

# The Visible Church

## Can Unbelievers Be Part of a Biblical Church?

### *The aim of this article*

*In the following article we would like to show that the Christian Church is a visible body of believers. It is seen by the world and gives testimony of God's love, purity and holiness.*

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## ⚓ 1 Introduction

Many people are aware that not everyone who goes to a Sunday “church service” is really a Christian. Such people are considered to be “nominal Christians” (Christians by name only), who do not have a relationship with Jesus. These “Sunday-Christians” usually attend church meetings, pray, sing and often even take communion along with the others even though they have not committed their lives to Jesus. This situation is regarded as biblical by the various denominations and is referred to as **the teaching of the “invisible church”**.

According to this teaching there is both a visible church and an invisible church. The visible church takes the form of different denominations and churches (e.g. Roman Catholic, Anglican, Reformed, Lutheran, Baptist, Methodist etc.). These visible churches consist of both believing members (or “born again Christians”) and unbelieving members (or “nominal Christians”). The “invisible church”, on the other hand, is considered to be the one true church comprising all the “born again” members of the visible churches across the globe. It is not a visible organisation or denomination; its members are connected by their faith without even knowing one another or having personal fellowship with each other. These people see it as their duty to evangelize the unbelieving members of the local visible churches which they attend and where God has “put” them—a kind of internal evangelism.<sup>[1]</sup>

**The New Testament shows us a completely different picture of the church from the one described above.**

## ⚓ 2 The Church in the First Century

The first church in Jerusalem, which came into existence after Peter's sermon at Pentecost, is described in the following words:

Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon's Portico. None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem. And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women... (*Acts 5:12-14*)

The miracles which happened among the Christians, their devotion to God and love for each other aroused respect and awe among the Jews. They realized that joining them would mean giving up everything for Christ. Those of them who had the wish to love God with all their heart believed and joined the church. The rest of the Jews who were not ready to live such a life, did not dare to join.

If an unbeliever came to the church, everybody assessed the "secrets of his heart":

If, therefore, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your minds? But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you. (*1 Corinthians 14:23-25*)

The whole church endeavoured to help the newcomer to understand what he had to repent of. Sometimes this process was quicker and in other cases it took longer. If, however, the newcomer did not want to repent after hearing the assessment of the Christians, there was obviously no base to baptise him, nor did he join or take part in the fellowship.

There were exceptional cases in which people like Simon the sorcerer joined the Christians after hearing the Gospel. When Philip preached about Christ to the Samaritans, a large number of them believed and were baptized—including Simon, although he had not changed his way of thinking. Since so many people repented at the same time, it was not easy for Philip to recognize that one of them (Simon) was not honest. Thus, Simon succeeded in deceiving the other Christians for a short while. Soon, however, the truth about him emerged, and Apostle Peter, who later arrived from Jerusalem, opposed him resolutely:

Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, saying, "Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity." And Simon answered, "Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may come upon me." (*Acts 8:18-24*)

We see a similarly strict assessment in such cases when some men who lived or thought in a different way to what Jesus and the apostles taught slipped into the church.

For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and

deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. (*Jude 4*)

Jude's aim was to express that these men have no place in the church. Even if they succeeded in slipping in, they were only able to remain in the church for a short time, until the believers understood that they were not actually brothers. We find several other admonishments in the letters of the New Testament urging the churches to expose and separate from such people: Acts 20:29-31; Matthew 24:23-26; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 6:3-5; 2 Timothy 3:1-9; 1 John 2:18-19.

### ⚓ 3 The Purity and Holiness of the Church

If a member of the church sinned in a way that made him become unworthy of the fellowship with the saints and he did not want to turn from his sins in spite of the patient help and repeated admonitions of his brothers, the church ceased having fellowship with him: he was excluded. This was based on Jesus' commandment:

If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector. Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. (*Matthew 18:15-18 NIV*)

The Jews did not have fellowship with Gentiles because they considered them unclean (see Acts 10:28). They treated tax collectors in a similar way because they compromised with the Romans (Matthew 9:10-11). This categorical rejection was not right, yet this was the Jewish practice. Jesus refers to this practice but shows that the reason for separation should not be someone's social status or nationality, but his refusal to accept the help and correction his brothers and sisters repeatedly tried giving him, choosing instead to remain in his sin.

