

A Kingdom that Cannot be Shaken

Part 3

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[00:00:00] The Gospel by Luke, chapter 17 and verse 20.

And when he was demanded of the Pharisees when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation, neither shall they say, Lo, here, or lo, there, for behold, the kingdom of God is within you, or in the midst of you.

Now the Gospel by John, chapter 18, John 18, verse 33.

And Pilate entered into the judgment hall again and called Jesus and said unto him, [00:01:01] Art thou the king of the Jews?

Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me? Pilate answered, Am I a Jew?

Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me, what hast thou done? Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world.

If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight that I should not be delivered to the Jews.

But now is my kingdom not from hence.

Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.

Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

[00:02:02] Pilate saith unto him, What is truth?

And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all.

Now Romans chapter 14, Romans 14, we'll read from verse 14.

I know and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself, but to him that he steameth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably, destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died. Let not then your good be evil spoken of. For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the [00:03:09] Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God and approved of men.

Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

Now lastly, 1 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 17.

For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ as I teach everywhere [00:04:01] in every church.

Now some are puffed up as though I would not come to you, but I will not come to you shortly if the Lord will and will know not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power.

For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power. What will ye?

Shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?

I've read four portions from the word of God, and you would notice that each time it says that the kingdom of God is not certain things, and then we can see from the context what the word of God, what the kingdom of God really is. [00:05:05] The kingdom of God is not by observation, the Lord says in Luke 17.

The Lord said in John 18, my kingdom is not of this world, is not from hence, and in Romans 14, Paul says the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, and Paul says in 1 Corinthians 4, the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.

Well we want to consider these things because there's a great deal of help and teaching involved in these statements.

The Pharisees, they came to the Lord to try and test him as they often did, and they asked him when the kingdom of God would appear, and when he was demanded of the Pharisees [00:06:05] when the kingdom of God should come, this is what they wanted. They weren't really concerned about the rights of God, what they were mainly concerned about was deliverance from the power of Rome, independence, the right to rule their lives as they wished, and also to carry on their traditions of the law, this isn't really all that they wanted, they weren't concerned about God or blessing for men. The Lord says to them that the kingdom of God doesn't come by observation, because if it had, they would have recognized that the kingdom of God was in their midst, and was seen in him, the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's been a help to me to view the kingdom of God in four ways, I pass this on to you. [00:07:02] First of all, in the Old Testament, historically, when the nation of Israel was blessed under God, and God was sitting between the cherubim on the mercy seat in the tabernacle system, there we have a picture of

God ruling amongst his earthly people, and we see a beautiful picture of the kingdom of God in operation, the king in the midst of his people, and then from out of the tabernacle, he issued his commands through Moses, his servant, in relation to his people. He gave them guidance for their lives, the food they were to eat, and the clothes they were to wear, all sorts of things were given by God for his earthly people. Now the proof that this was a picture of God as king is seen in the book of Samuel, when Samuel is very much concerned, because he had been rejected by the children of Israel [00:08:06] in their demand for a king, and God said to Samuel, why should you be upset, Samuel? They haven't rejected you, they've rejected me.

God in the midst of his people was the king over Israel, and Israel refused this king that they couldn't see, but whose power and majesty and glory was manifest in their midst, they refused him, and they chose a man who outwardly had a great deal of strength and ability, and what a failure he proved to be. And so God says, they've rejected me as king when they want a man, and they crowned him as king and gave him this honor. Now here's the historical view of the kingdom of God seen in the nation of Israel, God in their midst.

[00:09:02] Well we know how sadly that failed, not because God failed, but because the nation failed. Then we move on, and we come to the incarnation of the son of God coming into this world, and here we find him saying, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you. The kingdom of God's here, if you had only eyes to see it. I am the kingdom of God, in that in me is demonstrated all that is pleasurable to God, I do the will of God, and all the features of the kingdom are expressed in myself. Here we find the kingdom of God personally in the person of the son of God.

We know the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified, his earthly people refused him, and instead of reigning as king in Zion, the Messiah, the anointed, the rightful king of Israel, he was rejected, cast out by way of the cross, and for the moment the nation of Israel is [00:10:06] set aside.

