

The Church, God's Called out People

The New Testament presents the church as a divine institution. God planned and established the church (Eph. 3:9-12). The church exists in the world as a manifestation of God's glory and God's desire to save the lost (Eph. 3: 20-21). The church is God's called out people.

First, the word *church* in the New Testament carries the idea of those who hear the call of God and obey it. Jesus taught, "It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God. Every one that has heard from the Father, and has learned, comes unto me (John 6:44-45). According to Paul, the called are the church, the sanctified, saints, "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, *even* them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called *to be* saints, with all that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:2)."

Second, Jesus calls every sin-laden individual to follow him. He said, "Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (Matt. 11:28)." Sin imposes a heavy burden on us all, but Jesus promises to remove it, if we will answer his call.

Third, God calls everyone through the gospel. Paul said in 2 Thess. 2:13-14, "Whereunto he called you through our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." This is a clear statement of how God calls the lost to Himself. He calls through the gospel. Paul explains how that faith comes of this gospel, the word of God. He wrote, "So belief *comes* of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ (Rom. 10:17)." Paul further declared, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). God calls the church out of the world and to Christ through His word. This is the only way God has said that He calls us out of the world.

Fourth, God calls us out of darkness into light. Peter wrote, ". . . you may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9)." John also affirmed this very fact, "And this is the message . . . that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in the darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:5-7)."

In conclusion, God calls us out of the world into the church. He calls us out of sin. He calls us with the gospel of Christ. He calls out of darkness and into His marvelous light. Indeed, we become the church, the called out body of Christ.