

Session 1

July 26, 2020

WE ARE JOINED TOGETHER

Ephesians 1:20-23; 2:8-10,19-22

The book of Ephesians is Paul's primary exposition of *ecclesiology*...the doctrine of the church. The first three chapters present the doctrinal teaching. The final three make practical application. The foundation of the book is laid in chapter 1. It consists of *the sweeping plan of God for the ages* (worked out "according to the good pleasure of his will"), and *the revealing of that plan* ("having made known unto us the mystery of his will") to His redeemed, the church.

In the focal texts, three elements of the church are presented.

Church headship (1:20-23). The church rightfully belongs to Christ. He died to save her (Eph. 5:25 et al.) and will return to claim her (1 Thess. 4:13 ff). In the meantime, He is the head of the church (see 5:23). These verses highlight the authority Christ has establishing Him as such. The pronoun "He" refers back to "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father," mentioned in verse 17. Hence, God the Father *raised* Christ from the dead, *seated* Him at His right hand (v. 20), *put* all things in subjection to Him, and *appointed* Him as head over everything, all for the church's sake (v. 22). Verse 23, then, describes the church as *His body*. Just as the physical head of a person directs the physical responses of his body, so Christ, as the spiritual head, directs the spiritual life of His body, the church. This is done by means of the Holy Spirit, reflected in Paul's poetic description as "the fullness of the One who fills all things in every way."

Church membership (2:8-10). Ephesians 2:8-9 captures the indisputable truth of salvation apart from works. Salvation is God's work, wrought entirely by grace. Our entrance into His body—the church—is through faith. I have always said that saved people make the very best church members! My former pastor, Dr. Adrian Rogers, once said, "You can be a member of *a* church without being saved. But you can't be a member of *His* church without being saved." The oft forgotten part of this text, however, is the verse that follows. Works are indeed a part of the Christian life. While works do not *contribute* to our salvation, they certainly *indicate* our salvation. The purpose of a church congregation is not simply to sit, soak, and sour...but to serve! So important are these good works, that God has prepared them in advance. The idea of *walking in them* (v. 10) indicates not a category of activities (like a list of chores) to accomplish, but rather a lifestyle of service. So, church membership consists of *saved people* who are also *serving people*.

Church fellowship (2:19-22). In a flurry of words, the apostle Paul pulls out all the stops to welcome all genuine believers (especially *gentile* believers) into the faith. We are not foreigners in His kingdom, but citizens; not strangers in His household, but part of the family (v. 19). In verse 20, Paul returns to the metaphor of a building. The church is *not* a building; but it is *like* a building. The foundation was set by Old Testament prophets and built upon by New Testament apostles. And unlike the physical temple that could not contain Him (see Is. 66:1; 2 Sam. 7:5-7), the living church is a sanctuary for Him (v. 21), and a place for His Spirit to dwell (v. 22). For this reason, Paul wrote to the congregation at Corinth, "Don't you know that you are God's sanctuary and that the Spirit of God lives in you?" (1 Cor. 3:16). Unlike 1 Corinthians 6:19 (which refers to individual believers) this verse refers to the church, the body of Christ.