



Course DC211: Nature of God's Church

And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. Acts 2:47

Intro: The Church is much greater than one first realizes—let us *LOVE THE CHURCH*. When the Christian begins to really examine the Church, he finds overwhelming reasons to truly love it. Everyone is aware that problems occur within churches, some even using it as an excuse for why they do not believe. Christians, however, may be tempted just to quickly dismiss all the problems in churches by saying that the problems are hypocrites in the churches plural (meaning local assemblies), but not with the One True Spiritual Church which is comprised of all of God's saved ones. Now, there is some truth to be found somewhere in all those words, *but it is not the whole story by any means*. For even in the True Spiritual Body of Christ (i.e., those who are truly saved and thus are not hypocrites) there are weak and strong brethren, babes and mature ones in Christ, carnal and spiritual believers. There are some real problems and things lacking in the Church, even though the Church is precious and truly saved. The Church is truly filled with imperfect people, that's not just a fact, it's a fact which allows for us to be included in it. One may ask, "How can I be expected to love the Church then when it has so many problems?" The answer is found in how precious the Church is to Christ and the relationship the Church has to Him, and the relationship the Church has *to everyone who is in Christ*, including us if we are among the saved. As you go through this lesson, may the Holy Spirit move your heart to love and minister to the Church of God which He bought with His own Blood.

I.) The Church is Precious and to be Greatly Loved

The Church is precious, for Christ gave Himself for the Church:

- Eph. 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.
- Eph 1:7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.

1 Pet. 1:18-19 ¹⁸ knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like silver or gold*, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

- 1 Pet. 2:24 who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness--by whose stripes you were healed.
- 2 Cor. 5:21 For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.
- 1 Pet. 3:18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit.
- Rev. 1:5 To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.

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- Rev. 5:9 You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation.
- Heb. 9:12 Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.
- 1 Tim. 2:5-6 ⁵ For *there is* one God and one Mediator between God and men, *the Man* Christ Jesus, ⁶ who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.
- Titus 2:14 who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself *His* own special people, zealous for good works.

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- Mark 10:45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.
- John 6:51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.
- John 10:15 As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.
- 2 Cor. 5:14-15 ¹⁴ For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; ¹⁵ and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.
- Gal. 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.
- Gal. 1:4 who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.

II.) The Church Greatly Loved by the Lord

How closely attached we are to the Lord Jesus! Think of it, Scripture (using the language of marriage and the account of Eve coming from Adam’s body [Adam exclaiming: “she is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh]) says of the Church **“For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones”** (Eph. 5:30). How great is our relationship to Christ! For just as Eve partook of the life and nature of Adam, so the Church partakes of the same life and nature of Jesus (1 John 5:12, 2 Pet. 1:4). Husbands and wives share great love, they are willing to leave father and mother and become joined to one another. And the love the Church has towards Christ causes her to cleave to Him, to take His name upon her, and to go with Him wherever He may lead. Of this love from Christians back to their Lord, Albert Barnes wrote:

So strong is it, that he is willing for it to forsake father, mother, and home; to leave his country, and to abandon his possessions; to go to distant lands and dwell among barbarians to make the Redeemer known; or to go to the cross or the stake from simple love to the Saviour. Account for it as people may, there has been manifested on earth nowhere else so strong an attachment as that which binds the Christian to the cross. It is stronger love than that which a man has for his own flesh and bones; for it makes him willing that his flesh should be consumed by fire, or his bones broken on the wheel rather than deny him. Can the infidel account for this strength of attachment on any other principle than that it has a divine origin?¹

¹ Albert Barnes, *Barnes’ Notes on the New Testament* (Bible Explorer Software, Limited Edition, Version 4 [original printed publication 1832], 2004), Eph. 5:30.

The Church's incredibly close relationship to Christ:

- Eph. 5:30 For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.
- Eph. 5:25-27 ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, ²⁶ that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷ that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.
- Eph.1:22-23 ²² And He put all *things* under His feet, and gave Him *to be* head over all *things* to the church, ²³ which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.
- Eph. 5:31-32 ³¹ "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." ³² This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.
- Rev. 19:7 Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.
- Rev. 21:9 "Come, I will show you the woman, the Lamb's wife."

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Some Figures Used to Reveal the Church:

Family:

- Eph. 3:14-15 ¹⁴ For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵ from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named. . .

Body (an abundance could be given):

- Eph. 1:22-23 ²² And He put all *things* under His feet, and gave Him *to be* head over all *things* to the church, ²³ which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Bride:

- Rev. 19:7 Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.

Flock:

- John 10:16 And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock *and* one shepherd.

House/Temple:

- 1 Peter 2:4-5 ⁴ Coming to Him *as to* a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God *and* precious, ⁵ you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

An intimate fellowship with one another:

- Eph. 4:16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.
- 1 Cor. 10:17 For we, *though* many, are one bread *and* one body; for we all partake of that one bread.

- Eph. 3:19-21 ¹⁹ to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. ²⁰ Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, ²¹ to Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.
- 1 Pet. 1:22 ²² Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart
- 2 Thess. 1:3 ² We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, ³ remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father

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III.) Believers Edifying the Body in Love

We are to endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is a wonderful unity that exists between all believers—the Holy Spirit is in them all. That oneness is heaven made, not man made. It is a unity of the Spirit, and therefore could never be a mere alliance for the sake of peace. Grave and heretical errors have occurred when people mistake compromise with, and toleration of evil in an attempt to mistakenly keep the unity of the Spirit. The unity of the Spirit is in holiness. The unity of the Spirit is not something we create, it already exists. We are to endeavor to keep it, to experience it. When we endeavor to be like Christ, when we endeavor to obey His commands, when we endeavor to love the Body of Christ, to build it up in love, etc.—then we are experiencing the unity of the Spirit.

Edifying the Body of Christ in Love:

- Eph. 4:1-6 ¹ I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, ² with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, ³ endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ *There is* one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ one God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all.
- Eph. 4:11-16 ¹¹ And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, ¹³ till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; ¹⁴ that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, ¹⁵ but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ--¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.
- Col 1:24 ²⁴ I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church
- Rom. 12:9-13 ⁹ *Let love be* without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. ¹⁰ *Be* kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; ¹¹ not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; ¹² rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; ¹³ distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.

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Through loving each other in the Church we are making Jesus known in the world:

- John 13:34-35 ³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."
- John 17:23 I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.
- Phil. 1:27-29 ²⁷ Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, ²⁸ and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God. ²⁹ For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake
- 2 Cor. 2:14-17 ¹⁴ Now thanks *be* to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. ¹⁵ For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. ¹⁶ To the one *we are* the aroma of death *leading* to death, and to the other the aroma of life *leading* to life. And who *is* sufficient for these things? ¹⁷ For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ.

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IV.) Membership into the One True Church is through Salvation Alone

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- 1 Cor. 1:2 To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called *to be* saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:
- 1 Cor. 10:32-33 Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God, ³³ just as I also please all *men* in all *things*, not seeking my own profit, but the *profit* of many, that they may be saved.

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- 1 Cor. 11:16 But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor *do* the churches of God.
- 1 Thess. 1:1 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 1 Thess. 2:14 For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they *did* from the Judeans
- 1 Cor. 11:22 What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise *you*.
- 2 Cor. 1:1 To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called *to be* saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:
- Gal. 1:13 For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and *tried to* destroy it.
- 1 Tim. 3:5, 15 for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God? . . . but if I am delayed, *I write* so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.
- Heb. 12:23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn *who are* registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect . . .

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Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity." 2 Timothy 2:19