

THE CHURCH: THE PATRISTIC VIEW

Matthew 16:18b

Upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Introduction

Many things come to mind as we celebrate one hundred fifty-five years of this congregation's existence. There are many things to shout about. God has sustained this congregation through the many trials and tribulations. Today we celebrate and appreciate God's grace and mercy. The gates of hell have not and will not prevail against us. We have been attacked but not annihilated. In fact, this congregation has flourished in spite of the attacks of the evil one. This congregation is living proof that God's grace is sufficient.

This church congregation was founded in 1869, four years after the end of the civil war. Twelve former slaves spent \$2.50 to build a brush arbor as the first place of worship. They literally put their faith into action. They laid the spiritual and physical foundation upon which succeeding generations have successfully built and upon which we now stand today.

As I was decluttering my office, I came across some of my old seminary notes about some of the ancient church fathers. These saints codified many of the great doctrines of the Christian faith. They wrote volumes of theological treatises and attended numerous councils to dispel heresies. These church fathers, just to name a few, Augustine, Athanasius of Alexandria, and Tertullian, who were from Africa, saw the church from a very different cultural perspective, yet it amazes me how closely traditional Black churches are aligned with their thinking. When you look at church history in an objective fashion, it seems as if we have come full circle. African church fathers used Latin terminology to describe the true nature and function of the New Testament Church. Our fore-parents just did it by "spiritual instincts" without erudite terminology. They were guided by the Holy Spirit. Both the African church fathers and our fore-parents came to the correct conclusions and conformed to the Biblical standards of faith, hope, and love. Now let's look at five of these patristic views of the church.

Exposition

1. The Militant Church (Ecclesia Militans.)

(The Church Fighting Evil-Both Externally And Internally.)

(Our Weapons Are Not Carnal – 2nd Corinthians 10:4.)

(We Must Be Fully Equipped – Ephesians 6: 11-17.)

2. The Suffering Church (Ecclesia Poeniten.)

(If Christ Had To Suffer, So Must We.)

(If We Suffer With Him, We Shall Reign With Him Also.)

(Matthew 16:24. 2nd Timothy 2:12; 1st Peter 4:13.)

3. The Serving Church (Ecclesia Serviens.)

(Jesus Is The Perfect Example.)

(Jesus Healed The Sick And Fed The Hungry.)

(The Good Samaritan Is Another Good Example.)

(Matthew 20:27; Luke 10:33-37.)

4. The Worshipping Church (Ecclesia Adorans.)

(We Worship In Spirit And In Truth – John 4:24.)

(Paul And Silas Demonstrated The Power Of True Worship.)

(Acts 16:25-26.)

5. The Triumphant Church (Ecclesia Triumphans.)

(When We All Get To Heaven What A Day Of Rejoicing That Will Be.)

(Our Worship On Earth Is The Prelude To Our Worship In Heaven.)

(John 14:2; 1st Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1st John 3:2; Revelation 7:9-12.)

Closing Thoughts

I will close with the last stanza of our *Heritage Hymn*, which was written and performed to celebrate our sesquicentennial anniversary in 2019.

“The work is not completed,

Some tasks have just begun.

New members will be added,

New music will be sung.

Our God is always faithful,

His promises true.

His Spirit is here to guide us,

Our God will see us through.

Upon the rock of ages,

We build a better place.

Amen!”

Give God Glory! Give God All The Glory!

End Note

For the new members, the official demo of the *Heritage Hymn* is on YouTube. I have complimentary copies of the sheet music for those who would like to have them as souvenirs. I wrote the lyrics and Maestro Heather Sorenson arranged it. We used two existing hymn tunes, *Lancaster* and *Aurelia*. Here is the irony. We transferred the copyright to the publisher, which is standard procedure. Now we have to get permission to use it in certain ways. It’s really no problem. It’s a blessing that Hal Leonard, the largest music publisher in the world, would be interested enough to want to own the copyright of something I wrote. The publisher owns the copyright and promotes the music and we get royalty payments. To God Be The Glory!

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