

BRYAN STATION BAPTIST CHURCH

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BAPTIST CHURCH MEMBERS

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Acts 2:39-42, *“For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, [Gentiles] even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward, [crooked] generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized...”* They gladly received his word. What caused them to gladly receive His word if it wasn't the Holy Spirit. They that gladly received His word were baptized. Notice, they weren't baptized until they gladly received His word. That word concerning salvation in Jesus Christ. *“...And the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”*

The Bible says God has made the pastor the overseer; he has to be called of God. He has to desire the office of a bishop, that is the work of the Holy Spirit. A pastor is not worth a nickel if he does not desire to pastor the people God put him over. Deacons must be full of the Holy Ghost, and they must also desire to be in that office. They will never minister unto God's people until they have a desire to help God's people.

In Acts chapter 6, when the seven deacons were chosen, I don't see where any one of them refused the call, they gladly accepted it. They had a desire. Honestly, no one in the office of a deacon will ever perform the services of a deacon unless they have a desire to help God's people. A pastor, if he doesn't

have a desire, he has a problem. A deacon, if he does not have a desire, he has a problem. And a church member also ought to desire to be a member of the Lord's church. These are simple things.

Members of the church ought to *desire* to be a member of the church. The pastor ought not to desire his office in order to get his name in the paper; deacons should not desire the office in order to be exalted. There has to be a desire to give glory to God and to be a help to God's people. The Holy Spirit is the instigator of all that desiring, is he not?

In our text they that gladly received His word were baptized and the Lord added. Do you think anyone was added to that church that did not desire or want to be a member? They desired to be a member.

A man fell into sin in I Corinthians chapter 5 and he took his own father's wife and committed fornication. In II Corinthians that man desired to get back into fellowship with that church. The church would not let him back until Paul said he has had enough. He had a desire to be a member of that church. They had to withdraw fellowship from him. Paul said he has suffered enough, let him back in. He desired to be a member of the Lord's church.

Wonder who put that desire in his heart? The same one that put the desire in the pastor. The same one that put the desire in a deacon and the same one that puts the desire in church members that they want to be a member of the kind of church that Jesus built.

We have members sitting in our au-

ditorium who have moved to Lexington in order to be a member of this church. One moved back from Georgia; one moved back from Colorado. The main purpose was to be a member of His kind of church. Wonder who put that desire in their minds? That's the Lord, isn't it? We need to think about this.

There is a responsibility laid upon the pastor. There is a responsibility laid upon the deacons who have been chosen to that office. But there is also a responsibility upon church members. Many people don't understand that.

The Bible tells us the kind of people who should be members. Acts 2:47, *“Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”*

People who are members of the Lord's New Testament church should be saved. That means they have repented of their sins, put their faith in Jesus Christ; they have been quickened by the spirit of God, they have desired to live their lives for Jesus Christ and the Bible says they were baptized (verse 41) declaring that they are through with the old life, they are alive to God, now they want to live their life for Jesus Christ. Wasn't that the desire? When people were baptized in the first church, didn't they have a desire to live their lives for Jesus Christ? Why sure they did, or they would not have been baptized. *“Then they gladly received his word and were baptized...”* Declaring that I am dead to sin, alive unto God, I am going to be raised to walk in newness of life.

People are changed before they become church members. These people were Jews and were in Judaism, but the Lord changed them. They made a big change there at Pentecost. They turned away from Judaism, they turned to the Lord's church, they were baptized. They forsook the temple and everything else. They started working with the Lord's New Testament church.

Lost people are changed. I Corinthians 6:9-11 *"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, [womanish] nor abusers of themselves with mankind, [homosexual] Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."* What does that mean? It means just what it says.

But notice this next little verse: *"And such were some of you..."* See there, you were, but you are not any more. *"But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified..."* Who is it that sanctifies you, if it is not the Holy Spirit that dwells within us? How does he do that? Through the word. How are we washed? Through the blood of Jesus Christ in regeneration and faith in His blood. *"...But ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."* The Holy Spirit of our God is the one that did all that. Ye were, but you are not that any longer. When the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in your life, *"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure,"* Philippians 2:13. You cease to be what you were, you are not what you ought to be, but you are growing and being sanctified by the Spirit of God, through the word to become more like Christ all the time.

