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Two Unscriptural Concepts

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The New Testament speaks of the church in both the universal and the local senses. In the universal sense, there is one body and it is composed of all the saved of all the world (Eph. 1:22,23; Acts 2:47). In the local sense, a church is composed of Christians who agree to worship and work together, and in this sense, there are many churches (Rom. 16:16).

The two unscriptural concepts that we want to study involve how we become members of the universal and the local church. The "language of Ashdod" that is too prominent today indicates that many brethren do not have a clear understanding of the distinctions between these two uses of the word "church."

First, some talk about "joining the church" when they are speaking about their baptism into Christ. This indicates a lack of understanding about how we become a part of the body of Christ. We do not "join" the universal church. The Bible says, "And the Lord added to the church day by day those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47). The one who saves us, adds us! When does He add us? The context in Acts 2 shows that those who "repented and were baptized for the remission of their sins" were saved (Acts 2:38,41). Paul told the Corinthians, "For by one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were all made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13). The penitent believer is baptized "into one body," or "into Christ" (Gal. 3:27) in the sense that God forgives his sins and saves him because of his obedience to his commands. That does not make one a member of a local church, but of the universal church.

The second unscriptural concept that we want to notice is the idea that baptism automatically makes one a member of a local church. The Ethiopian eunuch was baptized by Philip, and "went on his way rejoicing" because he was saved (Acts 8:38,39), but he was not a member of any local church at that time. Saul of Tarsus had been baptized into Christ, and accepted by brethren in Damascus, but when he went to Jerusalem and "assayed to join himself to the disciples" there, he was not automatically accepted (Acts 9:26). After Barnabas "took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus," they agreed to accept him (Acts 9:27). The next verse says he "was with them" (v. 28). He did not just "join up," he "joined in"! But there had to be the desire to "belong" on his part, and the willingness to "accept" on their part. When Apollos wanted to go from Ephesus to Achaia, brethren in Ephesus wrote a letter "to the disciples to receive him" (Acts 18:27). What the word of mouth accomplished for Saul, the written word accomplished for Apollos! Before there can be local church membership, there must be a desire to belong and an acceptance on the part of others.

How is this desire and agreement expressed? The Bible does not give the details about this, therefore we must use our judgment in applying these principles. There are three ways that I know that have been used.

1) When a person moves to an area, or is baptized into Christ, and begins worshiping with a congregation, his participation is accepted by the church and understood by him as indicating desire to belong and acceptance, and no word is spoken. (The danger of this method is that one party or the other may misunderstand the intentions of the other. Simply worshiping with a group does not necessarily indicate a desire to belong, nor a willingness to accept.)

2) A person goes forward and states his desire to the preacher, or expresses it to the elders and a public announcement is made of this person's desire to "identify" or join this group. Unless there is some reason to question the person's faithfulness, he is accepted by the congregation as a member.

3) When a person expresses a desire to be a part of the church, the elders meet with him, or her, and discuss their mutual responsibilities. After such discussion an announcement is made that this person is a part of the congregation. (Elders have a

special responsibility toward members of the flock and such a meeting serves to let the prospective member know what we are doing, as well as what we do not practice, and find out what they have done in other places and are willing to do here. This is the approach that the elders here use.)

Other methods may be just as good in fulfilling the two requirements for local church membership, but we need to keep clearly in our minds that we are baptized "into Christ" (this is not "joining a local church"), and we join a local church (we were not baptized into it).

Being the Best You (Having the Best Attitude)

Don Wright

To be the best version of yourself, you must have the best attitude possible. When it comes to the kind of lives that we live, our attitude is critical. The saying "*attitude determines altitude*" is very true, not only in the secular realm, but also in the religious realm. In fact, it is even a biblical concept. The wise man once said about man, "*For as he thinks in his heart, so is he...*" (Proverbs 23:7).

To be the best you, you must have a humble attitude. Arrogance corrupts the mind, causing us to deceive ourselves into thinking we are better than we are. **Galatians 6:3 (NKJV)**

³For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

This self-exaltation leads to the mistreatment of others, speaking unkindly, and just an overall ugly disposition. The humble person, on the other hand, is usually kind, compassionate, and easy to get along with because they treat people fairly and with respect. This is the mind of Christ that Paul exhorts us to have (Philippians 2:3-9).

A humble attitude is possessed by those who are poor in spirit. Remember, Jesus said, "*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*" (Matthew 5:3). To be poor in spirit ultimately points to how we view and think of ourselves. It is to understand our true spiritual condition apart from Christ. To be poor in spirit is to see that, were it not for the blood of Christ, we would be hopelessly lost. This is the kind of person that pleases God. **Isaiah 66:2 (ESV)**

"...But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word."

To be the best version of ourselves, we must simply have a good overall attitude. People with bad attitudes are those who always have to have their way, making everyone around them miserable if they do not. Good attitudes are possessed by those who are thick-skinned. They are not easily offended. They do not fly off into a fit of rage when someone disagrees with them. They, instead, are very cooperative, willing to adapt and get along with others with whom they do not see eye-to-eye on a given subject. Having a good attitude is healthy for body, mind, and soul.

Proverbs 15:13 (ESV)

¹³A glad heart makes a cheerful face, but by sorrow of heart the spirit is crushed.

Proverbs 17:22 (ESV)

²²A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.

When do we need to have a good attitude? We need a good attitude when life throws unexpected challenges at us. We need a good attitude whenever we are interacting with others, friends or foes alike. We need a good attitude when we are dealing with brethren and matters of the church. We need to live with a good attitude every day. Only then can we be the best version of ourselves.

via *Winding Down Brown Street Blog*