

A Tale of Two Temples

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[0 : 0 0] If you've got your Bibles, keep it open to Acts chapter 4, and we'll be spending our time there. Amen. So, I wonder, when last were you bullied?

When last were you bullied? I wish I could say it was when I was in high school, but actually it was just a couple of years ago, the taxis that we've got on the roads, and he was doing his thing, and I think he was reversing down the main road in Claremont, and I took exception to that, let him know he wasn't doing the right thing, and the next thing, the driver jumps out and approaches my car.

I did the wrong thing and jumped out trying to protect my car, and then we got into a fight. And I thought I was doing pretty okay, you know, giving as good as I got, but then his khachi jumped out, and then there was two against one, and then the fight was pretty much over.

And I needed someone to protect me at that point. I couldn't handle two guys, I was barely handling the one guy, but I needed help with the second guy. And so what I needed was a protector, someone who was going to defend me against these bullies that were taking me down, and thankfully there was some security staff, it was in Claremont, and they jumped in and gave me a hand.

And today's Bible reading, we come across a bully. And the bully, sadly, is from God's own people against God's own people.

[1 : 2 5] There's a question that arises out of our passage today. What will the Jewish authorities do with this new movement that's begun to happen? What are they going to do with this message that has started?

Are they going to join these people, this new emerging movement that happens to have started out of seemingly nowhere in the book of Acts, or are they going to oppose it?

And if the Jewish people and the leaders of the temple do oppose it, what is the church, how are they going to respond? And so what emerges in our story today is a tale of kind of the people of two temples.

That's why we played that little excerpt earlier. One group represents the old temple worship and the old way of living under the law, and the other group seems to represent God and a new temple, a new way of living by the Spirit.

And so let's see how that drama unfolds in our passage today. And what we'll pick up first of all, and we'll see a lot of opposition, I'm sure you've picked it up in the passage, from what I call the old temple people, or the old temple leaders.

[2 : 3 4] Basically what they're saying is, listen, we're the boss around here, not you guys, meaning the church, meaning the apostles. We'll see Peter and John. What we'll see is that the old temple people, really the leaders of Israel, but here specifically the leaders of the temple, and it mentions that a few times in the text, are deliberately and decidedly set against the promises of God, and rather want to keep their own system of religion and their own authority, because that's what bullies do.

They don't have actual legitimate authority. They want to stamp their own authority, but in a bad way, in a way that hurts. And so have a look at our text there in verse 3.

They seized Peter. Peter and John were busy explaining to the people who had gathered at the temple they had had this amazing healing. This guy had been crippled for 40 years.

He had spent all his years at the gate waiting for help and waiting to be healed at the temple, and he'd never received it. And so we see that the temple wasn't the place now where God gave healing.

Something else had changed. And in walks Peter and John one day after Acts chapter 2. This is in Acts chapter 3. And they just say to him, listen, okay, in the name of Jesus, get up and walk. And this guy receives healing.

[3 : 49] And they're busy explaining that it's in the name of Jesus that this healing has happened. And in barge the temple leaders, the captain of the temple. He's the second most important person other than the high priest. Okay, this is a seriously heavy dude.

They seize Peter. And what do they do? They don't even ask any questions. They seize him. And John, you've got to go into jail. Verse 5 to 6. The next day, the rulers, the elders, the teachers of the law met.

The high priests were there. The entire religious and political leadership of the people of Israel is called in to make a judgment on what they think of Peter and John and their message.

Obviously, they're trying to kind of intimidate them into submission. Can you imagine walking into that kind of meeting? Here's Peter. Here's John. Local fishermen. Well, not even local fishermen.

Fishermen from the back-village town of Galilee. I mean, and they arrayed against all the might and power and glory of the leadership of Israel.

[4 : 51] You know, when the high priests and those guys got dressed up, it was very impressive. Well, their robes and their colors and their jewelry. You can just see them walking in, you know. And there's Peter and John.

