

Morning Sermon September 1, 2019

“Why Church Membership?” Ephesians 5:28-32

³⁰ For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.
Ephesians 5:30

Ephesians 5 puts church membership in the context of the covenant of marriage, and in the context of being married, Biblically one-flesh with Jesus Christ!

I. *Because if we are true Christians, we are already members, through a covenant relationship, of Christ’s body –*

This relationship grows out of the gift of God’s grace by which we: A. Know Him and B. Return to Him

We are (or become) His people and He is our God -

⁷ Then I will give them a heart to know Me, that I *am* the LORD; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, for they shall return to Me with their whole heart. Jeremiah 24:7

1. *This relationship is specifically identified in Scripture as a covenant relationship –*

³³ But this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Jeremiah 31:33

When we speak of “covenant” we are speaking of “vows” / “promises” – Marriage is a covenant because two people are taking “vows” and making promises to each other.

God made early covenants with:

A. *Noah and the entire world –*

¹³ I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth. Genesis 9:13

B. *Abraham which was the “I will be your God / you will be my people covenant –*

⁷ And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. Genesis 17:7

We see this theme repeated throughout Scripture, especially as it nears its fulfilment in Jesus Christ -

³⁸ They shall be My people, and I will be their God; Jeremiah 32:38

²⁰ that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God. Ezekiel 11:20

¹¹ that the house of Israel may no longer stray from Me, nor be profaned anymore with all their transgressions, but that they may be My people and I may be their God,” says the Lord GOD.’ ” Ezekiel 14:11

²³ They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions; but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. Then they shall be My people, and I will be their God. Ezekiel 37:23

²⁷ My tabernacle also shall be with them; indeed I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Ezekiel 37:27

⁸ I will bring them *back*, And they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. They shall be My people And I will be their God, In truth and righteousness.’ Zechariah 8:8

¹⁶ And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “*I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.*” 2 Corinthians 6:16

¹⁰ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people Hebrews 8:10

¹⁹ For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us—by me, Silvanus, and Timothy—was not Yes and No, but in Him was Yes. ²⁰ For all the promises of God in Him *are* Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us. 2 Corinthians 1:19-20

2. *This covenant reaches its culmination with Christ's marriage to His blood bought bride the church –*

21 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also, there was no more sea. ² Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God. ⁴ And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." Revelation 21:1-4

3. *This covenant shows itself in God's grace to us, which not only forgives sin, but gives us power to overcome it –*

⁷ He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. ⁸ But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." Revelation 21:7-8

II. Because as true Christians, we are already in a Covenant membership relationship with one another -

¹⁹ Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, ²² in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. Ephesians 2:19-22

1. *Requiring at the minimum regular church attendance –*

²⁴ And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, ²⁵ not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the manner of some, but exhorting *one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

²⁶ For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. ²⁸ Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. ²⁹ Of how much worse

punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? ³⁰ For we know Him who said, "*Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,*" says the Lord. And again, "*The LORD will judge His people.*" ³¹ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Hebrews 10:24-31

2. *Just as we need God, we also need each other –*

¹² But Moses' hands *became* heavy; so, they took a stone and put *it* under him, and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. Exodus 17:12

A. *This is where Christian friendship comes in –*

¹³ but exhort one another daily, while it is called "*Today,*" lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Hebrews 3:13

B. *Being members of Christ means we are also members in connection with one another –*

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. 1 Corinthians 12:27 See 1 Corinthians 12:12 through the end of the chapter and beyond...

¹² For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also *is* Christ. ¹³ For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. ¹⁴ For in fact the body is not one member but many.

¹⁵ If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? ¹⁷ If the whole body *were* an eye, where *would be* the hearing? If the whole *were* hearing, where *would be* the smelling? ¹⁸ But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. ¹⁹ And if they *were* all one member, where *would be* the body *be*?

²⁰ But now indeed *there are* many members, yet one body. ²¹ And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." ²² No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. ²³ And those *members* of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unrepresentable *parts* have greater

modesty, ²⁴ but our presentable *parts* have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that *part* which lacks it, ²⁵ that there should be no schism in the body, but *that* the members should have the same care for one another. ²⁶ And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with *it*; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with *it*.

