

THE CHURCH AND ITS MUSIC

Ephesians 5:8-21

— **Intro:** (Read the text.)

Of course the verse that I am interested in tonight is verse 19. But I read from verse 8 to show the emphasis that the Apostle Paul was making as he approached what he had to say about music. And you will notice in this passage that Paul was indicating that we are not to be like the world. We have a different kind of life to live. We are to “walk as children of light” according to verse 8. Verse 10 shows that we are to be concerned primarily with what is pleasing to the Lord. We are to “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” according to verse 11. Last Sunday night I spoke about our fellowship, and one of the passages I read to you was at the end of 2 Corinthians 6 which says that light and darkness can have no fellowship together. We want anyone to come to our services, but our purpose is not to put on a meeting that will be attractive to them. We are to be concerned about pleasing the Lord. And the word “acceptable” in verse 10 could be translated, *very acceptable, most pleasing*. In other words we are not to try to get as close to the world’s ways as we can, but to get as far removed from the world’s ways as it is possible for us to get. What we want to do is to “reprove” any sinner who comes into our meetings. “Reprove” is the Greek verb meaning *to convict*. Verse 13 makes it clear that it is the light which causes people to see the error of their ways, and to get them to turn in another direction. We want to see them brought under conviction so that they will turn to Christ.

Verse 14 is probably a reference to 1 Cor. 15:34 which tells us,

Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame

And the emphasis in that verse was the church’s ministry to the world. In our doctrine, in our way of life, and in the very nature of what we do in our services, we must be concerned about our testimony to people from the world who from time to time come into our services. But we don’t change a thing to make them feel comfortable. We carry on just like there were only believers present.

— And then in verses 15 through 17 we see that any other way is in God’s sight foolishness. Paul’s word for “fools” speaks of a persons who do not

understand the wisdom of God.

— You have all heard it said that “redeeming the time” means *buying up the opportunity*. What is the opportunity here that Paul had in mind? It is the opportunity to reach a person for Christ who has come into the meeting of the church unsaved.

In the light of what I have been saying, Paul suggests inverse 18 that if we are thinking about going the world’s way in any respect, we might as well serve people a glass of wine. I don’t know if that has occurred to any who have designed their meetings to appeal to the unsaved, but let us not be too surprised if we hear that this is being done. I understand that in some churches they are dancing in their services, and it is only a step from that to serving beer or wine or liquor.

But now in verse 19 we come to the subject of music.

— Music goes back in the Bible at least to the days of Lamech, who was five generations from Cain. He had two sons by his wife Adah whose names were Jabal and Jubal. And Genesis 4:21 b tells us this about Jubal: “He was the father of all such as handle the harp and the organ,” or pipe.

People have always been singing. And music is one way that people have had of expressing themselves. The Lord’s people have always been a singing people. When Moses led the children of Israel across the Red Sea, they celebrated the victory that God gave them over the Egyptians *by singing*. And it was a great psalm of praise to God for His blessing. You will find it in Exodus 15 – the first psalm in the Bible.

What do Christians sing? Well, Paul told them to sing “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.” And verse 19 in our text tells us, not that they were singing what those unsaved people were used to singing. They were not even singing to them. Paul said they were to be “speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,” but also that it was to be “singing, and making melody in your heart to the Lord”!

— So they were ministering to each other, but at the same time they were singing “to the Lord.” Singing is to be a ministry, just in the same way that the teaching of the Word is a ministry. *There is absolutely no idea in this passage in Ephesians that they were to sing songs that the unsaved*

might be familiar with, as far as the type of music was concerned. Long before this David wrote in Psalm 40 some words which fit right in with the picture we have here in Ephesians 5. Those of you who are memorizing our verses for this year already know what I am talking about. This is what Psalm 40:3 says:

And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: **many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.**

Even in those days people were being saved when they saw and heard what the people of God were singing.

I have told many of you about how one of Lucille's aunts was saved. In fact, Lucille was named after her. She was her Aunt Lucille. She had been raised a Catholic, but somehow she married a man who was a Baptist. He wanted her to go to church with him, and she wanted to go. So she asked her priest for permission. He told her she could go, but she was not to listen to the sermon. She was to plan a meal, a dress, or something like that, but not listen to the sermon. *But he didn't tell her not to listen to the singing.* She was a musical person, and so she listened to the singing, and it was the singing that ultimately brought her to the Word. I met Aunt Lucille just shortly before she died when she was bedridden with cancer, and she was dying after having lived many years as a true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

You can search your Bible through and through, Old Testament and New Testament, and never find that the people of God in the past who were really walking with the Lord and who were concerned about reaching others for Christ, ever adapted their meetings to what is going on in the world which churches are doing today. They sang the Psalms. They sang hymns – music directed especially to the worship of God. They sang “spiritual songs.” These are songs that reflect the teaching of the Word, songs which contain the message of the Holy Spirit. There was nothing in the meeting of the early church that would remind people of the world, and the music of the world.

Another thing that was different in those days in the early church. The leaders were concerned about knowing the truth about the Holy Spirit. That doctrine has been corrupted today as much as any other doctrine, and the men who have corrupted it are drawing big crowds. But crowds are not the test. It is the Word of God that is our standard. And any departure from the Word is, as Paul suggested, foolishness.

Now let me go on to other points which we have already covered.

I. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH?

And when I say that I mean what are we supposed to be doing in our churches? We have the answer right here in Ephesians. Please turn to Eph. 4, verse 11.