You know, like the naughty schoolboy when you go to high school. And get called into the headmaster's office. And they want to know, what is the source and power behind what you've been doing?

How is it going to... But the question they ask kind of gives away where they are. What are they going to do with this power, they wonder? How is it going to affect us? And they're not seeing the big picture.

They're only preoccupied with their issues of power and how it relates to them, with their reputation. In verse 7, they had Peter and John brought before them, began to question them.

By what power or what name do you do this? Then when they don't get the answers they want, they resort to bullying and threaten further violence or worse.

[5 : 53] You see, Peter gives a fantastic answer, doesn't he, to their question. And then they get confused, they confounded, they don't know what to do. Verse 13, when they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized they were unschooled ordinary men, they were astonished.

And they took note that these men had been with Jesus. But since they could see the man who had been healed standing right there, there was nothing they could say. But they don't then investigate and say, okay, well, this is amazing.

They don't ask him, wow, this is, how is this happening? Tell us how, how is this possible? Tell us more about Jesus. No, no, no. They withdraw. They ask, what are we going to do?

Everyone in Jerusalem knows what's going on. Verse 17, but to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we must warn these men to speak no longer to anyone in his name.

And so suddenly the leaders of the people of Israel have turned against their own people and have become the bullies and said, no, no, you need to listen to us. We're the ones who knows what's going on.

[6 : 57] You sit down and keep quiet and do what we tell you to do. So we see then that the old temple people are full of anger. They've got murderous intentions.

They're suspicious. They're confused. And they're only worried about their own prestige, their own power. Their name and their position. These little petty concerns when they've got this amazing miracle.

They did not investigate any further as to how it happened. So it's the name of Jesus. Tell us more. How is it possible? We thought he was dead. And we'll see what Peter and John's answer is in a second about that.

There's only one real word to describe what the old temple people have become. They're a people of hatred. They would have killed Peter and John if they had the chance.

The only reason they didn't is they said, look, everyone knows about what's happened. We can't do what we want. Let's just threaten them and hopefully that will work. So we're kind of back into Cain and Abel territory over here.

[7 : 56] Later on in the book of Acts, they get it right. They grab one of the disciples, Stephen, and they manage to stone him to death. And then this huge persecution breaks out. You know, they say the thing about betrayal that makes it so painful is it doesn't come from your enemies.

It comes from your own friends. And worse, if it's your own family. See, what had happened with the Jews here, with the leaders of the temple, the old temple, they had forgotten that God had warned them all those years ago, the warning that he had given to Solomon from our Old Testament reading earlier, if they don't listen to God and don't honor the place where he chooses to have his name dwell, the temple, then the temple would become useless.

It would become past its sell-by date. It would become null and void. And they themselves would be cut off from God's own people. 1 Kings 9. God's warning to Solomon.

And it's a solemn warning to Solomon. If you or your descendants turn away from me and do not observe the commands and decrees I have given you and go off to serve other gods and worship them, then I will cut off Israel from the land I have given them and will reject this temple I have consecrated for my name.

Now that happened, by the way, a number of times in the Old Testament. And when God moves in judgment, it's a terrible, terrible thing. And the old temple leaders don't realize the mortal danger that they're in.

[9 : 32] The danger of being cut off from God and having access to his temple, the place where he dwells. They're in danger of judgment and of ceasing to be his people. Instead of being God's friend, they're fast becoming his enemy.

And then this is exactly what Peter warns them about. So let's look at Peter's response to this opposition that came their way. And Peter's response is basically, So there, the Jewish leaders, Listen, we're the boss around here.

Peter's response is basically, No, no, Jesus is the boss. You need to realize you've come under new management. And you can imagine that's why the Jewish leaders were so confused.

But you're a fisherman. How is this possible? But Peter's answer is a fantastic answer. From verse 10. Know this, you and all the people of Israel.

It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed.

[10 : 40] Jesus is the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone. Salvation is found in no one else. For there is no other name under heaven, given to mankind by which we must be saved.

