

Preach Christ, Not The Church?

Some who claim to be gospel preachers and/or Christians, have put forth the call to "Preach Christ, not the church." They said this from time to time, because they perceive preaching about the "church" turns people off. Let us consider a point or two about this.

First, one cannot read Ephesians 5:22-32 without understanding that Christ and His church are intimately intertwined and cannot be separated. Note what would happen to this passage if we took out the church.

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the _____; and He is the Savior of the _____. Therefore, just as the _____ is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the _____ and gave Himself for _____, that He might sanctify and cleanse _____ with the washing of water by the word, that He might present _____ to Himself a glorious _____, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that _____ should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the _____. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the _____ (Eph. 5:22-32).

Denominationalism has long said that the church is unimportant. This is a logical conclusion from their false doctrine, especially in view of Premillennialism which teaches that the church was a last minute thing. Now, in recent years brethren have been infected with this disease of de-emphasizing the church in their preaching, or rather, avoiding it. In spite of this attitude, the Bible still teaches the importance of the church.

The church is that for which the Savior gave His life (Eph. 5:25). Paul said to the Elders of Ephesus, "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28). Jesus gave His life and shed His blood for the church. So, what value does that put upon it? The church is the blood-bought body of Christ (cf. Eph. 5:23; 1:22-23).

Further, the church was in God's mind from all eternity. "To the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. 3:10-11). Before time began, God planned to establish the church of our Lord. Thus, contrary to popular Premillennial thought, the church was not a "stop-gap" measure enacted at the last minute. This gives evidence to the greatness of the church.

With the church being so intimately connected to Christ and God's eternal purpose, it is a wonder why some would dare think, let alone say, "Preach Christ, not the church." Yet, there are weak men of every generation who want to please the masses, not the Master (cf. Gal. 1:10). The majority of men do not want to hear about the church of which they must be a member, either because they do not want the responsibility of such membership or because their family and friends are not a part of it. Concerning the latter, if a man becomes a member of the church, then by his action alone he condemns those who are not (cf. Heb. 11:7). So, with the desires of the masses being as they are, men feel pressure to compromise--and compromise they will (2 Tim. 4:3-4). These weaklings do not want to "offend" and turn away those they are seeking to bring in. Therefore, they avoid preaching about the church.

Friends, it does not stop with "Preach Christ, not the church." As with all compromise, it leads to more compromise. They begin to cry, "Teach grace, not baptism," "Preach the gospel, and leave others alone." This attitude does not help man, but condemns him. Truth cannot be compromised. As Paul, every Christian should be determined to teach the whole counsel of God, keeping back nothing that is profitable (Acts 20:20, 27). Preach Christ and His church. Teach about God's grace and baptism which puts one in that grace. Preach the gospel, stirring up the souls of men, cutting them to the heart (Acts 2:37).

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