

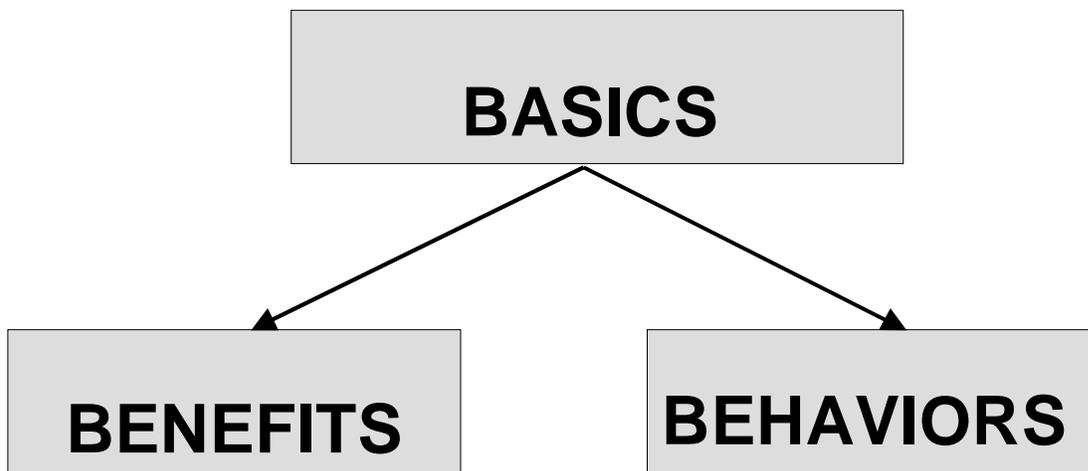
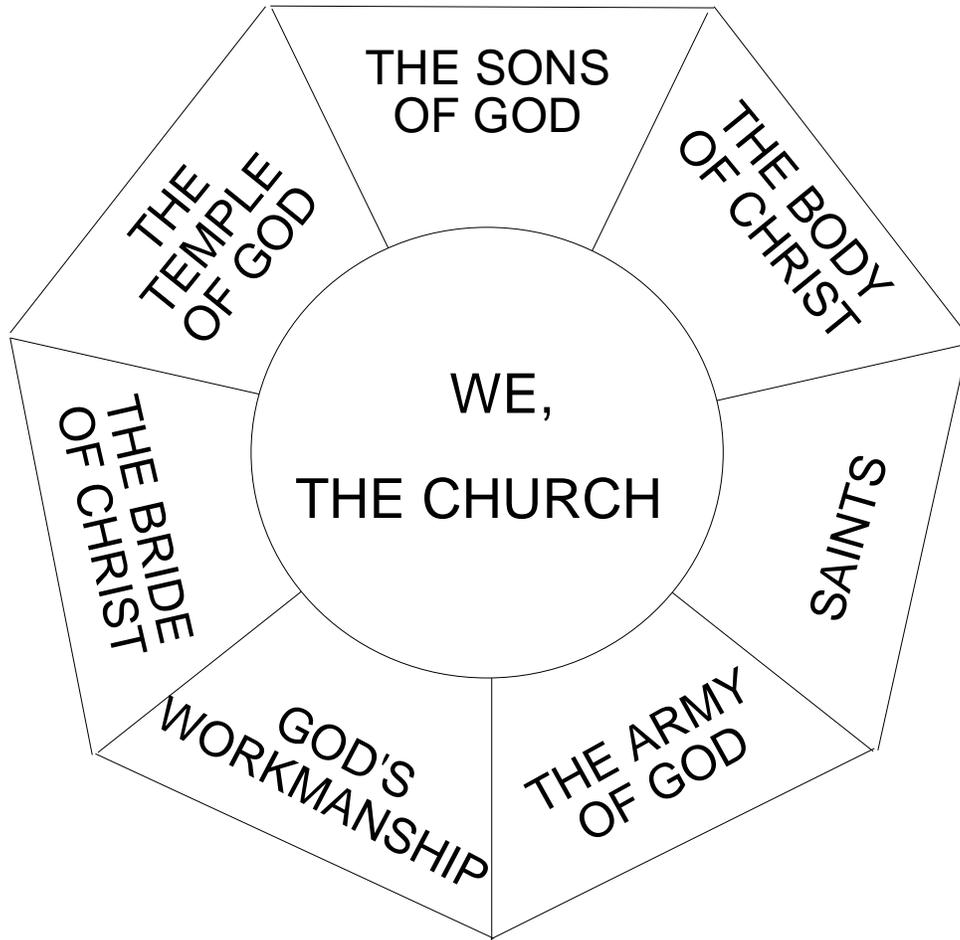
# **WE, THE CHURCH**