Now, notice the two accusations that Peter makes. Remember, he's standing at the bottom here, and these boys are all standing in the stands, watching down, looking at him.

You crucified this Jesus, but God has raised him from the dead. He has become the stone that you builders have rejected. Now, that's a quote from Psalm 118.

And Psalm 118 is a very important psalm. We've got to spend a bit of time in the Old Testament. In fact, we've got to look at three different psalms. So, if you've got your Bibles, just stay there in Acts chapter 4, with one hand, and then turn back to the book of Psalms.

Psalm 118. I can't spend too much time there, but I need to highlight just a few things for us. Psalm 118. Psalm 118 talks of a mighty victory of one of God's kings over his enemies.

[11 : 45] You'll see it just, we don't know who the king is there. It doesn't say a psalm of David, but it's definitely one of the kings of Israel. He's had a great victory. But it seems like people were doubting whether he could win.

So, verse 5. In my anguish, I cried to the Lord, and he answered by setting me free. The Lord is with me. I will not be afraid. What can man do to me? The Lord is with me.

He is my helper. I will look in triumph on my enemies. And so, notice, when God's king fights his enemies, God is always on the side of his king. And so, it makes quick work of his enemies.

When the victory comes, verse 15. Shouts of joy and victory resound in the tents of the righteous. The Lord's right hand has done mighty things. The Lord's right hand is lifted high. The Lord's right hand has done mighty things.

The Lord's right hand there, meaning him, the king. I will not die, but live. Or proclaim what the Lord has done. And then down to verse 22.

[12 : 44] You see the stone. The builders rejected has become the capstone. The Lord has done this. It's marvelous in our eyes. This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

You know those words are often used on a Sunday. By the way, that is a sign of victory. This is the day that the Lord has made victory in the name of this king. It's an interesting little verse. The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone.

And so, what happens here, and Peter's obviously saying that that's Jesus. And he's pointing the finger directly at the leaders. You took a seemingly ordinary, useless piece of rock that you didn't think could do anything that could build this mighty edifice, let's say, for example, the temple.

You threw it to one side. But Yahweh, the Lord, picked it up and said, No, this rock that you don't think is worth anything is worth more than you could possibly imagine. This rock is going to build my people.

The rock is picked up by the master architect. It's thrown away by the builders. But it's picked up by the person who knows everything and holds everything in his hands. And placed in the most important position, the rejected stone becomes a stone that holds everything together and makes sure the building, the temple, stands firm and strong, able to handle all the elements that won't crumble under pressure.

[14 : 02] Now, to understand the full import of what Peter is quoting here, we must remember that Jesus picked up Psalm 118 as well. In Luke 20, we don't have time to look at it, but just to summarize, Jesus tells a parable of wicked tenants on a farm who kill the owner's servants.

He sends the servants to go and find out what's going on. And they keep on killing his servants. And eventually the owner says, Okay, I'll send them my son. Surely they won't kill my son. And then immediately they kill his son.

And Jesus reminds them, Well, the stone that you builders rejected will become the capstone. And he ends with this warning. Everyone who falls on this stone will be broken into pieces.

But he on whom it falls will be crushed. Peter, giving this sermon, writes about it in 1 Peter 2. And he says the same thing.

The living stone rejected by men is chosen by God, has become chosen by God. And has become now a rock that causes men to stumble and fall. And then he goes on to explain how the stone becomes so powerful and important.

[15 : 12] And it's got to do with the resurrection, as you can imagine. In verse 12, the resurrection is already earlier, in verse 10. It's by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, but whom God has raised from the dead.

And what you see in the book of Acts, again and again, that the preaching about Jesus revolves around the fact that, well, because they're talking to the Jews at this point, you've killed him. He's your king, and you got rid of him.

But, God has raised him from the dead. And that makes, obviously you can imagine, all the difference in the world. You know, when you get rid of your enemy, and he's dead, but he comes back from the dead, you must realize, you're now in serious trouble.

There's nothing you can do to beat him. There's only one thing to do. And that's what Peter calls on them to do. To repent. To receive salvation in this name. By raising Jesus from the dead, God has made him not only a savior, but the only savior.

