

CHURCH, MISSION AND COVENANT PART 2

INTO: Today I want to talk about the church, the mission of the church and how a church covenant and covenant membership ties into this.

- As we do this I pray that you will be inspired and aspire to think more lofty and worthy thoughts of the church and the privilege of the Church, the glorious bride of Christ.
- To appreciate her more and esteem her higher than ever before.
- To get a sense of how Jesus sees her.
- Or how the Father sees His love gift to His Son.
- The work of the Spirit in sanctifying her and cleansing her that He might present her to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. (Eph. 5:27)
- So the Father is very particular, jealous and is sifting.....
- Now we talked last week briefly about the vulnerability of the church against unholy legal attaches, and the vulnerability of a church without formal membership.

1) What Is The Church?

Charles Bridges, in his book on the Christian ministry, says, "The church is the mirror that reflects the whole effulgence (shining radiance) of the Divine character. It is the grand scene in which the perfections of Jehovah are displayed to the universe. The revelations made to the church, the successive grand events in her history, and above all the manifestation of the glory of God in the Person of Jesus Christ, furnish even to the heavenly intelligences fresh subjects of adoring contemplation." (Eph. 3:10)

- The Church exists to display the glory of God because all things exist for His glory. Those of us who trust in and follow Jesus are caught up in something much bigger than ourselves. We have graciously been invited into God's redemptive purposes in the world.
- As the moon reflects the sun, so the church is to reflect the glory of God to a dark world.
- The Church is the gathering of the redeemed, the household of God (Ephesians 2:19), the bride of Christ (Revelation 21:2, 9), and the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-31).
- We all have gifts that differ according to the gracious provision of the Holy Spirit contrary to the beliefs of our culture, we need each other.
- The Church is God's great Building, of which Jesus is the Master Builder, and in the new birth we are not only placed into Christ, (Rom. 6:3) but also placed into His Church body, (1 Corinthians 12:13, 18).

2) THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

The mission of the church is the task given by God for the people of God to accomplish in the world.

- **To glorify God:** "In Christ we were also chosen ... in order that we ... might be for the praise of His glory" (**Ephesians 1:11-12**).
- **To Be a witness to those within and without the church.**
- His presence is manifested in such an environment, and authenticates our Christian witness in the eyes of the world. "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35).
- Eph. 4:1-3; amplified; I therefore, the prisoner for the Lord, appeal to *and* beg you to walk (lead a life) worthy of the [divine] calling to which you have been called [with behavior that is a credit to the summons to God's service, ² Living as becomes you] with complete lowliness of mind (humility) and meekness (unselfishness, gentleness, mildness), with patience, bearing with one another *and* making allowances because you love one another. ³ Be eager *and* strive earnestly to guard *and* keep the harmony *and* oneness of [and produced by] the Spirit in the binding power of peace.
- **To multiply:** Jesus lays out this role for His church in fulfilling this vision when he commissions his disciples in Matthew 28:18-20...All power is
- **To disciple the saints:** **Eph. 4:11-16**
- **To build up the saints.** The church is to encourage and comfort its individual members (**1 Thessalonians 5:11**; **2 Corinthians 13:11**).
- **To be an inn of healing** :Lk. 10:30-35
- Though creation now suffers the curse of Genesis 3, people are broken and live in a broken world, the gospel of Jesus Christ is the means by which sense, reason, reality, healing, and purpose can be realized.
- The Lord is greatly pleased to receive the corporate love and worship of His children who are joined together in unity and love toward one another (Eph. 4:1-4, 1 John 1:7).
- The Church universal is being used to write God's beautiful and dramatic story of redemption and reconciliation.
- In light of this reality, the opportunity to join a local church body (i.e., a particular group of believers in a particular locale) is much more than a commitment to consistent attendance or active involvement in community.

3) WHAT IS A COVENANT

- Our God is a God of covenant. **Num. 1:3,18, 19.**
- A covenant is generally defined as "a written agreement or promise usually under seal between two or more parties, especially for the performance of some action."
- In a literal sense, a covenant means a binding agreement, a legal contract. It is a seal between two or more parties.
- In a biblical sense, the word covenant derives from the same root word meaning "to cut." This means that in the culture of the Bible, covenant carried weight and was often cut, or sealed, in blood. A coming together.
- Within the Scriptures, we find a many examples of covenants.
The covenant of redemption, is the mutual agreement between the Father and Son, respecting the redemption of sinners by Christ.

- **The covenant of grace**, is that by which God engages to bestow salvation on man, upon the condition that man shall believe in Christ and yield obedience to the terms of the gospel.
- In church affairs, a solemn agreement between the attendees of a church, that they will walk together according to the precepts of the gospel, in brotherly affection and a common goal.
- Covenant membership means, "I now put myself under the care of the Elders and with the elders the church body, and I invite them to hold me accountable as a constituent member of this body."

FROM ALLIANCE DEFENDING FREEDOM

In order for a church to have the best claim to immunity against an alleged injury that resulted from a church belief, distinctive or discipline, the church must have a formal membership.

- For a church to defend itself is very difficult to determine if the church does not have a formal membership policy. The same would be true regarding church decisions based upon church beliefs and convictions. (who decides if all attendees are members.)
- Not every church has members in the traditional congregational approach to membership. Churches that do not have formal members must **be aware that they could potentially have a greater legal exposure and risk when they exercise church discipline or privileges.**
- Churches with a formal membership policy have a greater legal protection when they find it necessary to impose church discipline on their members. This policy should be added to their bylaws and explain the procedures for becoming a member, procedures for member discipline, and procedures for rescinding membership.

Let's take a look at our Bethel Fellowship Church covenant.

- Agreement to and practice of this document will be what our "Covenant Membership" will look like and be based upon.
- The out-working or out-living of this covenant is basically nothing new from what we have been striving after for years. The document is just articulating our desire and practice of Christian life together.