

1 Corinthians 1

Church life as a whole has changed in the past 16 years. With the rise of seeker service type of churches, there has been shift in church to that of a more consumerism church. The question seems to have shifted from, "What can I do for the church" to "What can the church do for me."

The world has changed over the last 16 years. Our nation has changed from that of Christian to post-Christian. We have heard that term used before. If you will read the characteristics of Athens when Paul went there to preach in the open markets as found in Acts 16 and 17, you will find that American culture is very much as 1st century Roman Empire was. We have become more secular. There is more tolerance towards secularism and any other teaching. There is a growing intolerance to Christians.

Along with these two changes, I do believe that we are in the last days before the return of Jesus Christ. So many things are happening simultaneously to ignore the fact that the return of Jesus is very soon.

So, I ask myself a question. What kind of church do we need to become to face the challenges of today and the near future?

Mark Dever, a pastor of a Southern Baptist Church in the Washington, D.C. area, notes that in SBC, there are three kinds of churches:

Liberal churches, Seeker service church, and Traditional church.

The three have points of emphasis.

The liberal churches see their relevance in social ministries.

The seeker churches see their relevance in music that draws those outside the church to have an avenue of entry.

The traditional churches see their relevance in programs.

More and more liberal churches are embracing cultural norms that were once thought to be wrong.

Church researchers are telling us that more and more of those in the seeker service will become dissatisfied with that kind of church, simply because of a spiritual hunger they will develop. The question is if and when they leave, will they quit church altogether, or will they seek other churches?

I fear the future of the traditional church. Traditional churches are dying in staggering numbers.

So, what kind of church are we to become?

I wonder what kind of church are we to be. Where do we get an idea of the kind of church to be?

Where do we find instructions to be the church God wants us to be? If I go to LifeWay bookstore, I will find a whole section on church growth.

I have to admit that I am reading on one book. However, this book is not telling me a manmade model of church. It is telling me to go to The Book to get the instructions of what church is to be. There is a fourth kind of church that we need to seriously consider. It has been given the name of historical church.

Another name that I think is more accurate to describe this church is Biblical church. It is the church God intends for us to become. We're going to be looking at scripture. We are going to be hitting some basics of what we are to be as a church. We are going to be spending time in the Book of Acts and the Book of 1 Corinthians.

I hope you will be in prayer and be in attendance to the next several Sunday nights and Wednesday nights. I feel that this is something that we cannot limit to just one time a week. Tonight, I want to begin our journey by looking at the first few verses of 1 Corinthians.

Chapter 1 verses 1-3.

*Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,
To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who is every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours;
Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

One word surfaces from this passage as it has to do with the church. Called.

Called

I will not spend a tremendous amount of time on this word. We have seen this before. I have explained this before. But for the sake of review and repetition let's look briefly at it.

Called means to be summoned. It is a deliberate act of summoning someone. It is purposed. There is nothing subtle about being called. It is a legal term, such as being called to jury duty. You are summoned to serve on a jury. You are served a summons to testify in court. You are summoned, called to testify about something you saw, heard, or did. If you don't show up, there are serious consequences to face for disobedience.

Such is the case for the call of God upon our lives. There is no slipping in the back door into the Kingdom. There are no incidentals about being called by God. You are summoned, called of God. It is deliberate. It is purposed. It is a privilege. It is an honor. It is a demand that cannot be ignored. An answer is demanded. We must answer yes, or we will face consequences.

Called out

This comes from the word church. The Greek word for church is ekklesia. The Spanish word for church is igglesia. It is close to the Greek word. Ekklesia is a combination of two words. "Ek" means out or out of. Klesia is another word from kaleo meaning called. The two together is called out or called out ones.

Have you ever heard someone say, "I'm going to call you out." Means I'm going to single you out, separate you from the rest.

That's what God does when He calls us to His church. He calls us out. Out of what? He calls us out of the world, out of sin, out of the grips of sin, and He calls us into His kingdom and His church.

