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The Church (Part 3)

We defined the “Church” as a group of people who are called out of the world’s system by God’s grace for the purpose of assembling to worship and serve Christ. Colossians 1:13 Amplified says of this group of people God “has delivered and drawn us to Himself out of the control and the dominion of darkness and has transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.” The church is to be a group of people who are consecrated (set apart for service to God) and whose function is to stand as a community in a living personal relationship with God. First Peter 2:5 says, “you also as lively stones are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ”, while Ephesians 4:11-13 tells us to accomplish this Christ gave Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers the task of equipping the saints for service and teaching them God’s Word so they can grow in spiritual maturity. Church should be a place where we are grounded in biblical truth, built up in our faith, encouraged to live holy lives, and equipped to serve the Lord. A sad but profound truth is that today we have strayed away from the Word of God in our worship services and now invest our energies into entertaining God’s people rather than training them in sound biblical truth and godliness. Giving the people a weekly emotional high will not accomplish the growth and maturity which stems from the teaching of sound biblical doctrine. The church is spiritual and must be built on the confession of faith which Romans 10:17 tells us comes by hearing the Word of God which is spiritual (John 6:63/Romans 7:14), and yet the church has become so commercial today that we are fostering to and providing what is pleasing and gratifying to peoples flesh, rather than ministering to the first need of God’s people, which is to teach them about the love of God and draw them into a loving relationship with Jesus Christ. Tradition and culture has made the Word of God of little to no effect today because we don’t want to offend anyone by addressing and correcting through sound biblical teaching these patterns of behavior established by these myths, man-made fictions, and old grandma tales which have been passed down through the years. As Paul was instructing Timothy, his son in the gospel, he instructed him in 2 Timothy 4:2 Amplified to “Preach the Word….Whether it is convenient or inconvenient, whether it is welcome or unwelcome, you as preacher of the Word are to show people in what they their lives are wrong. And convince them, rebuking and correction, warning and urging and encouraging them….in patience and teaching.” He proceeds to let him know that the time was coming (and now is today), that people will not tolerate sound and wholesome instruction, nevertheless he was to continue to hold to and preach the Word of God which contains the power to save souls. He concludes by encouraging young Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:5 Amplified that while diligently performing this task of preaching the Word to “be calm and cool and steady, accept and suffer unflinchingly every hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fully perform all the duties of your ministry.” The church will not thrive and accomplish what God intended without the teaching/preaching of sound biblical doctrine. As the first century church was fighting against Judaism and teaching that the Law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, so that we might be justified by faith, and now that faith has come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster, but we are all children of God by faith in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:24-26). Today we are in a time when the sound doctrine which was taught and reestablished during the Reformation which came through Martin Luther, must be taught with an urgency if we are to take this gospel to a lost people in whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not, so that the light of this glorious gospel of Christ cannot shine in their hearts (2 Corinthians 4:3, 4). The urgency is to teach them the truth and expose the danger of holding to culture and tradition which has no biblical foundation, but only fosters the errors they hold. When you see congregations fighting to hold on to the very ignorance God said that He once winked at, but now charges all people everywhere to repent, we must understand that there is a need for an Elijah anointing to invade the church today. Jesus declared that it is the truth that will set men free from the clutches of the enemy, and to call them out of the world system He said in John 17:17 to “sanctify them [purify, consecrate, separate them for Yourself, make them holy] by the Truth; Your Word is truth.” The church should be a pilgrimage of people no longer belonging to the world, but set apart to worship God, receive instruction and encouragement for godly living, and prepared for evangelism and ministering to those within the fellowship as well as those outside of its walls. The success of a ministry is not measured by the glamour of the building in which we met, nor the size of a congregation, but by the transforming of the lives of the people we encounter by teaching wholesome and sound biblical doctrine. Drawing a crowd of people every week to tickle their ears will not cause them to grow up in every way, but only continue to live off milk and not the strong meat we all need to edify the body of Christ and fulfill the Great Commission to which we all have been summoned.