Sometimes people who don't know the Lord come to our services, and we are thankful to have them. But our main purpose in the meetings of the church is not to attract sinners. It is to build up the saints. And it is when they see what we are doing, teaching the Word, worshiping the Lord through the singing of hymns, praying, these are often used by God to touch their hearts and bring them to Christ. But today churches are on such a stretch to bring in the unsaved, and appealing to them, that often the unsaved work their way into the ministry of the church, and then that church is headed for big trouble.

Our services are designed to build up the people of God, and we do that because that is what the Bible indicates that we should do. From our services we go out into the world, and there through godly living and a bold witness, we seek to bring the Gospel to everyone we can. But the church is not primarily to win people to Christ. If people are saved, we are thankful, but let us not forget our calling.

A second question:

II. WHO IS TO BE IN CHARGE OF THE SERVICES OF THE CHURCH?

The elders are in charge, and the qualifications for elders is very clear in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. And Paul specifically said that one who is a novice is not ready to be an elder.

But there are women leading in so-called worship times who have beautiful voices, and people like to hear them sing, but they are not elders, nor will they ever be elders if a church is concerned about God's will for the church. And how many of them who sing, or lead singing, have been chosen because it is known that they are saved, that they are mature, and sing only that which is distinctly music that is based upon the Word of God?

Emotionalism has taken the place of Scripture. Many churches are more concerned about pleasing people, about entertaining people, than they are about edifying people. But the church is for the edification of the saints.

- And it surely must be abominable in the sight of the Lord for churches to sound like, and look like, places where the world goes for their entertainment. How many hundreds of thousands of dollars have been spent on drums so that churches can hear songs and sing songs that have a beat to them?

We have designed our services to do what we believe the Lord wants us to do, singing Psalms, singing hymns that are directed toward God and about God, and spiritual songs which are songs taken and reflecting the teaching of the Word of God.

Concl: I believe that our elders and deacons are smart enough to put on the kind of services that would fill this auditorium in a very short time. But that is not our calling. We read in the book of Acts that the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. Cf. Acts 2:47. It is our responsibility to teach the Word, to preach the Gospel. It is the Lord Who uses His Word as He is pleased to use it. So let us come together to hear the Word, to worship the Lord, to pray together, and then do as they did in the early church when they went everywhere preaching the Gospel, telling people about the Lord Jesus Christ Who came into this world to give His life a ransom for many. We tell them that they must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ if they are to be saved.

IS BAPTISM IMPORTANT?

Acts 8:26-40

— **Intro:** Most of this chapter deals with the ministry of Philip. Our Lord had an apostle by the name of Philip, but it is generally thought that this was Philip, the deacon, who is mentioned in Acts 6 right after Stephen. The record of Stephen's martyrdom is in chapter 7, and it is generally thought that Philip probably succeeded Stephen as the head of the deacons. But here we see Philip as he is called in Acts 21:8, "Philip the evangelist." At that time he was living in Caesarea.

As I explained in a previous message, evangelists in those days were not what we think of when we speak of evangelists today. In those days they were like pioneer missionaries, carrying the Gospel where it had not gone before. This was the great burden that was upon the heart of the Apostle Paul, as he said in Romans 15:20-22:

20 Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation:

21 But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand.

— 22 For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you.

And it appears that this was to some extent the burden that was upon the heart of Philip. It shows that although a man may have a certain ministry in a church, like Philip had in the church at Jerusalem, that does not necessarily mean that it will be his ministry for life. The Lord had evidently done a special work in Philip's heart, and he was given a burden to preach the Gospel, like Paul, to those who had never heard.

We find him first here in chapter 8 in a ministry in the city of Samaria. The Lord blessed his ministry, and many people were saved. Look at Acts 8:12. Peter and John came down to assist him when they heard that people in Samaria were receiving the Gospel and being baptized.

From there the Lord had another work for Philip to do, and we begin to read about that ministry in verse 26 of Acts 8. (Read the whole text down to the end of the chapter.)

— Verse 37 was not in the early MSS, but it appeared in one of the later ones. So it is very likely that Luke did not put it there. But even if it is not

authentic, it does not change the meaning of the passage. It is obvious that Philip would not have baptized the Ethiopian eunuch if he had not been sure that the eunuch had really trusted the Lord as his Savior.

It seems that since the eunuch was returning from Jerusalem, and had gone there to worship, according to verse 27, that he, a Gentile, had become a proselyte of the Jews. He had turned to Judaism. But in his reading of the OT he had come across Isaiah 53, and wanted to know who the prophet was writing about, himself or some other (see v. 34). And that was a good question. It is very clear that the Spirit of God was already at work in the eunuch's heart.

So when Philip began at that Scripture and preached Jesus to him, the eunuch believed and was saved.

As they went on they came to some water, either a river or a lake, and the eunuch asked Philip if there were any reason why he should not be baptized. Philip agreed to baptize him. (Read the description in verses 38 and 39.) These verses have much to do on the mode of baptism which Philip used.

Now I have given my message the subject, "Is Baptism Important?" First, let me answer that question as far as the eunuch was concerned.

I. WAS BAPTISM IMPORTANT TO THIS ETHIOPIAN EU-NUCH?

The answer is that it was very important. He felt that being baptized was the next thing that he should do.

Let me ask a second question.

II. WAS IT IMPORTANT TO PHILIP?

We have to say "yes" to that question also. Philip would have wanted to guide him in his first steps as a Christian. It may have been that this is what they discussed as they rode along together in the eunuch's chariot. Or it may have been that the eunuch had some contact with Christians while he was in Jerusalem. We don't really know how he heard about baptism. But Philip would not have done this if he had not believed it was

important, and that the eunuch was ready to be baptized. And so we have to say that it was important to Philip, too.

— But now let me ask a third question.

