

Seven Pillars of the Christian Church

LET US PRAY!

When we speak of Apologetics, we are speaking about the reasoned defense of our core beliefs. For Christians that means the reasoned defense of Christianity itself. Some would have us believe that is the job of Theologians, Pastors, intellectuals and not for the common man. The Bible says otherwise:

1 Peter 3:15-16 AMP - ***¹⁵ But in your hearts set Christ apart [as holy—acknowledging Him, giving Him first place in your lives] as Lord. Always be ready to give a [logical] defense to anyone who asks you to account for the hope and confident assurance [elicited by faith] that is within you, yet [do it] with gentleness and respect. ¹⁶ And see to it that your conscience is entirely clear, so that every time you are slandered or falsely accused, those who attack or disparage your good behavior in Christ will be shamed [by their own words].***

First Peter is a general letter to the known churches that are under great persecution. Instead of throwing a pity party, he extols the joy, 1 Peter 1:3 and 2:9, 2:24 of being fellow believers. Then he directs the body of believers every one of them to be ready to defend their faith, this is Apologetics 101.

Considering the volumes of materials written on the subject of Apologetics I have chosen to speak on one topic alone today, that of the **Defending the Christian Church**, and I will use Paul's letter to the **Ephesians Chapter 4**, but before turning there I think it prudent to establish the biblical need for the church and church membership. After all, why bother defending something if you do not feel it is important?

Let me start by reading a quote from **A.W. Tozer** here he is referring to **John 2:16** which reads ***"Get these things out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!" Please keep this in mind as we cover today's sermon.***

***Christianity to the average evangelical church member** is simply an avenue to a good and pleasant time, with a little biblical devotional material thrown in for good measure!*

I hope I do not live to see the day when God has to turn from men and women who have heard His holy truth and have played with it, fooled with it, and equated it with fun and entertainment and religious nonsense!

The church has become a religious theater where amateur entertainers are paid to amuse those who attend.

*In many churches, **Christianity has been watered down** until the solution is so weak, that . . .*

***if it were poison — it would not hurt anyone; and
if it were medicine — it would not cure anyone!***

There are far too many scripture verses for me to expound upon or even list in detail, that clearly show the need for the church body and church membership. Probably the most quoted is [Hebrews 10:25](#), do not forsake the assembly of ourselves together..., [Acts 2:37-47](#) the call to the first church in Jerusalem, or even [1 Corinthians 12:21-26](#), which is a perfect description of the body working in unison.

Maybe the best verse for defending the church and church membership comes from [Hebrews 13:17](#), (AMP) ***Obey your [spiritual] leaders and submit to them [recognizing their authority over you], for they are keeping watch over your souls and continually guarding your spiritual welfare as those who will give an account [of their stewardship of you]. Let them do this with joy and not with grief and groans, for this would be of no benefit to you.***

Whom is it we are to obey if not Pastors or Elders and if they are they not Shepherds of churches? Why else would they be giving an account of their stewardship, the Latin Vulgate says: ***"for they watch, as those that must give an account for your souls"***

In addition to the scriptural references mentioned historically, church writings have supported the notion of a Holy Apostolic Church, made up of saints in membership. Documents such as the Belgic Confession, Westminster Catechism, the London Baptist Confession of 1689, and many other documents all support this. I encourage you to familiarize yourself with these.

As I said my main focus will come from Ephesians 4 so please turn there with me now:

I will be reading from the KJV this time for Poetic Simplicity:
Let us read God's Holy Word:

4 I, therefore, the **prisoner** of the Lord, beseech you that ye **walk worthy** of the **vocation** wherewith ye are called,

2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

4 There is **one body**, and **one Spirit**, even as ye are called in **one hope** of your calling;

5 **One Lord, one faith, one baptism,**

6 **One God** and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

Before I move on to the meat of the matter, let me point out a few things in **v.1**.

Paul reiterates his status as a **prisoner of the Lord**, **see 3:1**, this I am convinced is intentional. Paul can with little argument be called the greatest author of the New Testament, yet calls himself a slave to Christ. He humbles himself so Christ can be glorified.

Secondly, note that Paul says they/we the church body is to **walk worthy...** What is meant by this? How are we to walking worthy, John MacArthur in his Strength for Today Devotional said: **Just as organizations have rules their members must follow, God has standards Christians must live by.**

My Third Point here is that we as true believers are **called by God** to the church. This is not common grace that all can experience this is a special grace, under the urging of the Holy Spirit you are called from darkness to light, out of sins bondage to freedom, from the conversation and company of sinners to the fellowship of saints under the care of a shepherd.

