

Talking Temples

Introduction

- In Jesus' prayer to the Father before His trial, He said, *"I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, **I in them** and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. ... I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and **I in them.**"* (John 17:20-26, ESV)
- Jesus reveals to us an essential truth about His involvement in our lives today. He is IN us! When you look into the mirror, what do you see? Do you see what's on the surface, or do you recognize that you are a temple for God (1 John 3:24), Christ (John 17:23), and the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)?
- As you let this sink in, now look to your spouse. Do you see them as just your husband or wife, or do you also see them as a temple of the Lord? Look to your children. Do you see them as just your kids, or as (hopeful) temples for the Lord? Now extend your gaze to those within your local church. Do you see them as just a bunch of people, or do you see them all as temples of the Lord? What about Christians at other congregations in town, across this country, across the world, and even throughout time? Are they merely just men and women to you, or do you see them also as temples of the Lord?
- Amazingly, not only are we individually dwelling places for God, but together we become a collective temple for Him, as Paul said, *"So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, **grows into a holy temple in the Lord.** In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit."* (Ephesians 2:19-22, ESV)
- As we think about our roles as temples, let's ask the question, *"How do we approach the temple?"* As we look back to the physical temple, we see specific necessary commands being given, like being **reverent** (Leviticus 19:30) and **being careful with our words** (Ecclesiastes 5:1-3). The presence of God demands a certain response from us, and we would do well to remember that, especially in thinking about this new reality that God's presence is within those believers we know and us.

How Does This Fact Change Me?

- While letting these facts sink in, we could make many vital applications in our lives today:

- We could talk about how purity and holiness are demanded of us as temples of the Lord. This is undoubtedly a critical characteristic of being a dwelling place of God, but something we won't cover exclusively in this lesson.
- We could consider how, as temples, we are all on equal footing before Him. For example, there is no need to feel *lesser* in our work because we're not an elder, deacon, teacher, or preacher. We're all dwelling places for Him, and as such we don't need to get caught up in elevating someone to "super Christian" status like they did in 1 Corinthians 1:11-17.
- What we will consider today is what Paul said on the subject, "... *for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. **Do all things without grumbling or disputing**, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,* ..." (Philippians 2:13-15, ESV) As God works in us, we need to guard our hearts and lips from all forms of **grumbling, gossip, and grudges** that divide brothers and bring disunity in the church. Let's consider at least four problems with these kinds of words as we think about being temples for Him.

The Problem With Grumbling, Gossip, and Grudges

- **Problem 1: God Hates Grumbling, Gossip, and Grudges!** As the wise writer said, "*A worthless person, a wicked man, goes about with crooked speech, winks with his eyes, signals with his feet, points with his finger, with perverted heart devises evil, continually sowing discord; therefore calamity will come upon him suddenly; in a moment he will be broken beyond healing. There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.*" (Proverbs 6:12-19, ESV) If God hates it, that should be enough for us to consider, but let's continue.
- **Problem 2: It Grieves The Holy Spirit!** As Paul said, "*Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*" (Ephesians 4:29-32, ESV) Doesn't this make sense? If someone were to say hurtful things about your child, would you want to have a close relationship with that person? When we say hurtful things about the children of God, it most certainly causes Him pain!
- **Problem 3: It's A Heart Problem!** Jesus made it clear that we're not dealing with just words here; it's about something more profound, as He said, "*You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word*

they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." (Matthew 12:34–37, ESV) It's not about just keeping silent, or saying good things while harboring resentment and frustration in our heart. Hurtful words will eventually come out if love is not stored up in our hearts.

- **Problem 4: We're No Longer His Temples!** John speaks extensively on the topic of God dwelling within us, and also about how God will not dwell within us if we choose not to love our brothers, *"Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us."* (1 John 4:11–12, ESV)

THINK Before You Speak

- So it's critically important as temples of the Lord that we watch what we say, but even more so, that we address the condition of our hearts first. The adage we heard as children still rings true today, "Think before you speak!" A simple acronym may help in remembering when to speak and when to keep silent: THINK!
- **T:** Truth - Is what you're about to say the truth? I mean, really the truth! Not just what you've convinced yourself of, or what the majority believe, but the real, honest, factual truth. If it's not true, or we are unsure, we should not say it! *"Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another."* (Ephesians 4:25, ESV)
- **H:** Helpful - Just because something is true, doesn't mean it needs to be said. I doubt any of us would like all the truthful things about us and our lives paraded around publicly for all to see. So is it helpful? Will it be a benefit to those who hear and build them up with graciousness? *"Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear."* (Ephesians 4:29, ESV)
- **I:** Inspiring - Is what you're about to say helpful in inspiring others and building them up toward deeper faithfulness? If not, it's something that shouldn't be said! *"But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called 'today,' that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."* (Hebrews 3:13, ESV)
- **N:** Needed - Does what you're about to say need to be said? Sometimes we need to speak up and have courage to do so with love. Many times though, our words are foolish idle-talk which don't need to be brought up at all. We need to speak slowly, as James said, *"Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger;"* (James 1:19, ESV)
- **K:** Kind - Is what you're going to say kind and loving? As a last line of defense from the other areas we've considered, this may make all the difference. Maybe it meets all the other criteria, but the way we might say it is unkind. Either choose not to say it, or choose

to say it in kindness and hopefully your words will be received in the loving spirit in which they were given. *"Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person."* (Colossians 4:6, ESV)

Conclusion

- Isn't it amazing that God would choose to dwell within us as His temples? Let's make sure we approach that temple, then, with reverence and carefully selected words!
- Let's take on the challenge of Paul today to examine and test ourselves to see if we're an acceptable dwelling place for Him! *"Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!"* (2 Corinthians 13:5, ESV)