## **A Study of Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians**

### **Biblical Concepts of the Church**

**Scattered throughout Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus are at least seven distinct concepts of the Church. The objective of this lesson series will be to**

- ! Discover the Concept**
- ! Explore other related Scriptures**
- ! Learn the Basics (and basis) of the concept**
- ! Find what Benefits are ours revealed in the concept**
- ! Determine our expected Behaviors as a result of walking in the truth of the concept**



## THE SONS OF GOD

What are the Basic benefits and responsibilities for being sons?

### Primary Reference: Ephesians 1:5

*Eph 1:5 He predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will--*

Predestined - God's intent for us from before creation.

Adopted - Requires a change from our original condition

Through Jesus Christ - The means by which the change is implemented

His pleasure and will - Why God would have us to be His sons.

### Supporting Scripture References:

*John 1:12-13 Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God - children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. (NIV)*

All - not an exclusive, limited group

Received - Active involvement, a conscious decision

Believed - Involves the mind, emotion and the will

Right - granted authority to do or be something

To Become - An transforming process

Children - part of the family of God (all sons are children, first)

Not of human decision - God is the initiator of salvation

Born of God - Spiritual and supernatural origin.

Marginal notes in the NIV Study Bible and Harper's Bible Dictionary equate "children of God" with "sons of God." However, in the Jewish society and culture, a male offspring made a transition from the status of "child" to "son" as he matured and started taking on responsibility as part of the family. Sons are also recipients of the inheritance and those that carry on the family name.

*ROMANS 8: 12-17 - Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation - but not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a Spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by Him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs - heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his suffering in order that we may also share in his glory.*

Obligation - NOT to sinful nature because it is crucified with Christ. Those who are born of the Spirit have a choice and we need to know the truth that we have no duty to act according to the desires of a carnal nature.

Sinful Nature => Death    Spiritual Nature => Life - Being set free from bondage to sin does not guarantee we will always make the right choices. The desire of the carnal nature which is energized by the physical flesh is ever present. If we let it control us, then our salvation has been in vain in that we cannot experience the abundant life while walking

after the desires of the old nature.

Sons of God <==> Led by Spirit - The sons of God are led by the Spirit and those who are led by the Spirit are the sons of God. If you are not following the leading of the Holy Spirit, then your sonship is in vain. The benefits and outcome are as if you had never been saved.

Witness of the Spirit with our spirit - God provides "knowledge" (an internal assurance) by revelation to our spirits. This witness is "knowing" apart from "understanding."

Heirs of God - Co-heirs with Christ - The benefit of being sons is that we share in all the Father has. Inheritances are passed on the "first-born" (Christ) who then distributes the shares to his co-heirs.

Shared Suffering and Shared Glory - Suffering for the cause of Christ is an external validation that we are walking with Him. Just as Jesus was persecuted by the world system for what He did, we too will be persecuted IF we do the things He did. Doing the things He did is nothing more than obedience to His commands. Obedience to His commands confirms our love for Him and only those who love Him will share His glory. Those who do not love Him will not want to *share* His glory but will want all the glory for themselves.

*ROMANS 8:19 - The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed.*

Revealed - We are already the sons of God. At the end time when Christ appears, then we will be like Him. (This entire process of sanctification is to transform us into the image of Christ. See also Rom 8:28-29.)

