

THE CHURCH AND ITS CALLING

THE CHURCH: MYSTERY AND GLORY

UNDERSTANDING THE EXTRAORDINARY VALUE OF THE CHURCH

THE EXTRAORDINARY STATUS OF THE CHURCH

And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

EPHESIANS 1.22-23

- ▶ Christ is the “Fullness of Deity in bodily form” (*Colossians 2.9*), for the reconciliation of all things through his blood shed on the cross (*Colossians 1.19-20*), the full payment for all sin (*Hebrews 10.12*).
- ▶ The Church, complete in Christ’s fullness (*Colossians 2.10*), is his body, the visible manifestation of all that he is and all that his fullness encompasses (*Ephesians 1.23*), of which he is the Head (*Colossians 2.19*).

THE APOSTLE PAUL'S PERSPECTIVE ABOUT THE CHURCH

- ▶ He called himself "a servant of the church" (Colossians 1.25)
- ▶ He was jealous for the church (2 Corinthians 11.2)
- ▶ He was a guardian over the church (Acts 20.28-31)
- ▶ He was more than willing to suffer hardship and affliction for the church (Colossians 1.24; 2 Timothy 2.10)
- ▶ The church was his joy and reward in eternity (1 Thessalonians 2.8, 19)

The Apostle Paul lived, breathed, labored, struggled, and suffered for the church.

What shaped his extraordinary passion for the church?

THE PREEMINENCE OF CHRIST

- ▶ He is the visible image of the invisible God—

“the fullness of Deity in bodily form.”

- ▶ He is the One through whom and for whom all things were created.
- ▶ His existence is eternal; his ability is infinite, sustaining all creation.
- ▶ He is first in resurrection—thus becoming first in everything.
- ▶ His death provided an infinite payment for sin and achieved infinite reconciliation for us with God.
- ▶ He is God’s mystery, the *“Word of God in its fullness,”* the *“hope of glory,”* and the One *“in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”*

JESUS CHRIST, THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH

As the Head of the Church—

- ▶ The church is Christ's intention and design.
- ▶ The church is his creation and the work of his hands.
- ▶ The church is all that Jesus lives for: *“ever-living to make intercession.”*
- ▶ The church is loved by Christ as his Bride, for whom he gave his life.
- ▶ Christ is the life, worth, and future of the church.
- ▶ He has made the church his body; without the Head, there is no church; without the church, Christ has no body—no way of being known on earth.

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE HEAD AND THE CHURCH

- ▶ It was this profound eternal truth that fueled the Apostle Paul's passion:
 - to love Christ, is to love his body;
 - to cherish Christ, is to cherish his body;
 - everything done for the body, is done for Christ.
- ▶ There is no such thing as living for Christ and not living for his body; no such thing as loving Christ but not cherishing his body. The two are inseparable. *“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church (Ephesians 5.31.32).*

THE MYSTERY AND GLORY OF THE CHURCH

- ▶ The church is one with Christ; she is him and he is her. She is his visible representation on earth. He has given her everything that he is and has committed his eternal purposes to her (see Ephesians 3.10-11).
- ▶ In all his infinite fullness, he resides within the church; he is her past, present, and future—her hope and wealth. She is his visible representation on earth and he can only be known as she makes him known. She is his glory, revealed and known on earth.
- ▶ Therefore, to love the church—the members of his body—is our highest honor and noblest endeavor; in doing so, we are honoring Christ.