

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.
 - ii. Acts 4:12.
- 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.
 - ii. Acts 22:16.
 - 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 place 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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