Salvation, verse 12, is now found in no one else. For there's no other name under heaven given to men by which they may be saved. The power of the temple seems to have shifted, which is really now the power of forgiveness and salvation.

[16 : 23] It's shifted from the building and from the people who run that building to a new person. To Jesus. In the Old Testament, and you would have picked it up in that 1 Kings reading, the temple is the place where God gets his name to dwell.

And Peter, on purpose, says, there is no other name, meaning no other place, obviously no other person now. God is now going to dwell and deal with Jesus.

He's now the gateway between heaven and earth, between God and you, the Jews, everyone. Peter tells them in no uncertain terms that God has focused his dealings with his people not through the old temple anymore, but now through Christ.

And only through Christ can they now have access to his blessings and promises. The temple's under new management and they'd better realize that fast. And then the main point of this passage, and this is why Peter can work up kind of to verse 19.

They want him to keep quiet? Peter responds with, yeah, judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God.

[17 : 38] for we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard. What a hugely different Peter to the one that we find in the Gospels.

Do you remember? What was he like on the night that Jesus was betrayed? In fact, what did Jesus tell him? Peter, no, we'll never let this happen. Yeah, Peter, you don't know what you're talking about, mate.

You're going to run from me like a, not like a man. This is why you've got to read the Scriptures and not make them up as you go along.

He was frightened. Peter was frightened of a little slave girl who, you were with Jesus. No, no, no, no, no, I don't know what you're talking about and he runs off into the night. That same man is now standing before the assembled council of the people of God and telling them to their face that they're wrong.

Hell, this is a, this is a changed man. Why? It's because of the risen Christ and because he's been filled by the Holy Spirit. You saw what happened at the start? Peter, filled by the Holy Spirit, is able to tell them what's going on.

[18 : 46] It's because of the risen Christ and because of the power of the Holy Spirit that Peter can stand up when there's bullies, when there's opposition and he's not going to be cowed.

He's not going to be overawed. He serves the rock, the capstone, the risen Lord and he has the power of the Holy Spirit flowing through his veins and he's not going to be stopped.

Okay. So that's Peter's response. That's, that's a, that's a cool response. What about the church? Peter gets thrown into jail.

Now, I know it's interesting. He doesn't respond like that and then say, yeah, you know, try your best. I'm going to, you know, he didn't know, he didn't know what was going to happen next. Boom, in jail. I wonder what he thought. He's like, ooh, that go according to plan.

I thought it was going to be slightly different. We've got some cool stories about Peter later on in the book of Acts. But Peter gets released from jail, not miraculously this time, but God is obviously still working and he goes off to meet the church.

[19 : 45] And what does the church do in response? The collective body now. So have a look from verse 23. On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them.

When they had heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. Sovereign Lord, they said, you made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them.

You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant David. Okay, and they go on and speak. So, let's look at the new temple people. So then we've seen what the old temple people are like.

They're not with God anymore. They don't have the Holy Spirit. They're opposed to them. What about the new temple people, the church? What were they like? How did they respond to the threats and the opposition to these bullies?

What did they believe? What did they do? What lessons can we learn from them today? Well, I'm just going to run through a few things as they appear in the text. The first thing you see is that they're a praying church.

[20 : 53] Now, interestingly, you're going to see that some of the stuff we saw in Nick's sermon a few weeks ago from Acts 2, Acts 4 kind of expands on what's happening. It's the same kind of thing.

But now this is the heat of battle, really. You know, it's when the rubber meets the road that you see where you stand. All right, but they still are praying church. Verse 24 and 31. When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer.

Verse 31. After they prayed. So they, the moment they come against a bully or opposition, okay, boys, let's pray. that is taking action in the mind of the early church against opposition.

That's not not taking action. No, it looks like you're not doing anything when you pray. But you're doing more than you could possibly imagine when you're speaking to the God of the universe. And they know this. Now, just to make a silly point, really, not a silly point.