III. WHY WAS IT IMPORTANT TO PHILIP?

We must remember that the deacons were serving under the apostles. The apostles were their teachers. And we can say that from the first message that the apostles preached after the Lord's ascension, Peter mentioned baptism. When did he do it? Let me read to you from Acts 2:36 the last words of Peter's message, and what happened after that.

(Read Acts 2:36-42.)

From this we have to say that baptism was important to Philip because it was important to Peter. Peter preached the Gospel, and he preached water baptism along with it. So we can say that Philip baptized because baptism was important to the apostles.

— But now let us trace all of this back even farther, and I want to ask another question.

IV. WHY WAS BAPTISM IMPORTANT TO THE APOSTLES?

To answer that question let me take you to Matthew 28. There we need to read the last five verses of that chapter, the words of our Lord by which Matthew concluded the writing of his Gospel. This is what we learn from those verses:

16 Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.

17 And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted.

18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen (Matt. 28:16-20).

So the answer to the question, Why was baptism important to the Apostles, we must say, “Because it was what the Lord Jesus Christ told them to do.” They were to carry the Gospel to every creature (as Mark’s account gives it), “to all nations,” as we have it in Matthew’s Gospel, and it is implied that those who believe it were to be baptized.

But let me continue with some questions.

V. WAS BELIEVERS TO BE BAPTIZED SO THAT THEIR SALVATION WOULD BE COMPLETE?

In other words, in order to be saved, do people have to trust in Christ plus be baptized? Many interpret Acts 2:38 in that way. But what would that do to the doctrine of salvation. It would make it mostly a work of Christ, but part a work of the believer. But what do the Scriptures teach us about salvation. Cf. Eph. 2:8-10. Also Titus 3:4-8.

And if salvation included baptism, would you expect the Apostle Paul to say what he did in 1 Cor. 1:10-17. (Read.) Please note in verse 17 that Paul separated the Gospel from baptism.

In addition, we need to ask about the thief who repented as he was being crucified at the time our Lord was crucified. He was not baptized, and yet the Lord said, “Today thou shalt be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43). Some who believe that baptism is necessary for salvation say that he would have been baptized if he had the opportunity. Perhaps he would, but he didn’t have that opportunity? Well, then, they say that the Lord made an exception with him. But can there be exceptions where salvation is concerned.

There are many, many Scriptures which deal with salvation which have nothing to say about baptism. If baptism were essential before a person could be saved, then baptism would have to be mentioned along with faith every time.

Let me ask a sixth question.

VI. DOES BAPTISM MAKE OUR SALVATION MORE SECURE THAN WE WOULD BE IF WE WERE NOT BAPTIZED?

Once a person is saved, he is saved eternally. There is no other kind of salvation taught in Scripture. The teaching that you can be saved and then lost was not the teaching of the Lord, nor of the Apostle Paul, nor of Peter, nor of the Apostle John. Once we are truly saved, we are saved forever. People can make a false profession of faith, and not be saved, but true salvation is forever. I love those words in Ecc. 3:14:

I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him.

Now for a final question.

VII. WHAT, THEN, IS THE MEANING AND IMPORTANCE OF BAPTISM?

Let us go back to our text, first of all, to see *how* Philip baptized the eunuch. Let us read Acts 8:38 and 39. (Read.)

Philip baptized the eunuch by immersing him in water. This was a symbolic act which pictured what was necessary for any of us to be saved. We died and were buried with Him, pictured by being put under the water. But we were also raised with Him, pictured when we are raised up out of the water. It means we died to the life we were living, and would have continued to live if the Lord had not saved us, and then raised up to live a new kind of life, a life of holiness, a life that is pleasing to God.

Furthermore baptism was one of the first ways that Christians gave their testimony of their faith in Christ. The eunuch who was a high government official under Candace the queen, would not have been traveling alone. There would have been a whole entourage of people with him, and he wanted to declare to them that he was now a believer in Christ.

But there is another point in baptism that is rarely mentioned. Do you remember what the Lord said about baptism in those verses we read a little while ago from Matthew 28. With regard to baptism He said, "Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." This statement is full of meaning.

It meant that the person being baptized was claiming salvation on the authority of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Further it meant that they were claiming salvation which was the work of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Father did the choosing, and sent His Son to redeem His chosen ones. Christ came to give His life in substitution for those who would be saved. And it is the Holy Spirit Who by His convicting power has shown us our need, and shown us that Christ has met our need, and He brings us to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And it also means that the person being baptized is confessing his or her faith in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Three Persons are one in nature, and one in purpose.

So in baptism we declare our faith in God and Christ and the Holy Spirit, and show by what is done that we are truly saved. This is why we speak of *believer's baptism*. Only those who know the Lord as Savior can be truly baptized, but all who are saved should be baptized. And it is important that family members and friends see the baptism. In addition, it is important that this be done under the authority of a New Testament church.

Concl: The church has two ordinances, and only two. Both are symbolic.

As most of you know, they are baptism and the Lord's Supper. We are baptized only once because we are saved only once. But we observe the Lord's Supper repeatedly because we are to be constantly feeding upon Christ as our Savior, walking in fellowship with Him, remembering that it is only through His broken body and His shed blood that we have salvation.

And so both are only for believers. Neither has saving value, but both are intended to be a blessing to the people of God, and to glorify God for the saving gift of His Son. And both are designed so that people who don't know the Lord may be inclined to ask us why we do what we do, or as Peter said, asking a reason for the hope that is in us. When we get to heaven, I feel sure that we will find many there who have been brought under their first conviction of sin, either seeing a Christian baptized, or in seeing the Lord's people gathered at the Lord's Table. We don't do either to put ourselves on display, but to honor the Lord and to keep the truth of our salvation before the eyes of others who need the Savior. And the church will be doing this until the Lord comes again.

