

Figures of The Church

The Church is seen as living stones, as members of His body,
and as of a household.

Written by Dr. Edward Watke

The Spirit of God makes much of the church during this dispensation of grace. It is the living organism which the Father has left on the earth to carry out His work and will. It is the Church Christ died for, the Holy Spirit indwells and empowers, and the Father uses to finish the work His Son began.

The local church is the “*church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.*” (I Timothy 3:15). The church is an assembly of faithful people, who know the truth, believe it, avow it, adhere to it and practice it. There will always be tares which look the part, but are not wheat. (See Matthew 13:37-43) Those truly His are summoned out of the world to serve God by grace, through the Holy Spirit’s power.

There are seven figures of speech in the Word of God show the vital relationship between Christ and His saved ones, His saints. These figures give us different pictures of what the Church is because of what His saints are. Each one of these seven give some distinct relationship, some vital truth of Christ and His church. We want to look at some of these in this section that we might know how to behave ourselves in the house of God. (II Tim. 3:15)

Questions for Discussion:

1. Why are the saved pictured as living stones in I Peter 2:5?
 2. Since we are in the household of God, because of salvation in Christ, what does it mean that we are a part of HIS house?
 3. What do you think this means when you compare this with being a part of your earthly father’s house?
 4. What does it mean that we are a part of His body?
-

I. WE ARE LIVING STONES. (I Peter 2:4-6)

To help us understand what the Church is like God calls us “living stones.” (Pardon the subject being dealt with here again.) We are put into a spiritual edifice in which Christ is the “Chief Cornerstone,” and we are mutually dependent upon one another as the stones in a building are a part of the whole and need each other.

1. We Are To Be Stones of Witness.

They heaped up stones at the bank of the river Jordan after marching across the river at flood stage. (Joshua, chapter three) The stones were to be a witness of God’s power and ability to deliver and lead them. This was a memorable event. In a similar way we are to be living stones of witness of God’s ability to save and to lead us.

2. We Are To Be Stones of Service. (I Peter 2:5)

God speaks of us as living stones, not dead ones. Our lives and the life of the church ought to manifest life, and service. We are to be fervent in our service. (Rom.

12:3-21) As a church we are here to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God in Christ Jesus.

3. We Are To Be Stones of Strength.

Stones speak of strength, permanence, unmovableness and solidarity. God desires that the saved working together in the local church become a powerhouse of strength so that many will come to salvation.

II. WE ARE GOD'S HOUSEHOLD.

The Scriptures speak of the "Church of the living God as the house of God." (See I Tim. 3:15.) It is the house Christ purchased with His blood, over which Christ reigns -- God's household. When we speak of someone living in his house, or the household of any man, we are talking about the place where he is home in his house, where he is master.

1. It Is the Place of God's Dwelling.

It is His house, He resides there. The Church of God, made up of individuals, is the place of God's dwelling; He is in the midst of His house, His church. God said, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them...." (See II Corinthians 6:16-18.)

We are built up a spiritual house. This could not speak of each saint individually, but of a collective group. Remember Peter was writing to a local churches in certain locations which were scattered abroad. (See I Peter 2:5.)

2. It Is the Place of God's Manifestation.

A house is known as the place where a certain person dwells, or a number of people dwell. The individual is at home there for it is his own house. It is at home that the master of the house shows forth his true self, for there he manifests his heart, soul, and concerns.

God is more gloriously manifested among His people than in all His other works. There, in His Church, He reveals Himself like no other place. There the purpose of His will is to be fulfilled, and His power if manifested to that end.

3. It Is the Place of God's Rule.

In his own house a father shows forth his paternal rule. In the Church of the Living God, the Father expects to rule over His own. Having placed all things under the Son, the Father expects that in all things Christ will have the preeminence. (See Ephesians 3:21; Colossians 1:18)

4. It is the Place of the Fulfillment of God's Choicest Purposes.

In and for his own house a man works, spends money, plans, dreams, and executes those dreams. So the Father who rules over all things designs His providence for His own, for the local church, according to the eternal purpose and for His glory.

The Church, the Bride of Christ, is the living organism which God the Father destined to use during this age as His blood-bought institution to give forth the message of the Gospel.

III. WE ARE MEMBERS OF HIS BODY.

1. **The Head of the Body** (Consider Ephesians 1;22; 4:15; 5:23; Colossians 1:18; study I Corinthians 12:12-26.)

Christ is the head, but He is dependent upon the body, as our physical head is dependent upon our bodies. There is a mutual dependency one upon the other as the head and body are organically one so that each fulfill the vital needs of the other.

So it is our union as a Church with Christ, the Head that makes the difference. As head He ministers to the body, and as the body, we are to minister to and carry out the directives of the Head. The head is the intelligent director of the body, the authority to the body, and furnishes it with the will and force for action obedience. This is true in both the physical and in the spiritual realms.

2. **The Unity of the Body** (I Corinthians 12:12)

The ear has one operation, the eye another, the hand another, and yet in all this diversity there is unity. The whole body functions as one; and so it is to be in the body of Christ. The whole body is to function as one though it has many members.

This is what God expects of the body, His Church. What is true of the physical body and its many members should be true of God's church. The body having many members is to function as one body.

3. **The Entrance Into the Body** (I Corinthians 12:13)

We are born of God and baptized into the body of Christ. As we are baptized by one Spirit into the household of God, so we are given entrance into that body.

There is but one baptism, but many fillings. We are baptized into God's family but once, which give us place. The filling of the Holy Spirit gives us strength to fill that place.

4. **The Harmony of the Body** (I Corinthians 12:14-26)

It is easy for any church or its members to fall into sins of either envy or of despising one another.

- The problem of envy is seen in verses 14-20. If the foot were as sensitive about the prominence of the hand as some Christians are sensitive, there would be a schism in the body.
- The foot is in a lowly place and the hand is in a prominent, exalted place of exposure. Some Christians may feel they are in a lowly place and are very envious of others.

Note: God has set us in the body as it pleases Him. We do not choose our place. If we do not fill our place, no one else can do it for us. And we and others are the losers. Don't belittle or demean the sphere of service God has given you. Don't covet the place others may fill. Don't desire to be someone else.

- In verses 21-26, we have a case of the greater despising the lesser. The eyes have need of the ears, etc., there must be harmonious cooperation of the lesser and the greater.

Note: As there is a remarkable adaptation of the human body, each part complementing and compensating for its many parts, so in Christian love there ought to be an adaptation among the members of the church, walking together in harmonious service.

5. **The Charity of the Body** (I Corinthians 12:25, 26; chapter 13)

Do we give the same care to all God's people? Are some given preferential treatment? The good or the ill of one member becomes the pleasure or the pain of all

members. When one suffers all suffer; when one rejoices all ought to rejoice. All of us should feel the pain of the broken hearted, the fallen and the needy.

Applications:

I am writing to saved folks. All of us ought to realize that we are members of the body of Christ individually and collectively. We are members in particular, and therefore have a private and personal relationship with the Lord as well as a relationship with the whole.

If we would apply all the foregoing points and the Church would recognize the need of a walk together in harmonious, dedicated effort, much would be accomplished.

When the visible members recognize the headship of the invisible Head, Christ, and He is allowed to indeed be Head, then in subjection to Him we will enjoy greater victory and fruitfulness.

We are to be the instruments of His manifestation here upon the earth as He does His will through the local church.