*1 John 3:1-3 How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called the children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know Him. Dear friends, now we are the children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as He is pure.*

Purifies himself - The blood of Jesus cleanses us from all unrighteousness acts we have committed. How does this work? In 1 John 1:9-10 we see that recognition and confession of sins are the first step that we are to take. Then God is faithful and just to forgive and to cleanse.

Prevention is always better than cure. How does the prevention work? In John 15:3 Jesus told His disciples "Now you are clean through the word which I have spoken to you." Paul wrote in Eph 5:26 regarding the church "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word," The word of God, if it is applied to our lives, will keep us pure.

*11 Corinthians 6:17-18 Therefore, come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you, I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.*

Be separate -- Separated from the world and avoiding unclean things are both benefits and

behaviors.

I will receive you – Earlier (in John 1:12-13) we saw an expectation to receive Jesus and now we see a reciprocal response of being received by God. The separation from the world and avoiding of unclean things should be a natural outcome of our having received Jesus as Lord of our lives. Therefore, the condition of “touch no unclean thing” should not be a barrier to any true believer.

*Philippians 2:14-16 Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God, without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life.*

Do everything The first thing we see is the call to DO SOMETHING - “do everything” or as the KJV puts it “do all things”

What are the “things” to which Paul refers? We have to go back a couple of verses to 12 & 13

*Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed— not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence— continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.*

These things to which Paul is referring are those actions in our lives that we do as a result of having been saved and relates to the on-going work of sanctification that God is doing in our lives on a daily basis. Paul called this “working out your salvation.” You know that we are not work for our salvation, but we are simply manifesting in our lives that which God is working into us so that we are becoming all that He wants us to be. See what Paul says, “it is God who works in you,” We could say that we are to work out (or walk out) that which God has worked into our very lives.

No complaining or arguing - As we go about working out or walking out that which God has worked into us, then we are to do this in a prescribed way. That prescription is simply this “Do it without moaning and groaning.” Do it with complaining and arguing. Some Christian will complain and argue about everything. The admonition to not complain and argue does not mean that we have to go along with every cockamamie idea that someone wants to, but it does mean that as we contend for the faith we don’t need to be contentious about it.

If we really believe that God is in control, loves us supremely, and is using all things to transform us into the image of Jesus Christ, then we should surely be content. This does not mean that we are to be overcome by circumstance but are to overcome all things by the power of Him Who lives in and through us. Also, we are to contend for the faith rather than be contentious about it.

Blameless, Pure, Without Fault - The result is that we will become blameless and pure. The result of what? Is it the result of not griping and complaining and arguing that makes us become blameless and pure? Absolutely NOT! What make us become blameless and pure is “working out (walking out) that salvation which God is working into us.”

You could make the argument that we are already blameless and pure because we are saved by the blood of Jesus and that He has cleansed us and made us whole. That is true - we are all of that - we are (before God) blameless and pure because of the work

of His Son on our behalf. What Paul wants us to do is to show those benefits of our salvation to the crooked and depraved world in which we live. To show that we are indeed the children of God even among the world that is lost. It also means that we are to do this in spite of the situation of the circumstance in which we find ourselves.

If we lose our zeal for purity and become like the world, then we just blend in and appear to be as the world is. If we fail to be separated from the world then we become contaminated (blemished) with the world and we lose our distinctiveness of being blameless and pure.

Hold out the word of life - What is the vehicle by which we can accomplish this great responsibility? Paul tells us to “Hold out the Word of Life.” Do we know how to do this? We should! Why do we study the Bible? Why do we attend special studies? Why is preaching the word of God such a central part of our worship times? Why do we encourage daily devotion time? Is it just to learn so that we can become filled with knowledge? That just leads to pride! Unless we are letting what we learn flow through us, they we simply become bloated pools of stagnation. Ever learning and never DOING anything is not the desired result. See verse 14 in which Paul tells us that we are to DO everything or all things. If we are just saving it up and not working it out, then we are missing the point of why we were saved and what it means to be sons of God.