There is a practical example of this instruction of Jesus being applied in the Corinthian church:

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you. For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgement on the one who did such a thing. When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord. Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. (*1 Corinthians 5:1-7*)

Some verses later Paul continues:

But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or

swindler—not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside. “Purge the evil person from among you.” (1 Corinthians 5:11–13)

Somebody might ask: “Where is mercy? Where is patience? Did Paul not have the hope that God could still open the heart of this sinner?” Yes he did! [2] However, even though he considered it possible, he shows that there are clear conditions for belonging to the church. Although this kind of separation (i.e. exclusion) is hard and painful, God’s church cannot have fellowship with anyone who clings to sin. If the excluded person repents he can return to the church with a renewed decision to live a life worthy of God and his church.

This is how the first Christian churches guarded their purity, and in this way it was possible that there were no unbelievers among them. That is why Paul can address the brothers and sisters in his letters as “saints” (e.g. 1 Corinthians 1:1–3; 2 Corinthians 1:1–2). [3]

In the New Testament the term “saint” means the same as “Christian” (Acts 9:13; Ephesians 5:3; Philippians 4:21–22; Hebrews 3:1). All Christians are saints and people can only belong to the church if they let themselves be sanctified and let God reign in their lives (Hebrews 12:14; Ephesians 5:5; Galatians 5:19–21). Saints are not sinless people (this is visible especially in the letters to the Corinthians) but people “who are sanctified in Christ Jesus”, who have accepted Jesus’ forgiveness and salvation. Even if they do stumble and sin, they will listen to the admonitions of their brothers and want to change. Each and every member of the church fights against sin. A Christian cannot live a double-life. He cannot serve God while his heart is in the world (see: Matthew 6:24; Matthew 10:38–39; James 4:4; 1 John 2:15–17; John 12:25–26; 1 John 2:4–6). Likewise, the church cannot accommodate sinners who do not want to change.

If Christians accepted people who follow the way of this world as partakers in their spiritual fellowship, they would be deceiving them, because they would be treating them as their brothers and sisters in Christ, although in fact they are not. In this way they would also be portraying a false image of the church to unbelievers.

Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, “I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty.” (2 Corinthians 6:14–18)

God is willing to receive people as his children who separate themselves from unbelievers. [4] The Greek word for church (ecclesia) means an assembly that is called out. This word was originally used to refer to the custom of messengers calling out the citizens of ancient Greek towns from their houses for official assemblies. Thus, the messengers of the Gospel also call God’s people out of the world into his assembly.

As we see, the practice of the first Christian churches was totally different from that of today’s denominations. Today everybody can become a member of the “church” (after completing some formalities), and usually exclusion is not practised either. In order to be able to distinguish who should be accepted as a part of the church and who should be excluded, more intensive fellowship is necessary: spending more time together and giving one another more attention in order to be able to take part in each

other's spiritual life. Without this devotion to our brothers' sanctification, Christ's commandment cannot be fulfilled, and the purity of the church cannot be preserved, jeopardizing its very existence.

## ⚓ 4 The Parable of the Wheat and the Weeds

The wrong practice, however, did not just begin in our time. As early as the fifth century, in the context of the Donatist controversy [5], Augustine used the parable of the wheat and the weeds to justify the presence of unbelievers in the church. Augustine claimed, based on this parable, that the church is a "mixed body" (corpus permixtum) in which the wicked live together with the righteous.

He put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?' He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' So the servants said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' But he said, 'No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.'" (*Matthew 13:24-30*)

Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples came to him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field." He answered, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the close of the age, and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the close of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear." (*Matthew 13:36-43*)

In the parable of the wheat and the weeds the field is the world, not the church (verse 38). The church is in the world and shines as a light in it; therefore, the church cannot be identical to the world!

...that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labour in vain. (*Philippians 2:15-16*)

Jesus used the parable of the wheat and the weeds in order to help the Jews to correct their ideas about the Messiah. The Jews at that time expected the Messiah to come as a glorious king and a righteous judge; he would rescue his people from the oppression of the godless and cut off the evildoers from the land.

