

## We Need the Church

### Acts 20:28-32

Longer passages are not quoted in the study sheet, but they can be read in the accompanying transcript.

Many people think that you can be a good Christian without being a \_\_\_\_\_ of any church. Is church really necessary? Today, we're going to explore what \_\_\_\_\_ says about the church, and you can't afford to miss this study! We know the Lord's way is the best way, the right way, and the holy way of life. The best way to know the Lord's way is to \_\_\_\_\_ the Scriptures. They're God's \_\_\_\_\_ to us today. They were true when the Holy Spirit inspired the apostles and prophets to write them, and they're true for \_\_\_\_\_ time.

When you mention the word "church," people \_\_\_\_\_ in a multitude of ways. Some think of the church as \_\_\_\_\_. Some think of the church as an \_\_\_\_\_. Some think that the church is made up of prejudiced \_\_\_\_\_. Some think the church needs reinventing in a style more like the \_\_\_\_\_ of our times. Everyone seems to think they \_\_\_\_\_ what the church should be like. Even folks who have never read the Bible or haven't entered a church door in many years have an \_\_\_\_\_ about what the church should be.

You've probably noticed that religion in America has \_\_\_\_\_. Many groups have become religious \_\_\_\_\_ venues, and others have become like shopping malls. Some think the primary \_\_\_\_\_ of the church is to cater to my wants and desires. We've become self-centered, thinking Jesus ought to be our \_\_\_\_\_ rather than thinking we ought to be His. It's no wonder some see the church as optional and others as a \_\_\_\_\_ of time. Few want to know what \_\_\_\_\_ envisioned for the church that He built or what place it has in His heart. The Lord never thought of the church as an option; in His eyes it's necessary.

**Our reading today comes from Acts 20:28-32.** Paul is here addressing the elders of the church in Ephesus.

Yes, the Lord Jesus considered the church as \_\_\_\_\_. He wants everyone to be a \_\_\_\_\_ of His church and to \_\_\_\_\_ with the church regularly. The idea that you can be a \_\_\_\_\_ Christian and not be a member of the church is not from the heart of God. When you take a close look at your Bible, the New Testament \_\_\_\_\_ that the church is quite necessary to our relationship with the Lord.

The church that Jesus \_\_\_\_\_ doesn't belong to you or to me; it belongs to the Lord. He built it. After Peter confessed Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, the Lord Jesus said, "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock (that is, the confession Peter made) I will \_\_\_\_\_ My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it" (Matthew 16:18). Yes, Jesus built His church, and not even His \_\_\_\_\_ could prevent it.

The church belongs to the Lord because He \_\_\_\_\_ it. The apostle Paul, by inspiration, told the elders of the church at Ephesus, "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased

with His own \_\_\_\_\_” (Acts 20:28). If Jesus loved the church enough to \_\_\_\_\_ for it, how can we think so little of it? The church must be \_\_\_\_\_ to the Lord.

The Bible reveals how \_\_\_\_\_ related Christ is to the church in Ephesians 1:22-23. The Bible says, “And He (that is, God) put all things in subjection under His feet (that is, Jesus’ feet), and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” Just as your \_\_\_\_\_ is inseparably connected to your body, so Christ is inseparably connected to the church. Just as your body does your will as is conceived in the \_\_\_\_\_, so the church does the will of its head, and that’s Jesus Christ. The church is the \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ. We must never, never \_\_\_\_\_ Christ from His church or the church from Christ.

The church is extremely precious to the Lord; He considers the church as His \_\_\_\_\_. **Read Ephesians 5:25-27.** Jesus has gone to great lengths to \_\_\_\_\_ and to sanctify the church. He wants her to be radiant with \_\_\_\_\_. Jesus \_\_\_\_\_ the church that much.

When people \_\_\_\_\_ the church or make it trivial, they mock and insult Jesus Christ. If you wish to make a man angry, just slander his \_\_\_\_\_. Do you think the Lord Jesus will look kindly on anyone who slanders His \_\_\_\_\_?

I want to \_\_\_\_\_ the church that the Lord Jesus calls His bride from what people today think when they hear the word “church.” What I’m speaking about is the Lord’s church \_\_\_\_\_ in the New Testament. Many religious groups who call themselves “churches” are \_\_\_\_\_ like the New Testament church. They \_\_\_\_\_ in their name, in their organization, in their doctrine, in their mission, and in their worship. They’re often a \_\_\_\_\_ of our culture more than what God intended for the church to be. Some groups have so little \_\_\_\_\_ value and content, it’s no wonder that people see it as unnecessary.

This difference of what we see today and what the Bible teaches \_\_\_\_\_ and causes people to stray from the will of God. More than ever, people need to know the \_\_\_\_\_ revealed in God’s Word about the church. They need to think clearly about what God desires rather than be pulled into a \_\_\_\_\_ hope by something that calls itself church but differs greatly from the church that Jesus built as found in the New Testament. The Scriptures clearly make the church that Jesus built a necessity for us to engage in if we wish to \_\_\_\_\_ God.

Why is the church so necessary? There are several reasons. First, the Lord \_\_\_\_\_ those that He saves to His church. When the Jews at Pentecost heard Peter \_\_\_\_\_, they were pierced to the heart and they wanted to know what to do. Peter replied that they must \_\_\_\_\_ and be \_\_\_\_\_ for the forgiveness of their sins. Acts 2:41 says, “So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.” In verse 47 the Bible says, “And the Lord was \_\_\_\_\_ to their number (that is, to the church) day by day those who were being \_\_\_\_\_.” The Lord forgives us at baptism and adds us to His church. Baptism was that time that they were \_\_\_\_\_ or saved.

