

DOES THE CHURCH HAVE A CHANCE?

Eph. 1, 3

I want you to open your Bibles this morning to the book of Ephesians, chapter 1 and 3. And this morning and also in the morning I want to speak to you on a subject that has been much on my heart and mind lately and a subject ~~xxx~~ to which I think we need to ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ address ourselves to at this point and that subject is dealt with very completely and very thoroughly in the book of Ephesians and so I want us to read first of all in chapter 1 of Eph. - I think we will pick it up at verse 19 ~~z~~ now this is a prayer of the apostle and he is praying that God would open the eyes of these Ephesian believers so that they may know what all they have in Christ Jesus. Verse 19 and I'll read to the end of the chapter. In vs. 19 Paul then says that he is praying that God will open the eyes of believers so that they will appreciate the power that is theirs through the Lord ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ Jesus Christ. Now he says I want your eyes to be opened to the tremendous power that God has made available to us and then he gives us a demonstration of this power. He shows us how this power ~~xxxx~~ in its greatness was demonstrated in the LJC. And he says in v. 20, which he wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and set Him at His right hand in the heavenly places far above all principalities and power and might and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this word but also in that which

Now read me ~~t~~ again the last two verses -- vv 21 and 22 --

Now over in chapter 3, vv 8 through 11 --- Now let me read again vs 10 to the intent that now under the principalities ... by the church or rather through the church, by the agency of the church, the manifold wisdom of God. Now again in chapter 3, vv 20 and 21, ...

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I want to speak to you this morning on this subject DOES THE CHURCH HAVE A CHANCE? Now to listen to a great many people today the answer would be No, and I have been greatly distressed lately that in some of our Christian Life Conferences ~~X~~ and in some of the meetings that I have been in I have heard man so lambast and castigate the church that you'd think the church had seen its day. They consider it to be outmoded and outdated that it has long outlived its usefulness and the only decent ~~XXXXXXXX~~ thing to do, the only smart think to do is just to simply jettison ~~XXX~~ it, get rid of it, abandon it, walk off and leave it and start all over with some new idea - something else. But I want to say to you this morning that while the church is imperfect in its present state and while it is in tremendous need of revival, God has not abandoned His church, and while it is right that we cry loud and point out the sins of God's people and while it is right that we do not close our eyes to the imperfections of that body, yet is is equally right that we love it and that we honor it and that we revere it and that we give it the lofty place in our preaching and in our affection that the NT gives it, regardless of the ^{shape} ~~state~~ it's in, we have no right to treat as hatefully and as spitefully as some are treating it today, and we never, never, under the leadership of God's Spirit, according to the Word of God, never do we have any right to walk off and leave it and abandon it and say, "it's had it, it's seen it's day, we're through with it, it's a hopeless terminal case, we're going over here and do something else outside the church." Does the Church Have A Chance? If I understand the scripture right I would have to say, not only does the church have a chance, it's the only chance the world has is through the church of the Lord Jesus. Now the Bible, and particularly the book of Eph. makes it very clear that God is working out His great

purpose for mankind, by calling men to Christ and by forming in Christ a new redeemed society. And that society is called the church, the church of Jesus Christ. Now that church ~~is~~ used - rather there are 3 figures given to describe this church and these three are found in the book of Eph, it's described as a Body, it's described as a Building, it's described as a Bride. Now the main idea in these figures is that God now has an elect people in the world and that through Him His purpose is being worked out and through them he plans to effect His intention for the whole universe.

Now, the vs that I read to you this morning make it unmistakably and undeniably ~~XXXX~~ clear that God 's purpose for mankind is being ~~filter~~ed through His church. It is through the church of JC that the intention of the whole universe is going to be realized. This means that you and I must fit into that intention. This means that you and I must have the proper view of a proper relationship to the church or else we find ourselves going against the very current of divine and human history.

Now, the church in the NT many times is conceived to be as what has been called the universal church - ~~XX~~ in other words anybody who is saved every blood bought born again believer makes up that mystical body of Christ, the invisible church, the universal church. But also in the NT the emphasis is placed many times on that local congregation, that local church. The universal church always expresses itself in a local church. The invisible church always manifests itself in a ~~XX~~ visible congregation so that one local congregation can be said to be the Body of Christ and to

represent the entire Body of Christ. What I'm saying is this, you cannot say "well I am just going to be a member of the universal church, but I'm not going to be a member of the local church." You cannot scripturally, correctly say I am going to give allegiance and love and service to the invisible church but I'm not going to have anything to do with the visible church, the institutional church, because it's well it's had it and it's imperfect. I want you to understand very clearly that in the NT, the universal always expresses itself in the local, and the invisible always demonstrates itself in the visible. And so what I am saying to you this morning this, is that my relationship and your relationship ~~XXXXXXXX~~ to that local church must be right or else we find ourselves going against the very purpose of God and swimming against the current of divine history.

Now the local congregation has been and always will be the ~~XX~~ growing point in the body and as local congregations increase and grow in health and strength then the whole body of Christ is made stronger. You see the focal point, where the water hits the wheels, where the shoe leather hits the sidewalk, where the purpose of God is put into effect is in that local congregation. DOES THE CHURCH HAVE A CHANCE? Yes, it does have a chance. Now what I want to do this morning is to try to bring us up to a lofty, biblical view of the church of Jesus Christ and I'd like to share with you three reasons why I believe the local church has a chance, why it is the only chance that the world has to ever see God's intention realized in the earth.

Now we are going to take these three passages that I read to you this morning and we are going to see that each one of these deals with a subject that insures the survival and the strategic position of the church of JC.

