WHOSE CHURCH ARE YOU A MEMBER OF?

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**DATE: 10/10/2018 Wed.**

**TEXT: I Corinthians 1:1-3**

**INTRODUCTION**

When I first got saved I had no clue about the Doctrine of the Church

I was raised in the Biggest of the Main Line Denominations

To me, at that time, all churches were alike

But over the years, as I’ve studied the Bible, I have found that not to be true

All churches are not alike, nor are they right in their Doctrine

Later, I would leave the Denomination of my Childhood and get rebaptized in a Bible Believing Baptist Congregation

**Humor:** When it comes to one’s denomination, many are like the Baptist woman that was a patient at a Catholic Hospital. The priest came in to see her. She immediately told him she was a Baptist. He said that was fine and he gave her a little cross to rub if she felt any pain. She laid the cross to the side and thought, "Not me, I'm a Baptist." In the middle of the night she had a sharp pain. She looked at that cross and then thought, "No, I am a Baptist." Then she had a sharper pain. She grabbed the cross and started rubbing it. Looking up toward heaven she prayed, *"Lord, don't let this little cross fool You, I'm still a Baptist."*

I’m a Baptist by Choice and …

… a part of the Church of God by Conversion

As a Baptist I belong to an Organization (Order)

As Church of God I belong to an Organism (Living)

I joined the Baptist Church but I was Born Again into the Church of God

So, what am I saying?

Paul's introduction to **I Corinthians** declares that all saved people are in the ***“Church of God”***

**v. 2 – *“Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints,”***

The letter begins in Paul’s customary way

-- The Author is Identified – ***“Paul”* – v. 1**

-- The Readers are Indicated – ***“Unto the church of God which is at Corinth”* – v. 2**

-- The Blessing is Imparted –***“Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ”* – v. 3**

When Paul speaks of the ***“Church of God”*** he’s not referring to a Denomination

He’s referring to the Church that is composed of every Born-Again believer

The word **Church** means *called out ones*

It speaks of an assembly of Called out people

That assembly can be social, civic, or political in nature

But when used in reference to Christians, a modifier is always used

It’s the Church of God

It’s an assembly that is unique from all others

It’s the Assembly of God

And God is the LORD-LIFE-LIGHT of that assembly

Every member of A Church may not be a member of HIS Church though

I’m talking about God’s Church

You can be a church member and not be saved

Only Born Again, Blood Bought Believers are Members of God’s Church

I will add though, that every member of A Church should be a member of GOD’S Church

If we are saved we should be identified and involved in a Local Congregation

So, let’s look at the ***“Church of God”*** and consider 3 great truths found here in **I Corinthians 1:1-3**

And think on this thought

***“Whose Church are you a Member of?”***

**~~~Prayer~~~**

First, let’s look at …

**I. THE “MEMBERS” OF GOD’S CHURCH**

In **v. 2**, Paul speaks of the Members of God’s Church as being ***“in Christ”***

Paul uses this phrase 146 times in his letters

Only those who are *in Christ* are members of the Church of God

Let’s notice a Few things he says about the Members of God’s Church

First, he describes …

**A. Our ‘Consecration’ *in Christ***

**Consecration -** *the action of making or declaring something, sacred*

Again in **v. 2**, he says that the members of His Church are ***“sanctified in Christ”***

The word ***“sanctified”*** is a verb that speaks of *a setting apart for God, to make holy by the offering of a sacrifice*

When we got saved we were Spiritually Baptized into the Body of Christ

**I Corinthians 12:13 – *“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit”***

**Ephesians 5:23 b – *“… even as Christ is the head of …***

***… the church: and He is the Saviour of the body”***

As members of *the Church of God*, we have been *consecrated* to God by the sacrificial death of Christ

We belong to God because of the sacrificial work of His Son

-- We were Received by a Congregation into A Local Church

-- We are accepted by the vote of that Congregation

But we are accepted into God’s Church by the death of the Lord Jesus and our faith in Him

The tense of the word ***“sanctified”*** speaks of a past act with Consequences that Continue into the present

