

Regenerated Church Membership

This week we will be exploring a topic often taken for granted: Regenerated Church Membership. Simply put, Regenerated Church Membership just means that only those that have accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior and are born again may be part of the local Church.

This doctrine is essential to keeping the purity in the Christian Church. We see the necessity to keep the membership of the Church pure when we examine what happened to the Christian Church following the Edict of Milan in A.D. 313. Emperor Constantine of Rome claimed conversion to Christianity and unfortunately demanded to be the head of the church. In exchange, the persecution of the Christians ceased and Christianity was pronounced a tolerated religion. Soon many unsaved members of society – in an attempt to gain political or economic stature by emulating their emperor – converted to Christianity in name only. The Church had allowed unsaved members into the church and shortly found that the world was creeping into every doctrine and practice of the Faith. The false professing Christians brought many heathen practices into the church and contaminated the purity of the Church.

THE TWO TYPES OF CHURCH

In order to further understand the gravity of Constantine's actions we need to understand two aspects of this doctrine:

- 1) There is the Church and There is the Local Church.

The Church is the body of all believers of Jesus Christ. Only members that have been baptized by the Holy Ghost may be part of the Body of Jesus Christ. The baptism of the Holy Ghost occurs the instant an individual accepts Christ as their Savior and it places the individual into the Body of Christ (The Church). *For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.* 1 Corinthians 12:12-13

Essentially, The Church is a spiritual body in which all believers of Jesus Christ are part of the Body of Christ. There is nothing one needs to do to be part of this besides to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. In this Church there are no denominations, no differences between one another, and no respect of persons.

The Local Church is a corporeal body consisting of: Saints (regenerated membership), Deacons (helpers of the Pastor), and Bishops (another word for Pastor) in one location.

- 2) Christ is the Head of the Church

We previously mentioned that the Church is the Body of Christ – a body of all believers in Christ. If there is a body, there must be a Head – the Lord Jesus Christ. *And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.* Colossians 1:18

A basic understanding of this doctrines sheds light on the consequences of Constantine's actions. His influence encouraged compromise and the admittance of unsaved people into the Church thereby corrupting it and by demanding the headship of the Church he usurped the rightful position of Jesus Christ as the Head of the Church.

BECOMING A MEMBER

There are three ways to become a member in an Independent Fundamental Baptist Church.

- 1) To accept Jesus Christ as your own personal Savior and be baptized by water immersion into the local Church.
- 2) To make a profession of faith that one has accepted Jesus Christ as Savior and have a willingness to be baptized by immersion.
- 3) One may present a letter of transfer from another Church of like Faith.

MEMBERS ARE EXPECTED TO:

- 1) Agree with the doctrinal statement of the local Church
- 2) Regularly attend every service of the local Church and support it with tithes (10% of what one earns) and offerings (over and above the 10%)
- 3) Win others to Christ and bring them into the local Church
- 4) Support the leadership of the local Church in prayer and finances
- 5) Always maintain the true Christian spirit of love and kindness