

Life in the Father's House
Lesson 3, "Choosing a Good Church"

Memorial OPC, Fall 2008
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Why is it so difficult to choose a good church to affiliate with?

Acts 2:42 - A Necessary Starting Point in Our Search.

Continuing steadfastly in (adhering to; persisting in; holding fast to; strong towards):

1. The teaching of the apostles

- A. An Issue of Authority (Says Who?)
- B. An Issue of Content (2 Timothy 3:16)
- C. An Issue of Focus (God-centered vs. Man-centered) See comments on pp. 64-65.
- D. An Issue of Methodology (Preaching and Teaching are Ever-relevant)

2. The fellowship (the word *koinonia* here can refer to several things: close relationship, partnership, sharing. The root comes from *koinos* which means common, communal, that which is held in common. The verbal cognate *koinoneo* means to share, to have a share, or to give a contribution.)

- A. An Issue of Bonding (One Body)
- B. An Issue of Time (Priorities)
- C. An Issue of Resources (Priorities)
- D. An Issue of Inclusion (These are "in" and those are "out")
- E. An Issue of Love (See how they love one another!)

3. The breaking of the bread (This seems to be a specific reference to the Lord's Supper as it has the definite article attached to it.)

- A. An Issue of Word AND Sacrament (God knows we need both)
- B. An Issue of Glad-Hearted Reception
- C. An Issue of Privilege

4. The prayers (Once again the definite article is used seeming to indicate the public prayers or stated prayers of the church.)

- A. An Issue of Dependence (Without Me you can do nothing)
- B. An Issue of Devotion (Abide in Me, and I in you)
- C. An Issue of Gratitude (Philippians 4:6)

Historical Helps

The Marks of the True Church (*vide* Belgic Confession - chapter 29; Heidelberg Catechism 82, 83)

At one time there was little need for enumerating these. Yet when heresies arose it became necessary to point to certain marks by which the true church could be distinguished from the false "church."

How many marks? One, Two, or Three?

1. The pure doctrine of the gospel is preached therein

A. Unto evangelism

B. Unto edification

C. Unto practice

2. The pure administration of the sacraments as instituted by Christ

3. The exercise of church discipline

Note well that number one under-girds numbers two and three.

Note well that no church manifest the three marks perfectly.

The Marks of a False Church

Belgic Confession - Chapter 29 (1562)

"As for the false church, it ascribes more power and authority to itself and its ordinances than to the Word of God, and will not submit itself to the yoke of Christ. Neither does it administer the sacraments as appointed by Christ in His Word, but adds to and takes from them, as it thinks proper; it relies more upon men than upon Christ; and persecutes those who live holily according to the Word of God and rebuke it for its errors, covetousness, and idolatry. These two churches are easily known and distinguished from each other."