

Baptist Distinctives: Regenerate Church Membership

The Main Idea: The local church is a gospel community, a gospel people, made up of those who are born again and who voluntarily covenant with one another to express the Christian Faith.

Definition of Terms

1. Regenerate – Those who have been born again
2. Invisible, Universal Church – All God’s People from Every Era
3. Visible, Local Church – Earthly Manifestation of the Universal Church
4. Membership – Those who have Covenanted Together in a Local Church to Reflect the Glory of Christ on Earth

The Historical Context Of Regenerate Church Membership

1. Protestant Reformation of the 16th Century: Martin Luther was moving toward this in his early writings
2. Radical Reformation: Anabaptists turned Luther away from this because some, not all, were extreme
 - a. Rejected a Mixed Membership – Only Believers
 - b. Church = A Voluntary, Gospel Community who believe in Jesus Christ, transformed by the Spirit and God’s Grace!
3. 1646: 1st London Baptist Confession of Faith
4. English Reformation: Separatists/Independents
 - a. Argued for Regenerate Church Membership
 - b. Rejected by the Westminster Assembly Divines
5. 1689: 2nd London Baptist Confession of Faith

The Biblical Defense Of Regenerate Church Membership

1. ἐκκλησία – translated from Hebrew (*qabal* and *edab*) → “Those who are Called” (by God)
 - a. The Church is the *Called of God*
 - b. Romans 1:7; Jude 1; 1 Corinthians 1:2
2. Description of Church Members
 - a. God’s chosen Ones, holy and beloved (Col 3:12)
 - b. Sons/Children of God (Gal 3:26)
 - c. Saints in Christ Jesus (Phil 1:1)
 - d. Imitators/Followers of the Lord (1 Thess 1:6)
 - e. Beloved by the Lord (2 Thess 2:13)

3. Peter’s Illustration at Pentecost
 - a. Sinners were cut to the Heart – Inward Transformation by the Holy Spirit
 - b. Then they were ADDED by the Lord to the Church
4. Lydia of Thyratira
 - a. She was inwardly affected by the Spirit of God
 - b. She Believed and became part of the Church
5. The Description of the Church in the New Testament
 - a. Citizens of the Kingdom (John 3, Eph 2:19)
 - b. The Household of God (1 Peter 4:17)
 - c. A Body with Many Members (1 Cor 12:12-19)
 - d. One Flock with Many Sheep
 - e. One Vine with Many Branches
 - f. One Temple Built with Many Bricks
6. The Obligation of Each Member One to Another
 - a. Love, Encourage, Admonish
 - b. Rebuke, Correct, Serve, Confess Sin to...
 - c. *Only the Regenerate can do this!*
7. Redemptive Church Discipline – See Below

Safeguards Of Regenerate Church Membership

1. Believer’s Baptism – Last Week’s Message ☺
2. Redemptive Church Discipline
 - a. Difficult Subject, Painful Practice
 - b. Recovers the Offender = Redemptive, NOT Punitive
 - c. To Restore the Sinful (Galatians 6:1)
 - d. Regard them as a Brother (2 Thess 3:13-15)
 - e. Save their Soul! (James 5:19-20)
Redemptive Church Discipline Assumes Regenerate Church Membership!
 - f. Goal = Redeem the Soul & Keep the Bride of Christ Pure (1 Cor 5); Protects them from Self-Destruction
 - g. HOW Do We Practice This? (Mat 18:15-17)

What About GCBC And The SBC?

1. Church Growth Movement of 20th Cent. Hurt Us
2. Today’s Southern Baptist Convention:
 - a. 15 Million Members, only 5.3 Million Attendees
 - b. Avg Church Membership Enrollment: 223
 - c. Avg Church Attendance per Sunday: 70
3. What Should We Do?
 - a. LOVE and Obey Christ’s Commands
 - b. Be Faithful to God’s Will