The moment I put my faith in Christ, He set me apart as His own

That’s Positional Sanctification

The Consequences of that act are still being felt in my life today

At the moment of my salvation the Lord Jesus set me apart as His child

But He Continues to do a work in me setting me apart as His child

He is Constantly working in me to make me more like Him and a witness to the fact that I belong to Him

This is Practical or Progressive Sanctification

Our Day to Day Living Holy for Christ

**Our ‘Consecration’ *in Christ***

Then, he describes **…**

**B. Our ‘Designation’ *in Christ***

**v. 2 – *“called … saints,”***

Everybody has a name

In my case I was named after my father and grandfather

But as a Member of the Church of God I was named after my Heavenly Father

We are literally called ***“saints”***

This is our official designation or Title

Our official Title as a believer is *saint*

In **v. 1**, Paul calls himself an *Apostle*

That would be his official designation in God's Work

Just like *pastor* is my official designation in God’s Work

As believers though, our God given Title is *saint*

As believers we are Corporately called Christians,

But our God-given Personal Title is *saint*

I guess you could call me Saint John

The word ***“saint”*** is closely akin to the word *sanctified*

It speaks of a person that is Devoted to the Service of God

Since we belong to God, what better Title could be given us

We belong to God and thus should be Devoted to God

This again denotes our Position in Christ

But also notice that he says that we are ***“called to be saints”***

The Word of God clearly and definitely teaches Progressive Sanctification

-- We are to be Growing in Grace

-- We are to Desire the sincere milk of the Word

-- We are to Study to show ourselves approved

**Hebrews 10:10 – *“By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all”***

*Sanctification is not an attainment on the part of someone through Righteous Living*

*But is brought about by a Divine Relationship through a Surrendered Life*

**Our ‘Designation’ *in Christ***

Finally, let’s look at …

**C. Our ‘Association’ *in Christ***

To Associate with someone is to Identify with them

Paul again speaks in **v. 2** of ***“all who call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord”***

Paul speaks of *All* who are saved and *All* who have a relationship with Jesus Christ and call Him Lord

He speaks of a Family of Saints

All who have called upon the name of Jesus and all who have confessed Him as Lord are part of this family

It’s the Family with whom all believers are Associated

There are Members of His Church in every Race and in ever Place

There are many Congregations but only one Church

It is extremely important for the student of the Word of God to carefully distinguish the Local use of the term Church from its application to the entire Church – the Body of Christ

The Church of the Living God of which Jesus is the Head and the Foundation and of which we are members baptized into that Body by the Holy Ghost is a Heavenly Organism

We are Members of this Organism through the New Birth – **I Cor. 12:12,13**

There is no Universal Church or Church on Earth

Only Local Churches or Congregations …

That make up the Church of God

  **THE “MEMBERS” OF GOD’S CHURCH**

Next let’s look at …

**II. THE “MINISTRY” OF GOD’S CHURCH**

The Church of God is not only ***“in Christ”***

But also ***“at Corinth”***

The Church of God has two addresses

It has a geographical address and a spiritual address

The Church of God is not of the world but is in the world

***“In Christ”*** relates to our spiritual *Position*

***“At Corinth”*** relates to our spiritual *Purpose*

When you consider the Church and its place in the world,

We are reminded of the Ministry of the Church

The Lord's Church is expressed in Local Terms because it exists In its locality to be involved in ministry To that locality

First, let’s look at …

**A. The ‘Witness’ of the Church in the World**

Let’s Consider the City of Corinth geographically

Corinth has been called The Vanity Fair of the Ancient World, The Bridge of Greece

Each name describing its Location in the World

The north and south traffic of Greece had no alternative but to pass through Corinth

The east and west trade of the Mediterranean world chose to pass through Corinth

You might say the whole world passed through Corinth

It was a very Popular city and a very Populous city, over a ½ Million people

And in this cosmopolitan city, God had a Witness

God had not only raised up a church in Corinth

But He also placed them there Deliberately to be His Witness

The Ministry of His Church is to be a Witness to the city and community God has placed them in

Every Local Church must realize this Purpose

And they must develop a strategy for fulfilling this purpose and make a commitment to this task

How are we going to reach our Jerusalem?

