

The Church Is Important To Christians

Text : **Ephesians 4: 11-24**

INTRODUCTION :

A. American Christians have a tendency to take the church for granted.

1. In their lifetime, there has never been a time when the church was not there.
2. They have never had to struggle to protect the church or even felt threatened.

B. Most members of the church were brought up in the church by Christian parents.

1. That's a great blessing, but can also be a stumbling block.
2. Religion can easily become merely a cultural value.

ILL.- Life on the mission field in Catholic country where religion is cultural.

C. Many congregations have become more socially oriented than religious.

1. **Obviously,** it is important that a congregation have a healthy social life.
 - a. Encouragement must take place day after day. ... **Heb. 3:13**
 - b. The very first congregation was together daily. ... **Acts 2: 41**

* **Therefore :** **If we are to restore the N.T. pattern, we must have contact with each other at times other than just the weekly assemblies.**
2. In order to maintain the church from generation to generation, our young people must be brought up in a religious social environment. **(NOT left as weeds in the world)**
 - a. **I Cor. 15: 33**
 - b. If one's primary peer group is in the world, he'll be drawn to the world. (young or old)
 - c. The single strongest drive in a teenager's life is to be accepted by his peers.
3. **HOWEVER,** having acknowledged the obvious, we must be careful not to lose sight of the purpose of the church.
 - a. The church exists for the sole purpose of saving souls.
 - b. The church must reach out to lost people.
 - c. It must insure that the saved mature and remain faithful.

TRANSITION :

A. Our last lesson centered on the importance of the church to God emphasizing :

1. That He planned the church before He created the earth.
2. That He purchased the church at the highest cost ever paid for anything.
3. That He uses the church to represent Him on the earth and to accomplish His will.

B. Today's lesson will center on the importance of the church to the Christian emphasizing :

1. That the church is the spiritual incubator where Christians mature in Christ.
2. That the church is a safety net to protect Christians from falling to Satan's devices.
3. That the church is the platform from which Christians glorify God.
4. That the church is truly the vestibule from which Christians enter Heaven.

I. The church is the spiritual incubator in which Christians mature in Christ.

A. God requires that ALL new Christians be taught ALL of the teachings of Christ.

1. **Matt. 28: 19-20** Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."
2. The Apostle Paul said he was a faithful teacher because he taught the whole purpose of God.
 - a. **Acts 20: 26-27** Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. ²⁷ For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God.
 - b. He infers that he wouldn't have been faithful if he had not taught God's whole purpose.
 - c. This is not to say that every member knew or understood every point of every doctrine.

B. Christians are taught they must seek and accomplish spiritual maturity.

1. **I Pet. 2: 2-** like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation
2. **I Pet. 3: 15-** but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;
3. Those who do not grow are not approved of : (**ILL-** all math about 2, year after year)
Heb. 5: 12f- For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food.

C. God organized the church to be the place where spiritual growth is achieved.

1. **Read ... Eph. 4: 11-16**
2. Every church leader and every member has a responsibility in producing spiritual growth.
3. The process is not completed until we become like Jesus.

II. The church is the safety net which protects Christians from falling to Satan's devices.

A. As in any family, in God's family (*the church*) the strong help the weak.

1. Read ... Gal. 6: 1-2

- a. Everyone is either spiritual or he is not.
 - b. ALL who are spiritual have a responsibility to all who are not spiritual.
 - c. ALL who are not spiritual have a right to expect they will receive assistance.
2. No Christian has the option to lives to himself.
- a. We're all responsible for each other. (All members function as one body.)
 - b. Rom. 15: 1-2 Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves.² Each of us is to please his neighbor for his good, to his edification.
 - c. Compare ... Phil. 2

B. One of the primary functions of Christians is for each to encourage the others.

1. Heb. 3: 12-14 Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God.¹³ But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is *still* called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.¹⁴ For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end,

- a. Every Christian owes vigilant support to every other Christian. (DAILY)
 - b. Sin can sneak up on even strong Christians. (Cf.- I Pet. 5: 8)
 - c. Salvation depends upon our holding our faith fast until the end. (Cf.- Rev. 2:10b)
2. Heb. 10: 23-25 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful;²⁴ and let us consider how to motivate one another to love and good deeds,²⁵ not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.
- a. Part of the encouraging is to be done in the assembly of the church. (Not 5 acts & out)
 - b. Everything in the assembly is done for mutual edification. ... I Cor. 14: 26 (cf Vs 12)
3. Christians are also to pray for each other.
- a. James 5: 16 ... Pray that we will be healed of our spiritual sicknesses.
 - b. I John 5: 16 ... Pray that we will be forgiven of our sins.

C. Christians hold each other accountable. (a key to success in any endeavor)

1. Church discipline is not about punishment, but about loss prevention.
 - a. **I Thes. 5:14-** We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone.
 - b. **II Thes. 3: 14-15** If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame. **15** Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother. (love him)
2. The ability to admonish each other in a spirit of love is a mark of maturity.

Rom. 15: 14- And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another.
3. When admonition does not work, stronger action is implemented.
 - a. **Read ... II Tim 4: 1-4** .. Reprove, rebuke, exhort those who seek comfortable lessons.
 - b. **Tit. 3: 10-11** Reject a factious man after a first and second warning, ¹¹ knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned.
 - c. **I Cor. 5: 11-13** But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one. ¹² For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? ¹³ But those who are outside, God judges. Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.

* **The objective is clearly to restore the erring brother. II Cor. 2: 6-8**

III. The church is the place where Christians glorify God. (← keep pure because)

A. The objective of all God's people is to bring glory to Him.

1. Glorifying God is a form of worship. (**honoring, lifting up, praising**)
2. We live the lifestyle we live in order to bring glory to God.

B. Christ is glorified in the church. (Not glorified by good done by people of world)

1. The book of Ephesians strongly emphasizes that our Lord is glorified in & by the church.
 - a. **Eph. 1: 18-19a** *I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. (He is glorified by HIS servants.)*

- b. **Eph. 3: 20-21** Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, ²¹ to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever.

2. **Read ... Thes. 1: 9-12**

C. Every victory the church achieves brings glory to God in the spiritual realm.

- 1. **Eph. 6** ... Every battle His followers win in this realm, glorifies God in His realm.
 - a. The hearts of people is where spiritual battles are fought.
 - b. The church is a battle ground where Satan attacks God.
- 2. When a church lives by faith, God is lifted up high and holy.

CONCLUSION :

A. The church is vitally important to the Christian because :

- 1. It's the place where they are nurtured as they seek to become spiritually mature.
- 2. It's the place where they are kept safe from Satan and kept in conformity to Christ.
- 3. It's the place where they are able to bring glory to God and to His Christ.

B. The church is very special because it is the vestibule of Heaven.

- 1. It is a place where the citizens of Heaven are proven worthy. (**Learn to live in Heaven**)
- 2. It is the place where Christians learn to come out of themselves and love the brethren.
- 3. It is the place where Christians establish eternal fellowship with God and His children.

C. What is the church to me ? To YOU ?

- 1. Do you treasure it as God treasured it ?
- 2. It is the center of your plans as it was the center of God's plans ?
- 3. Do you have a relationship with the church that enables it to minister to you ?
 - a. To help you grow ever closer to God ?
 - b. To make sure you stay on the pathway of faith that leads to Heaven ?

INVITATION :

If you are not a member of God's church, we urge you to become one right now. (God puts all saved people in His church.)

If you do not have the relationship with or the involvement in you need in the church, commit now to change, to commit yourself to God and to His church.