Lastly, look at the use of the word **vocation**. If you look at most commentaries they skip over this point, I think it should be emphasized. We as a people were **put on this earth to work**, even in the Garden we were to work, **Genesis 2:15 "And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it."** We do not abdicate that duty at the church doors and turn it over to elders and deacons. Church members should be working members.

Okay that is my introduction I have seven points that I promise to get through quickly 😊

Paul in verses 4-6 tells us seven things that every church needs to have I will look at each one in turn.

I. v.4 There Is One Body – The Holy Catholic church, here meaning universal church and as described in the Apostles Creed. It comprises all the “true saints” from the past to the future coming of Christ. 1 Cor 15:23 tells us that Christ is the first fruit of the church and all who follow are his.

This is the first pillar of the church and I am convinced Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit put it first for good reason. Turn back in your bibles with me a few pages to Ephesians 2. Paul writes to the church at Ephesus to handle a lack of unity between the Jews and the Gentiles. Here in **Chapter 2:1-3**, he reminds them:

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;

² Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

³ Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

At one time we are all dead in our sinfulness to God and in need of a Savior.

Then in **2:10-22**, he reminds them that **God, unites all peoples, Jews, and Gentiles under the banner of the cross in the temple of the church as NEW CREATURES in Christ.** How sad, some are sitting in churches just like this who will face the terrible news of Matthew 7:21-23 where Christ says He never knew them.

II. Continuing in v.4, we see There Is One Spirit – My friends there is not one Spirit for Juan and one for Juanita, the Holy Spirit indwells ALL true believers. **Romans 8:9 and 1 Corinthians 6:19.**

9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

This Spirit that indwells every true believer is also the same that **Matthew Henry** says that the church is: ***animated by one Spirit, the same Holy Spirit who by his gifts and graces quickens, enlivens, and governs that body {the church}.***

Listen, I am confused enough on my own accord I do not need a bunch of different “spirits” trying to tell me what to do. I like How **Hodge comments** on this: *As the human body is one because pervaded by one soul; so the body of Christ is one because it is pervaded by one and the same Spirit, who dwelling in all is a common principle of life. All sins against unity, are, therefore, sins against the Holy Spirit (He notes: But this is NOT the unpardonable sin!). They divide that which he binds together. Our relation to Christ as members of his body; and our relation to the **Holy Spirit Who is our life** (Jn 6:63) (Ephesians 4 Commentary - Hodge's Commentary on Romans, Ephesians and First Corinthians)* (Bolding added)

III. Continuing in v.4, Paul writes, There Is One Hope – Hope is what fuels the Christian faith. Let me repeat that **Hope is what fuels the Christian faith.**

Everyone has hopes of some sort or another. **Hope** as the world typically defines it is a desire for some future occurrence of which one is not assured of attaining. The ancient world did not generally regard **hope** as a virtue, but merely as a temporary illusion. Historians tell us that a great cloud of **hopelessness** covered the ancient world. Philosophies were empty. Traditions were disappearing. Religions derived by man's warped imagination were powerless to help men face either life or death. People longed to pierce the veil and get some message of hope from the other side, a message that can be ultimately found only in the Cross of Christ.

Hope (1680) (**elpis**/ el-pese) in Scripture is not the world's definition of "I **hope** so", with a few rare exceptions (e.g., Acts 27:20.) **Hope** is defined as a desire for some future good with the expectation of obtaining it. **Hope** is confident expectancy. **Hope** is looking forward to something with some reason for confidence respecting fulfillment. (https://www.preceptaustin.org/ephesians_44-6)

What else but eternal Hope would allow men and women to be persecuted even unto death and not budge from their faith. We have what all others have not, it is that **hope of Glory** that God has made known to us **Colossians 1:27 To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:** and that Paul said I am paraphrasing **if all we had was a tied up in this world we were most miserable of men** (1 Corinthians 15:19).

IV. Moving to v.5, There Is One Lord – The fourth thing that Paul settles here is the question of who is in charge and it is not him. Nor any ordinary man for that matter. Only Christ Jesus Himself is worthy to be **Lord of Lords**.