The Lord Jesus Christ ascends into glory where he came from, the Holy Spirit descends down, and then began the kingdom of God spiritually.

In the power of the spirit of God, the features of the kingdom are expressed by those who belong to God through Christ today.

We read that in Romans 14. The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

And then, fourthly, we have the kingdom prophetically, all the glowing prophecies that we have in the Old Testament and in the New concerning the coming kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ when he will reign as rightful king over Israel, as son of man over the Gentile nations, and that kingdom shall have universal sway. [00:11:03] So I think we can think of it in this way, historically in the past, personally in the Son of God, spiritually in the power of the Spirit today, and prophetically in the time to come.

So we want to consider this statement here in Luke 17.

The kingdom of God cometh not with observation, neither shall they say, Lo here or lo there, for behold, the kingdom of God is within you or in the midst of you.

There is another quotation that confirms what the Lord says here, his own words, of course, in John's Gospel, that in order to see the kingdom of God, you must be born again.

It says that so plainly, that unless you're born again, you cannot see the kingdom of God. [00:12:01] That means you need a new beginning, you need a new nature, you need a new power in order to see the kingdom of God.

It cannot be perceived by the natural perception that we have. It's not to be taken account of by the senses that we have as human beings.

We must have divine power, we must have a new nature in order to see the kingdom of God. How blind people were when Jesus, the Son of God, was amongst them.

You remember in Isaiah 53, it says there was no beauty in him that we should desire him. There was nothing in him that commanded our attention, they just failed to understand the greatness and the glory of the person who was in their midst. And really, all that was expressed in our Lord Jesus Christ was the features of the [00:13:03] kingdom that were pleasurable to God. We can quote Old Testament scriptures to prove this. If you turn to the book of Isaiah, there's a very glowing prophecy that speaks about the time to come when the Messiah shall reign, and it says that the lame shall walk, the blind shall see, and many other features, and there will be great prosperity and blessing. Now when the Lord Jesus Christ came, in his healing ministry, he fulfilled this prophetic utterance.

They ought to have understood who was in their midst. Another thing, it says that God, Jehovah, in the Old Testament, would be among his people forgiving them their sins and healing them of their diseases.

Well when the Lord Jesus Christ was here, that was expressed in a very wonderful way. [00:14:06] Persons were healed, persons were cured.

Wonderful things took place because of the hands of power of our Lord Jesus Christ. His healing ministry, whereby persons instantaneously were made whole, proof that the king was in their midst. And what wonderful words he spoke when he said to souls, thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace. Here the king was in their midst, extending forgiveness, mercy, compassion to his subjects, and yet they failed to recognize it.

The kingdom of God did not come to them by observation, they couldn't perceive by the natural vision that the kingdom of God was there in divine power and manifestation.

I think two things, perhaps more, are prominent in the kingdom of God.

[00:15:11] The will of God, the righteousness of God.

We'll talk about the other three things in Romans later on, but I would like to emphasize the will of God, the glory of God.

These things seen are really an expression of the features that belong to God's kingdom.

In all the Old Testament prophecies, we have this great feature running through them, that the will of God is accomplished.

In the future, this will be so.

There will be no one to challenge the rights of God in the coming kingdom. [00:16:05] Any attempt to do so will be dealt with immediately by divine power. Today, the will of God is expressed by those who are the subjects of the kingdom. They do the will of their father.

In the prayer that the Lord gave to his disciples, commonly known as the Lord's Prayer, which is really a prayer for the kingdom, that's the first part of it, isn't it? Hallowed be thy name, thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven.

So the will of God is extremely important in relation to God's kingdom. Now, in the Lord Jesus Christ, this was perfectly expressed, God's will accomplished in perfection. Indeed, coming into this world, this was his joy and delight. I delight to do thy will, O God.

[00:17:02] I do always the things that please the Father. The will of God was accomplished in perfection in our Lord Jesus Christ.

You, in the Old Testament, we find these glowing prophecies of the glory of the Lord covering the earth as the waters cover the sea.

