MEMBERSHIP HAS ITS PRIVILEGES

(Ephesians 1:3)

I. The privilege of forgiveness of sins.
   a. If there is anything that weighs on people that claim to be religious, it is the idea that they don’t know if their sins are forgiven or not.
   b. The thought that one might not be forgiven is something that haunts people.
   c. I believe Calvinism has had more to do with this than any other false religious idea out there.
   d. Those who are in the body of Christ know their sins have been forgiven and that any sins committed after being added to the body can be forgiven as well.
   e. Forgiveness of sins only comes through Jesus Christ (Acts 13:38).
      i. It is through the name of Jesus only that one can obtain salvation.
   f. How is that possible?
      i. The forgiveness of sins comes through or by the blood of Jesus (Ephesians 1:7).
      ii. It is the blood of Jesus that has the power to remove our sins from us (Revelation 1:5).
   g. The question then becomes: when does the blood of Jesus wash away our sins?
      i. There is only one action mentioned in connection with the washing away of sins.
      iii. Baptism is the only act ever mentioned that washes away sins.
      iv. Prayer, crying, belief, or any other thing is never mentioned in connection with the washing away of sins: only baptism.
   h. Notice again Ephesians 1:3, 7.
      i. All spiritual blessings are in Christ.
      ii. Forgiveness of sins is in Christ.
      iii. The only way to be in Christ is to be baptized into Christ (Galatians 3:27).
   i. Once one is in Christ, baptism is never needed again, only the confession and repentance of sin is needed (1 John 1:9).
      i. It is still the blood of Jesus that cleanses us of the sin (1 John 1:7).
      ii. But we do not need to be continually baptized when we sin.
   j. Those outside the body of Christ, the church, do not enjoy this great privilege.
      i. Those who aren’t in Christ are described as being dead in sins (Ephesians 2:5).
      ii. One can only be made alive in Christ and that comes with membership in the Lord’s church.

II. The privilege of fellowship.
   a. The English word fellowship is found 14 times in the New Testament.
b. The Greek word most often translated fellowship is found 20 times.
   i. It is also translated distribution, communicate, communication, communion, and contribution.
   ii. All of them indicate the idea of joint-participation in something.

c. In English, fellowship is defined as: friendly relationship; companionship; community of interest, feeling, etc.; communion, as between members of the same church, friendliness, an association of persons having similar tastes, interests, etc.

d. The Greek word, as mentioned, indicates the idea of joint-participation in something.
   i. However, it is deeper than just doing something together.
   ii. It carries the idea of intimacy, or deep knowledge of the parties involved.
   iii. There is a closeness between those who are involved in this type of participation.

e. John, the inspired apostles, tells us that we have fellowship with one another but also with the Father and the Son (1 John 1:3).

f. He then tells us that this fellowship is maintained by walking in the light (1 John 1:7).

g. It is far more than just eating a meal together.

h. This fellowship is only possible by being together with God the Father and God the Son through obedience to the gospel.
   i. Notice 1 Corinthians 1:9 – God called us into fellowship with Jesus.
   ii. How does God call us (2 Thessalonians 2:14).

i. When we hear and obey the gospel call sent out by God through His word, we enter into a fellowship with all those who have done the same and with deity, Who sent out the invitation to fellowship with them.

j. This fellowship is enjoyed in different ways.
   i. It is enjoyed together in the sense of being together in worship (Acts 2:42).
   ii. It is enjoyed together as Christians and with deity in our partaking of the communion (1 Corinthians 10:16).
   iii. It is enjoyed together through helping minister unto others (2 Corinthians 8:4).

k. Being a member of the body of Christ, His church, allows us to have a tremendous fellowship with our brethren and with the Godhead.

l. Those outside the body of Christ, the church (Colossians 1:18), do not enjoy this great privilege.

III. The privilege of a future that is bright.
   a. One of the questions that all need answered is “Where am I going?”.
   b. Membership in the church of Christ gives one the confidence to be able to answer that question.
c. Jesus gave His apostles this great hope (John 14:1-3).
   i. Jesus promised them and us that He was going to prepare a place for all
      of us.
   ii. At some point, He promises to come back to allow us to be with Him
       where He now is.

d. There is the great picture of how Jesus will return, found in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-
   17.

e. The Hebrews writer says that those to whom he was writing had allowed
   themselves the loss of earthly goods because they had in heaven a better and an
   everlasting substance (Hebrews 10:34).

f. Peter told his readers that there was a placed reserved in heaven for them.

g. Being a member of the body of Christ allows us to know the bright future that
   awaits us in heaven.

h. Those outside the body of Christ, His church, do not enjoy this great privilege.

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