Back to the question: “How do we hold out the Word of Life?” Most of time the first thing we think about is that we need to present the plan of salvation to a lost person. Consider that the Word of Life - capital W and capital L – is simply Jesus. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We need to show them Jesus. I don’t mean a photograph or a painting. The only picture of Jesus that the world is willing to look at it the one of Him they see in our lives.

Shine like stars - result of holding out the truth of the gospel.

## THE BODY OF CHRIST

What are the Basic benefits and responsibilities we being the body of Christ?

**Primary Reference: Ephesians 1:22-23** *And God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be the head over everything for the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him Who fills everything in every way.*

Head of everything for (to) the church: Typically we think of Christ as Head of the Church, but here we see Him over everything. (See Eph 1:9-10 The outworking of this reality is yet to be seen; however, His headship in the church is a present reality.)

Fullness of Christ: All dimensions of His character (fruit of the Spirit), compassion, saving power, discernment, authority, wisdom, knowledge, healing . . . the Gifts of the Spirit take form in the church. The church is the embodiment of Christ Himself in the world.

### Supporting References:

*ROMANS 7:4* *You also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit to God.*

Dead - Identity with Christ crucified. We are also crucified and not under the law of "sin and death."

Belong to Christ - We have been redeemed by the blood. We do not belong to the devil or to ourselves.

Bear fruit to God - What sort of harvest does God want? Fruit of the Spirit and New Christians.

*ROMANS 12:4-5* *Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body and each member belongs to all the others.*

*I CORINTHIANS 12:25-27* *There should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it. Now you are the body of Christ and each one of you is a part of it.*

In his book *The Body*, Chuck Colson argues that Christians have been sucked in by the radical individualism of secular culture and the soothing sermons of the feel-good gospel. Many believe "I am my own church." This denies the Biblical truth and requirement of corporate commitment.

One body: Unity of purpose in the church.

Member not all have same function: diversity of gifts and purpose for each member.

No unimportant members!

Each belongs to the other: We have responsibilities to each other, not only to care for but also to protect the body's health (the case for discipline).

Concern for each other: We have responsibility to support and relate to fellow members. Help those who are hurting, especially those with spiritual hurts.

Rejoice with the honored: There is no room for jealousy and envy among Christians.

*EPHESIANS 4: 12-16* - *to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of*

*Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.*

Built up - purpose of ministry is to build up the church. Spiritual growth.

Unity in faith and knowledge of Jesus - Unity must be a result of belief in the truth as revealed in Christ Jesus. We need to avoid basing unity on "cheap grace" or "sloppy agape."

Mature - becoming like Jesus. See also, Roman 8:29

Not Infants - steadfast and not eager to adopt every new teaching of men. (See Ps 1:1)

Truth in Love - Uncompromising in adherence to the truth of the Word of God. Concern for those in error.

Supporting ligaments - Unity in the Holy Spirit in the bond of peace is what holds the body together.

Each part .. work - Each member has a purpose and an job to do. Failure here hinders the growth of the church.

*COLOSSIANS 1:18 And He is the head of the body, the Church, He is the Beginning and the Firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.*

He is the Head of the body - Thinking, deciding, reasoning, and forming attitudes and opinions, are things we do in our heads. If Christ is the Head of the Church and we are individual members of the church, then He is our Head. What is the practical outworking of this concept?

Beginning - We are part of a New Creation. As such, old things are past away, all things are become new. (see II Cor 5:17).

Firstborn from the dead - Hope for us in the resurrection. We shall be like Him with a body like His.

Supremacy - He is supreme. He is Number 1. He is Lord!

*I CORINTHIANS 6:15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ Himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never!*

Can we or should we expand the question beyond sexual impurity? If the answer is "yes," then consider this: In ancient Israel, one man stole an enemy idol and hid it in his tent. Israel was defeated in the next battle. Should there be a "corporate" concern (above just caring for the individual) about the action of members of the church? Is the "corporate" church being defeated because of the "hidden idols" of individual members?