Jesus, however, did not come to rule as a political king, nor did he come to punish the evildoers. The last judgement will take place on the day of his second coming. Until that time, both the good and the evil have to live on earth together. His kingdom is spiritual and has overcome the world in a spiritual way:

I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world. (*John 16:33*)

In Matthew 13:41 the Son of Man gathers the evildoers out of his kingdom. Yet here, his kingdom does not stand for the church, but for the world. Jesus is the Lord of the whole created world and he has the authority to rule over it as the Messiah:

Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever." (*Revelation 11:15*)

A similar interpretation applies to the parable of the net.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad. So it will be at the close of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (*Matthew 13:47-50*)

The fact that Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven with the net does not mean that the net refers to the church. In other parables he compares the kingdom of heaven, for instance, to a king<sup>[6]</sup> or to a merchant<sup>[7]</sup>. In these parables, there is no grounds to think that the king or the merchant symbolize the church. Jesus often used the expression "the kingdom of heaven" when he wanted to explain something concerning God's Kingdom. "God's Kingdom" (in Matthew: "Kingdom of Heaven") to the Jews meant the kingdom of the Messiah. With his parables Jesus mainly wanted to correct their wrong understanding of this.

## ⚓ 5 Other Frequently Misinterpreted Passages

### 5.1 2 Timothy 2:16-21

But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness, and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, men who have gone astray from the truth saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and they upset the faith of some. Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness." Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work. (*NASB*)

In support of the false teaching of the "invisible church", the house mentioned by Paul (v. 20) is identified with the church and the vessels to honour and dishonour are wrongly referred to the believers and unbelievers, respectively, who are together in the church.

It is correct to refer the house to the church since the context is also about the life of the church. However, the vessels to "honour" and "dishonour"<sup>[8]</sup> do not refer to believing and unbelieving members but, based

on the context, to those members who stand firm in their faith and in the teaching and to others who are weaker and could be more easily influenced by false teachers (There were Gnostic false teachers outside the church who should be avoided because their teaching spreads like gangrene and they had already confused many in their faith). To cleanse oneself from “these things” is similar to the thought in verse 19: “everyone ... is to abstain from wickedness...”. So “these things” do not refer to the vessels to dishonour, but to the false teachings and teachers. The “vessels to dishonour” may have started to give in to the influence of Gnostic deceivers but if they separate themselves from them, they will become “a vessel for honour, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.”

## 📌 5.2 1 Corinthians 15:34

Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame.

In the context, the topic in this passage is the correct understanding of resurrection. It seems that some Christians in Corinth—influenced by the Greek concept of the afterlife—became uncertain about what exactly would happen to their bodies after death and started to question the resurrection of the body. Generally, Greeks believed in the immortality of the spirit but bodily resurrection was unimaginable for them. Paul, on the one hand, thoroughly explains the right Christian teaching about resurrection, but on the other hand he rebukes the Corinthians for their doubts, as in this way they question the power of God who is able to raise the dead. This is why he says that some of them have no knowledge of God—they do not fully grasp how powerful he is and that it is not too hard a thing for him to raise the dead in immortal bodies. It does not mean that some of them were not Christians. In the initial greeting of the letter we can see that he regarded all of them as saints.

To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours... (*1 Corinthians 1:2*)

## 5.3 Matthew 25:1-13

Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. But at midnight there was a cry, ‘Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ But the wise answered, saying, ‘Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.’ And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. Afterwards the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’ But he answered, ‘Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.’ Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

The parable is a warning for believers to persevere to the end and even to be prepared for a longer period of waiting until the return of Jesus. Those believers who do not persevere to the end (who do not have

enough oil) will not be allowed to enter his heavenly kingdom (the wedding feast). If someone decides to follow Jesus and thus becomes a member of Christ's body but later abandons his faith will lose his eternal life. [9] We should be always aware of the limits of a parable. Jesus wanted to encourage to perseverance and to be always ready for his coming. This parable is, however, not a description of church life. So it cannot be used as an argument against the need of separation between believers and unbelievers.

## 5.4 John 10:14-16

I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.