The glory of the Lord to be made known to all nations. The glory of God revealed, all shall know me from the least to the greatest. And O dear brethren, what glory was expressed in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ when he was here, demonstrating to all around that here was the King in the midst with all his power and glory, and yet men's eyes were so blinded by selfishness and sin that they failed to recognize that the kingdom of God was amongst them.

[00:18:02] We could also say this, that if there had been repentance on a whole scale by the nation, then the King would have taken the throne that belonged to him and exercised his kingship in the midst.

But he certainly wouldn't exercise his kingly rights over a nation that was unrepentant and unresponsive to God.

So this first scripture tells us of the greatness of our Lord Jesus Christ here upon earth, where in his person he exhibited all the features that belonged to the kingdom for the pleasure of God.

Now we turn to John chapter 18.

Pilate, the representative of the emperor of Rome, asks the Lord Jesus, [00:19:02] Are thou the king of the Jews?

And the Lord says, Are you saying this of yourself? Is this your own appreciation of me, or has someone else told you to say this? Pilate, he parries the question, says, Am I a Jew, thine own nation, and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me? What hast thou done?

Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world.

If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight. My kingdom is not from hence.

Well here the Lord Jesus is at the point where he is going to be crucified. We often speak about the

point of no return, and here it was as far as the Lord Jesus was concerned.

We know of course from other scriptures that if he had wished, he could have commanded twelve legions of angels to come to his assistance, and there would have been no mercy for man, [00:20:02] no blessing for us today. But the Lord Jesus Christ was at this point where he was in the hands of men, it was their hour and the power of darkness, and willingly, voluntarily, he had delivered himself into their hands, and he was ready to go to the cross in order to accomplish the work of redemption. And here this man is interrogating him, Are you a king? Yes, says the Lord, to this end was I born.

Born a king.

Not delegated authority, but born a king into this world, and a king indeed in every sense of the word. And yet, here we find him, in the hands of a Roman governor, and this Roman governor has the power to deliver him unto death, although we do read in this passage the Lord saying to Pilate, You have no power against me unless it be given thee from above. So on the one hand, we see man's responsibility in dealing with the Lord Jesus Christ in such [00:21:07] a manner, and on the other hand, God's purpose, God's plan, being worked out in order to secure our redemption and blessing and God's glory.

So the Lord says, My kingdom is not of this world.

I'm going to be a king over a different kind of kingdom.

Pilate was the representative of an earthly monarch, noted for his tyranny, his wickedness, his corruption, a tyrant indeed, a monster indeed, as he'd been well named. And his kingdom was a kingdom of corruption. It was only there to gratify the lust and desires of those who were at the head of the nation.

Poor people were ground down into the dust, taxed up to the hilt, no freedom, no liberty, [00:22:03] no joy.

They were just the tools of those who ruled over them. And here was a kingdom that the Lord Jesus was going to found, a kingdom founded upon love, love expressed at Calvary when he laid down his life, love expressed when he went on high, and all his power and blessing administered to his subjects, his kingdom not of this world.

Now when we think of all the things that pertain to men's kingdoms, we know just the principles that are carried on. We're not saying that all men are corrupt, far from it. There are many men who are upright, men of integrity, men with a sense of calling and duty, who do their best to rule for the blessing of their fellows.

But recently, in many places, many countries of the world, the veil has been drawn aside [00:23:03] to show us the corruption that often exists in high places. Not righteousness, not uprightness, not honesty, not truth, the very opposite. And so we get a picture of man's kingdom and the principles that govern it. The Lord says, my kingdom is not of this world.

He goes on to speak about truth. He had come into this world to give witness to the truth, and I believe in this section the Lord is indicating that his kingdom would be marked by the witness of truth,

truth bearing upon every feature of the subject's lives, so that truth would govern them in order for the expression of God's glory. Wonderful thing.

That truth is contained for us in the word of God.

