**SMS** 02003-382 01/06/2002
**WHAT IS RIGHT WITH THE CHURCH?** Decatur, IL

**INTRODUCTION.**

A. Scripture text: **Ephesians 1:3-6**.

B. When those who profess the Christian religion and do not live up to its standards, men often ask, "What is wrong with the church?" Perhaps if we measure the church by the yardstick of X, we will find nothing wrong with the church as He ordained it. The church, as X built it, is perfect. Let us change the question and ask, "What is right with the church?"

C. This sermon is in two parts. I will look at four things right with the church this morning and four more things tonight.

I. **IT IS RIGHT, BECAUSE IT FULFILLS GOD'S PURPOSE.**

A. The church was in "the eternal purpose of God" (Eph. 1:3-12; 3:9-11). It was not an afterthought.
**(Eph 1:3-12)** Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, **4** just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love **5** He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, **6** to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. **7** In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, **8** which He lavished upon us. In all wisdom and insight **9** He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him **10** with a view to an administration suitable to the fulness of the times, *that is*, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things upon the earth. In Him **11** also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, **12** to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.
**(Eph 3:9-11)** and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God, who created all things; **10** in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly *places*. **11** *This was* in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord,

B. The act of purchasing the church with the blood of X was also in the "eternal purpose of God" (Ac. 20:28; 1Pet. 1:18- 20).
**(Ac 20:28)** "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.
**(1Pet 1:18-20)** knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, **19** but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, *the blood* of Christ. **20** For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you

C. Such love is beyond human comprehension. It should call forth our praise and quiet our thoughtless charges against the Lord's church.

II. **IT IS RIGHT, IN ITS ESTABLISHMENT.**

A. It was built by Christ (Mt. 16:18).
"And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it."

B. He built it by his truth revealed through divinely inspired men (1Cor. 3:10-13a).
According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building upon it. But let each man be careful how he builds upon it. **11** For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. **12** Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, **13** each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is *to be* revealed with fire;...

C. Christ is its foundation, not only in the sense of being a guarantee for all blessings promised to the church by Him, but also in the sense that the church is literally built upon His teachings (Eph. 2:20).
...having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner *stone*,...

D. Any church that rests entirely upon His teachings and promises must be right.

III. **IT IS RIGHT IN ITS DIRECTION.**

A. Jesus is Head of the church, and is Head over all things pertaining to the church (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22-23). To Him alone should the church look for guidance.

**(Col 1:18)** He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything.

**(Eph 1:22-23)** And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, **23** which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all.

B. Everything the church does in worship, organization, membership, and work must be under the authority of X.

C. Through His teachings He has given us "all things that pertain to life and godliness" (2 Pet. 1:3).

...seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

D. He ordained a plurality of elders in every church to keep those teachings before His people (Ac. 14:23; Ti. 1:3). He ordained no earthly head or super-organization to do that work.

**(Ac 14:23)** And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

**(Ti 1:5)** For this reason I left you in Crete, that you might set in order what remains, and appoint elders in every city as I directed you,...

E. Every church that is organized and working according to the Biblical pattern must be right.

IV. **IT IS RIGHT IN ITS ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS.**

A. Christ requires that a person be saved to belong to His church (Ac. 2:47; Jn. 3:5).

**(Jn 3:5)** Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

**(Ac 2:47)** ...praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

B. The church is the SAVED or the "called-out" from sin to salvation (Col. 1:13,14).

For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, **14** in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

C. To be saved or enter the church one must:

1. Believe on X (Ac. 16:31; Heb. 11:6).

**(Ac 16:31)** And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household."

**(Heb 11:6)** And without faith it is impossible to please *Him,* for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

2. Repent (Ac. 17:30).

"Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent,..."

3. Confess faith in X (Mt. 10:32-33).

"Everyone therefore who shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. **33** "But whoever shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven."

4. Be baptized in His name (Ac. 2:38).

And Peter *said* to them, "Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

D. Many have their names on church rolls but are not members of the Lord's church. To be enrolled in His church (Heb. 12:22-23) one must meet His requirements.

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, **23** to the general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of righteous men made perfect,...

E. Those who accurately teach the plan of salvation must be doing right.

**CONCLUSION AND INVITATION.**

A. There are problems in the church because no one is perfect.

B. But there are some things right with the church too:

1. The church fulfills God's purpose.
2. The church is established by X Himself.
3. The church has a good direction because it has a good foundation.
4. The church is preaching the plan of salvation to sinners.

C. Tonight we will conclude this study with four more things that are right with the church.
D. Plan of salvation for non-Xians, erring Xians.