Here in v.5, we find the Greek word koo'-ree-as for Lord:

1. he to whom a person or thing belongs, about which he has the power of deciding; master, lord
 - a. the possessor and disposer of a thing
 1. the owner; one who has control of the person, the master
 2. in the state: the sovereign, prince, chief, the Roman emperor
 - b. is a title of honor expressive of respect and reverence, with which servants greet their master
 - c. **this title is given to God, the Messiah**

Augustine made a powerful statement regarding Jesus as Lord writing that - **Jesus Christ will be Lord of all or He will not be Lord at all.** Many in modern culture want what I have termed **Burger King Theology**, they want God their way. Of course, this is an Unbiblical Worldview.

Why is this, the Lordship of Christ, so important to the church? Turn back with me to **Ephesians 1:22 (AMP)** **And He ^lput all things [in every realm] in subjection under Christ's feet, and ^lappointed Him as [supreme and authoritative] head over all things in the church,** so okay great Christ is in charge, but hold on there is more to the story, read **verse 23** with me, **which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills and completes all things in all [believers].** We complete the body of Christ, just as he completes us.

John Gill comments on this:

the fulness of him that filleth all in all;

besides the personal fullness which Christ has as God, and his fulness of ability and fitness for his work as Mediator, and his dispensatory fullness, which dwells in him for the use of his people, the church is his relative fulness, which fills him, and makes up Christ mystical; and which is filled by him, and is complete in him: and then will the church appear to be Christ's fulness, when all the elect, both Jews and Gentiles, shall be gathered in; and when these are all filled with the grace designed for them...

filleth all in all;

... he fills the various societies of his saints with members and with officers; and these with the gifts and graces of his Spirit, suitable to their place and station; he fills all and every one of the saints, all the vessels of mercy, whether greater or lesser, all sorts of them, of larger or meaner capacities; he fills all the powers and faculties of their souls, their hearts with joy, their minds with knowledge, their consciences with peace, their wills with spiritual desires, submission and resignation, and their affections with love to himself and people: in short, he fills

them with all grace and goodness, and the fruits of righteousness; and so makes them meet for usefulness here, and for happiness hereafter...

Few have heard of **James Smith, he preceded C.H. Spurgeon at the London Metropolitan Tabernacle** but his words ring true today just as they did when they were written over 160 years ago on Christ's Lordship:

Excerpt from The Headship of Christ. James Smith, 1860

Various are the figures selected by the Holy Spirit, to represent and set forth the connection which exists between Christ and his people.

If the Church is the temple of the living God — then Christ is the entire foundation, and the beautiful stone, which at each corner, unites and binds the whole building together.

If the Church is a tree — then Christ is the root and trunk, which supplies every part with nourishment and strength.

If the Church is a kingdom — then Christ is the King and Lawgiver, who rules and governs the whole.

And, if the Church is compared to a body — then Christ is the living and life-giving head. He is head over all things for the good of the Church, thrones, and dominions, and principalities, and powers, being made subject unto him; he is head of the Church, as he represents, rules, and supplies her.

Christ stands in the closest and most endearing relation to his Church. "He is the head of the body, the Church." Every member is closely and vitally united to him. Each and all are absolutely dependent upon him. Each member is interested in all that Christ is, and in all that Christ has. The whole body is the object of his tender and watchful care. His Church is called his fullness and his glory. As the head, he cannot be complete without each and every one of his members. At his second coming, he will come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all those who believe.

The Church, therefore, stands in the most important relation to Christ; she "is the body, the fullness of him who fills all in all." Jesus as her head rules her, not only by his laws — but by his love.

V. Continuing in v.5, There Is One Faith – There has been some scholarly debate over the years as to what is the meaning of "one Faith." **Martin Lloyd-Jones** in his magnum opus on Ephesians after a lengthy discussion of the two possible interpretations of **one faith** concludes *"that it refers to the very essence of the Gospel (see the related study of "the faith"), that which the Apostles were specifically called to preach in their work of evangelism. It is indeed the great message of the Gospel concerning salvation, or justification by faith only. I suggest that the only possible and satisfactory exposition of this term 'one faith' is to say that the Apostle is referring to justifying faith; and that this is not only the*

'one faith' but also the only faith". ([Lloyd-Jones, D. M. Exposition of Ephesians in 8 Vol. Baker Book](#))

Let me ask you, have you ever been confronted by someone who said to you well that is just your opinion? Maybe it was about Abortion, Same-Sex unions, Separation of Church and State, or some other hot topic the left does not want us talking about. They will accuse you of being dogmatic. Well, I am here to tell you the most dogmatic man to ever walk the earth was Jesus Christ. Need proof, study John 14:6 (AMP) **Jesus said to him, "I am the [only] Way [to God] and the [real] Truth and the [real] Life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.** It does not get more dogmatic than that. It is the definitive statement on the Christian Faith, the only way to God is through Faith in Christ PERIOD. No exception, no variations no waivers. Come judgment day the maximum effective range of an excuse will be zero meters.

