

Assembled in Christ

Church Membership

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Bible Text: Ephesians 1:10; Ephesians 5:25-32

Preached on: Sunday, March 12, 2017

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Let's have a word of prayer and we'll begin.

Father, thank you for the opportunity to study your word. You did a good job and we cannot improve on it. Help us just to enjoy what you've written and we thank you for your kindness toward us through Jesus. Thank you for a great facility to meet in. I pray that you would help us to learn. Please be the teacher that we need. We'll thank you in Jesus' name. Amen.

So let's look at Ephesians 5 to finish number 1 from last week. Ephesians 5. We've already determined, we'll rehearse a little bit. Look at Ephesians 1 first and we'll find the two things that the church is called. The two things that the church is called in the book of Ephesians. You can help me with them. They start with the same letter and you already filled one in from last week. So Ephesians 1 and we'll be reading verses 22 and 23 and we're talking about, of course, Jesus. And we'll begin reading in verse, look at verse 15 of Ephesians 1, "Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers." Now just in passing, I know this isn't a lesson on prayer but the fact that he doesn't cease to give thanks for them means that every time he meets them, he thanks God for them, and that should be a regular part of our life, as much as inhaling and exhaling, should be the practice of both giving thanks and making requests.

Moving on, verse 18, "the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe," not to those how pray but to those who believe, "according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places." So he's talking about Jesus and so he's seated in heavenly places, "far above," verse 21, "far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named," above them, that's where he's seated, "not only in this age but also in that which is to come." So he's above everything all the time. Verse 22, "And He put all things under His feet." So God put all things under Jesus' feet, "and gave Him," Jesus, "to be head over all things to the church." Last week we talked about a first century understanding of the word "church." If you are not clear on what that

word means, please don't embarrass yourself, listen to the lesson. The word has first century understanding, a first century connotation and a denotation for today, a dictionary definition which may not be accurate, depending on what dictionary you use, but it has a connotation because the word wasn't written in English, it was written in Greek, translated to English. As a matter of fact, if you find the Geneva Bible, I think the Matthews Bible, *ekklesia*, that Greek word in your footnote, is not even translated church, it's translated assembly because they didn't want you to confuse the structure or the institution or the corporation, for lack of a better term, with the group of people that's called out to assemble. Verse 23, verse 22, "the church is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."

Boy, there's a ton we could say there. Think through that. If he is the head of the church, that means the church is his body. Now brothers and sisters, there are a lot of terminologies that determine terms in the Bible that stress the union of Jesus and his people. So let's see if we can work through three of them. He is the foundation or the cornerstone and we are the building. Okay, good. Zero for one. Alright, he is the shepherd and we are his sheep. Okay, good, one, wonderful. He is the vine and we are the branches. So here he is the head and we are the body. Right, so just like you don't expect to be running around in heaven with a woolly coat, you probably shouldn't expect anything weird about how you look in heaven as the body of the supreme head. It is an analogy. It is a metaphor of how we are united with Jesus. He's the head, we're the body. The church is the body.

And what you need to ask yourself is: who is Paul writing to here? Any ideas?

("Ephesian church.") The Ephesian church. Pretty important. He's not writing to a bunch of the pagans in Ephesus that loved the goddess Diana, he's talking to the people in Ephesus that assemble in Christ's name. So he's talking to a real live body of believers with or without a building. He's talking to them and says, "Christ is your head. Yes, I'm an apostle," verse 1, "but Christ is your head," verse 22 and 23. So you should see under number 1: these verses tell us that the church is the body of Christ.

Now look at chapter 5 of Ephesians. Here's the second thing that the church is called in the book of Ephesians and then I'll take questions in just a moment. Ephesians 5. You have seen this passage. It's a wonderful passage. It's a beautiful passage. It's a passage that I use all the time in premarriage counseling and will continue to use because it tells husbands their role.

We have chairs within the U tonight, Lisa, so if you happen to need one of them, it's preempted for our eating meeting as Walter coined it. Eating meeting. So if you need a chair, there are some on the inside or there are a couple of here.

So Ephesians 5, verse 22, "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife," look here, "as also Christ is head of the church." So if he's the head, the church is the body, right?

