

Viewpoints Of The Church #1

Introduction. The book of Ephesians is a book that teaches about the proper place of the church. Christians ought to never lose sight of what the church really is about. The book of Ephesians stresses the church and doctrines central to the church more than any other book.

All of the blessings which are said to be "in Christ" are only enjoyed in His church. It is a wonderful organization that God has placed in our care. We should not neglect nor ignore the blessings of the church.

After opening the book of Ephesians with a comprehensive statement regarding our salvation (1:3-14), Paul embarks on the first of eleven different statements which are descriptions of the church and its position in God's scheme of redemption.

I. ***The Church Is The Fulness Of Christ (Ephesians 1:15-23)***

- A. Here Paul elevated and glorified the church of Jesus Christ in a manner that staggers the imagination. The church is the body of Christ. It is a living, functioning organism. The body is made up of many members. The body completes Christ. The church gives completion or perfection to the Lord's universal dominion.
- B. By way of illustration, the scriptures furnish several ways to understand this concept. A bridegroom is incomplete without a bride. A vine is incomplete without branches. A shepherd is incomplete without sheep. A head is incomplete without a body. Without the church, Christ's dominion would be incomplete.
- C. Jesus is above all principality, power, might, and dominion. His authority is superior to that of all other authorities whether celestial or terrestrial. Furthermore, the body or the church gives Christ the head a kind of completeness or fulness (Colossians 1:19; 2:9). It completes Him by working for Him under His direction. He, in turn, fills the church with His power, wisdom, majesty, truth, goodness, and holiness (John 1:16).
- D. It is very desirable that we have a full knowledge and rightful understanding of these privileges. We can now know the extent of the power which has been manifested in our redemption and our souls can have complete confidence in the Lord.

II. ***The Church Is Alive With Christ (Ephesians 2:1-10)***

- A. Our past condition was that we were dead in sin. Death always implies a change from the state of being alive. Therefore, the thought of total human depravity as something inherited must be incorrect.
- B. Now we are made alive with Christ. The new life is a spiritual life. It is affected from the moment an individual rises from the grave of sin to

walk again among the living. The same thought is in Romans 5:10 where our being enemies was the existing state from which we were reconciled to God. God raised us up and seated us with Christ in the heavenlies or in the spiritual realm. Salvation includes two aspects: grace and faith.

- C. Without God's grace, salvation would be impossible. The church is God's creation and we are to walk in the good works which God prepared beforehand. However, there is no release in this text from the obligations God has bound upon sinners who desire to be saved from their sins. One who is a Christian works under the same imperative compulsion as that which rested upon Christ (John 9:4). Any theory which divorces the works a Christian performs from having any connection with his salvation is a false theory (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

III. ***The Church Is The Body Of The Reconciled (Ephesians 2:11-18)***

- A. There is a progression in these verses describing the pre-Christian state of the Gentile Christians. Physically, they lacked the ancient sign of the covenant; politically, they had no part in Israel's national or religious life, and spiritually they had no knowledge of the true God.
- B. But Christ broke down the barrier of the dividing wall and removed all these shortcomings. The temple veil that hung between the Holy of Holies and the Holy Place was torn in two when Christ died on the cross (Matthew 27:51). The significance of this being in the fact that the sacred veil was the largest, highest, most important, and most symbolical of all the "middle walls of partition" in the ancient Jewish temple.
- C. Christ nailed the Law to His cross (Colossians 1:20-22; Hebrews 10:1-10). The separating influence, the Law, had divided the nations because it was a national law, designed for Israel only. "Ordinances" are decrees, statutes, edicts, or specific rules. When the Law was taken away, there was no reason to identify separately the Jews from the Gentiles in any spiritual sense.
- D. Where there was once enmity, now there is reconciliation or friendship. The totality of the entire Jewish system of religion is under consideration, and is not restricted in meaning to the ceremonial law or any lesser part of Judaism. Christ's entry into the world to bring the word of the Father to sinful humanity had a far greater purpose than merely making peace between Jews and Gentiles.

IV. ***The Church Is A Fellowship Of Saints (Ephesians 2:19)***

- A. Paul was a Roman citizen and had received blessings from this relationship (Acts 25:11). Thus it was natural that he should have com-

pared the privileges of being in Christ to citizenship in a kingdom much higher and holier than any other ever known on earth.

- B. Now in Christ the Gentiles are no longer strangers and aliens, but are fellow-citizens with the saints. "Strangers" and "foreigners" means those who were outsiders without any real share in God's family. A "fellowcitizen" is one who possesses equal privileges and advantages. There is one class of citizen and no one is inferior to another.
- C. We have fellowship with each other because we have fellowship with God (1 John 1:6-7). Fellowship within the Lord's church is a two-way street. When a couple decides to join themselves in fellowship with a congregation, they agree to follow the Lord's commands. The congregation agrees to give them a place to worship in spirit and in truth and has the right to withdraw its fellowship from those who do not live according to the Lord's will.

V. ***The Church Is The Household Of God (Ephesians 2:19)***

- A. The term "house" or "household" refers to God's family. The term is extended and expanded to include all who are saved. The "household" metaphor, like the "kingdom" metaphor, when referring to Christians on earth, is the church.
- B. When we are children of God, we are born again into the family and that occurs at baptism. There should be mutual affection and closeness among all members of the family who love one another because they are of the same Father and share common characteristics and traits. From this metaphor, we ought to take advantage of all opportunities to know one another better (Romans 12:10).
- C. A similar word is used in antiquity to describe the family of slaves belonging to some mighty ruler or wealthy landowner. Several such "households" are mentioned in Romans 16. We are family because we bear the same name and are from the same Redeemer. It does not matter what nation we are converted from; we are all family.

Conclusion. This brief survey of Ephesians allows us to see the importance of the church in God's eternal purpose. It is not a thing to be taken for granted or overlooked. Let us determine to show by our faithfulness the gratitude that is due Him for all He has done for us.