

## Ecclesiology – Discovering Doctrine

- In this session, we'll be discussing the doctrine of the church
- The word for church that we find in the New Testament is *ekklēsia*
- It means "called out" or "called forth," usually referring to a called out assembly
- One lexicon describes it as "a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place; an assembly"
- It's translated "church" 115 times in the New Testament
- It's translated "assembly" three times
- When we make reference to the church tonight we will be using this word
- Our foundations booklet has a good deal to say about the church
- These are the nine statements of belief we will spend our time discussing here

1. We believe that the church of Christ is a congregation believers joined together by the common bond of the faith of the Gospel.
2. We believe that the church of Christ should be observing the ordinances of Christ and governed by His laws.
3. We believe that the church of Christ should be exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges given to them and clearly defined in Scripture.
4. We believe that the true mission of the church is found in the Great Commission.
5. We believe that the local church has the absolute right of self-government.
6. We believe that the one and only superintendent is Christ through the Holy Spirit.
7. We believe that churches should cooperate with each other in order to further the Gospel.
8. We believe that every church is the sole judge of the measure and method of its cooperation.
9. We believe that every local church is the sole judge of all matters of membership, of policy, of government, of discipline, and of benevolence.

- The way in which we are joined together is described in many ways in the New Testament
- Paul expressed it this way to church at Ephesus...

### Ephesians 4:1-6

- 1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,
- 2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;
- 3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
- 4 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;
- 5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,
- 6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

- The church, together, must walk worthy of our common calling
  - With the same approach, in lowliness and meekness
  - Endeavoring to keep - not establish, but keep - the unity of the Spirit
  - In the bond of peace
- 
- Because Christ has only one body
  - There is only one Holy Spirit
  - And we share in a singular hope
  - That singular hope is in a singular Lord
  - We are united because of our faith in Him
  - We've been baptized into His family
  - That is, the family of the One True God
  - Who is above all
  - Who works through us all
  - And who is in us all
- 
- This is part of our evidence for "we believe" statement number one
  - There will be more evidence as we continue
  - Therefore, we can take up statement two, which asserts "the church of Christ should be observing the ordinances of Christ and governed by His laws"
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- We define baptism and the Lord's table as the ordinances of the church
  - They provide for us a picture of something important in each case
  - In baptism, the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ and what it has accomplished - personally - for us
  - In the Lord's table, the body and the blood of Christ, which we are to remember at that time
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- We see baptism almost immediately in the early church
  - When the church is empowered for ministry on the day of Pentecost...

Acts 2:38

38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

- Only three verses later...

Acts 2:41

41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

- The fact is, they were doing exactly as the Savior commanded at His departure...

Matthew 28:19

19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

- But Paul also delivered this instruction
- We speak about it regularly at our church (usually on a Sunday night)...

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

23 For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread:

24 And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.

25 After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.

26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

- And we do!
- In the practice of baptism and the observance of the Lord's table, we show both the world and each other
- As we follow our example and instruction from scripture we testify of His sacrifice and we remind ourselves of it
- These are not just religious duties, they are calls to renewed commitment out of thankfulness and joy
- But churches are governed by His laws (His commandments) too
- Look no further than John 14, when Jesus said...

John 14:15

15 If ye love me, keep my commandments.

- Or go back to His great commission...

Matthew 28:20

20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

- Everyone who comes to faith in Him - who becomes part of the church - must obey everything He said to do
- It is our mandate to teach this kind of obedience
- And, of course, our mandate to model the same kind of obedience ourselves
- In "we believe" statement number three, we say "the church of Christ should be exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges given to them and clearly defined in Scripture."
- One of the places they are defined (at least our giftings) is Ephesians...

Ephesians 4:11-13

11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

- God gives certain gifts at certain times in the history of the church to accomplish His work
- Every believer is gifted for ministry
- So that the body can be edified
- And so its people can be built up
- The local church is the setting into which we bring these gifts to be cultivated and refined
- As they are being refined, we put them to use in our disciple-making ministry too
- When I considered the rights and privileges mentioned here, I couldn't help but think of this one...

Titus 2:1-8

1 But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine:

2 That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience.

3 The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things;

4 That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children,

5 To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.

6 Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded.

7 In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity,

8 Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.

- We have the privilege of both teaching and learning from other generations in our assembly
- These life lessons are priceless and must be part of any healthy church
- When they are absent, growth is more difficult and progress is slower
- By joining this body, members are given the right (and given the responsibility) to take part
- All of this will lead to the fulfillment of our mission, which we have already mentioned in part
- Jesus presented it in the gospel of Matthew...