Then we look at verse 24, "Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything." So you see either marriage is trying to describe the Gospel to us, or the Gospel is trying to describe marriage to us, and Paul seems to be saying in no uncertain terms that marriage was introduced in the garden to teach you the Gospel before it was needed.

("Say it again.") Paul goes to some length here to teach us that the Gospel was taught in the garden through marriage before the Gospel was even needed. There was a perfect marriage in a perfect place and it was Eve submitting to Adam and Adam loving Eve. And it says here that in that manner, so what is the model and what is the substance? The model: Christ is the head of the church. He's the Savior of the body therefore just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands. So even though marriage was on planet earth before the church, the church is supposed to be, I should say the church and Christ are supposed to be exemplified through marriage. Adam and Eve were given to each other to tell us about the Gospel story that would come. Pretty awesome.

Verse 25, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her." So the wife is to be pleasingly submissive and the husband is to be sacrificially loving. And he gave himself for her, that's a lot of sacrifice. That's everything.

"That He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself," Christ presents a clean church to himself, "a glorious church," a glorious group of people, not a glorious institution, not a glorious corporation, not a glorious building, a group of people. He's going to present this group of people to himself. So in the immediate context, Paul is talking to a local body of believers, yeah? Right? But there must be a time when all the groups of believers will comprise one group of believers otherwise this Scripture makes no sense. Yeah? We're not going to be separate from all the other believers' groups in heaven and I think Oxford Baptist Church, I don't know very many people there but I'd like to think it's a body of believers, yeah? And I would like to think that once we get to heaven, it won't be Oxford Baptist and Sandy Ridge, right? I would like to think we're going to be one group of people and in a minute I'll give you a proof text for that. But here we have this understanding where Paul is talking to a group of believers about who they are to Christ. They are the body to the head and now we're being told what else they are, alright?

So verse 29, "no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones." Then he quotes out of Genesis. I don't want to lose you. "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." Alright, here we are. He's quoting a verse out of Genesis 2 when Eve is created out of Adam's side and brought to Adam, yeah? We'll be back to that in a second. And he says that a man will leave mom and dad and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one flesh.

Now verse 32, "This is a great mystery." Listen to this. He's telling you what Genesis is about. This is a great mystery, a man and a woman leaving parents and becoming one flesh. He quotes Genesis 2 and says, "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church." He tells you right there what this verse in Genesis 2 is about. Is it immediately applied to a man and a woman in marriage? Yes, but the mystery is that it was talking first about Christ and his church. That was the view in the garden of Eden. Not man and woman primarily, Christ and his people that he would die for. That was why marriage was created, to picture the Gospel. Think that through. Do you believe that Jesus knew, that God knew that mankind would sin and fall from him in the garden? It didn't take long, Genesis 3, they sin. Genesis 3:15, there is going to be a seed of the woman that will crush the serpent's head. Do you all remember that? And so all through that.

Now let's talk about Adam and Eve. Adam sins but not before he has a wife. So Adam goes to sleep, a deep sleep, and what happens? Genesis 2. Come on. You've read this.

("God takes the rib out.") From? ("Adam's side.") It says opens his side and crafts a bride. When he wakes up from sleep, in the New Testament how do we describe saints who have died?

("Asleep.") Yeah, Lazarus, he's asleep, right? How about 1 Thessalonians 4? "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose from the dead, we believe that he also will bring those who sleep in Jesus." So sleep is a picture of death. Death is not a picture of sleep, sleep is a picture of death.

So Adam...remember, this is written by one author. That's why we take no hesitation about saying that it's written by one author from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22. It's one book. He did a great job. Let's figure out what he means, okay? That's why. In Genesis 2 when Adam takes a deep sleep which is a picture of death, and he has out of his side brought a bride and when he awakens out of his sleep, which is a picture of death, there is a woman brought to him. So Adam being a picture we're told in Romans 5, he's a picture of the last Adam that is to come, he is a picture of Jesus, Adam is a picture of Jesus. Paul says it in Romans 5. Adam is a picture of Jesus. Marriage is a picture of Christ and his church. Sleep is a picture of death. So Adam goes to the picture of his death, has his side opened and what do we have but a picture of Christ dying, becoming alive, and out of his side, his wounded open side, is brought a bride. Do you remember on the cross that Jesus had his side opened and we were purchased with his blood? And to him was brought a bride when he awoke the third day.

