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**SERIES: EKKLESIA**

**TITLE: WHAT THE CHURCH IS TO BE!**

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What the church is to be!

In week 1 of our series on the Church, we spoke about the EKKLESIA! How it originated; who its chief architect is; who it is made up of etc.

Today we are going to speak about; WHAT IT IS TO BE!

If it is God's idea to have a church, He has a very definite plan with it. He always has a purpose for what He brings into being. It's never going to be expensive China, hidden behind a glass cabinet, just for display purposes. He always intends for it to be of use.

### **THE CHURCH IS TO BE UNITED.**

**Jn 17:11** Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me that they may be one as We are.

This prayer of Christ is practical and prophetic. He saw the divisions that would come in Christendom and prayed for a Church that would be in unity in and with itself. Unity is one of the most powerful forces in earth, whether for good or evil.

In our day and age, we have various denominations. These are as a result of historical events. We also have denominations based on doctrinal lines. People group together because they have a leaning towards certain understandings of the Scriptures. Some years ago and perhaps in some circles today it would still be the case, where folk had endless discussions on the validity of expression of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The age of the apostolic outpouring. Power gifts as some would say.

Let me suggest that those divisions are of the flesh. Often those differences disappear like mist before the sun when the church faces some kind of crisis or threat.

In the eighties and early nineties when our Country faced a crisis. When the townships were going up in flames; when young people lost their lives at the hands

of angry mobs; when business SA faced international sanctions; when interest rates were sky high and we faced bankruptcy, when SA was on the brink of civil war Church folk from all different backgrounds, denominational backgrounds, cultural backgrounds- crossed the imaginary lines of division, got together in unity and prayed. And God saved SA. In his book, "A WITNESS FOREVER", Michael Cassidy eloquently describes the role the Christian church played preventing major bloodshed in SA

The new SA history doesn't always reflect the magnanimous role the united church played in bringing about healing and restoration in SA.

In Acts 8, when Saul who became Paul persecuted the Church, in one area, the whole church suffered. When there is bad press about a church or a minister, we shouldn't gloat we should pray with that church and its people because we are part of the body.

But we can't really do that, if we're not plugged into the heart beat of the local church where we get our spiritual food from.

The church was of one accord- meaning there was harmony, they were of one mind and one heart

**Acts 1:14** They all met together continually for prayer, along with Mary the mother of Jesus, several other women, and the brothers of Jesus.

**Acts 2:46** They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity –

**Phil 1:27** But whatever happens to me, you must live in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ, as citizens of heaven. Then, whether I come and see you again or only hear about you, I will know that you are standing side by side, fighting together for the Good News.

This would be my prayer/ our prayer. "God makes us ONE." we desperately need to be united in spirit. In the local church first, before we can even speak about the broader body.

The opposite of unity is divisions. Sectarianism.

Division in the body is evidence of carnality. The work of the flesh. The works of the flesh are motivated by and evil influence. There is a spirit of evil, of deception, of undermining the work of God, in anything that seeks to bring division amongst people. Whether in a church, in a business, in a marriage. In any relationship for that matter.

Paul spoke about these things in warning the church against it.

**Gal 5:14** For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbour as yourself."**15** But if instead of showing love among yourselves you are always biting and devouring one another, watch out! Beware of destroying one another. **16** So I advise you to live according to your new life in the Holy Spirit. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. **17** The old sinful nature loves to do evil, which is just opposite from what the Holy Spirit

wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are opposite from what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, and your choices are never free from this conflict. **18** But when you are directed by the Holy Spirit, you are no longer subject to the law. **19** When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, your lives will produce these evil results: sexual immorality, impure thoughts, eagerness for lustful pleasure, **20** idolatry, participation in demonic activities, hostility, quarrelling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, divisions, **the feeling that everyone is wrong except those in your own little group**, **21** envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other kinds of sin. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God. **22** But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23** gentleness, and self-control. Here there is no conflict with the law. **24** Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there.

Paul uses 4 different words to describe the sin of sectarianism.