I Corinthians 6:12, *"All things are lawful unto me..."* When Christ saves us, he takes us out from under law and puts us under grace, we are not under law any more. All things are lawful for me. In other words there is not a law I can break that will send me to hell, *"...but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any."* I am not going to let those things dominate me, I am going to live my life for Jesus Christ. I John 4:4, *"...Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world."*

"And such were some of you..." I

believe the Bible teaches that when a person unites with the Lord's kind of church and gladly receives baptism, and becomes a member of the Lord's church, their lives should have been changed. I didn't say it was perfect. If I did, we are all in a mess, but I will tell you one thing, we have a desire to live our lives for Jesus Christ and to give him glory. Isn't the church the place to do it? Ephesians 3:21, *"Unto him be glory in the church..."* Do you fail? Do I fail? Yes we do, but thanks be to God, one day he is going to get us out of this body where we will never fail again. But until that time we have a warfare going on in our bodies. There is a war going on between the flesh and the spirit, we are to yield ourselves to the spirit of God and put the flesh down.

When they believe, when they gladly receive His word, when they believe and trust Jesus Christ, they become children of God. Not when they are baptized, John 1:12, *"But as many as received him,"* talking about the Jewish people in particular, *"to them gave he power [authority] to become the sons of God..."* If you have been born again, you become children of God, you are sons by adoption, children by birth. *"...gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that [what?] believe on his name."* Does he add anything to that? Does he add baptism to that or any thing else? No. The Bible says when you believe, *"to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born,"* There is the work of the spirit of God, *"not of blood,"* or heredity of your parents, *"nor of the will of the flesh,"* not because you wanted to be born again because the flesh is enmity with God, *"nor of the will of man,"* not because somebody else wanted you to be born, *"but of God."*

A saved person has been born of God. They become children of God. Now when we are born of God, some things happen to us. Talking about the new birth I Peter 1:22, *"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit..."* You will never obey the truth unless the Holy Spirit leads you into the truth. These are simple things, but friends, these are major teachings. Notice: *"unto unfeigned love of the brethren..."* You don't pretend to

love the brethren. God puts his love in you and you begin to love God's people that love the Lord. Isn't that true? I John 3:14, *"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."* How can we love the brethren and hate God at the same time. Last part of verse 22, *"see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."*

So when we are born again, we become children of God, we are in the family of God. We begin to love the children of God and we love the brethren. The brethren are those that have done the same thing we have. How can we be called brethren, if we have not been born of the same father? So we have been born again by the spirit of God.

I Peter 2:2, *"As newborn babes..."* You know, when people are little babes, they don't know very much, they need to be taught. *"As newborn babes."* You take a newborn that has just been born into the world, he doesn't know anything. He needs to cry, and he needs to eat, that's about all he knows. People who have just been born again think they know everything. I've been studying for forty years and I don't know anything like I ought to know.

"Desire the sincere milk of the word..." Babies can't eat steak, they can't eat pork chops, they have to have milk, pablum, ground up spinach and all that stuff. People who have just been saved by the grace of God have to start at the bottom. In this church we have to have a class that teaches the basic things to people that have just been saved. God's little ones need to be nursed, spiritually; where they are taught things that you and I take for granted. When we are first saved, we don't know who Abraham is, we don't know who Adam is, we don't know any of these things. We need to be grounded in the simple things. You had to start that way, didn't you? And these little ones have to start that way too.

"...That ye may grow thereby." Children who are members of this church need to grow; and, as they grow in knowledge, will, and understanding they will become more like Christ. Didn't Jesus Christ, when he was born as a little baby, have to grow up in wisdom and stature. Yes, He was God. He had the Holy Spir-

it in Him and yet He was God. We have the Holy Spirit in us, we need to grow up like He grew up. We have to be taught. "...A child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame," Proverbs 29:15. Even in the natural sense, a child left to himself brings his mother to shame, but a child in the church that is left to himself will also bring his mother to shame. I personally believe the Lord's church is the mother of His children. We have gone out, sowed the seed, the Lord saved people; and God has placed those little ones in our care. Psalm 113:9, "*He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children...*"

I Peter 2:4 talks about a living stone - that's Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of the Lord's church. "...disallowed indeed of men, [men rejected him] but chosen of God, and precious, Ye also, [just as Christ was] as lively stones." How many of us ever really understand that in the Lord's kind of church, in a spiritual sense, we are living stones upon a living foundation, Jesus Christ. We are His building. "...Are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

It seems to me then, in the church, there ought to be sacrificing going on. Hebrews 13:15, "*By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.*" You might say that when Christ died all the sacrificing ended. Yes, it did of bulls and goats and all that; but friend we ought to sacrifice the sacrifice of praise giving thanks to His name. We ought to come into His house thanking Him and praising Him for Jesus Christ. Instead of talking about worldly things, we ought to come into God's house praising the Lord and sacrificing our lips to God praising Him for what He has done for us. I am guilty of that, you are too; but we ought to try to get rid of it.