That truth is to bear upon your life and upon my life. We have no other statute book than the word of God. [00:24:05] Whenever man brings some other person's book along and places it beside the word of God, we can say there's going to be trouble. Because the Bible is the statute book for our kingdom. It's from that book that we get our directions as to how we comport ourselves in this kingdom, as to how we show our allegiance to the Lord, the King of glory. Here is the way that the truth of the kingdom is demonstrated today by the subjects of it being obedient to the truth that has been set forth by the King.

Now if we take that as a guiding principle and then turn over to the King, issuing his commands, his principles of the kingdom in Matthew 5, 6, and 7, we find a very challenging statement.

It's very challenging indeed. [00:25:03] Not just an outward conformity, but the whole person brought into the allegiance to Christ under the authority of Christ's lordship and his word final, binding as to every movement of our lives.

There's no intermediate authority. It's the words of the King. They have complete control over our lives.

And so it's not only what's seen outwardly, it's what's in here, in our minds, in our hearts, in our thoughts.

All this is taken account of in Matthew's gospel, chapters 5, 6, and 7.

When he was finished, it says they marvel, because he spake as one having authority and not as the scribes and Pharisees.

Recently I went through the New Testament and noted the references to commandments.

[00:26:08] And we see, and rightly say, we are not under law, we are under grace. And that's perfectly true.

We are not bound by the demands of the law.

But don't let us think for one moment that because we are not under law that there aren't New Testament commandments which are as binding upon us as the Old Testament commandments were binding upon the children of Israel. And you'll be amazed.

Take a good concordance and look up the references to the commandments that are binding upon Christians and you'll find there are many of them.

If we look at the first epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, we'll find a great deal of instruction for a Christian company, for the company as it meets together under the direction [00:27:02] of the Lord and in the power of the Holy Spirit, not by any formal organization, but rather subjection to the Lord and to

the guidance of the Spirit. We'll find that Paul deals with a great deal of subjects. At the end of them he makes the statement, ye that are spiritual will recognize that what I have written unto you are the commandments of the Lord.

Now a commandment is not an optional thing. When you think of a soldier turning around to a superior officer and saying I've heard what you said but I'm not going to do it. I don't feel like doing it. I've got an engagement tonight and I can't fulfill this order. Well we know what would happen. And the commandments in Christianity are certainly not optional. They are binding upon the Christian. And so the Christian in allegiance to his Lord ought to fulfill those commandments. [00:28:04] They are not the statements of Paul. They are the statements of a man inspired by the Spirit who is acting on the part of our Lord Jesus Christ.

These are the commandments of the Lord. And if we saw that little company in the city of Corinth owning no allegiance to anyone else but to the Lord Jesus Christ, we would see there a little outpost if you like of the kingdom, a little expression of it, and there as they are subject to the commandments of the Lord, they are doing the things that pleased him. And so when the Lord said that he had come to give witness to the truth, that his kingdom was not of this world, that his kingdom was not from hence, I believe he's saying that this kingdom that he is setting up is not governed by the expedient principles of the world, but governed by the truth that he would reveal from heaven and had already revealed [00:29:04] when here upon earth, that his kingdom wouldn't be marked by all the expedient principles that we know pertain amongst men, but would be an expression of truth, the truth of God.

You see, Satan is described as the prince of this world.

He's also described as the God of this world. We believe that as the God of this world, his influence has permeated the religions that are in this world, which make nothing of Christ, but much of man. We believe this is where the God of this world expresses himself, in false cults, false religions. As the prince of this world, we believe he permeates the affairs and influences of men. And we know the principles upon which he operates, violence and deception. [00:30:03] From the very beginning of the world, Satan began to work amongst men on these two principles, deception and violence.

He seduced Adam and Eve, and he led Cain to slay his brother.

But when we come to the final installment of man's history in the book of Revelation, we read of two beasts, and they're both marked by the same features, deception and violence. Christ's kingdom is not based upon deception, neither is it based upon violence. We don't think of the church militant marching with the carnal weapons of man's warfare. No, we think of the church militant armed with the spiritual arms that Christ supplies in order to overcome the strongholds that are in this world. And so I believe, dear brethren, that we have to face this important principle of truth, [00:31:06] operating through our Lord Jesus Christ in relation to his subjects, that there might be an expression of this kind of kingdom, not the kingdom of this world. Not from hence, no, the Lord Jesus was going to be crucified. Israel set aside, and the time is coming, thank God, when he'll set up his kingdom, and that little nation, beset with its enemies at the present moment, will have its true place in this world as the head amongst the nations, not the tail, and the Gentile nations will be blessed with it too. Hasten that day, it will be a wonderful day for this world, wonderful day too for those who belong to the assembly, who shall be reigning with Christ at that time.