So this is magnificent. This is God's book and so anyway, verse 32, we find then that since Paul is talking about a great mystery, Christ and the church, and who is my bride? Nicky. Who is the bride of Adam? Eve. Who is the bride of Christ? The church. That's right.

So how then, if we have individual churches in the New Testament, how then are we together with all other born again believers whether a part of Sandy Ridge or not? How

are we considered one church with them? I'm glad you asked. Look at Ephesians 1. We're still in Ephesians and we're in chapter 1. Ephesians 1. How if church means assembly and we as Sandy Ridge Baptist Church are known individually as the body of Christ, soon to be grouped or somehow are already grouped with all believers in another assembly as the body of Christ, and if we at Sandy Ridge Baptist Church are the bride of Christ and are somehow grouped with all other believers as the bride of Christ, how?

Ephesians 1:7, "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself." Basically the reason you're bought by his blood is because it has something to do with God pleasing himself. Did you get that? It has zero to do with us. God is so God-centered it would scare you.

Verse 10, "that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times," and that's like enough to choke a horse. What's a dispensation? Well, it is the noun form of the verb "dispense." What does "dispense" mean? To dispense something means to give something out. So dispensation is a giving of something out. It is a period of time in which God gives something out.

So verse 10, "that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times." Well, if you want to know what the fullness of time means, it means when the time is right. All waiting is over.

So verse 10, "that in a particular time when the time is right when the Lord has a particular way of giving grace out," look at the rest of the verse, "He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth--in Him." How are myself and Rick Hedrick, how are we gathered even if we were members of different churches? In him.

So I don't get it but judicially we are accounted as being in Christ. All of us who have been saved, if you've been saved, you are in Christ. Now, that's weird because you're like, "The last time that happened to me, I was playing underwater jump rope in my mother." But now we're talking about being in someone else. We are placed into Christ.

Well, this is not the only time it's mentioned. You might notice in chapter 2, look at verse 6, "He has raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ." Does everyone see that? So in Christ...born again believers, you can only answer this question. All others, hush. If you are a believer, where are you in Christ right now?

("In heavenly places.") So where is Christ? Chapter 1 again. Look at chapter 1, verse 20, God "worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places." Ephesians 2:6, where are we in Christ? In heavenly places. But where specifically are we in Christ? It says in chapter 1, verse 20, at whose right hand? Jesus is not at Jesus' right hand. Jesus is at God's right hand. So Jesus is at God's right hand, we are in Christ seated with him at God's right hand. Right now we are

already in heaven. It's as good as done. Good as done. Fixed fight. If you're saved, you're already in heaven in Christ.

So if that's true, then the "in Christ" thing read back under verse 10, we are assembled in Christ at God's right hand right now. Who? All believers. All believers where, verse 10? Which are in two locations, where? In heaven and in earth. So your saved loved ones that have gone to ?? are where? They're in heaven but they're assembled with you and I where? At God's right hand in Christ. So we are in heaven waiting to get there. That's what it says. Ephesians 2:6, we have been raised with him and are seated with him in heavenly places. Already there. It's done. That, good friends, is called eternal security. For you to lose your salvation, you have to leave heaven.

Any questions? Comments. Okay, let's hear it. ("1:6 or 2:6 says...") 2:6 says that we are seated in heavenly places in Christ.

("We're time oriented people. Heaven is outside of time. That's kind of hard to grasp that we're already there and we're here.")

("It's hard to grasp that.") In the flesh, that's pretty clear. We all feel that but in Christ, something we take by faith.

("We're already there.") Already there.

So what else is true in the flesh? We born again believers who comprise Sandy Ridge Baptist Church is in the flesh. We are assembled in the flesh even right now. Even when we're not here, we regularly assemble so we're still called an assembly even when we're not assembled because we assemble so frequently. So since we assemble so frequently, we're called an assembly whether assembled or not. In the flesh we assemble. In the spirit, we're already assembled around the throne of God in Christ. So in that case, all born again believers in that sense are a part of the church which he is presenting to himself without fault, Ephesians 5.