I Peter 2:7, "*Unto you therefore which believe he is precious...*" Do you believe that? I believe that those who **truly** believe, Jesus Christ is precious. You might say, well I am a member of the church, and never even think about Jesus Christ. Something is wrong somewhere. Our faith is in Jesus Christ. I can't judge people's hearts. But can members not come and bring back into

remembrance the death of Jesus Christ by observing the Lord's Supper? Isn't He precious to them? Something is wrong somewhere.

Verse 9, "*But ye are a chosen generation...*" Do you know God's people are a chosen generation? If God hadn't chosen you, you would not be in the Lord's church. Acts 2:39, "*...Even as many as the Lord our God shall call.*" Verse 9, "*But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood...*" Aaron and his sons were priests back in the Old Testament. We are not sons of Aaron, we are sons of God and are a royal priesthood. Our father is the king. We are priests. I believe in the priesthood of the believer, I don't believe in the priesthood of the church. I don't believe you have to be a member of the Lord's church in order to be saved. But as a member of this church, you are a priest unto God. You can represent others to God, pray to God directly as a priest. "...An holy nation..." In the Old Testament you had the nation of Israel. That nation was not holy, they were ungodly, rebelling against the Lord and everything else. But when we talk about spiritual Israel in Romans chapter 9, we are a holy nation. A people that God has chosen to be holy.

"A peculiar people..." That doesn't mean we are to be peculiar in the sense on how people look at us. That means we are a people that has been purchased for His possession and belong to Him. Notice why we are that way, "*that ye would shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*" What is the purpose for us? That ye should shew forth the praises of Him, that's all He wants, give Him glory and praise, and do His work.

"Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God..." Now we are ye the people of God, because ye were chosen. "...which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy." Why is it that ye are a chosen people? Why are ye a royal priesthood? Because God has been merciful. Not because you deserved it, but because God has been merciful.

"Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims..." You are strangers on this earth, you are just passing through, "...obtain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." That's church members, isn't it?

"Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold..." We are to live out lives for Christ, let our light shine and "*be careful to maintain good works,*" Titus 3:8. "...which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation."

People become members of the kind of church that Jesus built through water baptism. The word baptize means to immerse. Anything outside of immersion is not baptism. You don't sprinkle or pour anybody. The word is a Greek word which means to immerse or plunge under. It pictures a death. When a man is buried, he is put under the ground. That is what baptism pictures.

These members in Acts 2:41, "*Then they that gladly received his word were baptized...*" So they desired to be members. You need to desire to be members of the church for the right reason. Not just in order to have someone to preach your funeral when you die. That's about what it amounts to with some people. They ought to desire to be members so they can be taught and live their lives for Jesus Christ. That's what the church is for. Get 'em saved, baptize them, and then teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. You might say, I don't like that, I am rebelling against that; No, when God saves people they desire to be taught.

I Peter 2:2, "*Desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.*" Do you desire that? I don't know who put it in people's heads that you are just supposed to attend church on Sunday morning about 45 minutes and that's all you are supposed to attend. Whoever taught you that, has taught you wrong. Hebrews 10:25, "*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*" That desire to be a member of the Lord's New Testament church was put there by the Holy Spirit.

I Corinthians 12:12, referring to the human body, "*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.*" He is comparing the Lord's church as a body to a human body, a local visible body, that's what a church is, it's not universal in any

sense. *"For by one Spirit"* [that's the Holy Spirit] *"are we all baptized"*, [all of us in that one body] *"into one body..."* The Holy Spirit leads us to be baptized in water, become a member of that kind of a church. That kind of a church is put there in order to give glory to God, to praise Him, be taught the things of God, represent Him on the earth, be a witness for Him and preach the gospel. The Holy Spirit is the one who put that desire in there, *"whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."*

If the Lord added to the church such as should be saved, seems like it is the Holy Spirit that lead people into that body. When people are baptized for the proper purpose they have a desire to live their lives for Jesus Christ.

Baptism declares, first of all, that we have already been saved. It does not declare that we have washed away our sins as a baby or something, it declares that we have been saved by the grace of God, put our faith in Jesus Christ who died for me, and the righteousness of Jesus Christ has been imputed to me and I have that righteousness of Jesus in my life.

People today don't understand what church membership is. Romans 6:1-2, *"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"* When we trust the Lord Jesus Christ that He died for us and we receive Him as our substitute for our salvation, we die in Him. How in the world can we continue in sin when we see that Jesus Christ had to die for that sin, shed His precious blood for that sin and we are going to trust that and keep on sinning. No, God forbid. We need to live our lives for Jesus Christ.

Verses 3-4, *"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."* Baptism is not something that we do in order to be saved. Baptism is a declarative act of what has already happened. When we are baptized and declare that, that is the Lord's way we become a member of the Lord's New Testament church.

