

The Church is important to God

Text : **I Thessalonians 1: 2-10**

INTRODUCTION :

- A. In today's world, more and more people seem to be placing less value on the church.**
1. Many who espouse belief in God don't belong to any church.
 2. People don't feel they need, they want or they have time for the church.
 3. Some claim to commune with God in the forest or on the lake. (**except in bad weather**)
- B. Today we'll observe three proofs that God views the church as being important.**
1. God planned the church before He created the world.
 2. To purchase His church God paid the highest price ever paid for anything.
 3. God uses the church as His tool for accomplishing His will on the earth.

When we are finished, we will realize that if God places such great importance on His church, we should also value it most highly.

I. We know the church is important to God.

- A. Because He planned it from before the foundation of the world. (before creation)**
1. **Eph. 1: 3-4** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, ⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. (**Cf. Rev. 13:8, 17: 8** name written from)
 2. **I Pet. 1: 20-** For He (Christ) was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you ...
 3. **Matt. 25: 34-** Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

*** Remembering that the church is composed of people who have been called out of the world for salvation in Christ, why did God prepare His church even before He created the world ? He valued it highly. He valued YOU.**

- B. Because He valued it so highly He purchased it with the blood of His Son.**

1. Elders are commanded by the Apostle Paul to :
Acts 20: 28- ... shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

2. **Rev. 5: 8-** And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.
3. Is there anything you would give your child’s life to purchase ?
- * **Why did God pay such a high price for His church ? He valued it highly.**

II. The church is important to God because it represents Him on the earth.

A. No one has ever seen God at any time. (Moses = Anthropomorphism)

1. God is only seen representatively through that which :
 - a. That which He created. ... **Rom. 1: 20**
 - b. By those He sent. (Prophets, Apostles, Christians)
2. Jesus was a physical manifestation of God to the earth. **He is God. ... John 1:1**
 - a. **John 1: 18-** No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.
 - b. **John 14: 9-** Jesus said to him, “Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?”
(Cf.- **Heb. 1: 3** ... the exact representation of His nature, ...)
3. Today the life of the Christian reflects Jesus, thus, God.
 - a. People identified the Apostles with Jesus by their character and their manner of life.
Acts 4: 13- Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus.
 - b. Christians are commanded to do likewise. (**Be like your Father.**)
Eph. 5: 1-2 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; ² and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.

B. People see God through the church.

1. “Christians” and “the church” are synonymous terms.
 - a. ALL Christians are added to the church. (**Acts 2: 41, 47** , **Gal. 3: 26-27**)
 - b. The church is the body of Christ on earth. (**Eph. 1: 22-23** , **Col. 1: 24** , **I Cor. 12: 27**)
 - c. Thus, the church is the presence of Jesus on the earth.
YOU are the presence of God on the earth.

2. There are more people watching you than you think. (**You are their contact with God.**)
 - a. Sociologists estimate that the average person influences **10K** people in his lifetime.
 - b. A small interaction can set into motion events that become memorable experiences.
 - * **Being nice to an obnoxious bag boy in a story may save his life.**
The guy behind you may be a psychopath about to be set off. (small thing leads to ..)
 - An Elder told this personal story as being true :** (*He was the young med student.*)
A young man planning suicide was saved by a kindly guy helping with his flat tire.
He became a doctor and saved many lives, including that of the guy who helped.
3. Every Christian needs to be able to make the same admonition the Apostle Paul made.
 - a. **I Cor. 11: 1- Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.**
 - b. Ask ourselves, “**If every member was just like me, what would the church be ?**”
 - c. The Apostle Paul was not perfect, but he trusted and he obeyed. **SO SHOULD WE.**

C. People will never see God, but they observe His children day by day .

1. Christ will never again set foot on the earth. (**cf.- I Thes. 4:13f**)
 2. If you are a child of God, they see your father in you.
 3. The children of the devil are all around us ;
Christians must make sure the world can see the difference.
- * **You, the church, are important to God because you represent Him on the earth.**

III. The church is important to God because He accomplishes His will through the church.

A. God does not work His will by miraculous means.

1. He doesn't send lightning bolts to zap evil.
2. He doesn't rain gold down to reward good.
3. He has the ability to work miraculously, but doesn't choose to reach work that way.

* **Remember, all relationships with God are based upon faith, NOT sight.**

B. God does not speak directly to anyone today.

1. We hear many stories about people who claim to have talked to God.
 - a. Ralph said he saw God out in front of his truck and was converted. (**Made a deal**)
 - b. Lady saw God at the foot of her death bed and was healed. (**Said she was saved**)
 - c. Man in auto accident was saw God and was saved. (**had to quit drinking**)

* **We cannot dispute what a person saw or where it came from,
 but God is not the only one who works signs and wonders.**

II Thes. 2: 8-9 ... the activity of Satan with power and signs and false wonders ...

2. **Acts 22** ... God did not tell Saul how to be saved; he sent him to a Christian. (**Ax 9**)

- a. The Christian did not tell him that he was saved.
- b. He was told to wash away his sins. **Acts 22: 16**

3. Whatever God wants done, he will do through His representatives on the earth.

Phil. 2:13- for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. (Cf.- **I Thes. 2: 13** , **James 1**)

- a. If God wants this congregation to grow, He will accomplish that through its members.
- b. If God wants the gospel to be taught in Shelbyville it will be done by His people.
- c. If God wants your neighbor saved, He's depending on YOU to bring Him to the cross.

Eph. 3: 20-21 Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us,
²¹ to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever

C. God does not force His people to serve Him.

- 1. He calls us to service, but does not manipulate us like puppets on a string.
- 2. Remember how Jesus wept over those who would not obey God.
 - a. **Luke 19: 41-** When He approached *Jerusalem*, He saw the city and wept over it,
 - b. **Luke 13: 34-** O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it!*

CONCLUSION :

A. Is the church important to God ? You bet it is !!!

- 1. He planned it before He created the world.
- 2. He purchased it with the life of His Only Begotten Son.
- 3. It functions as the representation of Him on the earth.

B. Since the church is so important to God :

- 1. The church should be important to us. (Christians)
- 2. We should be aware of our importance to God.
- 3. We should put forth the best effort we can for His church and for Him.
 - a. In the life that we live as His ambassadors.
 - b. In the way we serve God in His church.

- * **Ambassadors NEVER speak evil of the one they represent, even if the evil is true. Likewise, no ambassador of God (*Christian*) should ever speak evil of the church.**

The church is composed of individual Christians. (**I Cor. 12: 27)**

Thus, to be critical or speak evil of a brother is to belittle God's church.

C. Since the church is so important to God, should you not be a part of it ?

INVITATION :