Now we'll turn to Romans, chapter 14.

[00:32:04] If you read this chapter carefully, the 14th chapter of Romans, you will see that what Paul is concerned about is that Christians should live together on the best possible relations with each other, that love, consideration, tender-heartedness towards each other should be expressed.

And coming down to the end here, I feel that the last thing he says is that the kingdom of God operating amongst the Christian company, or in the midst of the Christian company, will produce these features, righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

He supposes a case where a person is offended over some food being eaten, [00:33:01] or a person is offended because of some drink that is being taken, and the conscience of some Christian is gravely disturbed about this thing. So Paul says, now brethren, we ought not to get upset over this kind of thing. We shouldn't deliberately wound the conscience of a Christian for whom Christ died. He says we ought to be concerned about loving each other, helping each other, caring for each other. You see, dear brethren, this is why kingdoms have collapsed all down the ages. Internal dissension, strife, not standing together, quislings, if you like, to use a modern expression, in the midst of them. Persons bent on strife and sorrow and division and havoc.

Now, says Paul, we don't want this kind of thing in the Christian company. It's foreign to the idea of the kingdom. [00:34:02] A kingdom in strength is marked by standing together, repelling the enemy, maintaining what is good for all concerned.

And so he says, the kingdom of God's not meat and drink. Don't get upset over these things. Exercise the greatest possible latitude towards each other, and leniency and compassion and concern. Don't be concerned about these things. Be concerned about righteousness, peace and joy in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Oh dear brethren, how wonderful Christianity is. When the law was given to the nation of Israel, they said, all this we will do.

God says, oh that they had a heart to do it. God knew perfectly well that while they made this statement, they made it foolishly, not realizing the difficulty of keeping the law. [00:35:03] Oh, he says, I wish their heart was really in line with what they're saying. Of course, events prove before very long that what God said was true. How could it be otherwise? God doesn't tell lies, neither does he make mistakes. The moment came when the nation of Israel failed and failed miserably. How wonderful that we today are given things to do.

We are commanded to do certain things. And God does not leave us to ourselves in order to accomplish these things. He has given every Christian the gift of the Holy Spirit. Every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ receives the gift of the Holy Spirit. And here is the power to put into effect those commandments which God has given to his people. How wonderful it is.

Not one of us can say, I can't do that. My natural makeup rebels against that. [00:36:03] I can't attempt to do this.

I haven't the power. I haven't the ability. We shouldn't say that because we have the power. God has given us the power. And if we are concerned before God to do the things that are right, then we'll get all the help that God can give through Christ in glory and through the Holy Spirit indwelling in us. So the first thing Paul says is righteousness.

Now, it's right that this statement should come first. Because if the rights of God are met in the Christian company, the other two things will follow as a logical sequence. Righteousness first, that is God's rights are maintained in each of our lives and then follows peace and joy.

And righteousness is a very exalted thing for the Christian.

[00:37:01] It means doing everything right according to the will of God, not according to the will of man. And as I've said already, we all have the power and the scriptures are the guide for us in order to express this righteousness. Now, I remember a statement by a brother. I read the statement and it appealed to me greatly as an explanation of what righteousness is. I hope it doesn't sound too involved. Righteousness is consistency with every relationship into which God has placed us.

Now, just you think of that. It's not so involved as you think it is. The statement is simple and really righteousness is consistency with every relationship into which God has placed us.

Now, if you think of the marriage bond, husband and wife acting righteously according to God's standard. [00:38:05] There's no divorce. There's no breakup of that home. There's love, forgiveness, all the features that God demands of a man and a woman are maintained in that bond. If there's employer and employee, then these persons are governed by the truth of God in the Bible. That's righteousness.