("What does verse 7....?") Of which chapter? ("Chapter 2.") Oh, that's good stuff. ("He raised us up so that when we became dead in our sins, our trespasses, he made us alive. He raised us up, it's a done thing, that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace.") Oh, that's wonderful. Eons and eons, ages to come is eons and eons. That means that there is not a snowball's chance in Hades that when you go to heaven you will know everything right away because for the ages to come, he will unveil more riches in Christ.

So when someone I think it was this week, someone said, "When will I have all my answers?" It was Friday. I was meeting someone in my office. "When will I have all my answers?" I said, "I'm not sure." "Well, won't I get them when I get to heaven?" No, because if you know what God knows, that makes you omniscient and therefore God. You will not have all your questions answered when you get to heaven. That's craziness. That might be a Gaither song but it's not Paul's writing.

("One might say that you'll have all your questions answered but when you get to heaven you will only have one question and that is: what did Jesus do for me? And you'll finally have the perfect answer when you get there. After that you will be with Jesus forever. It's not that we're chasing intimate knowledge, we'll have Jesus and that's all we will need.") Right and a foretaste of that, Brother Matt, is the book of Job. Job never got his "why" answered. He never was let in on the angelic thing happening in heaven before God's throne. Never got his "why" answer and apparently the book closes after 42 chapters with the only answer he ever needed which is "who" and not "why." It's God and Job, I like it, one of my favorite preachers, C. J. Mahaney says, God for some strange reason watches for, you know, dingbat friends helped Job and then God takes Job on a journey through creation and then a journey to the zoo and then basically Job hates himself for wanting all the "why" questions answered and he realizes that all he needs is the "who" answer and that is God. God is behind all of it and God is allowed to have his secrets and we are not going to demand that he becomes less God and makes us more God by giving us his omniscience.

And there's a lot of truth to what you say because around Revelation 5:9, Matt, you don't have the 24 elders saying, "And now I know why So-and-so, this and that, and why I at age 13 had this happen to me." That's not happening around the throne. They are talking to God. "You have redeemed us by thy blood out of every kindred, tribe, people and nation." They're only talking about one thing when they get to heaven and that's how they got there.

(unintelligible) Maybe. Maybe. I don't know. The reality is Jesus did a lot of things that I would not have expected with his glorified body. He ate fish.

(unintelligible) I mean, what's a glorified body need food for, right? Because that introduces other questions which I'm not interested in asking before we eat. So the glorified body does some things I'm not expecting already. So the fact that...there is a difference, you know, and I'm watching the time. Don't worry, all the nervous people in the room. I'm watching the time. There is a difference between the brain and the mind, you realize that. The brain is an organ, the mind is something different, right? You understand that, right?

I had this conversation with a 22 year old guy making six figures in Virginia a couple of weeks ago and he's just depressed beyond belief and can you imagine making \$130,000 a year as a 22 year old and being depressed? But he was in that position and I'm his chaplain so he talked to me and he said, "You know, I feel like there's something wrong." I said, "Let's acknowledge something. After all the medication is talked about and after all the psychiatry is talked about, let's admit that there's a difference between the brain and the mind." The mind is, "I know I exist. I feel certain things I can't prove. I can't prove love. I feel it but I can't prove that love itself exists because it's an emotion. I believe in pain." So there are a ton of things we cannot prove that are over in this mind area. The brain, surely enough, dies and that's probably, I don't know for sure, but that's probably a great idea of when death occurs. Yeah, the brain and the mind are different.

So somehow the mind is transferred to the eternal world, yeah? And it takes up residence at the resurrection surely, but before that in a body of a different kind. So to say that everything about our current mind stripped of its sinful desires in a glorified body won't think something about this planet earth thing back there that we can hardly remember, I can't promise that. We will probably still have some questions but we will have all the ages to come, Ephesians 2:7, to have how the Gospel relates to those things.

And we're done. So if you have questions, you need to see me. I'm not going to run out of the room. There is food to be had.