First, the church does have a chance because

IT IS THE RECIPIENT OF THE POWER OF GOD

In other words, God has chosen the church to be the means whereby He demonstrates and localizes and releases His power. Let's look again at the first chapter, vv 21, 22, 23, let's go back to verse 20. He says "which He wrought in Christ." Now the subject is the Power that works ~~XXXX~~ in believers. Notice what He says, "which He wrought in Christ" What did He do? #1 He raised Him from the dead, that was the first demonstration of the power of God, He raised Him from the dead. Secondly, He exalted Him and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places far above all principalities,,,,, All things in that exaltation have been brought into subjection to Him. And #3 -- notice this -- this is a demonstration of the power of God, and gave Him to be the Head over all things through the church which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. Now ~~the~~ tremendous things are said concerning the church of Jesus Christ at this point. Notice -- #1, first of all, He says that Christ is given to the church, Christ is ~~given~~ given to the church. In vs. 22, "and hath put all things under his feet and GAVE Him the head over all things to the church. Christ is seen in some way as God's gift to the church. What an amazing outstanding statement, this exalted, sovereign, supreme Christ is God's gracious gift to the church. In other words, friends, the church has been endowed. And there is nothing that will insure the stability and the steadfastness of an institution as an endowment. I was reading just the other day where some foundation, some institution had been ~~daved~~ because a very wealthy person had left an endowment to it. That institution had been endowed. In other words, its survival was no longer dependent on its own ability but rather somebody from the outside with unlimited resources, with unlimited ability had endowed that institution, so now its survival and its steadfastness depended not upon ~~X~~ its own ability but

now it depended upon the ability of its benefactor. Now listen to what Paul is saying - that God took this Lord Jesus Christ, He raised Him from the dead, He exalted Him above all things, every power that is name in heaven and earth, He has exalted Jesus above all that, He has brought all things under His feet and when He did that then, He gave this Christ, this resurrected, this glorified, this exalted, this reigning, sovereign, supreme Christ, He gave Him to the church. This church has a chance because it has been endowed by God's gracious gift and this endowment has unlimited authority, unlimited power, and it sits today at the right hand of the majesty on high. First of all, God gave Christ to the church.

Secondly, notice Christ is given to the church as Head. Again in v. 22 -- and hath put all things under ~~XXX~~ His feet and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the church which is His Body. Now this particular figure of speech, the Head and the body is one of Paul's favorite ways of describing the church and its relationship to the Lord. The church is the body, Christ is the Head. Now what is significance of this picture? Three words come to mind that I want to share with you. The first word is DERIVATION. DERIVATION. In other words, Christ as the Head is the life of the church and the church derives its life from its head. The church enjoys a derived life, and it derives that life, not -- here again, not from ~~xxxxxxx~~ its own ability to propagate itself and to reproduce itself, but it derives its life from the Lord Jesus Christ. Now I've already said I agree, I agree that the church, in many instances, is in bad shape and in desperate need of revival but I want to say something - the life of the church, now listen carefully, the life of the church does not come from its members, the life of the church does not come from new structure and new programs, and new ideas. The life of the church comes from the Lord Jesus, Himself, now I'm not saying that we ought not to have new programs, new ideas, new structures, but folks those aren't the problems. Experimental church is very popular

and that's fine, but I want to tell you something. I've seen revival come to ~~XXXXX~~ ~~traditionally~~ structured churches just as easily as it can come to an experimentally structured church and I'm afraid that sometimes we look at the church and we see how powerless it is, how weak it is, how sick it appears to be, and we say, well the solution is to get a new structure. You know, we have had this old traditional structure for so long and it will breathe new life into the body, it can renew the church if we can just change the structure and if we'll somehow rearrange the people and change what we call the SS and change what we call this, and change what we call these people, and if we can get everybody doing this and everybody doing this and restructure the whole thing. A new concept of ministry, a new concept of structure, this will bring renewal and revival to the church. Well I just want to say, it will not. It will not. Friend, the life of the church, derives not from structure, not from people, not from programs, doesn't even derive from the members discovering their spiritual gifts -- it derives from its Head, and Christ is the Head of the church. Now I want to tell you something, if the church wants to be renewed, if the church wants to be revived it needs to get right with its Head. The body needs to get aligned with its Head, there needs to be an adjustment made between the body and the Head, and the body needs to seek the Head and to obey the Head and fall in love with the Head and begin honoring the Head ~~XXXXXXXX~~ and the Head itself will bring life and renewal and revival to the body. Jesus Christ is the Head of the church, He is the Head of the church, and this means DERIVATION. The church DERIVES its life from the LJ.

The second word is DIRECTION. Now this has to do with leading. Leadership. The church not only derives its life from the Head, which is Jesus, but also its leading is directed by the Head, this means that the church is to follow its Lord and it is to be in absolute X submission to the direction of the Lord. And as the Head leads, as the Head speaks, as the

Head utters its commands, then the church finds its leading, then the church finds its way. Listen, the church is, in many instances, lost, and many people are saying the church has lost its way~~X~~ and its lost its purpose and it doesn't know what it exists for-- well, where are you going to find that direction? -- from the LJC, He gives us our direction and when the lines of communion and communication are kept open between the church and the Lord, between the Body and the Head, He will give us our leading, He will give us our direction.

The third word is DOMINATION. The fact of His Lordship. Christ is Head, He is head of the Body -- that means he is to be an unrivaled LordXXX in every situation. Now, this you see, insures the survival of the church