If there's obedience to the powers that be, that's righteousness. And then when we come to the Christian circle, there's the directions given in the word of God for the functioning of an assembly, for each person's place in it, for the function of the gifts, that's righteousness. Every feature of Christian life and experience, whether individually or collectively, is righteousness before God. Now, to set it not your brother, to say I'm not worrying about what he thinks, I'm not concerned about what he does, is unrighteousness. [00:39:04] Because this chapter says we've got to love our brother. He may be awkward and we may be awkward, but we have to get on with each other. We have to forget those awkward corners and exercise love and concern towards each other and fulfill righteousness. Remember the commandment of the Lord, a new commandment I leave with you, love one another.

Dear brethren, we talk about the broken mosaic law. How often has that law been broken? How often has that commandment been broken? Loving our brethren.

And so I believe that the attention to this great principle of righteousness is of the utmost importance, that everywhere, in our duties and responsibilities, in connection with the world, and in our duties and responsibilities and privileges and joys in the Christian circle, [00:40:02] if righteousness is maintained, then the other things will follow. The Bible says that the effect of righteousness is peace. Wonderful thing that.

When the Lord Jesus Christ established the righteousness of God on the cross and made it available for you and for me, then peace has been the result for us.

Oh, how wonderful that is. Without Christ loving righteousness and hating iniquity on the cross, we couldn't have enjoyed the peace of God. Oh, how wonderful this is. And if you find a Christian company going on and following after righteousness, you can sit down there happily and you'll be at peace. If you find a believer who's following righteousness in his life, he'll be at peace. This is one of the blessings of the righteousness of God being met. And in the future, connection with the Lord

Jesus Christ as a king, he shall reign in righteousness. [00:41:06] But it says another thing about him. This man shall be the peace.

Oh, how wonderful it will be when everything is ordered for the pleasure of God. His rights maintained. No armies to keep the peace.

No United Nations organization or any other company of men. This man shall be the peace. The man who maintained righteousness for God in his life and at the cross will maintain peace and righteousness in connection with the world to come. So we see again, if we follow righteousness in our lives, if we follow the rights of God in our Christian companies, then we'll know what peace is. Not expediency, not compromise, not brushing things under the carpet and hoping that eventually things will come all right. Faith matters, the rights of God maintained, and then we'll have a lasting peace. [00:42:04] We know that in the affairs of men after the First World War, when they had the peace treaty at Versailles, they sowed the seeds for the Second World War. This is well known by historians. They thought that by compromise and expediency, they could produce conditions for a lasting peace. And they spoke about the war to end all wars, but it didn't. They sowed the seeds for a future war. And I believe, dear brethren, whenever we neglect the righteousness of God in matters pertaining to the company of believers, where the Lord's honor is involved, we sow seeds for future trouble. But if we face matters in divine righteousness, according to the word of God, we'll know the blessedness of peace and joy. This other great feature of the kingdom, oh, the features of it in the Old Testament. In Isaiah 11, we have a beautiful picture of the Messiah, the spirit of the Lord resting upon him, and all the other features that attach to him. [00:43:10] And then in chapter 12, we read about people drawing water from the wells of salvation, joy, exultant joy, joy reigning in that scene because the time of blessing had come. So it is in a Christian's life, following after righteousness, realizing the joy, realizing the peace, and then knowing something of this wonderful joy. Why is it that we're so doleful at times? Why is it that our hearts are not really brimming over with appreciation to God? I believe because somewhere down the line, we've been lacking in righteousness, something that has been unattended to. And of course, we haven't the peace that we ought to have in a practical sense. I'm not talking about the settled peace that we have in relation to salvation. That is secure for us in the work of our Lord Jesus Christ, never to be disturbed. [00:44:07] But all we do know, how easily we can be upset and how easily our peace can be destroyed because we haven't attended to the rights of God. And so Paul says, let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace and things wherewith one may edify another. Here he says, are the things that are acceptable to God and approved of men when we serve Christ and these things that we've mentioned. How wonderful to be approved of God. How wonderful to be acceptable to God.