Biblical Perspective on Church Membership

1. What is the church?

The church is “a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place, an assembly”¹ Acts 19:32, 39, 41 comprise the only times (of the 118) where this Greek word is mentioned in a context other than “religious”, and we see it is either a mob (19:32) or a lawful, governing, local body (19:39). One begins to really see what the disciples would have expected when they heard this word used by the Lord (Matthew 16:18).

I Corinthians 12:27 and Ephesians 1:22-23 tell us that the church is the Body of Christ and is made up of individual members. Revelation 21.1-9 and Ephesians 5:21-32 show us the “great mystery” is that Christ loved the church and gave himself for it as his Br _____.

2. What is church membership?

A church is when the local body of Christ recognizes a person as a C _____.² In Acts 2:37-47 there are several characteristics that are demonstrated by those who are in the same church. First a person must R _____ and be B _____. Second, an individual must affirm the same core D _____ of the Bible. Third, the believer will F _____, both in and out of the church with other believers, as well as P _____ for them.

3. Is church membership biblical?

(Hebrews 13:17) As Christians we are to submit ourselves to the A _____ over us. If there is no local church membership then who do we know to obey?³ Also, if there is no local body of believers for whom is the pastor responsible?⁴ Since the believer is to submit to an elder, and the elder is responsible for certain souls, the believer must be a part of a local church body.

(I Timothy 5:17) We see that the elders who _____ well deserve double honor. If that be the case, how can a believer know if an elder is “worthy of double honor” is they have not “submitted” to his pastoral oversight.

Looking back to Acts 2:37-41 we see that there is a “n _____ record” of those who have believed on Christ. The church at Jerusalem was keeping a r _____ of growth.

1 Timothy 5:3-16, in this passage there are specific requirements to be met if the church is to support a W _____ financially. How would the church support specific widows if they did not have a prioritized list that would stem from the members of a local body of believers?

Turning over to Romans 16:1-16 the reader will see there is a distinct body of believers in Rome that are in churches that Paul knows. The amount of knowledge Paul has of these Christians is a clear example that these people are members of a s _____ body that serve there, and have served for a length of time that has made them of honorable mention.

4. Why should I be a member?

¹ Blue Letter Bible. "Dictionary and Word Search for *ekklesia* (Strong's 1577)". Blue Letter Bible. 1996-2012. 23 Oct 2012. < <http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong=G1577&t=KJV> >

² Jonathan Leeman, Church Membership: How the World Knows Who Represents Jesus (Crossway, Wheaton Illinois, 2012), 29.

³ Is Church Membership Biblical; Matt Chandler, www.9marks.org/journal/church-membership-biblical

⁴ Ibid.

As a member I can have an active role in the d_____ of the church by the ability to vote in a congregational form of government. I will be able to be known as a member of that church (1 Corinthians 5:7). Looking at 1 Corinthians 5.1-12 the reader can see sin in the church which Paul deals with. The membership of the church is subject to D_____ from the church. A “brother” cannot be put *out*, if there is not a specific *in* to which he belongs.

I will be better fitted for S_____ (Acts 6:1-7).

Being a member places more credibility upon a person who has a desire to work in a particular ministry making me an active part in the E_____ or growth of the church (Ephesians 4.11-12).

As a member I will help the B_____ work properly (Ephesians 4.15-16). I will have the added blessing of being held

A_____ for my actions (Ephesians 4.25).

The church will look after the needs of W_____ (1 Timothy 5.1-3).

Now that we have seen the advantages of membership, let’s look as the disadvantages of not being a member.

1 Peter 5.1-5. If I am not a member that means I am not under the numbered F_____ of an under-shepherd or pastor to be looked after. This means I will miss out on the feeding of that flock as well as the careful watching of that shepherd. The under-shepherd will have to give an account to the Great Shepherd for the flock he has been given the oversight of; he needs to know who his sheep are. How can a shepherd know when one of his sheep is missing if he does not know which sheep do not belong to him?

5. What are the biblical requirements for church membership?

Acts 2.4-47. Those who were added to the church had first “R_____ his word” and then were “B_____.” The Lord “A_____” to the church daily those who were “saved.” A person must profess Christ as their Savior to be entered into the membership of the church.