When a person is saved, the Lord \_\_\_\_\_ him to His church. To be in the church means the Lord has \_\_\_\_\_ you. The Scriptures never contemplate a person who is saved as a person who hasn’t been baptized or a person who is not in the Lord’s church. The apostle Paul told the church at Colossae, “For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the \_\_\_\_\_ of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1:13-14). Just

as the Lord grants forgiveness when one repents and is baptized, so the Lord adds the baptized to His church. The church is the \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ!

When John wrote to the seven churches of Asia in Revelation 1, he revealed to them what Christ had done for them. The Bible says, “Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our \_\_\_\_\_ by His blood—and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—and to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen” (Revelation 1:4-6).

The book of Revelation addresses people who had come into a kingdom and were \_\_\_\_\_ to God. John taught that “we” Christians “are of God, and the whole world lies in the \_\_\_\_\_ of the evil one” (1 John 5:19). There are but \_\_\_\_\_ kingdoms: the domain of darkness and the kingdom of His beloved Son. To enter the \_\_\_\_\_ is to enter the kingdom of the beloved Son.

The Lord Jesus Himself spoke of the church as a kingdom. **Read what the Lord said in Matthew 16:18-19.** Why would the Lord \_\_\_\_\_ one thing and then give Peter keys to something else if the church is not the Kingdom? He doesn’t do that. The church is the kingdom of God today.

Some may ask, Phil, how do you know that? In Acts 20:28, the Lord Jesus purchased the church with His own \_\_\_\_\_. We have no record anywhere in the New Testament that the blood of Jesus ever purchased anything but the \_\_\_\_\_. The twenty-four elders, however, sang this new song to the Lord Jesus, “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. And you have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth” (Revelation 5:9-10). The same blood didn’t purchase \_\_\_\_\_ different things, no—the church is that blood-bought kingdom.

Second, being in the church means you’re blood-bought, but there’s no promise of being blood-bought to those \_\_\_\_\_ the church. The church contains the \_\_\_\_\_, but the others outside are still in \_\_\_\_\_. The kingdom contains \_\_\_\_\_ to God, but outside there are no priests to God. The Bible says, “Whoever has the Son has life; but whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life” (1 John 5:12) Being in the Lord’s church is \_\_\_\_\_ to our eternal salvation.

Ephesians chapter 2 contrasts the difference between people who are in the \_\_\_\_\_ and outside of Christ from those who come into Christ and His church. The apostle Paul reminds those who came out of paganism at Ephesus of what they had \_\_\_\_\_ they became members of the church, or body of Christ. **Read Ephesians 2:12-13.** In verses 19 to 22, Paul describes them after they became Christians, “So then you are no longer \_\_\_\_\_ and aliens, but you’re fellow \_\_\_\_\_ with the saints, and are of God’s household (His family), having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.” Before, they were strangers without \_\_\_\_\_ and without \_\_\_\_\_. Now, they’re God’s family and fellow citizens in God’s kingdom, the church.

Third, the church is necessary because being in the church means that you are a member of God's \_\_\_\_\_. Paul told Timothy, "but in case I am delayed, I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household (that is, the family) of God, which is the \_\_\_\_\_ of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15). Paul identified the church as God's household or family. The \_\_\_\_\_ of God are in the church. If you claim to be in God's family but say church membership is unnecessary, then you're confused and may be \_\_\_\_\_ yourself.

The very \_\_\_\_\_ that puts you into the family of God is what puts one into the church. Compare these two verses. First, Galatians 3:26-27, "For you are all \_\_\_\_\_ of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were \_\_\_\_\_ into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." Baptism as an act of \_\_\_\_\_ and is what makes us children of God. Second, consider 1 Corinthians 12:13, "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one \_\_\_\_\_, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit." This verse says that we are baptized into the body. Ephesians 1:22-23 taught us that the body of Christ is the \_\_\_\_\_. So, baptism is what makes one a child of God, and baptism is what puts us into the body of Christ, and that is the church.

When we realize the church is God's family, it's the bride of Christ; it's the body of Christ; it is the saved; it is those that were bought by the blood of Jesus, then we can see why the church is so \_\_\_\_\_ in God's eyes. Being a member of the Lord's church is not \_\_\_\_\_. Let me ask you, are you a member of the church that Jesus built? It matters!

Many people claim to be members of the church, but they aren't \_\_\_\_\_. They've \_\_\_\_\_ worshipping at church or supporting it. By their actions they've actually abandoned the church and in that sense they've abandoned the \_\_\_\_\_. The Bible says, "let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as the habit of some, but \_\_\_\_\_ one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near" (Hebrews 10:24-25). The Lord wants us to encourage each other to love and good works and not \_\_\_\_\_ assembling with other Christians. You can't encourage other Christians to stay \_\_\_\_\_ if you quit going to church altogether.

I know some of you can't attend worship because of your \_\_\_\_\_. The Lord understands your situation. But if you can attend, yet \_\_\_\_\_ to forsake meeting with the Lord's church, you're forsaking the Lord, too. The Lord \_\_\_\_\_ His people and knows His church. If you quit serving Him, He knows it. When you stop attending, you also open the door to \_\_\_\_\_ of every kind. To stay spiritually \_\_\_\_\_, stay in church.

To become a member of the church and to be saved, \_\_\_\_\_ with all your heart that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; \_\_\_\_\_ of your sins; \_\_\_\_\_ Jesus Christ as the son of God; and be \_\_\_\_\_. When you're baptized, the blood of Jesus will \_\_\_\_\_ away your sins; he'll cause you to be \_\_\_\_\_ to the church. You'll become a child of God, \_\_\_\_\_ again into His family. If you are a member of the church of Christ but you've stopped attending, my friend, why not come back to the Lord and to the church. Get right with God and do it today.