It's not a main point. It's just one of the things that's popped into my head that I wanted to put down. By being a praying church, and you'll note that they're a liturgical church, what that means is the prayers that they are praying are straight out of the Bible.

[21 : 56] They've got set prayers that are set before them. It's not a point at all to harp on, but it is interesting to know that they are using prayers, the prayers of the Old Testament.

But I'll make a point about using the Old Testament. in a second. What might be hidden in verse 24, where they pray, Sovereign Lord, you made the heaven and earth and the sea and everything in them.

It's a really profound way to start a sermon. By the way, that word sovereign Lord in the Greek is despotes. Despot. Someone who's got complete power and control in the palm of his hand.

As my history teacher used to say, look, there's nothing wrong with a despot. You just want a good one. So the problem is we don't really have good ones in the world. But if you can find a good one, like God, and Christ and the Holy Spirit, well, now you're talking.

And so what you might miss is that this is a quote out of Psalm 146. So keep your hand in Acts 2, 4, and just bounce back to Psalm 146.

[22 : 59] I'll read from verse 5. Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God, the maker of heaven and earth, the sea and everything in them, the Lord who remains faithful forever.

Can you see the quote? Similar, right? He upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets the prisoner free. The Lord gives sight to the blind.

The Lord lives up those who are bowed down. The Lord loves the righteous. The Lord watches over the alien, sustains the fatherless and the widow, but frustrates the way of the wicked. Can you see why they prayed that prayer?

Boy, they knew their Bible and that really helped. It ends, the Lord reigns forever. Your God, O Zion, for all generations. Which brings us to the next point. They're a praying church.

They're a liturgical church, meaning they're using the prayers of the saints, of their scriptures, which means they're a Bible church. They're an Old Testament kind of church.

[24 : 03] They're not just a New Testament church. They constantly build on the Old Testament. The New Testament is not new, I guess, for them in that sense. It's not stand-alone. Christianity is not a novel religion.

It's built on fulfillment of the Old Testament, not in saying that there was a problem with the Old Testament and should be done away with. I guess, and because they're a Bible church, it means that the gospel, the message that believe, is based and carries weight because it's not something new.

If I can put it like that. It's ancient. It's got these promises that have been made to God and His people that they now see, as you saw a few weeks ago, they've got the Spirit. They can see that these things have all come true and what they mean about Jesus and what it means for them as God's people now.

Because they're a Bible church, they're also a gospel church. And their gospel is the gospel of the lordship of the risen and ascended Christ. That's why they quote Psalm 2. I should have kept you in this book of Psalms.

But notice what they say. Why do the nations rage and why do the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against His anointed. In Psalm 2, you can check it out if you want, but I'm going to stay in Acts.

[25 : 24] Just to quote Psalm 2, God's response to people who come against Him and His anointed one, and in Psalm 2, the people who are doing this, the leaders and the rulers, in their mind are the Gentiles.

And what we see in Acts 4 is that that has changed to be the people of God. God's own people have now become His enemy. But what is God's response to the people who oppose Him in Psalm 2?

Well, God laughs at the people trying to raise their fists and throw Him off. Psalm 2 goes on to say, the one enthroned in heaven laughs. The Lord scoffs at them.

He rebukes them in His anger and terrifies them in His wrath, saying, I have installed my king on Zion, my holy hill, mountain. I will proclaim the Lord's decree, continuing in Psalm 2.

He said to me, you're my son. Today, I've become your father. So God's response is to laugh and to say, no, no, I've got my king ruling from Zion. Ask of me and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession.

[26 : 36] You will break them in pieces with a rod of iron. You will dash him to pieces like pottery. So what happens when you come against God and against His king is that you go down.

You know, there's two shots. One shot, God's making you. Second shot, you hitting the floor. But now when you're faced with the, this is quite violent stuff and it's not normally the picture of Jesus that most people have, but now, you know what happens when you face a bully.