Yes, for all of these reasons, *baptism is very, very important.*

THE MEETING OF THE CHURCH

Hebrews 10:19-25

Intro: No one can read the New Testament with any degree of understanding, without noticing the importance of the local church, or of local churches generally. The letters of the apostles were written to be read in churches (with the exception of Paul's letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. More often than not, when the apostles wrote, they addressed the people in the plural. People first heard the epistles as they were read in church meetings. As soon as people began to be saved in any area, churches were established, and leaders were appointed to lead the people in teaching, in worship, fellowship, and evangelism. It was the church which was usually the object of persecution. Before the Apostle Paul was saved, we are told in Acts 8:3 that "he made havoc of the church" at Jerusalem. In his letter to the Galatian churches he mentioned that they all had heard about his manner of life before he was saved because, as he wrote to them, "how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it" (Gal. 1:13). The Jews feared the impact of the church upon the people in those days, and just as they had aimed all of their opposition at the Lord while He was here on earth, after he had gone it was the church that suffered. To be sure individual believers like Stephen were singled out and martyred, but it was because they were a part of that body of believers known as "the church." The words "church" and "churches" are found repeatedly throughout the book of Acts and in the epistles. The book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ was written to "the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea" (Rev. 1:11). And the letter from the Lord Jesus Christ in Revelation 2 and 3 were each address to one of those churches. And you will remember that the epistles to Corinth and to the Galatians were written to the churches in those places, and in the other epistles Paul spoke of the saints who were in the places to which he wrote, obviously meaning the churches.

When you start to notice this, you see it all through the book of Acts on to the end of the New Testament. The Apostle John in some of his final words in the book of the Revelation gave these words from the Lord Jesus:

I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright

and morning star (Rev. 22:16).

— The evidence is overwhelming that the focal point of the work of the Lord in every place was “the church,” not the building in which the people met whether it was a home, or later a church building, but the people who met together in those places for their own edification and for a testimony in the communities where they lived.

Today, as I told my class this morning, there are organizations outside of the church which are telling the church what to do. That is not the way it was in the early days of the church. Many Christian leaders today have little or nothing to do with the church personally, but they spent their time setting up programs for the church to follow. And this is one big reason why the work of the Lord is in such a sad state today. And it is only as we get back to God’s plan, churches under the leadership of godly men, meeting together for the glory of God and the teaching of the Word of God, that we will really be able to see the blessing of God upon His people as it was in the early days of the church. You will notice how one parachurch group after another comes along, and usually pastors get excited about first one and then another, and some spend their lives getting involved in following these outside groups rather than taking care of the ministry which the Lord has given them.

By the way, the word “para-church” is a word that has been coined to describe these outside organizations. It means *beside the church*, or *along side of the church*. But they are not *in the church*. I am not trying to start a movement against these organizations, but simply to point out that the heart of God’s work in those early days, and many, many times since then, was and has been when it was the church that took the lead.

Sadly, it is getting harder and harder to find churches today devoted to the preaching and teaching of the Word of God, where the primary objective of the leadership in the churches is the edification of the people of God. When believers are growing and walking in fellowship with each other, then the church gets concerned about people in the world who are without Christ, and the result is that people outside of the church are saved, and then they come into the church.

— My text tonight is found in Hebrews 10, verses 19 through 25. I think I can say truthfully that expositors generally believe that it was written to

the church in Jerusalem. It speaks of the high priestly ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, in Hebrews our Lord is presented both as the High Priest and the Sacrifice.

As far as the epistle itself is concerned, there is also general agreement that the doctrinal section of the book ends with chapter 10, verse 18, so that the practical section begins with the text I have chosen for our meeting tonight.

You will notice looking down through the text that verse 22 begins with the Lord, "Let us." And the same is true of verses 23 and 24. And finally in verse 25 we have a strong exhortation concerning what I have called, "The Meeting of the Church."

Originally the church in Jerusalem seemed to meet daily, but as time went on the first day of the week was set aside by believers as the day set apart for the meeting of the local church. And they did this to commemorate the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. It disturbs me that today we have churches meeting on Friday night and Saturday night as well as on Sunday, but the people can choose to go when they want to. Friday and Saturday are for those people who want to have as much of the weekend to do what they want to do. And it seems to me that this means that in many places churches are getting away from that glorious truth without which there would be no church. And I am talking about the resurrection of our Lord.

We are told in Acts 20, verse 7, what the believers did when Paul was in Troas. This is what that verse says:

7 And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.

And in 1 Cor. 16:1 and 2 we have these verses which speak of the first day of the week:

1 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye.

2 Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

The Jews under the Law were required to keep the seventh day, which is the Sabbath. In the church no such command was given as to the day

when they would meet, but the first day of the week became the day when the people of God gathered together to worship the Lord. They did it because they wanted to, and because they felt the need to be together. The Sabbath had to do with the old covenant of the law; the first day of the week commemorates, as I have said, the resurrection of our Lord.

But our text seems to indicate that as time went on, some were becoming careless about meeting together with other believers in the local church. And evidently this was going on right in the heart of the place where the Lord Himself had ministered.

Now as we look at our text, notice that the writer (probably the Apostle Paul), approached this subject on the basis of:

I. WHAT WE AS THE LORD'S PEOPLE HAVE (Heb. 10:19-21).

First,

A. We have “boldness to enter into the holiest” (vv. 19, 20).

We have a special privilege that the people of God did not have in OT times. They were excluded from the Holy of holies, except for the high priest who could enter once every year.

