that there should be no schism in the body. I don't believe for one moment that we could possibly acquiesce in all the divisions [00:43:08] that take place or have taken place and are in function in the Christian testament today. But what we can do, we can pray zealously for every true believer in Christ. We can pray for their formation in the truth and ourselves, of course, not assuming that we are a cut above the rest because we have a knowledge of this truth, not for one moment. That would be false pride indeed. But to pray earnestly that there might be no division, no schism in the body, but a true working out in any locality for the pleasure of the Lord. It's often been said and rightly said that in the epistle to the Romans, the truth of the body is brought forward as a guard against independency. You see, the chapter opens with each person is to devote his body to God [00:44:03] for God's will. And there might be the easy tendency to say, well, I'm giving my body to God, now I'll just do as he tells me. Of course, we might be very mistaken as to what God wants us to do. And so I'm not listening to what anybody else says. I'm going in this way, I'm doing this, and the next thing, this is God's will for me. I don't care what anybody else says. Well, that would be a very wrong attitude indeed. And so Paul brings in the balancing truth of we are members, one of another, many members, many members in Christ. So the truth of the body is brought in in Romans 12 as a balancing against any inclination or tendency towards independency. But in Corinthians 12, the truth of the body is brought forward very definitely as a guard against any one member setting himself up as the body. Listen to what it says. Yes, there it is. Verse 19. If they were all one member, where were the body? One member, [00:45:23] in some way or other, trying to rule, control, and express what he believes is the right thing for the body. One member. In other words, if you like one man ministry, if you like a plain statement clericalism, one man may be ordained by unconverted men to occupy a place amongst believers to direct and control, that's foreign to the truth of the body, absolutely. A young man staying just a few doors from where I live studied for the ministry in the Church of Scotland. [00:46:03] And in the process of his studying, he had to have an examination by a certain board. And they were there to ascertain if he was a fit candidate for the ministry. And they had the power to refuse him any further instruction or any further education in this particular matter. So I asked him, I said, George, were these true believers? No, he says, they weren't. He says, as far as I could understand, he says, I don't think they were true believers in the sense that we speak of true believers. What an awful thing that even the Apostle Paul would have been denied the privilege of preaching for Christ if they didn't, if he hadn't added up to what that board wanted. That kind of thing is absolutely foreign to the Word of God. Each member is under the direction of Christ, [00:47:04] guided by the authority of the Word of God, empowered by the Spirit, and takes his place in part in the gathered company, owning his interdependence with other members, not lording it over, not seeking a precedence or a place of prominence, but simply as a member of the body of Christ, doing what the Lord directs him to do. And we should say this, that as far as we can see in Scripture, this is the only membership that the Bible recognizes, not a member of a house, but the member of a body. Not the member of a company, the member of the brethren, or a member of the Church of Scotland or the Church of England, the member written on a church roll. That kind of thing is foreign to the Word of God. Membership of a body, that's the only membership that the Word of God countenances. And this ought to be said plainly because this is what the Word of God teaches. Now the dignity, just as I close. What a wonderful [00:48:07] thing to realize that we're set in a position by God. God has set us there, that is, if we're true believers. We've been baptized in virtue of what took place at Pentecost. That was the one initial baptism, never to be repeated, and every believer, when he trusts the Lord, comes into that body in virtue of what took place at Pentecost. Only done once, never repeated. And there, they're set by God, there they're set by the Holy Spirit, and they're there for the interest of

Christ, for the interest of God. What a dignity. And then the relationships and responsibilities, we are interdependent upon one another. We need each other. That's why I say it's bound to be seriously impaired if all believers in any given area are not together. I can't throw away this [00:49:05] hand and say I don't need it anymore. I need my fingers, I need my hand. We need other believers. We need all to be working together according to the truth that we find in this chapter. They're members of the body. We didn't arrange that. God arranged it. It's a divine arrangement. It will last for all eternity. The fact that this is a an organism, not an organization, living life connected with Christ in glory, and this is something that God has done, no man could do it. And for that reason, we need each other. And we cannot despise other Christians in any way whatsoever. We might not agree with things that they believe and do. That's another matter altogether. And we have to have a correct scriptural judgment in relation to that. But if they're true members of the body of Christ, they deserve to be recognized at that level, not at any lower level. Because this is what God has done. This is what Christ has made them. This [00:50:05] is what the Spirit has done. And we have to recognize that. Oh, how wonderful then when Paul says, ye are the body of Christ and members in particular. That's true of any given area, and will be true until the Lord comes. We'll never be destroyed. It might not be in the best possible expression, but it's divine. And because it's divine, it can never be destroyed. Now, these are only a few things, dear brethren. And there are many, many other things. Time doesn't permit us to see any more. Well, may the Lord help us to appreciate these things. If I've said anything wrong, then please correct me.