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. ²⁸ And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. ²⁹ Are all apostles? *Are* all prophets? *Are* all teachers? *Are* all workers of miracles? ³⁰ Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? ³¹ But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way. 1 Corinthians 12:12-31

III. Because as True Christians, members of Christ's body, it is best to live out membership with a local church body, including vows / promises –

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 13:34-35**

1. *Do you acknowledge yourself to be a sinner in the sight of God, justly deserving his displeasure, and without hope, except through his sovereign mercy?*

This first vow speaks to who we are in regard to our needs, and in relation to God's amazing grace. Jesus, in His Sermon on the Mount started with – ³ “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Matthew 5:3-4

Meaning true happiness starts with realizing your spiritually bankrupt state and CRYING / mourning over sin that would destroy you! There is no true Christian who does not first realize that he or she is a SINNER –

³² **I have not come to call *the* righteous, but sinners, to repentance.” Luke 5:32**

One of the reasons for the popularity of John Newton's song, Amazing Grace, is that it tells us the truth about our sinful condition!

2. *Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and Savior of sinners, and do you receive and trust Him alone for salvation as He is offered in the gospel?*

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. ¹⁷ For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. John 3:16-17

Yes, we are sinners, but Jesus came into this world to die for and save sinners! Do you believe this?

3. *Do you now resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that you will endeavor to live as becomes a follower of Christ?*

However, Jesus died, not only to save us from Hell. But even more importantly, to save us from sin -

²¹ And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.” Matthew 1:21

Though we come to Christ as sinners, we are not supposed to stay that way, by His grace and the power of His Spirit we are saved from the PENALTY (Hell) the POWER (Temptation Now) and even the PRESENCE of sin when we get to Heaven. We are to endeavor through prayer, Bible reading, church attendance and obedience to God's commands to live a life that would please God!

4. *Do you promise to support the church in its worship and work to the best of your ability?*

How do we support the church?

- A. *Financially, non-members are not required*
- B. *With regular attendance*
- C. *By serving according to God's gift and grace –*

⁵ so we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. ⁶ Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, *let us use them*: if prophecy, *let us prophesy* in proportion to our faith; ⁷ or ministry, *let us use it* in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; ⁸ he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. Romans 12:5-8

- 5. *Do you submit yourself to the government and discipline of the church, and promise to strive for its purity and peace?*

Do you realize you vowed obedience in Christ to the leaders of this church?

Do you realize that if you do something wrong, especially if it is scandalously wrong, you have vowed to submit to the discipline of the church?

Do you realize we have a Book of Church Order? Do you understand you are submitting to elders (plural) and not any individual elder?

Do you realize this is all designed and organized to help you on your way to Heaven, as God disciplines His children –

⁷ If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? ⁸ But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. ⁹ Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid *them* respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? ¹⁰ For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed *best* to them, but He for *our* profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. ¹¹ Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Hebrews 12:7-11

- 6. *About the membership vows in general, I want you to notice they do not go into great detail about Christian doctrine –*

¹⁶ **All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,** ¹⁷ **that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16-17**

You may ask why?

- A. *Because in the Presbyterian Church in America, we do not count ourselves the only true church. Other denominations may differ with us on issues like Baptism and still be true Christians.*
- B. *We do not require of new-born Christians a full knowledge of God's Word, equal to that of a Pastor or elder –*

² **as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, 1 Peter 2:2**

- C. *However, because we strive to be Biblical in our teachings and also open about what we believe, in contrast to another part of Christ's body, we have expressions of what our church believes / how it interprets Scripture in what are called the Westminster Standards: The Westminster Confession of Faith; and the Shorter and Larger Catechism.*
 - *Membership in a P.C.A. church does not require a full understanding or agreement with these documents*
 - *However, leadership in the P.C.A. are required to understand and agree with these.*

The fact that the P.C.A. has a Book of Church Order and refers to other documents, other than the Bible bothers some people. We do not count these documents equal to Scripture!

However, we are the organized, rather than the unorganized church!

This helps us keep the command of 1 Corinthians 14:40 –

⁴⁰ **Let all things be done decently and in order. 1 Corinthians 14:40**

Arnold Brevick