Matthew 28:18-20

18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

- I've often called this a comprehensive mission
- To make disciples, to baptize them, and to teach them everything that Jesus commanded
- That's a lot of teaching
- That's a lot of living life together
- That's a lot of help one for another
- A lot of exhortation
- A lot of encouragement
- A lot of grace
- But Christ equips us to do it all
- In pursuit of this mission, we believe "the local church has the absolute right of self-government"
- There should be no outside authorities exerting power and influence on a local body
- Under Christ, who is the head of the church, pastors should be leading (equipping the saints), deacons should be serving, and members (together) should be the final earthly authority for decisions in a congregational form of government
- This is the kind of activity we see in the book of Acts...

Acts 6:1-7

1 And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.

2 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.

3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch:

6 Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.

7 And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

- A problem arose in the church, which required leadership
- The pastors (in this case, the Apostles) led the church to a solution
- The congregation agreed together
- And the guidelines were established for ministry as a deacon
- These offices (pastor and deacon) persist, as does the desire to "please the whole multitude"
- Every action was taken with the commandments of Christ in mind
- Because Christ is the head of the church
- As "we believe" statement number six says "the one and only superintendent is Christ through the Holy Spirit"
- The book of Colossians says this in speaking of Him...

#### Colossians 1:16-18

16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

- He is first in rank and influence over the whole earth
- Over everyone and over everything
- Therefore it only follows and makes sense that He would have first rank and influence in the church
- He is the head of the body

- Ephesians provides additional details...

#### Ephesians 5:22-25

22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.

24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.

25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

- The church is subject to Christ in all things
- Because He gave Himself for the church
- And in our efforts to carry out His mission, we find this "we believe" statement helpful: "churches should cooperate with each other in order to further the Gospel"
- The early church modeled this cooperation
- You may note this when you read about the first missionaries, which were sent from the church at Antioch
- Paul and Barnabas planted many churches
- And when they separated in Acts 15 and Paul travels with Silas, we see...

#### Acts 15:40-41

40 And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God.

41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.

- This ministry brought forth fruit, as we see in the following chapter...

#### Acts 16:1-5

1 Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek:

2 Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium.

3 Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek.

4 And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem.

5 And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.

- One church, in Antioch, sends a member (equipped by God) to plant and grow other churches

- In this case, carrying word from the church at Jerusalem
- Picking up disciples (like Tomothy) from another church along the way
- To encourage and exhort them as they "increased in number daily"
- That sounds like furthering the gospel to me!
- As far as the extent of our cooperation, we provide "we believe" statement eight: "every church is the sole judge of the measure and method of its cooperation"
- If Christ is the head of the church, then the church and every member of that church must look to Him as their authority
- The church's authority does not come from men outside the church, it comes from the Savior above the church
- We get some insight on this from Romans...

#### Romans 14:4-5

4 Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.

5 One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

- Churches, made up of individual believers, must be fully persuaded in their own minds
- Cooperation is a joy, it is advantageous in many ways, but it is not required in every circumstance
- In fact, it may be unwise, or problematic, or even flat out wrong in some circumstances
- Pastors, with Godly council from wise deacons, and the support of a committed congregation must decide
- Because we know there are those who teach falsely...

#### Romans 16:17-20

17 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.

18 For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.

19 For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.

20 And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

- Certain people cause divisions and offences



- They teach something other than sound doctrine
- And they should be avoided
- A congregation serving Christ (who is their head) should recognize they do not serve Him
- Instead they deceive
- We must not cooperate or join with these
- While churches decide for themselves
- They do not decide for others
- In fact, "we believe" statement nine is: "every local church is the sole judge of all matters of membership, of policy, of government, of discipline, and of benevolence"
- Each church is autonomous
- That means self-governing
- We do not have a denominational superstructure
- Local churches are independent
- We may operate differently
- This is the decision of the church
- We choose our own leaders
- 1 Timothy is one of the places that outlines their qualifications...

### 1 Timothy 3:1-7

1 This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.

2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;

3 Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;

4 One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;

5 (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)

6 Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.

7 Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

- This passage goes on to explain the qualifications for a deacon
- As we read in Acts 6, the church selected its own deacons
- We have no outline for assembling any additional authority structure for the church
- No one outside the church replaces our pastor or our deacons for us
- No one outside the church determines our membership practices or tells us how we should use our money

- We listen to Christ, obey His commands, and listen to pastors that we have selected who obey His commands
  - And we vote
  - We come together, make determinations based on scripture, and decide for ourselves
- 
- Christ is our head
  - His word is our guide
  - Men who fit His qualifications provide leadership
  - And serve us
  - Then we carry out His mission together