What is the one thing you need if you can't handle them yourself? Well, you need someone to protect you. You need a king, a leader, someone who's going to protect you and defeat your enemies.

And that's exactly what the gospel of the people of Acts believed and it should be ours as well. Now because of this, they're also a bold church.

Because they're a praying church and a Bible-believing church and a church that believes in this gospel, this Jesus, this king, they're also a bold church. Look at verse 29. Now Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness.

[27 : 41] because they have Jesus at the center of their gospel, they were a church prepared for confrontation, for conflict, and in fact war. They knew they had enemies.

So what? They had the risen king, the Messiah of God on their side. And because they were bold, that means they were also a church that could just go out and spread the gospel.

Their boldness led them to speak about God freely and about Jesus. The word bold here means to speak openly and freely without any hindrance, to know exactly what you want to say, to know exactly what you believe, and not letting anything stop you or get in your way to tell people about this truth.

Moving on, they were also a church filled with the Holy Spirit. And that's in verse 31. After they had prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken.

They were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God openly. And spoke the word of God boldly. Again, they're filled with the Holy Spirit. We saw that the last time. That continues.

[28 : 45] Important to know that the church is a church filled with the Spirit. Now that shaking is the same language used of God at Mount Sinai. It also reminds us of Acts chapter 1 when the Holy Spirit came on the disciples with power.

Okay, now this is amazing because this tells us that the church is the meeting place between heaven and earth. It's the new temple. And again, because they've got the Spirit, it lets them speak the word of God boldly.

Then notice they're also a unified church. They were one in heart and soul. Verse 32. All the believers were one in heart and mind. Now it's interesting. This comes from the Old Testament.

It's from David's mighty fighting men. David goes into battle and just the reference from the book of Kings is that all these men were one in mind and they had unity of purpose and they knew what they were doing.

They knew who their enemy was and they knew who their king was and they knew what they could do for him. That's what fellowship is all about actually. One in heart and soul. There's both friendship and unity of purpose.

[29 : 52] And you need to say they have to meet together to have fellowship, to be like this. It's not a small thing by the way. One of the big challenges of God's people in the Old Testament was to stay unified. They would more often not go to war against each other and we see this happening exactly in Acts chapter 4.

They're supposed to be unified in heart and soul. They're supposed to be together, united together under their king and they're not. The small throwaway line is actually very powerful. It says that only in Christ and in his church can people be truly unified and one in heart and soul.

And then there were a generous church and we saw this the last time and it continues from verse 32. All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions were his own but they shared everything they had.

With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord and much grace was upon them all. There were no needy persons among them for from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them and brought money for the sales and put it at the apostles' feet and was distributed to anyone as he had need.

How's that? So they've got the Spirit, they've got the Word of God, they pray and the result is okay, well let's be generous, let's make sure that everyone is doing okay. Luke is obviously the writer Luke, the author of Acts is obviously going out of his way to show us how generous they were.

[31 : 14] Everything belonged to everyone, they had everything in common, they sold and shared as they needed, they brought proceeds, they were organized and they didn't just bring small things, they sold a house and a field.

This is radical generosity. Anytime someone needed anything, they gave it. And as we've seen in our previous sermons, it's a fulfillment of God wanted from his people from Deuteronomy 15.

One wants to make sure that there is no one in need. I suppose a reverse of the curse, it's going to be hard, life is going to be hard and difficult, it's a reverse of the curse in Genesis 3 and a foretaste of the new creation to come.

And God, this is not in the center of who the church is, but it's obviously a very important mark of the church. It's been mentioned by Luke twice now in the book of Acts. So if you want to be a good church member, one of the things you've got to think about is, yeah, I've got to be generous.

And then, lastly, they're an evangelizing church. We just read past it, verse 33, with great power the apostles continue to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and much grace was upon them.

[32 : 27] Notice again, I guess at this point I'd say, with great power the apostles were testifying. They're a praying church. They're a Bible-believing church. They've got the Holy Spirit.