Second,

B. We have “an high priest over the house of God” (v. 21).

Please turn back to Hebrews 3 so we can understand about “the house of God.” (Read Heb. 3:1-3.)

God no longer dwells in a Tabernacle, or a Temple. He dwells in His people, and when we are gathered together, He is there, and there should be evidence that He is there, depending upon the spiritual condition of His people.

One of the richest of studies in the NT is the study of what we have in Christ. Every believer is spiritually rich, but I am afraid that many do not know what their riches are – and many who profess faith in Christ, don't care!

Following these wonderful words about what we have, then the apostle who wrote this book, said three things that we are to do. “Let us . . . Let us . . . Let us . . .”

Notice what they are.

II. THREE THINGS THAT ARE TO BE DONE IN “THE MEETING OF THE CHURCH” (Heb. 10:22-24).

First,

A. We are to “draw near . . .” (v. 22).

The connection between verses 21 and 22 seems to indicate that we are to draw near to our High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ. We come in the “full assurance of faith,” but we also come spiritually clean.

So there needs to be preparation for our coming to the Lord.

B. We are to hold fast the profession of our faith (v. 23).

This means that there must always be the steadfast adherence to the truth we believe, that which is revealed to us in the Word of God. There must not be any departure from the truth. And we hold to it because it has been given to us by a faithful God!

C. We are to be mindful of each other, and to provoke each other unto love and good works (v. 24).

We are there to encourage each other to love and good works. This is true fellowship. No Christian can go it alone. The Lord saves us one by one, but then we are immediately baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ, and made to realize that we not only depend upon the Lord, but we have been brought into a fellowship which we will always desperately need.

(Comment on John MacArthur’s message on the Church in which he deals with fellowship, and what he learned about Dietrich Bonhoeffer from his book, *Life Together*. Bonhoeffer was executed by the Nazis after being moved from one prison to another until no one knew where he

was. But what he missed more than anything else was “the meeting of the church.”)

But now all of these wonderfully important exhortations are underlined and emphasized by the last verse of our text: verse 25.

III. BELIEVERS WERE NEVER TO DEPART FROM “THE MEETING OF THE CHURCH” (Heb. 10:25).

But the exodus from the church meeting had already started. And the apostle indicated clearly that when believers begin to stay away, the quality of their fellowship with the Lord begins to decline as well.

In fact, instead of seeking less, we need to be seeking more. Leaders in the church, instead of being satisfied with the ground we have gained, we need to seek more.

And the writer of this epistle says that they closer we get to that day when the Lord will come, the more we are going to need each other and the fellowship that we enjoy with one another and with our Great High Priest.

Why will we need it more? Because of what is going on today in the world. We are in “perilous times.” And we should not be surprised if once again the church becomes the object of the world’s hatred and persecution. The unsaved Jews in those early days not only hated those who believed in Christ, but they hated their meetings because it was in their meetings that the believers were strengthened to continue living for the Lord in the hostile world around them.

Concl: I trust that the Lord will minister to all of us through these words in Hebrews 10 so that each one of us will realize how wonderful it is that we have each other, and that we can meet together to learn of the Lord, and then spiritually refreshed to go about our daily lives to live that by God’s grace others may see Christ in us.

CHRIST, THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH

Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:15-16; 5:22-24

Intro: In our study of the Church we began with the first reference which our Lord made to it during His ministry. It is found in the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 16. The full text goes from verses 13 through verse 20, but the statement that I am referring to now is in verse 18. The particular statement that the Lord made is this: “I will build My church.”

Two things are important about those words. First, the Lord said that it would be “My church.” And the second is that He would build it. “I will build My church.”

He, of course, was speaking of the church, not in the local sense, but as we learn later, as *the body of Christ*. That is what the Lord is building: His church. But what is true of the whole body, must also be the case with all true local churches, such as Trinity Bible Church.

Trinity Bible Church is our church only in the sense that we are a part of it, and it is with each other that we gather together to worship the Lord and to learn of Him. But in reality we are “His Church” – just a part of the larger body of Christ, but to be sure we are “His Church.” And He is our Builder! He builds each of us up as living stones in this building, but He also adds others to His church from time to time as it pleases Him. And what the Lord is doing here with us, He is doing with all true believers around the world.

So it should not be surprising to us when in the epistles the Lord Jesus Christ is called, “the Head of the Church.”

There are only two epistles in the NT where we find this truth: the epistles of Paul to the Ephesians and to the Colossians. In Ephesians this word referring to Christ as the Head of His church are found in 1:22, 4:15, and 5:22. In Paul’s letter to the church at Colosse, you will find this word in 1:18, 2:10, and 2:19. But Col. 2:10 speaks of our Lord’s headship in another way. There He is called “the head of all principality and power.” But that does not apply to my message tonight.

Also 1 Cor. 11:3

So we really have just five verses which speak of our Lord as the Head of His church.

The first thing that we need to learn is:

I. WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

What does it mean that the Lord is “the Head” of the church?

Thayer in his Greek Lexicon says that if used of a person it means that he is supreme, chief, prominent. Adam Clarke says that church has no ruler but Jesus Christ. All in the church are under His authority. And then he added that “others may be officers in the church,” meaning elders and deacons, “but He [Christ] alone is Head and Supreme.” He is the One Who is in charge of the church. He has sovereign dominion over the church. Fausset in the JFB commentary says that this implies not only His dominion, but our union with Him. He is the Head; we are His body.

So the Head of the Church is not the Pope. He is not the pastor, nor anyone else in the Church. Christ, and Christ alone, is the Head. He has that position because God the Father made Him the Head, and He never has, and never will, give His position to anyone else nor has He delegated that authority to anyone else. Christ is the Head of His church.