The good news is that we, that is truly born-again believers, share a common faith (Jude 3, Titus 1:4) all focused on our Lord and Savior.

VI. The last pillar Paul points out in Verse v.5 is, [There Is One Baptism](#) –

First let me establish that neither Paul nor I am in any way suggesting that Baptism is a requirement for Salvation. Again deferring to **M.L. Jones:**

We must not say that baptism in any shape or form is vital and essential to salvation, and that a man cannot be saved unless he is baptized. This, for the good and sufficient reason that there have undoubtedly been excellent Christians among the Quakers, the early Quakers in particular, and members of the Salvation Army today, and others. Take the case of the thief dying on the cross by the side of our Lord. Surely no-one doubts his salvation, his conversion, his regeneration; yet he was not baptized. There have been others who have come to see the truth on their death-beds and have never been baptized. Baptism is not essential to salvation; so the Apostle cannot have been emphasizing the rite in and of itself...But it is more important that we should realize that these are simply outward representations of an inner and unseen spiritual grace... Baptism therefore represents and signifies our being put into the realm and into the sphere and into the influence of the Lord Jesus Christ. ([Lloyd-Jones, D. M. Exposition of Ephesians in 8 Vol. Baker Book](#) or [Logos Version](#)) (Bolding added)

Nor is this Baptism that my Pentecostal friends have asked many times about, 'have you been baptized by the Holy Spirit? They seemed shocked when I respond, Of course, all true believers have and lay a little Scripture on them:

12 For as the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. 1 Corinthians 12:12-13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

The mark of a true Christian is that he has been **"Baptized by the Holy Spirit"** not unto some strange speech or act but of Gracious acts for the glory of God. Too

many churches "baptize" anyone and everyone" who professes salvation. This is tantamount to heresy.

Spurgeon called it **Baptizing deadheads?**

Too many church members do very little for Jesus! It is frightfully true that numbers of professors are just so many baptized dead heads! They are of no use. They are not working. Perhaps grumbling is the only sign of life they have. But they are neither giving of their substance nor laying out any other talents in the cause of Christ.

VII. V.6, There Is One God – The final pillar number seven is Paul's emphasis on **One God**. Here again, it is far too often a practice of the naysayers to use this verse to say see there is no such thing as the Trinity. Of course, they are forgetting basic Greek 101. God here in v.6 is **theh'-os** which means:

1. a god or goddess, a general name of deities or divinities
2. the Godhead, trinity
 - a. God the Father, the first person in the trinity
 - b. Christ, the second person of the Trinity
 - c. Holy Spirit, the third person in the trinity
3. spoken of the only and true God
 - a. refers to the things of God
 - b. his counsels, interests, things due to him

Hodge writes- *As the church is one because pervaded by one Spirit, and because it is owned and governed by one Lord, so it is one because it has one God and Father; one glorious Being to whom it sustains the twofold relation of creature and child. This God is not merely over us, as afar off, but through all and in us all, i.e. pervading and filling all with his sustaining and life-giving presence.* ([Ephesians 4 Commentary - Hodge's Commentary on Romans, Ephesians and First Corinthians](#))

I would like to close with these thoughts:

Spurgeon writing on the matter of church - *If there were two lords, you might be divided into two parties; if there were two faiths, you might split up into two sections; if there were two baptisms, you might be right in having two denominations; if there were two fathers, there might be two families; if there were two indwelling spirits, there would be, and there must be, two sorts of people; but, in the true Church of Jesus Christ, there is "one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."*

A unified church we may conclude, therefore, is an indispensable part of Christendom.

Second, 1 Corinthians 3:17 says: - *If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.*

There is a two-fold message implied therein, first, it is obvious that we are the temple of the living God and should treat ourselves, that is our bodies as such. But the lesser understood message is that we are to DEFEND that temple both our bodies and the church from those who would invade and destroy it. That is Apologetics, that is why Christ said **Matthew 10:34** *Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.*

My friends we are at war, the enemy is, of course, Satan and his minion, the culture that sees us as fools, family, and friends that will disown us. But as Paul said in **2 Timothy 4:7**, we must fight the good fight, and our best offense is a good defense, that defense being an **Apologist for the Faith**.

Let Us Pray