

Christ’s Bride—the Body of Christ

“God raised Jesus from death and set Him on a throne in deep heaven. He was in charge of running the universe, everything from galaxies to governments, no name and no power was exempt from His rule. And not just for the time being, but forever. Jesus is in charge of it all, and has the final word on everything. At the center of all this, Christ rules the church. The church, you see, is not peripheral to the world; the world is peripheral to the church. The church is Christ’s body, in which He speaks and acts, and by which He fills everything with His presence.” — Ephesians 1:20-23 The Message Bible

Wow, wow, wow! A church on every corner and the world still drives by and thumbs their nose at God’s church. How can this be? Don’t they know that God’s church is the bride of Christ, the main event? Is the world’s system truly peripheral to the church?

These verses wowed me and gave me God’s way of seeing His church. Because of my previous poor perspective, this phrase especially hit me in the gut: *“The church, you see, is not peripheral to the world; the world is peripheral to the church.”* Despite Scripture telling us that *“the gates of hell will not prevail against the church,”* and because of my short sidedness, I, too, have been guilty of relegating the body of Christ to only having a minimal effect on society. There are many reasons why the world has given the church second billing... or third... or fourth or seen as having no importance at all. Let’s look at a few.

The world perceives “the church on every corner” as powerless because in many cases it has earned it *by reputation*, and therefore ignores her message. Cynicism reigns because the typical church has no power to call anyone *“out of the darkness into His wonderful light.”* The solution begins with me and you (we can’t blame the person sitting beside us in the pew.) We must, individually, become doers of His Word and illuminate our neighborhoods and workplaces with the light of the liberating gospel message. Each of us is perfectly fitted into the body of Christ, *“in which He speaks and acts,”* and it is through us *“by which He fills everything with His presence.”* As we represent Jesus to the world by the power of the Holy Spirit, God will work through us to change the world’s perception of the church.

The truth is *“The church is Christ’s body, in which He speaks and acts, and by which He fills everything with His presence.”* God’s presence manifested in us will bring His light to a place or situation where darkness is lurking. So how are we filled with God’s presence? By faithfully abiding in the *Secret Place*, communing with the Most High, we take on the fragrance of Christ. 2 Corinthians 2:15-16 says it this way, *“Our lives are a Christ-like fragrance rising up to God. But this fragrance is perceived differently by those who are being saved and by those who are perishing. To those who are perishing, we are a dreadful smell of death and doom. But to those who are being saved, we are a life-giving perfume.”*

As a member of the body of Christ, who abides in the Vine, you take on the fragrance of Christ to not only expose darkness but to dispel it. Stated differently; by seeking God with all our hearts, we prepare the way for the Holy Spirit to work in the lives of the people we know and meet. When this happens enough, throughout the body of Christ, it will become evident to more people that the world system is indeed secondary to God’s kingdom, as *He fills everything with His presence*” through His genuine believers.

Scripture tells us “as Jesus is in this world so are we.” Moreover, 1 Peter 2:9 tells us, *We are “God’s very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for He called you out of the darkness into His wonderful light.”* Jesus showed others the goodness of God so can we. As genuine believers, we are the light of the world who “*call people out of darkness into His marvelous light.*” Darkness has no real power. Its “effectiveness” is only manifest in the absence of light. We all know that when a light is turned on, darkness has no choice, it has to leave.

Another cause of the church’s inability to influence society is that the church has forfeited its power. 2 Timothy 3:5 tells us that we can settle for “a form of godliness,” but in doing so we lose the power that is present in true godliness. It is the Holy Spirit’s resurrection power resident in us that has the potential to change the world, but there is a caveat—genuinely aspiring to godliness and holiness with a surrendered heart is a prerequisite for the release of, and the manifestation of God’s world changing power. God will not trust His power to an insincere heart.

Lastly, God is a Spirit and His power is unseen until we release it in faith. 2 Corinthians 4:18 tells us to, “*...fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.*” Only the spirit realm is real and everlasting. By contrast, everything that is visible is of the natural world and is temporary, or temporal. His power is released when we exercise our faith, bringing the (everlasting) treasures of heaven into the natural realm (temporary). When we properly delineate these two realms through the lenses of Scripture we come to the conclusive fact that “*the church is not peripheral to the world; the world is peripheral to the church.*”

 Information and Revelation
 Application and Transformation

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your love and power given to save people from the penalty of their sins, and from the wrath waiting for those who refuse Jesus—Your love reigns supreme! In Your wisdom and grace, You provided me an escape from Your judgement through Jesus. Thank You for perfectly fitting me into the body of Christ, which is His betrothed bride. Thank You for the holy and precious mystery of how the bride of Christ, through Jesus’ power and presence in me, fills everything with His presence.

LORD, as a member of the body of Christ, help me be a doer of Your Word and represent Jesus to those I know and meet by the power of the Holy Spirit. Help me as I go out into my world to illuminate my neighborhood and my workplace with the light of the liberating gospel message.

LORD, draw me into Your very presence, where I ask for the desire, ability and courage to spend time in the Secret Place of Your presence and commune with You. Your Word tells me that You will produce in me the fragrance of Christ that will separate the holy from the unholy, preparing the way for the Holy Spirit to work in my life and in others.

LORD, let Your light so shine in me that by Your love and power I can “call people out of darkness into Your marvelous light.” It is my prayer that Your love and power will be evident in me through holiness so that everyone will correctly perceive that “the church is not peripheral to the world; the world is peripheral to the church. Jesus is the only hope of glory! I proclaim Your love and make these proclamations in Jesus’ name. Amen.