- VARIANCE. [ERIS] [Difference in opinion; dispute; lack of harmony]

Rom 1:**29** their lives became full of every kind of wickedness, sin, greed, hate, envy, murder, fighting, deception, malicious behaviour, and gossip.

- STRIFE. [ERETHEIA] Struggle between people. Opposition.

Rom 2:**8** But he will pour out his anger and wrath on those who live for themselves, who refuse to obey the truth and practice evil deeds.

- SEDITIONS. [DICHOSTASIA] Conduct or speech inciting rebellion. Agitation against authority.

Rom 16:**17** And now I make one more appeal, my dear brothers and sisters. Watch out for people who cause divisions and upset people's faith by teaching things that are contrary to what you have been taught. Stay away from them.

- HERESIES. [HAIREISIS] Belief or practice contrary to the orthodox doctrine. Opinion contrary to mainstream thought.

**1 Cor 11:19** But, of course, there must be divisions among you so that those of you who are right will be recognized!

**Tit 3:10** if anyone is causing divisions among you, give a first and second warning. After that, have nothing more to do with that person.

If you are always in disagreement with somebody. When there's always conflict in emotions. The term, "irreconcilable differences", is used, then we must of necessity end the journey.

## **THE CHURCH HAS A MINISTRY.**

1. A binding ministry

It has the power to bind those who oppose. Bind the strong man, and then spoil his house. The enemy is not the people that are being used by the devil. They're just pawns in his strategy. Bind the strong man.

**Mt 12:29** Let me illustrate this. You can't enter a strong man's house and rob him without first tying him up. Only then can his house be robbed!

**Mt 13:30** Let both grow together until the harvest. Then I will tell the harvesters to sort out the weeds and burn them and to put the wheat in the barn."

So, there is a spiritual sifting that is going on. God is busy working it out. He is working to build His church and part of that working is the binding of certain things and certain attitudes. Attitudes are in people not in things so by deduction, He is busy tying up the tares.

**Mt 18:15** "If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the fault. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back. **16** But if you are unsuccessful, take one or two others with you and go back again, so that everything you say may be confirmed by two or three witnesses. **17** If that person still refuses to listen, take your case to the church. If the church decides you are right, but the other person won't accept it, treat that person as a pagan or a corrupt tax collector. **18** I tell you this: Whatever you prohibit on earth is prohibited in heaven, and whatever you allow on earth is allowed in heaven.

## 2. A loosing ministry

**Luke 13:16** Wasn't it necessary for me, even on the Sabbath day, to free this dear woman from the bondage in which Satan has held her for eighteen years?"

**Ps 102:20** to hear the groans of the prisoners, to release those condemned to die.

What we bind on earth is bound in heaven. What we loose on earth is loosened in heaven.

That's why the church needs the mind of Christ, her Head. The church on earth must be one with the Lord in heaven.

In the OT, Gen 14 we read that Melchisedek, blessed Abraham of the most high God. The possessor of heaven and earth blessing, setting loose His abundance on Abraham. Unless heaven works with earth, earth will fail in powerless, meaningless form and ceremony.

God has meant for His church to set free those that are bound.

## THE CHURCH IS TO BE GLORIOUS.

**Eph 5: 23** For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of his body, the church; he gave his life to be her Saviour. **24** As the church submits to Christ, so you wives must submit to your husbands in everything. **25** And you husbands must love your wives with the same love Christ showed the church. He gave up his life for her **26** to make her holy and clean, washed by baptism and God's word. **27** He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault. **28** In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. For a man is actually loving himself when he loves his wife. **29** No one hates his own body but lovingly cares for it, just as Christ cares for his body, which is the church. **30** And we are his body. **31** As the Scriptures

say, "A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one." **32**This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one.

This revelation that Paul had of the church, as the great mystery, the Bride of Christ, shows the ultimate intention of the Lord for His church. This is GODWARD in its truth. It's not what it is now. It's what it is intended to be. It's a work in progress. And on that great and glorious day, when we all shall see Jesus, it will finally be:

- Sanctified-fully, separated holy unto Him
- Cleansed, by the washing of the water of the word
- Glorious, clothed with glory and bringing Him glory
- Without spot and wrinkle.
- A holy church, separated from sin.