So, church, we are to be a bunch of different ones as compared to the world. Jesus prayed, "Though they are in the world, do not let them be of the world."

We are a subculture. It is more of a culture within a culture. We are in American culture, but our way of living singles us out to be a different culture within the culture.

This is where churches are getting into trouble.

Called out to belong to God

Notice again verse 2, "To the church of God." That is, the called out ones of God. I think that a literal translation of that verse is the church belonging to God.

So God calls us out to be part of the church, the body of believers who are called out. We are also called to be God's. We belong to God.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Or do you not know that your body is a ^[k]temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from ^[l]God, and that you are not your own?²⁰ For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

The fact is that we belong to someone. In the spiritual realm, we either belong to Satan or we belong to God. There is no self-ownership.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 becomes a principle by which we care for our bodies since we belong to Him. Where would you take the church building? What would you do with the church building? You house the Holy Spirit. You are a temple of the Holy Spirit. How you treat the church building should be how you treat your body. Where do you take your body? What do you do with your body? How do you treat your body?

Called out to be holy

Since we are called to belong to God, then it stands to reason that we are also called to be holy. What follows, "To the church of God which is in Corinth," describes further the church of God, "to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling."

Isn't it interesting that this is the first description of the church of God? We are the ones who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling. By the way, it's not that we have been sanctified one time, but it began at the time of our salvation and it is to continue until the day we see Jesus. Sanctified has its roots in holiness. To be sanctified are in the process of being sanctified is to live a life of holiness. It is a pursuit that all God's people are to be on. The standard of holiness is Jesus Christ. The instructions given as to how to live that life are given to us in His Word. Therefore, pursue holiness. It is a command.

1 Peter 1:15-16

¹⁵like the Holy One who called you, ^[a]be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; ¹⁶because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY."

So, what is involved in being holy or being in the process of being sanctified? It is to be set apart. It is to be different. It is to not embrace the standards of this world that are contrary to the standards of God's Word. It is to be light to the people of the world who are in darkness. It is to be different in your talk, and different in your walk. It is to have little to no tolerance of sin in our lives. It is to stop justifying sin as anything else but sin. It is to live a life that looks like Jesus, because that is what He has called us to do!!

For some of us, that might mean that tonight, we need to inventory our lives and see if we are living holy lives.

The last thing that verse 2 tells us is that we are...

Called out to be unified

saints by calling, with all who is every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours;

There is a little bit of a difficulty in understanding the original text. In the original text, the Greek text, "Lord" does not appear where NASB says their Lord and ours. There is some question as to whether Paul is talking about their place and our place. The context, however, makes it clear that this is referring to Jesus Christ. He not only our Lord, but He is other people's Lord. There is a call to be unified. We are to be unified first within Maple Baptist Church. In order to be unified in Maple Baptist Church, Jesus must be Lord. The unifying factor is Jesus Christ. It's not our church, this God's church. Remember the church is not the building. The church is you. Remember you are called to belong to God. You don't belong to yourself. You belong to God in Jesus Christ. I don't know if you remember this sermon when we were looking at the power of the cross a few Easters ago. One of the ways that the power of the cross is displayed and effective is that the power of the cross is that which unifies the church, because Christ died in order to unify us together.

Unity with other churches like ours who name Jesus as Lord.

On the first Friday of every month, a group gets together in the Rec Center of Conway, and they pray for revival to come to America. They pray for revival to come to our churches. This group becomes anguished when they talk about the state of our world, nation, and communities. They become concern for the future of the Church. What is interesting is that this group is not united in denomination. There are Southern Baptists. There are Presbyterian. There are those belonging to Bible churches. It isn't denomination that unites us on those Fridays. What unites us is Jesus Christ.

It is time we become serious of our call from God. We are called out to belong to God to grow continuous in holiness, and grow in unity with one another in the church of Maple and the Church universal.