Now let me develop the thought I have just expressed about Who gave Him this authority. And we find this in Paul’s first reference to Christ as the Head of the Church in Ephesians 1.

So the next thing that we need to see is that:

II. CHRIST’S AUTHORITY OVER THE CHURCH HAS BEEN GIVEN TO HIM BY GOD.

But you will notice that verse 22 is just a part of a sentence. And the sentence actually begins in verse 15 where Paul began to tell the Ephesians how he was praying for them. As you look at the prayer you can see that verse 22 is especially related to the third request in Paul’s prayer, which is, that we might know “the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe” (v. 19). And if you trace these requests back to the beginning of the prayer, you will see that Paul addressed his prayer to God! So “his power” is *God’s power!*

What about God’s power?

This is the power which raised our Lord from the dead. (See v. 20a.)

This is the power by which God set His Son at His own right hand. And in doing so He, that is, our Lord, was not only above, but “far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come.” \

But this is not all.

God also put all things under His, Christ’s, feet. Our Lord is sovereign over all things throughout the whole universe. And finally we come to what we are interested in. God “gave Him [Christ] to be Head over all things to the Church.” See v. 22.

What a God we have, and what an amazing Lord Jesus Christ we have as our Head in the Church. Is it any wonder that the Lord said that the gates of Hades will not prevail against the Church. The Church is guaranteed its survival, its security in all kinds of times, and its ultimate triumph at the hand of its glorious Head.

As Paul wrote these words, don’t you imagine that he said something like this to himself, “And I thought I could do away with it!”?

The Church has been through good times, and it has been through bad times. The Church has been at times strong, and at other times weak. But never for one moment has it been out from under the sovereign power of God exercised through our glorious Head, the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is truth here in these verses that we can think about for a long, long time. And the result is sure to be that we will find ourselves on our knees worshipping the One Who is the Head over all things to the Church.

Notice how all of this was presented by Paul to the Colossians. Please turn to Colossians 1, and let me break into the thought of the passage by beginning to read with verse 14, reading on down through verse 20. (Read.)

A major part in the exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ was, and is, that the Father made Him the Head of the Church. How thankful, and how amazed, we should be that God has made us a part of what He has done in exalting His Son.

But now let us move on to Ephesians 4, and our verse is verse 15.

What was Paul discussing in this passage? I think as we read the verses before, and the verse after, that we can all see that here we have:

III. THE HEADSHIP OF CHRIST IN THE PERFECTION OF THE CHURCH.

Here we need to go back in our reading to verse 11. We have considered this passage before in this series, but I want you to see it tonight in its relationship to the Headship of Christ.

Have you ever wondered as you have thought about God's purpose in saving us, to make us like His Son, if we are all going to make it? Does it not seem that we all have a long way to go before that will be realized? And aren't there times when you get discouraged about yourself, as well as about others? I am talking now about *real believers*, not just church members, or people who try to be "religious."

Nobody but God could possibly undertake such a mammoth task. How will He do it?

I mentioned a little bit ago, quoting Fausset, that for Christ to be our Head suggests not only dominion, but union. He is the Head of a body, and we in the Church are that body. In this passage Paul was talking about "the perfecting of the saints" (v. 12). But perhaps you and I have not paid enough attention to the first two words in verse 16, the word, "From Whom . . ."

This may not be good English, but I want to ask, "Who is the Whom?" How can we tell? We tell by linking these two words with the Name of the Person Paul mentioned at the end of verse 15. The "Whom" is Christ, our Head. And using the figure of a body, a human body, Paul indicated here that all that it takes to "grow up into Him" (v. 15) Who is our Head, is to realize that all that it takes for us to grow and to function properly in the Body is to realize that our life comes from our Head! He is not only our Lord, but our Life!

So this means that our Lord, Who is our Head, having complete authority and dominion over each one of us, joins us together, and it is He Who

Eph. 1:22-23; 4:15-16; 5:22-24 (5)

“maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”

— So whatever place we may occupy in the body of Christ, our Lord as our Head is supplying all that is needed for our individual growth and perfection, but for the building up of the whole Body.

But a word of warning is necessary here, and we have that in Col. 2:19. Let me begin reading with verse 18. (Read.)

The point is that we must not turn away from Christ. In this connection read also Col. 1:18. No one must ever take the place in our lives which only the Lord has. God made Him the Head; we must make Him pre-eminent in our lives.

But there is still one more point.

In addition to all that we have already seen,

IV. WHAT SPECIFICALLY AND CONSTANTLY SHOULD THIS TRUTH OF CHRIST'S HEADSHIP MEAN TO THOSE OF US WHO ARE IN THE CHURCH?

— Please turn now to Ephesians 5:22-24. (Read.)

There is one answer to that question, and it is *submission*. The Lord is our Head. He occupies that place that He has over His church (and this includes every one in the church) because God has given it to Him. We are to be submissive to His will. We are to do His will as it is revealed for us in the Word of God. Every problem in every church would immediately be solved if suddenly we all would become submissive to the Lord Jesus Christ, our Head. And what precious fellowship we would enjoy together with our Lord!

The Lord is our Head, and He has made us and saved us so that we will find our greatest joy in doing His will. Our Lord was like that with the Father. He delighted to do the will of God. And if we are to be like our Lord, then submission to Him is the only way for us to go.

— **Concl:** I trust that after looking into these passages tonight, when we talk about the Lord being our Head, the Head of all of us in the body

Eph. 1:22-23; 4:15-16; 5:22-24 (6)

of Christ, that it will produce in our hearts a sense of our need as well as of security and blessing that God in His wisdom has so united us to the One Who is not only sovereign over our lives, but sovereign over the affairs of the whole world.