And because of those things, this is why they can testify with great power. It's because of those things that they're testifying with great power. And what do they testify to? The resurrection of Christ.

Christ. That is the key point about the gospel. Jesus has come back from the dead. And because he's come back from the dead, God has installed him in heaven as his king that now is dealing with his enemies.

And what's the result of living like this as the people of God? Same in verse 33. It's a small little throwaway line. Great grace was given to them.

Grace, much grace, was upon them all. That means favor. It means they were both effective in what they did. That grace is God's grace on them, saying, yes, go ahead and do it.

[33 : 27] When you do this, I'll be with you. In other words, they'll be successful and effective. And it could be the grace of the people around them. Everyone liked them. So it's interesting. When you do the things that God wants you to do as a church, you become effective, God uses you, and the people that you are giving testimony to like it as well.

Right, so, what do we see? God is now with this people, the new people, not the old temple people anymore. This is the place that God is now residing, his new temple.

God is going to work to his, this people, the church. This is the place where his spirit dwells and whom are the words of life. This is the place of provision, of blessing and healing.

The place of protection from God's enemies. This is the place of community and fellowship. The place where people care and help each other. This is the kind of community that God has always wanted.

The kind of community that can truly change the world the way that God has always wanted for his creation. So, what about us? Well, I think, firstly, let's take heart.

[34 : 32] If you belong to this community, you need to take heart and be encouraged. We too have the spirit. We too can ask for deliverance. We too can speak with boldness. We too can be filled with the spirit.

We've got the power of the risen Christ to call on when we face opposition and bullies. Now, that doesn't mean we won't individually go through hard times.

But if we stay close to Christ and rooted in him, as well as the fellowship of believers, the church, we can have assurance that the God of the universe and his Christ is fighting on our side.

And then who can stand against us? And if they do, so what? They might have a small victory, so what? They'll never have the total victory. We should be encouraged and emboldened to be an active part of this community.

Then, so we'll take heart. But let's also take stock. If you're part of this community, let's do an internal audit. How are we doing with being filled with the spirit? How are we doing with being unified?

[35 : 35] How are we doing with meeting together and being generous? When I say take stock, you might just want to think through those five or six points of the response of the church. Where's your weak point?

Choose one that you're not good at. Maybe it's prayer. Maybe it's knowing the gospel. Really understanding the gospel and the resurrection of Christ and his appointment as the Christ. Maybe it's generosity.

Maybe it's meeting together. Maybe you've got the other points but you don't really enjoy meeting together. Kind of preaching to the choir here, I guess. If you have a weak point that you want to change, why not bring it up with your small group leader or with another Christian or if you're feeling really brave, me or Nick.

But our point here is to help you to get those things right as so is the church. We're a band of brothers. The enemy is real. We've got a band together.

That's what fellowship is all about. We're in a war and when people are stuck in a war and they need help, they need bullets, they're in the next foxhole. I'm not going to go, yeah, well, you know, blah, blah, blah, why didn't you? No, mate, here, take your bullets, have my hand grenades, let's get going.

[36 : 40] You've got to fight the enemy, we're going to do it together. That's what fellowship is all about. And then lastly, if you're not part of this community, hey, come and join us.

You really want to be on the winning side of God and of His leader and of His people. what's stopping you? Just come. Let the living Christ send His Holy Spirit to bring life and power and meaning and joy and all the good things to your life.

Your pain can have meaning. Let your doubts be resolved. Let your path stop haunting you. And you can change your future. You can fill your life with good people.

You can have a power to live a changed life. and the power to help other people. You'll have the power of the God of the universe to protect and watch over you and all those you love.

Join us and be the place that God lives and the person through whom God can change the world. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you for such a strong and powerful word about your victory through Christ, our King.

[37 : 55] Lord, we love that we're part of your people and you give us all these benefits, the Holy Spirit, the Bible, Christ, each other. Lord, help us to be the people that you want us to be so that your grace and favor may fall upon us and we can be effective and that people will join us.

We can join each other in giving you praise and glory. In Jesus' name, Amen.