

Matthew 18: 20.

"For where two or three are gathered together in *My* name, there am I in the midst of them."

Substance of an address by N. Anderson.

The company is of no value if it is not rightly centred on the Christ of God. The centre of the gathering is the Lord Jesus Christ — in this connection — His name. I ask you, simply yet solemnly, if any company suggested that the Lord Jesus Christ was a sinful Man — would you go on with it? Or that He is not very God; or that He is not truly Man — sin apart? These are serious things and they have to be faced. If the truth that the Lord Jesus Christ was born of a virgin were denied, or that it does not really matter, and that it is optional whether we accept or not that the Lord Jesus Christ is Son in the co-equality of Godhead, eternally with the Father and the Holy Spirit, would you go on with it? The centre of gathering for the company is Christ *as the Scriptures present Him*, not Christ as we think He should be; not Christ as we think He might have been, it is the Christ of the Word of God. I have been exercised as to the truth of the intrinsic glory and greatness of our Lord Jesus Christ as co-equal in the Godhead with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Co-equality is not confined to His advent here. Our blessed Lord, in the grace of His incarnation, brought into Manhood the relationship in which He has ever subsisted with the Father, and He brought also the blessed revelation of the affection proper to that relationship.

Scripture is replete with divine teaching in the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth, that Christ was Son in the bosom of the Father before He was seen as the Babe of Bethlehem.

Let us exercise, dear brethren, the thinking faculty that has been given to us in the gift of the Spirit of God in relation to the discernment of the truth of the PERSON who is the Centre of the gathering, and in the discernment of that which would cast aspersion upon His blessed Person. I trust the Spirit of God will press the truth of it upon us, because we are not only faced with the so-called ecumenical movement — noxious as that is — but there is a so-called peaceful penetration into the ranks of believers which would rob us of the truth of Christ as alone the true centre of gathering. Indifference to Christ cannot be tolerated where the Spirit of God exercises the thinking faculty which leads us to not only judge what is *contrary* but what is *acceptable* to true assembly gathering.

Where can the assembly be found today? Speaking abstractly we find it in the heart of God; we find it in the heart of Christ; we find it in the ministry of the Spirit of God; speaking abstractly we find the assembly in the Word of God; speaking concretely it is difficult to find it anywhere. I hear brethren praying and speaking of "our assembly" or of "this assembly." If saints of God gather here in this particular place on some particular occasion they cannot be called "the assembly of God" except as you view them abstractly in conjunction with and in union with all the saints of God on earth at any time. The local assembly — speaking geographically — includes all believers in the place designated by the local name, not just those who break bread in one particular meeting. It would be a blessed thing if in real faith and affection and in the Spirit's power, those who break bread in such a place did so in the light of, and in the appreciation of, the truth of the assembly as gathered to Christ's Name alone. Blessed indeed to learn from the Word of God what the assembly is in the light of God's revelation, and as in the light of the affections which dwell in the heart of our blessed Lord, He who loved the assembly and gave Himself for it. He has done that, it is historical, and He will yet present it to Himself all glorious. Looking at the saints in their responsible condition today it seems absolutely incapable of realisation, but in the mind of God on the basis of the work of Christ, and having regard to what the assembly is to Christ, it is not only gloriously possible of realisation, but it is just on the doorstep, dear brethren. Christ is coming. He will translate the assembly from earth to heaven in a moment. This is not

a theory just to be said "Amen" to when referred to in prayer or in ministry, it is that which would produce desire and response continually as Christ is precious to us.

Are we appreciative of the fact that differences between believers militate against the truth of the assembly of God? Let us weigh what is said in verse 20 — "for where *two or three*."

It is not merely a question of numbers that is in view in Matthew 18, but the words of our blessed Lord have in mind the number of those whose feelings are in accordance with His own blessed heart. Would we not like to be amongst such? Such gatherings are an evidence of attraction, and a demonstration of the fact that there is an all commanding Object, One who exerts so powerful an influence that one person comes from here and another from there, and they meet at one appointed spot, with one blessed Object as their supreme attraction. Where can such an Object of attraction be found? The pre-eminent Christ; the impeccable Christ; the precious Christ of God. The Lord Jesus Christ is the attractive Centre of gathering for His people. It says — "Where two or three are gathered" — there is an external gathering attraction exerting a powerful drawing influence. "Draw me, we will run after Thee." Are we here because we have been brought; or here because of natural links? Or are we here because Christ is precious to us? Notice the "where" and the "there" — "There am I in the midst of them."

We repeat — the company is of no value unless it is centred upon the Christ of God. He of whom Paul wrote, "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor." Can we measure such love? We have to bow our heads and hearts in the presence of this presentation — "He became poor"! It tells the story of the cross; it tells the story of His being made sin; and the story of the sufferings of Christ. He was rich yet for our sakes He became poor that we — think of the magnitude of it — that we ruined by sin, poverty stricken, — that we "through *His* poverty might be made rich." As we contemplate such grace we refuse to countenance anything or anyone who belittles the Christ of Scripture.

If we are gathered together unto His Name we are aware of His absence from the scene in which we are gathering. Christ is absent. Why is He absent? "They hated me without a cause."

Christ is absent. If He were not absent we would not be gathering to His *Name*, we would be gathering to Him. "We beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto Him" — the Rapture. He is absent and we know why He is absent, and we are in sympathy with Him in His absence, and if we are in sympathy with Him we are identified practically, not theoretically, with a rejected Christ. "Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach."

Philadelphia is not confined to any circle of meetings. One of the blessed features of this Philadelphian character is "Thou hast a little strength," nothing to boast about. We cannot afford to raise our heads and say of others — "What do we want with them?" If we appreciate them as precious to Christ we know that — "Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it."

The sadly broken state of things may prevent us from walking freely with some but we feel for them, and as praying for them we should seek before God that they might gather to Christ's Name alone. The Lord's own words to Philadelphia are — "Thou hast a little strength, and hast kept My word." Christ's Word! "And hast not denied My Name."

They were true to Him in the face of the mounting opposition which would rob His own of the blessedness of identification, not only with a rejected Christ who was once crucified here, but a Christ still rejected in man's world but who is glorified in heaven. The light of His glory streams down upon

us, brethren, and a ministry of the Spirit of God reaches us in His own power from that blessed Man so that our hearts being drawn out to Him *there* we might be true to Him and His interests and His people *here*.

May the Lord grant that we may be found in real faith and in energy of affection and loyalty of walk gathering to Christ's Name — the Christ of Scripture, because He is worthy.