## HABITATION OF GOD THROUGH THE SPIRIT (TEMPLE)

What are the Basic Benefits and Responsibilities for being His Temple?

### **Primary Reference: Ephesians 2:22**

*In whom, ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.*

We . . . together - Individually we have the Spirit, and collectively we experience the fullness of the operation of the Spirit. None of us are complete without the others.

Are builded - are being built - a continuing on going process that will see its culmination at the appearing of Christ. It is not something we are doing, but it is happening to us.

Through the Spirit - The necessity of the spiritual birth. We cannot be part of what God is doing unless we are born again.

### **Supporting Scripture References:**

*MATTHEW 21:12-14 - Jesus entered the temple area and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. "It is written," He said to them. "My house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a den of robbers." The blind and the lame came to Him at the temple and He healed them.*

Jesus entered - He is not there until He comes in. The New Agers teach that everyone has "the Christ" in them, we just need to discover it. The Holy Spirit may visit but He does not inhabit the natural man.

He drove out all - Expect Jesus to drive all the profane and vain out of your life. We must be careful to not put it back when He drives it away.

Money changers and sellers - materialism must be replaced with spiritual values.

It is written - Our lives must be ordered in accordance with the word of God - by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

House of prayer - If we don't pray on our own, God may give us something to pray about.

You have made - We have the capability to mess up what God is doing.

Blind, lame came to Him at the temple - People needing help from the Lord should be coming to us since we are His temple.

He healed them - The church is a place of healing.

*I CORINTHIANS 3:16-17 - Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you. If anyone destroys (corrupts) God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred and you are that temple.*

You yourselves are - NIV stresses emphasis on the Church rather than the individual.

God's Spirit lives - The Living God inhabits the Church. This is the real thing, we are not just playing church!

God will destroy him - directed to those outside of God's family that would corrupt the temple. A strong message for those that ridicule and demean the church.

Temple is sacred (holy) - the church is not just another organization, it is special and must be treated that way. When the church comes together it is a holy gathering and should be for a holy purpose.

*1 CORINTHIANS 6:19-20 - Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, Who is in you, Whom you have received from God? You are not your own. You were bought with a price. Therefore, honor God with your body.*

Your body - the emphasis here is on the individual rather than the collective body  
Spirit in you - The Living God inhabits each of us. This is the real thing, we are not just playing church!

You are not your own - our freedom is in Christ. Outside of Christ we have no rights.

Honor God - motive for doing what is right with our physical selves.

*II CORINTHIANS 6:16 - What agreement is there with the temple of God with idols? ... "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be My people.*

What agreement - The church does not need to be politically correct - just scripturally correct!

Live and walk among - If God is around there will be evidence.

## THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

What are the Basic Characteristics (Benefits and Responsibilities) of the Bride?

### **Primary Reference: Ephesians 5:25-27**

*Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water by the word, and to present her to Himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.*

The word "bride" does not appear in this passage. However, the description matches that of the bride given in Rev 21. The Hebrew word for bride is "kallah" which literally means *the complete and perfect one*. Thus the action described is the process of perfecting the church to be the "complete and perfect one" or the Bride of Christ.

Holy - set apart, not for any other! We need to watch allegiances. Do not take pledges of a spiritual nature for anything other than that associated with the Lord Jesus.

Cleansing-washing-by the word - read that "washing as with water" and we see that we need to get into the word and immerse ourselves.

Present her to Himself - The Church is to be surrendered to the will of Christ.

Radiant - glowing with an inner light of the glory of God.

Without blemish . . . blameless - What can wash away my sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen?

### **Supporting Scripture References:**

*JOHN 3:29 The bride belongs to the Bridegroom.*

Belongs - we are not our own. The dowery has been paid.

*REVELATION 19:7-8 Let us rejoice and be glad and give Him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear. (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)*

Rejoice - the celebration starts with the arrival of the Bridegroom.