And oh, the apostle says, brethren, let us follow after these things. Things that make for peace and prosperity amongst the people of God.

Things whereby we build each other up. You see, Paul is mentioning many things in these previous verses that is destructive. [00:45:06] Many things that are destructive. And he says, no, he says, we want to build each other up, help each other, be a blessing towards each other. And he says, this is all in connection with the kingdom of God.

We know that if this kingdom that we live in at the present moment could work together as one nation controlled by one set of motives and ideas that we're all working for all for each and all working as hard as we can. What a change there would be in the condition of the nation. Instead of all pulling in different directions, different ideologies, circulating different ideas, different objects, different goals, all

working against each other instead of working for each other. So Paul says this ought to pertain to the Christian company. [00:46:01] Now, lastly, just a few words.

First Corinthians chapter four.

It's well known that the first epistle to the Corinthians is a corrective epistle. Many abuses had crept into the Corinthian church.

The Corinthian city was well known for his debauchery and licentiousness. It's evil living.

And unfortunately, that kind of thing had crept into the Christian company. So Paul wrote to them to correct these disorders. And he indicates that he had no intention of coming amongst them because if he had come, he would have come with a rod to punish instead of coming with love in his heart to give them all the benefits of the blessings that he had in his soul. [00:47:06] So he wrote to them in order to be a blessing to them, in order to correct these disorders. And he says, but I will come to you shortly if the Lord will and will know not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power for the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power. Now, this is the last thing we want to speak about very briefly. Paul says it's no good talking about things rather than he says what we want to see is the expression of things and divine power. You'll notice often this statement is made in John's epistle. If we say, if we say, if we say, if we say certain things, we ought to be in keeping with these things. And so Paul says, I'm not concerned about what you say about yourselves. And in the first chapter, he speaks about their gift and their knowledge and their ability. [00:48:04] Perhaps they were very able persons, but he says, I'm not worried or not concerned or not even affected by what you see. He says, I want to know the power. And this power, of course, is the expression of Christianity in its greatest possible sense.

Not just the mere reiteration of creeds and phrases, but really the power of divine life expressed in them in the power of the Holy Spirit. You think of a Christian company boasting about its ability in many ways, perhaps even boasting in the possession of miraculous gift. And yet they were quite happy to sit down and break bread with a man whose conduct in the city of Corinth was a known public shame. Everybody in Corinth knew about this wicked man and his awful conduct. [00:49:06] And yet these Christians could sit down quite unconcerned about it. Oh, he's a fine brother, this so-and-so. He's a happy sort of lad. Well, we'll just let him go on. We might cause more trouble, you know, if we deal with him. We don't know where this will end. And so they're quite unconcerned in their puffed-up condition, quite prepared to go on with evil, although it was manifest in their midst. Paul says, what, you brethren, making all your boast about your gift and your knowledge? He says, I want to see power. And power in a kingdom means the dealing with evil and the guarding of what is good. And this is what we're seeing in a decadent period in our nation, when evil is supported and good is being suppressed. We can see this gaining ascendancy in a land that was known for its integrity, where persons can commit the most awful crimes. [00:50:04] And yet, through the pulling of wires in one way or another, they can be allowed to go free. There is this awful attitude towards lawlessness, and nobody seems to be able to curb it. Now, in a Christian company, if it ever arrives to a place like this, where evil cannot be dealt with, where it cannot be curbed, it's a clear indication that such a company is far off the rails and is nowhere near the mind of the Lord. It doesn't matter what they say. It doesn't matter what they claim. If they cannot deal with things that are dishonoring to the Lord, they cease to be the representatives of the Lord Jesus Christ. So Paul says, I'm not concerned about what you say. What I want to see is the expression of power. For the kingdom of God is not in work. It's in power.

So, dear brethren, these are a few features that we've noted. [00:51:02] Look over these passages again for yourselves. There's much more to be considered. And I believe the whole tenor of these passages that we've read together is to emphasize upon us the expression of these things in the power of the Holy Spirit for the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. May it be so, for his name's sake.