The one time that Paul spoke of Christ as Head in Colossians which is not related to the church, is in chapter 2, verse 10. His Headship over us would not be complete if He were not also sovereign over all other powers, angelic and human. But this verse assures us that our Lord is in sovereign authority over all, whether angels or man, whether demons or saints. So nothing can overrule Him in the purposes that God has for us.

Let me close by reading Heb. 1:1-3. There is a phrase in that verse which we all need to see for our further encouragement. It is: "And upholding all things by the word of His power." What God has ordained, Christ will accomplish. And we are the recipients of all of the blessings, both now and forever!

THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD

Acts 1:8

Intro: When we are first saved, we are just as qualified for heaven as we ever will be. That was demonstrated by the Lord's words to the thief on the Cross as both of them were dying. After the thief expressed his faith in those very simple words, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom" (Luke 23:42), the Lord responded by saying, "Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43).

Shortly before this we read in Matthew's Gospel that while the crowd around the Cross was reviling the Lord, and mocking Him, that "the thieves also [plural], which were crucified with Him, cast the same in His teeth" (Matt. 27:44). But then a change began to take place. The other malefactor joined with the crowd in saying, "If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us" (Luke 23:39). But this was too much at that time for the thief who then turned to the Lord because he said to the other thief, "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: But this man hath done nothing amiss" (Luke 23:40-41). And then it was that he turned to the Lord in faith.

He didn't have time to read the Word. He prayed the only prayer that he knew to pray. He had no time to show by his life that he was sincere. He knew nothing about spiritual growth, or why the Lord saved him. But the Lord knew his heart, and that settled his destiny. The Lord said, "Today thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." He was one of God's elect.

But with most people, as with all of us, we live on after we are saved. And there are two reasons why we live on. One is that we might grow in the Lord. We need to move from spiritual infancy to spiritual maturity. As the Apostle Paul expressed it in Eph. 4:15, we need to "grow up into Him," that is, Christ, "in all things." And we have seen that the spiritual growth and improvement is the reason that the Lord's people meet together in churches.

The other reason that we live on is in order that we might be a testimony to the world, a testimony for Christ, and a witness to what Christ has done for us in saving us from our sins.

When the Lord gave what we call *The Sermon on the Mount*, He said a couple of things to His disciples which had to do with their relationship to the world. One was, “Ye are the salt of the earth” (Matt. 5:13). The other was, “Ye are the light of the world” (Matt. 5:14). These statements have to do with each one of us individually. But we have been thinking about the church in this series, and it is significant that when our Lord sent His letters to the seven churches mentioned in Revelation 1, 2, and 3, He pictured them as “candlesticks,” or better, *lampstands*. *The point is that each church existed in the towns where they were, to give light.* And the Lord Jesus concluded His remarks about “light,” “the light of the world,” by saying,

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven (Matt. 5:16).

Salt is useful for preserving food, but it also is used by women all through the world to season food, and to make it tasty. Light, on the other hand, enables us to see. The light of the sun fulfills that purpose in the daytime, and we turn on lights at night so that we can see in the darkness.

The Bible represents this world and its people as being in spiritual darkness, without any light. They stumble through life not knowing why they are here, nor where they are going. They do not know God, and so they give Him no place in their lives. The Psalmist said that the entrance of God’s Word gives light (see Psalm 119:130). But most people don’t read the Bible, and many don’t even own a Bible, so they continue on in their darkness and ignorance. That is what makes it so important for all of us to do as the Apostle Paul said we should do in Eph. 5:8,

For ye were sometimes [once] darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:

We were once where the people of the world still are, but the Lord has changed us. Now we are light in the Lord, and so we are to “walk,” meaning we are *to live*, “as children of light.” This was Paul’s exhortation to the church at Ephesus. But he meant that this was the responsibility of every true believer in the church at Ephesus. People may ridicule the Bible and say that it is just an old book that doesn’t mean anything to us today. Far too many have no hesitation in taking the Name of the Lord in vain. They have no time for church. They have other things that they would rather do. But God has ordained that it is impossible for them to explain the changed life that believers in Christ live. Not everyone will be impressed, and inquire as to the reason, but this is one way that Lord

uses to reach people with the Gospel. The Apostle Peter said along this very line,

— But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear (1 Peter 3:15).

The point that all of these Scriptures make is that our ministry to the world has to be a living testimony. Our words, if they are not backed up by our lives, will fall far short of being “salt” and “light” in this world in which we live.

Now let us go to the verse I have chosen for my text: Acts 1:8. Luke wrote this book of Acts, the same Luke who wrote the Gospel of Luke. And the book of Acts is really a continuation of the book of Acts. The Gospels tell us what the Lord did while He was physically present on the earth. The book of Acts tells us what He continued to do through His apostles and through His people after He went back to heaven. And Luke gives the words found in Acts 1:8 as the Lord’s last words before He ascended back to heaven. I am sure most of you could quote them from memory. This is what the Lord said when His apostles asked Him, “Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” And this was His answer:

— 7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth (Acts 1:7-8).

The church was not yet in existence. But it would be shortly. The Lord was telling the apostles primarily what was their primary responsibility to the world.

I. THEY WERE TO BE THE LORD’S WITNESSES.

He said, “Ye shall be witnesses unto me.”

— What is a witness? A witness is a person who tells what he knows. When Peter and John were later told “not to speak at all nor teach in the Name of Jesus,” their response was this:

19 But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.

20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard (Acts 4:19-20).