The church is not just an Assembly … It is an Activity

If you think you are going to come and sit on your good intentions here, you won’t be very comfortable

A church not only gathers on the Lord's Day,

But it goes out everyday as a Witness …

… in the areas God has placed us in

**There is Not Only the Witness of His Church**

There is also …

**B. The ‘Walk’ of His Church in the World**

With this thought I think of the Moral Conditions at Corinth

The Morals of Corinth were so bad that the phrase *to Corthininize*, was coined

This phrase spoke of the reprehensible forms of behavior marked by the lust and debauchery that took place in this city

The Corinthians became so known for their immoral lifestyles that whenever a Corinthian was shown on stage in a Greek play he was shown as a drunk

Corinth was sometimes called *the city of Aphrodite*,

the goddess of love

Her temple stood on the Acropolis and was attended by 1000’s of priestesses who were sacred prostitutes and each night they descended from the Acropolis and plied their trade on the streets

It was in this city, and to this society, that God sent His people

As Saints they represented a different Lifestyle

As God's people they were a light shining in a very dark place

**II Corinthians 4:3, 4 – *“But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:” “In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, Who is the image of God, should shine unto them”***

**II Corinthians 6:17 – *“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,”***

The believer’s Walk was to draw people to Christ

But as we all know, that’s not always the case

There are many people going to hell because of people going to heaven

They profess to be saints but their practice is far from being a saint

As saints we are to be a Witness to those around us

Our Walk is indispensable to being an effective witness

**THE “MEMBERS” OF GOD’S CHURCH**

**THE “MINISTRY” OF GOD’S CHURCH**

**III. THE “MASTER” OF GOD’S CHURCH**

Paul speaks of ***“Jesus Christ”*** no less than 10 times in the first 10 verses of our text

The Master of the Church of God is not the pastor, not the deacons, not some committee, not even the members

The Master of the Church of God is the Lord Jesus Christ

He is both Redeemer and Ruler

Understanding this we see that …

**A. Christ is to be ‘Preeminent’ in His Church**

Again in **v.2** we find this phrase **…**

***“the name of Jesus Christ our Lord,”***

Jesus needs to be the Lord of our Life

He needs to have the **Preeminence**

*the fact of surpassing all others; His superiority*

There isn’t Jesus + something, it is Jesus Alone!

His Word is the final authority of His Church

It’s to be a congregation’s only form of Faith and Practice

His Will is the activity of His Church

-- He’s to have more than a Place in the Church

-- He’s to have more than Prominence in the Church

-- He’s to have the Preeminence!

He is not a Member … He is the MASTER!

-- Our Message is to be Jesus

-- Our Ministry is to be Jesus

-- Our Motive is to be Jesus

As Members of His Church

-- We have a Role to play in the Church

-- Jesus has the Rule of the Church

He’s to be Present in every Service

He’s to be Proclaimed in every Message

He’s to be the Priority of every Meeting

He’s to be the Point of every Lesson

He’s to be the Power behind every Ministry

The Church is about Jesus! It’s His Church

The Church of God

And then lastly …

**B. Christ is to be ‘Praised’ in His Church**

Notice one more time the phrase ***“call upon His name”***

It is a phrase that speaks of Worship

Jesus is not only to be Pre-eminent In His Church

But He is also is be Praised By His Church

During the Week our Lives are to bring Him Praise

And on Sunday, our Lips are to give Him Praise

He is to be Worshipped

**CONCLUSION**

Whose Church are you a Member of?

**AS “MEMBERS” OF GOD’S CHURCH**

**We must be Born Again**

**AS WE “MINISTER” IN GOD’S CHURCH**

**We Must Reach the Lost with the Gospel**

**THE “MASTER” OF GOD’S CHURCH**

**Is Jesus**

**Who alone deserves to be Praise and Honored and Glorified**