

I. God's heart for the Church (Review)

Paul's revelation of Christ and his deep trust in the Spirit make him immune to the extremes of cynicism and pessimism.

II. The Meaning of "Church"

The Greek word from which we get "church" is *ekklesia*, which means "gathering, assembly, congregation." It refers to the assembly of God's people, or the collective people of God, local or universal (Mat. 16:18-19; 18:16-18). *Ekklesia* was used to translate the Hebrew word *qahal*, which denotes the assembly of the children of Israel in a sacred sense.¹ (Deu. 5:22; 1 Kin. 8:14)

III. Five Characteristics of the Church (1 Cor. 1:2-9)

To the church of God that is in Corinth, to [1] those sanctified in Christ Jesus, [2] called to be saints [3] together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours: 3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 4 I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, 5 that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge— 6 even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you—7 so that you are not lacking in any gift, as [4] you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, 8 who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 God is faithful, by whom you were [5] called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. (1 Corinthians 1:2-9)

1) The Church is made up of those who are unified with Christ or "in Christ Jesus." This describes a spiritual union with Jesus and an imputing, covering, and governing relationship with him, in which his riches become ours (1 Cor. 6:9-11, 17). **2)** The Church is made of those "called to be saints." This means we are called to be *set apart* from the world to God (2 Cor. 6:14-7:1). **3)** The Church is one. It is those who are "together," "with all...in every place," that call upon the name of our Lord. **4)** The Church is those people who "wait" for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.² It is an Eschatological community. The Corinthians have received the gifts of the Holy Spirit until "*the revealing of...Jesus Christ*" (1 Cor. 13:8-12). **5)** The Church is made of those who are called into a "fellowship" (1 Cor. 1:9). The word fellowship is "koinonia." It is translated variously as "communion," "participation," "sharing," or "fellowship."³ We are a covenant community (1 Cor. 10:1-4; Acts 2:42).

¹ Longman III, Tremper. The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary. Baker Books. Grand Rapids, Michigan. 2013. 306.

² Verses Paul emphasizes Eschatology in 1 Cor: (1 Cor. 3:12-15, 4:5, 5:5, 6:2-3, 9-10, 7:26-27, 29-31, 11:26; 13:9-12; 15:22-28, 49-58, 16:22).

³ Mounce Greek Dictionary, "κοινωνία," MGD.

JESSE DIGGES

IV. The Unity of the Church

Our unity is rooted in the trinitarian life of God (John 17:20-23). It is not something we achieve in our strength. It is a *gift* that was purchased by Christ through the cross. Unity is something we *maintain* by walking in the Spirit of Love (Eph. 2:16; 4:3-6).

- ◆ **Confessional:** Your entrance into the covenant people of God is a profession of faith in Christ, as you “call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1:2, 5-6). Oh, the liberty of the gospel! Faith, expressed in joyful confession, is how one is joined to Christ and made part of God’s covenant people (1 Cor. 12:3, Rom. 10:9-13). **Faith** is assent to propositional truths. It is also trust in God’s faithfulness and character.

Paul teaches that this is how we know where the Spirit is at work and how we identify other Christians (1 Cor. 12:3). This is why apostolic ministry is first (1 Cor. 12:28). It is planting churches through the proclamation of the gospel among the unreached (1 Cor. 1:21; Rom. 10:14-17). Wherever the gospel is proclaimed, and people believe and confess, the church begins to exist.

This appears to conflict with sacramentalism. Preaching causes new birth, not baptism (1 Cor. 1:17-18).

- ◆ **Spiritual:** It is through faith that we receive the Spirit in salvation. This is being born again (John 3:1-8; Gal. 3:2-4; 1 Cor. 12:3, 13). The Church is the temple of the Holy Spirit. The same Spirit dwells in all believers; therefore, we have the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:10-16).

We are called to see one another as part of Christ’s body in the Spirit (2 Cor. 5:16). On such a basis, we walk out unity. If I am family with someone, I will approach that person with respect and a distinct kind of love. This is why he appeals to them as “brothers and sisters” (1 Cor. 2:1).

- ◆ **Covenantal:** The Lord’s Table is the New Covenant. Those who are believers must come to the table together and express their unity (1 Cor. 10:16-17; 11:20; 11:24-26).

V. Observations

1. Paul does not appeal to an ecclesiastical hierarchy for unity. He uses a bottom-up approach rather than a top-down approach (1 Cor. 3:4-5; 10; 14-17; 21-23).
2. These ideas accord with Protestant theology and Charismatic liberty. Protestantism does not restrict the Church to one institution.⁴ The Spirit is not bound within an institution.

⁴ Kärkkäinen, Veli-Matti, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Historical, Global, and Interreligious Perspectives*, 45.

A LETTER TO THE CHARISMATIC CHURCH

Finding Spiritual Realignment in 1 Corinthians - The Unity of the Church

JESSE DIGGES

"In this posture of institutional inclusivism...Protestantism is rather unique. To put it negatively, Protestantism denies the claim that any one institutional hierarchy constitutes the "one true church."⁵

Luther: "Where the word is, there is faith; and where faith is, there is the true church."⁶

Calvin: "Wherever we see the word of God sincerely preached and heard, wherever we see the sacraments administered according to the institution of Christ, there we cannot have any doubt that the Church of God has some existence, since his promise cannot fail, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Mt 18:20).⁷

3. The Church exists beyond this local assembly. It is regional and universal! We have unity with the Church in this city, this nation, and this world.
4. If we are one in Christ, and our unity is rooted in the triune life of God, then love is paramount, not ministry or gifts (1 Cor. 13:1-3).

In this box, write down something the Spirit may be highlighting to you from this message:

⁵ Ortlund, Gavin, *What It Means to Be Protestant: The Case for an Always-Reforming Church*, 20, 22.

⁶ Kärkkäinen, Veli-Matti. *An Introduction to Ecclesiology*, 45-46.

⁷ Ibid, 57.