They were the Lord's witnesses to tell people about Christ, all about Christ. They were to tell Who He was, the works that He did, the teaching which He gave, and then His death, resurrection, and ascension back to heaven and to the Father. They had a message to give. They were to tell why He died. They were to speak of how the judgment of God fell upon Him as He died as a Substitute for sinners. They had a vitally important message to give, and it all had to do with Jesus Christ. And they were to do it graciously, compassionately, and humbly, not as men who gave the impression that they were better than anyone else.

So the word "witnesses" carried with it another idea, and it is emphasized by the word "be," "ye shall be witnesses unto Me." In other words, they were not just to give a message, but their lives were to witness as well as their lips. Every Christian needs to meditate much on our Lord's words in this verse because here we have the reason for the mighty work that was done by those Christians about whom we read in the early days of the Church. They were not perfect, but they understood their mission. The most powerful witness is a godly witness, one whose life backs up the message that he gives of a perfect, crucified, risen, and glorified Savior.

So we should be able to see from this the connection between the ministry in the church and the church's ministry in the world. A church with growing, godly saints, will be a mighty witness in the world. It is even written of our Lord Jesus Christ that "in Him was life, and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4).

So the church has a ministry to the world, to shine as lights by life and by word of mouth. How we are to be used in turning others to Christ, is the work of the Lord. But our responsibility is to be godly, and to live in a godly manner, and to speak of Christ wherever and whenever we have the opportunity.

But this is "easier said than done," as the saying goes. And so now we need to go back to the beginning of the verse where the Lord spoke about:

II. THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

— The Holy Spirit has always been the power behind the people of God. We read about the Holy Spirit many places in the Old Testament. But there was a special way in which the Holy Spirit was to be involved in the lives of all of the people of God from this point on. The Lord described the difference between the work of the Holy Spirit in OT times as compared with NT times when He said in John 14: 16 and 17 that He had been “with” them, but the Lord was praying for the Father to send the Holy Spirit to be “in” them, and that He would “abide” with them forever.

— And so this is what the Lord was speaking about in Acts 1. *The work of the Lord is difficult beyond what believers can do on their own.* We all know how difficult it is to engage people in conversation about the Savior and salvation. The early Christians understood the difficulty too. So that when Peter and John came back to tell the church what the chief priests and elders had said to them, they prayed for boldness to speak the Word. And the Lord’s answer to that prayer was that “they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the Word of God with boldness” (Acts 4:31). It was the Holy Spirit Who gave them the power and the boldness to carry out the Lord’s words that they should be His witnesses. The death of Stephen in those early days was a shocking reminder to the church that the message they had to give was not at all acceptable in the world. And so they realized how dependent they were upon the Holy Spirit if they were to do what the Lord had left them on the earth to do.

— And so ours is a task of giving to the people of the world a message that they do not want and which they are incapable of understanding until the Lord sees fit to open their hearts and to give them a mind and heart to receive the Gospel.

The Apostle Paul who was not even saved when the Lord spoke the words of Acts 1:8 to His apostles, has nevertheless given us an excellent statement of the ministry in his second letter to the church at Corinth. Let me read to you **2 Cor. 3:18-4:7. (Read.)**

But now we come to a third point:

— III. THE PART OF THE WORLD WHERE THE CHURCH IS TO MINISTER.

Listen to these words: “Both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” It is not “either . . . or . . . or . . . or . . . or . . .,” but “both . . . and . . . and . . . and . . .” This means that the generation which the Lord left on the earth was responsible to get the Gospel to the whole world. And the same is true of all the following generations down to our own. Obviously we are not all called to go, and no church can financially carry such a load, but this to be our vision.

Now this in itself stirs up antagonism in people’s hearts. And we are seeing growing opposition to the preaching of the Gospel in our own day. People will say that if we want to believe this Gospel, that is all right with them. But when we try to get them to believe the Gospel, and when we also tell them that this is the only way to God, then people are inclined to draw the line on us. They tell us that we are going too far with our message. If people have their own religion, or no religion, we need to leave them alone. We have no right to say that the Gospel is the only way to heaven, the only way of salvation. What are we going to do when we are confronted with such opposition.

We must do what faithful servants of the Lord before us, have done. We continue to go. We continue to preach Christ, and we continue to tell people that Christ is the only Savior, and that there is no possibility of finding acceptance with God and the forgiveness of our sins except through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But there is another thing that we must not do. Paul gave this word to the church at Rome. And I am speaking of Romans 12:1 and 2. We usually think of this as applying only to us as individuals, but it is for the church as well. We are not to be “conformed to this world.” We are not to soften our message to make it more acceptable to people in the world. We are not to put on performances to get people to come to hear the Word of God. We are to preach the Word, and that means that we are to preach Christ. The work of the Lord remains the same generation after generation because the hearts of people have not changed. And our message has not changed. And so while the world may follow this fad today and another fad tomorrow, the church is to stay by these words spoken by our Lord just before He went back to heaven. Portland is our Jerusalem. Oregon is our Judea. Washington, or Idaho, or California is our Samaria. And from there we seek to get the Gospel to the whole world. But let us

remember that it all has to begin at home! If we aren't faithful to the Lord here, we can't find any satisfaction that we are obeying the Lord just because we give or pray that others may go. The burden must fall upon all of us. The early church took the Lord at His Word, and Paul was one of those who worked tirelessly to get the Gospel to every place throughout the Roman Empire

Concl: The Lord has appointed us as His witnesses. We need to have a clear understanding of the Gospel. The Holy Spirit is our Teacher, and He is the power that we need to be faithful in preaching Christ at home and every other place where He makes it possible for us to go. May God give us a clear understanding of our mission that we may see the blessing of the Lord in our day as through the preaching of the Gospel He draws to Himself those whom He has elected to be saved.