

The Sanctified Church

When we look at the Church in Corinth we would think of anything but a “sanctified church”. That’s because we look at churches – and people – through natural eyes and not the way God sees them. We often hear of people talking about how we should be like the early church as if the early church was perfect in every way. The fact that letters like 1 Corinthians were written show us that the early church was anything but perfect. We need to look at the early scriptures and learn from their good points as well as their mistakes, but not try and replicate them.

The church today needs to be all that God wants it to be today. Fundamental teachings and doctrines are timeless, but structures, methods and traditions are not – they need to be changed and adapted according to the present generation.

One fundamental truth is that the church remains a sanctified church irrespective of the changes in time, tradition, methods or even irrespective of the problems in the church.

We are positionally sanctified and ought to live up to practically what we are positionally

1 Corinthians 1: 1 – 9

1) Called to be holy

- To those sanctified in Christ Jesus – Greek: *Hageadzo* – to make holy; purify or consecrate
- All believers **have been** sanctified in Christ Jesus – positionally
- The church, being the fellowship of sanctified believers in Christ Jesus, is a sanctified church – a church set apart for God to accomplish His purposes in this world.
- The church is called to be holy – Greek: *Hageeos* – sacred (physically pure and morally blameless)
 - KJV: called to be saints
 - The Message: Set apart for a God-filled life
- God expects the church to be what it is
 - It is holy so **be** holy
 - It is set apart so **be** set apart
- God understands our weaknesses and failings as individuals and as a church but he still intends us to grow towards what he wants us to be.
- He wants His church to be the glorious church, the bride made ready for the bridegroom.
 - Brides put a lot of effort into being the glorious bride on her wedding day. If she doesn't she will still be the bride but not all that a bride ought to be on her day.
 - Will we be all that Christ intends us to be?

2) Enriched by grace

- vs 4 – 6 from The Message: “Every time I think of you – and I think of you often – I thank God for your lives of free and open access to God, given by Jesus. There's no end to what has happened in you – it's beyond speech, beyond knowledge. The evidence of Christ has been clearly verified in your lives.”
- Irrespective of all the problems in the Corinthian church Paul thanks God for what he has done in the church and that they still had a clear testimony.
- 3 out workings of grace:
 - Grace from... - saving grace. We have been saved by grace through faith...
 - Grace to be.. - sanctifying grace. I am what I am by the grace of God.
 - Grace for... - works of grace. We have received grace to call people from among the gentiles...
- God intends us to be a grace filled church – as we are enriched by His grace so we enrich the lives of others by extending grace.
 - This does NOT mean that we tolerate sin in the church but we DEAL with sin with an attitude of grace

- Remember that God does not tolerate sin but he dealt with our sin with grace.
- We can teach and exhort someone to enter the kingdom of God and walk in the ways of the Lord but we cannot force them to do it. We can get them to conform to the outer standards but the inner transformation is a work of grace not law.
- God has given us “every spiritual gift” that we need to be a church through which God's grace can operate.
- Being a “Church that Cares” means that we are to extend grace to one another as well as to the community.

3) Kept by God's faithfulness

- vs 8 – 9 from The Message: “And not only that, but God himself is right alongside to keep you steady and on track until things are all wrapped up by Jesus. God, who got you started in this spiritual adventure, shares with us the life of His Son and our Master Jesus. He will never give up on you. Never forget that.”
- Philippians 1: 6 (The Message): “There has never been the slightest doubt in my mind that the God who started this great work in you would keep at it and bring it to a flourishing finish on the very day Jesus Christ appears.”
- Some of us might have doubts that we (individually and/or as a church) will ever be all that God has called us to be. But it is not only up to us. God has not left us alone to do it. He is there alongside us. He is there keeping at the work that He has started – we didn't start it, He did, and He will complete His work.
- Let us not look at the problems and issues in the church but at God who is at work amongst us.

The Sanctified Church is the church set apart by God, for God and, by grace, in the process of becoming all that He wants her to be, being held together by His faithfulness.