Has made herself ready - cooperation is needed in the preparation. Ephesian reference indicates that the Bridegroom is the initiator of the "getting ready."

Fine linen - We are clothed with His cloak of righteousness but we are adorned with those acts of righteousness with which we are involved.

REVELATION 21:2,9: I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. . . Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.

The perfection will be complete when we are at last one with Christ. This is the time of the fulfillment of all the promises when there shall be no more death or dying.

Wife of the Lamb - responsibilities and privilege after the marriage.

REVELATION 22:17 The Spirit and the bride say "Come!" And let him who hears say "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come, and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

The Spirit and the bride - Jesus said "No man can come to Me except the Father draw him. We speak of the "wooing" of the Holy Spirit to indicate this action. In the physical realm, there is no birth without travail of the woman. If we are to reign (govern) with Christ then we must be in agreement and cooperation with Him. If Wesley is right in saying that "God does nothing but in answer to prayer," then we can say that without the travail of intercessory prayer and the wooing of the Holy Spirit that no soul is ever saved. Those for whom the Church travails are saved, all others are lost!

## **SAINTS AND FELLOW CITIZEN WITH THE SAINTS**

What are the Basic Characteristics (Benefits and Responsibilities) of saints?

### **Primary Reference: Ephesians 2:19**

*Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and (members) of the household of God.*

**Saints:** Literally, "Those who are set apart." We are different and it is OK to be different. We are separated from the world and separated unto God. Typically, we associate saintliness or "holiness" with "purity." Purity results from our having been set apart for God and walking in or "working out" that truth in our lives.

### **Supporting Scripture References:**

*EPHESIANS 1:1 Paul, apostle of Jesus Christ by will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus and faithful in Christ Jesus (Gr.Int.).*

In Christ Jesus - Our elevated position which defines our "set-apartness". Prior to being born again we were in Adam and therefore, in sin. Sin separates us from God. The blood of Jesus cleanses us and restores us to what God originally intended: separated from the world but not separated from God.

Faithful - This word implies being steadfast. It involves an outward manifestation of the inward cleansing that frees us from the guilt of our sin. (We walk the talk.) We do so even though we live at Ephesus - sin city.

### **Citizenship -**

*Philippians 3:20 But our citizenship is in Heaven and we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Citizenship in Heaven - being a citizen implies certain rights and privileges as well as responsibilities. (What are the right and responsibilities of being a citizen of heaven?)

*1 Peter 2:11 Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires which war against your soul.*

Aliens in the world - being an alien implies that we cannot do certain things and do not have certain rights. (What are those things that we should not be allowed to do, since we are aliens?)

*EPHESIANS 2:12 remember that at that time (before becoming a Christian) you were separated from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenant*

*of promise, without hope and without God in the world.*

Covenant of promise – God's covenant made to (with) Israel which finds its fulfillment in "spiritual Israel" or those who have the faith of Abraham.

Hope – our expectations based on the promises in the Covenant.

God in the world – the relationship with God begins while we are still in this life.

*II CORINTHIANS 5:20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.*

Christ's Ambassadors – As members of the church, our role of being citizens of the Kingdom of God calls for us to represent Jesus Christ to those we encounter.

Making His appeal through us – It is through us that God appeals to lost people to come to Him for salvation.

Reconciled to God – We must be continually in proper relationship to God so that He can work through us by the Holy Spirit as the Spirit draws people to Christ.

## **THE WORKMANSHIP OF GOD**

What are the Basic Benefits and Responsibilities of being the workmanship of God?

### **Primary Reference: Ephesians 2:10**

*We are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*

Workmanship - The Church is the handiwork of God. He is the Master Builder.

In Christ Jesus - The foundation and the pattern are Christ. Part of the consolidation of all things into One, even Christ Jesus.

Good Works - our good works are a result of God having worked in us. Good works are a product of our salvation not the raw material.

Before Ordained - Part of God's eternal plan was that all that are in Christ Jesus would walk in such a manner to glorify Him.

