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Subject: The Corinthians had a church...

Posted by [william](#) on Tue, 30 Mar 2010 05:55:39 GMT

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Whatever one may believe about Clement of Rome (one of the first of the apostolic fathers) we can easily discern from his epistle to the Corinthian church the extent they had fallen away from the truths that were proclaimed by Paul by the end of the first century.

His chief indictment concerned the division that was in their midst. Paul had warned them about the very same issue.

I believe that we can make some comparisons between the church at Corinth and our own situation.

I. They differ from most of us in that they actually had an assembly to identify with, however imperfect it may have been.

i. Those of us who find ourselves alone in the wilderness must in some way justify our condition by believing that we are somehow yoked to the 'church universal' even though we might not like the terminology. A question we must ask--is it better to be a part of an imperfect representation of a local church, (like the Corinthian church) or is it better to separate completely from such assemblies?

1) To answer such a question we first must decide what actually constitutes a church?

a) Are there any believers present?

b) Is heresy being taught by the leadership?

c) Is there any hope that God may salvage such a church?

d) Do we possess any gift that might help to bring about the restoration of the body of Christ in this church?

2) At what point can it be said that a church has become apostate, or has had its lamp stand removed?

3) Can one become a Christian in this church?

a) What is necessary for one to become a Christian?

b) If there is a possibility that one can become a Christian in this church, what course of action would you advise for the new convert?

i) Stay put and read your bible.

ii) Find another church. (Assuming this is possible)

iii) Leave and join the ranks of the independent Christians everywhere who are a part of the mystical 'church universal'?

4) What doctrines are absolutely necessary for a church to be considered a Christian church?

a) We can assume, according to Jesus, that the church should be promoting a love for God among its members.

b) Secondly, there should be love toward others, both within the fellowship and without. (Who is my neighbor?)

c) Interpretation of biblical truth should be based upon sound principles of hermeneutics.

d) It is desirable that all believe the same things when it comes to doctrine, but is there room for differences in interpretation when it comes to things like the head-covering, for instance, or the holidays, or how one may or may not exercise their faith regarding healing, deliverance, or the prosperity of the believer? Could there be fellowship among those who are at different levels regarding these things? Do these things determine whether or not a church is true or false?

e) Positive confession. Is this a deal-breaker when it comes to the definition of a church?

ii. Is it possible to be a part of the body of Christ, without being a part of an assembly?

iii. Are the gifts (1Cor12, Rom12, Eph4) only given to those who are a part of an assembly, or can we expect them to operate through us more or less independently of the fellowship of believers?

II. The Corinthians, however imperfect they were, had an abundance of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

III. The Corinthians, despite an abundance of problems, despite their divisions, despite their schisms, were still unified enough to be considered a church.

IV. The Corinthians were still a functioning assembly toward the end of the first century even though they had not followed the words of Paul (which we know to be THE WORD OF GOD) and were still plagued with the same sort of vices that are enumerated in 1 & 2 Corinthians. I'm not advocating for a carnal church, nor am I saying that they were not in danger of losing their lamp stand, but it is an interesting fact that even with all of their problems-- lack of unity, lack of agreement on doctrine, jealousy, envy, strife, pride, etc.--they were still viable as a church!

I'm not sure where I'm going with this other than to provide some food for thought.

I'm certainly not trying to point a finger (I don't have) at anyone for being in a situation that none of us really want to be in, but I don't like the status-quo and I'm not going to be satisfied as an unattached fingernail. I was made to scratch an itch and I'm having a tough time doing it without a finger!

Blessings,  
William