Jesus says that there will be "one flock" in the future. That is why many people refer the flock to those believers whom Jesus will gather together from different visible denominations on the last day. At that time the believers who are scattered throughout many different flocks will supposedly be united into one flock. But why should we refer this future event to the last day? It could just as well refer to another future event. Jesus speaks about those who are "of this fold" and those who are not. He had already called the sheep from the first fold and he would call the other sheep later. All the sheep that listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd would form one flock. In verse 16, he speaks about "this" fold, which must refer to Israel, since during his earthly ministry Jesus' mission was to call the "lost sheep of the house of Israel":

These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, "Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And proclaim as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'" (*Matthew 10:5-7*)

It follows that the "other sheep" refer to the Gentiles. Jesus wanted to hint at the fact that there were people from among the Gentiles, too, who would listen to his call. Some years later the disciples were to experience this great event: the unification of Jews and Gentiles. This is summarized by Paul in the letter to the Ephesians:

Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God... (*Ephesians 2:11-19*)



Consequently, the unification of the sheep from the two folds already took place in the first century when Jewish and Gentile Christians were joined together as one flock in the church.

## ⚓ 6 Summary

The teaching of the “invisible church” does not occur in the Bible. Even if there are differences between the members of the Christian church in maturity, faith or obedience, each member has a relationship with the Head, Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12–27; Ephesians 4:15–16). This church is seen by the world:

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (*John 13:34–35*)

...I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. (*John 17:23*)

The world has to be able to see the church. The Christian church must always be aware of this responsibility. A “church” that lives as a “mixed body” is not the body of Christ and does not fulfil the mission that Jesus entrusted to his church. Christians live in deep fellowship based on the teachings of Christ. Only in this way can their testimony about Christ’s love be authentic to the world.

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Footnotes

1. The well-known reformer John Calvin (1509–1564) formulated the teaching of invisible church as follows: “I have observed that the Scriptures speak of the Church in two ways. Sometimes when they speak of the Church they mean the Church as it really is before God – the Church into which none are admitted but those who by the gift of adoption are sons of God, and by the sanctification of the Spirit are true members of Christ. In this case it not only comprehends the saints who dwell on the earth, but all the elect who have existed from the beginning of the world. Often, too, by the name of Church is designated the whole body of mankind scattered throughout the world, who profess to worship one God and Christ, who by baptism are initiated into the faith; by partaking of the Lord’s Supper profess unity in true doctrine and charity, agree in holding the word of the Lord, and observe the ministry which Christ has appointed for the preaching of it. In this Church there is a very large mixture of hypocrites, who have nothing of Christ but the name and outward appearance: of ambitious, avaricious, envious, evil-speaking men, some also impurer lives, who are tolerated for a time, either because their guilt cannot be legally established, or because due strictness of discipline is not always observed. Hence, as it is necessary to believe the invisible Church, which is manifest to the eye of God only, so we are also enjoined to regard this Church which is so-called with reference to man, and to cultivate its communion.” (Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion, Book 4, Chapter 1)
2. This is visible from 1 Corinthians 5:5: “... so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.”

3. A similar address can also be observed in other letters: Romans 1:1-7; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:1-4; 2 Peter 1:1-4
4. See also Peter's sermon at Pentecost: Acts 2:40: "Save yourselves from this crooked generation."
5. The Donatists (named after their leader, Donatus, bishop of Carthage) held that the church must be a church of "saints", not "sinners", and sacraments, such as baptism, administered by bishops who denied their faith during the persecution under the Roman emperor Diocletian (fourth century AD) are invalid. Augustine disagreed with this view and was an ardent opponent of the Donatists.
6. Matthew 18:23
7. Matthew 13:45-46
8. In the Greek text the words "timē" = honour, worth, value (NIV: noble purposes) and "atimia" = dishonour, the antonym of "timē" (NIV: ignoble purposes) are used (they are derived from the verbs "timaō" = to appreciate, to honour and "atimazō" = not to appreciate, to dishonour). Also in 1 Corinthians 12:23 Paul uses a word derived from the Greek word "timē": "atimoteros" = more despised, NIV: less honourable. This passage may help us come closer to what Paul meant in 2 Timothy 2:20 by "articles for noble and ignoble purposes":

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. (*1 Corinthians 12:12-13*)

The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you", nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and on those parts of the body that we think less honourable we bestow the greater honour, and our unrepresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honour to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. (*1 Corinthians 12:21-25*)

Here the presentable and the unrepresentable (weaker, less honourable) members clearly refer to Christians. Paul wants to say that every Christian is precious because the Holy Spirit dwells in him, irrespective of his gifts. As every limb of the body is connected to the head and obeys it, likewise every member of the church is connected with Christ.

9. See e.g.: Hebrews 6:4-8; 10:24-31 and many other passages mentioned in our [topic on Apostasy](#).

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