### **Supporting Scripture References:**

*MATTHEW 5:16 Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.*

Light - The emphasis is on the light being seen and not on the good works. Our light is from the Light of the world - Jesus. As Jesus is seen in us, then people will recognize the Source of our good work and will glorify God and not us.

Good Works - This is that to which we are called, one purpose for which we are saved. The Source of all "good" work is God. Since it is God who is working in us then He should receive the glory.

JOHN 9:3-4 Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life. As long as it is day, we must do the work of Him who sent Me. Night is coming when no one can work.

This happened . . . displayed - Does everything that we encounter in life have the potential

of "displaying the work of God in our life? Does this align with "all things work together for good . ." and with "in everything give thanks . ."?

*PHILIPPIANS 1:6 being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*

Confident - faith that God will save fully all that are in Christ Jesus.

Began a good work – The beginning of the good work was the initial salvation experience (born of the spirit).

Carry it on – the carrying on of the good work results in our sanctification.

Completion – the completion of God workmanship will be our glorification.

*PHILIPPIANS 2:12-13 Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed, continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose.*

Obedience is working out what God has work in us. The internal work is the transformation (renewing of our minds) that has its purpose in altering our wills and our actions. Obedience is manifesting the good work that God had done in us.

Fear and trembling - recognition of the awesome responsibility of having God indwelling and working in us. (Jesus said, the words I speak are not mine, but those of Him who sent me. Can we say the same thing?)

## THE ARMY OF GOD

What are the Basic benefits and responsibilities we have in being the Army of God?

### **Primary Reference: Ephesians 6:10-11**

*Finally be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.*

Be strong in the Lord - There are two aspects of being strong -- strong faith and strength of character. We need to know where we stand and the basis of our position so we do not give up to those forces that would destroy our society.

In His mighty power - We must recognize the source of our strength. The realm of our strength is spiritual and not physical nor political.

Full armor of God – We are to be properly dressed or prepared for battle.

Take your stand – Notice that this is personalized – your stand. We tend to let others take stands and many are on the sidelines of the spiritual battles.

### **Supporting Scripture References:**

*MATTHEW 8:9 For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me.*

Under authority - Implication of order and discipline in an army. We do not act on our own authority but that which is imputed to us by God.

*I TIMOTHY 1:18-19 Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight, holding on to faith and a good conscience.*

Instruction - training is needed before we go into battle.

Following - we need to operate according to our training and put the instruction into practice.

Fight the good fight - a good fight is one that we win.

Holding to faith - everything we do must be by faith in God.

Good conscious - Guilt will hinder our ability to engage in spiritual warfare since guilt stems from unresolved sin which can cause us to feel separated from God.

*I TIMOTHY 4:7b-8 Train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.*

Training - A disciplined life is required to be a good soldier in the Army of God.

Value - As soldiers and stewards we are to seek the most value from the life we live.

“Good” results from godly living.

Life to come - Our focus must be on the long range since we are in training for eternity.

*I CORINTHIANS 14:8 Again, if the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle?*

Clear call - The leaders in God's Army (preachers and teachers) must recognize the presence of the enemy and call the congregation to arms. We need to call

abominations what they are and not alternate lifestyles. We need to recognize and protect human life.

Ready for battle - preparation is needed. We need to know the facts and not go off half-baked and ignorant.

*II CORINTHIANS 10:3-5 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.*

Not after the flesh - We must deal with spiritual problems with spiritual solutions. It is not a matter of the power of positive thinking, or of transcendental meditation.

Strongholds - Entrenched erroneous doctrines that people "KNOW" are true. Such stronghold get introduced into our thinking through "assumptive language." This is simply the powerful and deceptive use of words in which a seemingly simple statement is made, hoping the hearer will buy the simple statement without recognizing the huge assumptions that come with it. When one buys the simple statement, you buy its assumptions without knowing it. [Examples: We receive grace by participating in the sacraments of the church. In the middle of the seven years of tribulation, the devil will put an end to sacrifices in the new temple that is to be built in Jerusalem.]

Imaginations and thoughts - Soldier need to know where the battle is being fought? The battle is spiritual and the battle ground is in our minds.

High thing - pretensions and pride. We build fortresses around our egos to make us feel good about ourselves rather than putting self to death. We find ourselves captured by hollow and deceptive philosophies that are based on human traditions and worldly principles that set themselves up against God's truth claims. This is the danger of the "gospel of self esteem." The only worth we have is that derived from being in Christ. All else is based on pride.

*EPHESIANS 6:12-17 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins gird about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God.*

Not against flesh - Tendency to take issue with people rather than the spiritual force behind the person.

Power and rulers - demonic and corrupt spirits that influence this world

High places - The spiritual or supernatural realm. It is in this realm that we are empowered in Christ. "We are seated with Christ in the heavenlies."

The whole armor of God - We are to be thoroughly and completely equipped with the right equipment. It is God's armor and not secular education and modern psychology

with which we need to be armed.

Withstand in the evil day - to literally hold your ground. Don't give up that which God has given to the church to "occupy until He returns."

Having done all - fight the spiritual battle that the situation demands. And having done nothing we relax on the cushioned pews while pornography, abortion, child abuse, incest, divorce, homosexuality, satanism, and every other unclean spirit gains control.

To Stand - Take a stand for the principles of the Kingdom of God and let your life make a statement of what you stand for when the battle is waging all around.

Girdle of Truth - a wide belt to protect the viscera. To the ancients, the emotions were often described as the internal organs. We need to wrap our emotions with the protection of the truth of the word of God. The girdle also helps us to utilize the strength of the rest of the body without injury.

Breastplate of righteousness - I Thess 5:8 speaks of the breastplate of faith and love. Righteousness is faith put into action out of the motive of love. Abraham was declared righteous because he "believed" (not just believed in) God. Eve's mistake was not that she didn't "believe in" God, she didn't believe Him. Righteousness protects our most vital spiritual part, the heart.

Shoes of readiness of the gospel - Prepared and able to bring the gospel to any consideration or confrontation. Putting feet to our faith requires being prepared with the message of the gospel.

The shield of faith - a shield is moved about and used where it is needed most. The Roman shield was heavy leather soaked in water. Our shield must be soaked as in water by the word. When a burning arrow of the devil is shot at us, then we affirm God's promise for that situation.

The helmet of salvation - cross reference to I Thess 5:8 shows that Paul refers to the helmet as the "hope of salvation." Faith is associated with the realm of the heart and hope with the realm of the mind. Therefore, it is fitting that the helmet be the hope of salvation. Scriptural "hope" is more than wishful thinking, it is expectation that grows out of confidence in the promises of God.

The sword of the Spirit - The word of God is to be use as a sharp two-edged sword that can divide the thoughts from the intents of the heart and to separate the soulish from the spiritual (Heb. 4:12) It is mainly intended to be used on ourselves to bring to light the motive behind our actions. The soul and the spirit of man are distinct and separate in the sight of God. If we confuse the two, then we will likely wind up nourishing the soul and neglecting the spirit.

*EPHESIANS 6:18 Pray at all times-on every occasion, in every season-in the Spirit, with all manner of prayer and entreaty. To that end keep alert and watch with strong purpose and perseverance, interceding in behalf of all the saints.*

Pray - How to use the armor to fight the spiritual battle.

At all times - can't let up.

In the Spirit - need help in what and how to pray.

Be alert and watch - know what is going on: many are asleep.

Interceding - pray for each other.

CONCLUSION: Being a part of the Church of the Lord Jesus has great benefit and blessing. However, just as God blessed Abraham and through that blessing he was to be a blessing to

others, we also have a serious responsibility to fulfill the responsibilities that go along with the various concepts of the church. As we walk in the truth and are faithful to our calling, then others will be blessed. If we fail to take part in the benefits and fail to fulfill our responsibility, then we are as those who do not know Christ.