We are saved by grace. Now let's see what grace does. Titus 2:11, *"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation [that is the only kind of grace we are talking about right now] hath appeared to all men, [that's through the preaching of the word] Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts..."* Now the grace of God will teach you that. Now, let me ask you something, if the grace of God teaches that, shouldn't I teach you that? *"...We should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."* Shouldn't your pastor teach you that? Should I let down the barriers in any sense or should I teach you that? I'm going to teach you what the grace of God teaches you. Matthew 28:20, *"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you..."*

Verse 13-15, *"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee."* The grace of God teaches this, and the pastor teaches you this, don't despise the pastor if the Lord is teaching you that you should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.

I Timothy 6:3-5, *"If any man teach otherwise,"* [talking about the things of the Lord] *"and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but dotting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself."*

I had better not teach any doctrine that is not according to godliness. You might say, it's alright to do this or that. It is not. If God tells you not to do it, don't do it. I learned a long time ago, the Lord told me to preach perfection, I don't measure up, but I ought to be striving for that.

Galatians 1:3-4, *"Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver*

us from this present evil world..."

I John 2:15, *"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world, If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."*

James 4:4, *"...Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."* Pretty serious, isn't it?

Matthew 5:13, *"Ye are the salt of the earth..."* Salt is a preserving element. How many of you ever salted hams? You do that to preserve hams. *"...But if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under the foot of men."* If this world is going to be preserved, it is going to have to be preserved by God's people.

God would not destroy Sodom and Gomorrah as long as Lot was in there. He had to get him out, understand that. I don't believe that God is going to bring the tribulation period upon the world until He gets His people out of there—pre-tribulation rapture.

Verse 14-15, *"Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel..."* That's kind of silly isn't it, to light a candle when it is real dark and take a bushel basket and put over the top of it. What good is a candle that has a bushel on top of it? The light doesn't shine, does it? It is hidden. What you do is put it *"...on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all the are in the house."*

When you light a candle, the best thing to do with that candle is put it on a candlestick and let the light shine. In Revelation 1:20 the Lord says *"the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches."* His kind of a church.

What is that teaching us: that means if God has saved you, if he has put that light in your mind and in your heart, has given you an understanding of the truth and you love the Lord and you desire his words and want to live your life for him, where is the place to do it? Ephesians 3:21, *"Unto him be glory in the church..."* So the Lord added unto the church such as should be saved. What is the church to do? To teach you the will of God, show you what God would have you to do. Then you begin to do the will of God, let your light shine, work out your salvation with fear and trembling, the world looks upon you and as you do.

"Let your light so shine before men..." Isn't that living a Christian life--the same kind of life that Jesus lived?

Jesus said, in John 8:12 "...I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." The Bible says, "Let your light so shine before men..." In other words, my life ought to be lived in such a manner that when I am walking in a world that is in darkness; people ought to see a difference in me and the rest of the world.

Matthew 5:16, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works..." Ephesians 2:10, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." "...And glorify your Father which is in heaven."

I am not even getting to the tip of the iceberg concerning the responsibility of church members. They are to love one another, strengthen one another, to help one another, to suffer with one another, etc. Every church member is responsible to be a witness. Every church member ought to be telling the story of Jesus Christ. That is not left up to the pastor and the deacons, that is the responsibility of every church member--to tell people about Jesus Christ. Just tell them what great things God has done for you, that he has been merciful to you.

Where are we to do that? Go into all the world and preach the gospel. The pastor has a great work to do. He is responsible and he ought to desire to do it. The deacon has a great work to do. God says when you do that and do it well it is a great work. You have the privilege of laying up treasures in heaven. Matthew 25:21, "...Well done, thou good and faithful servant..." What a reward that will be! When you become a servant to God, and do it the way God told you to. When you have done it unto my little ones you have done it unto me.

The membership also has a great work and responsibility. We are getting to the place where we don't really understand what our purpose on this earth is. It is not just to be like the church at Laodicea--I have need of nothing. Look, I am settled now, don't bother me. No, we have a work to do.

God has a way of scattering a church. If we don't do it, God has a way of

scattering us. The membership also has the greatest work and great responsibility of preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.

People who are lost can't preach the gospel. They will tell you, you have to do this and that, you have to confess your sins before a priest, if you don't do this or that, you are lost. They don't have the gospel.

The gospel is how that Jesus Christ died for our sins, how that he was buried and was raised again. We are justified by grace through faith. Justified from all things through faith. When we trust the Lord he imputes everything Jesus did to us, we are saved by the grace of God, become children of God. We are not under law, we are under grace. He deals with us now as children. We don't have to fear being lost after we are saved. That is the work of the Holy Spirit.

In order for this to be done, the pastor must teach. Is that right? He must fulfil his job. He has to teach, that is one of the qualifications of the pastor, he has to teach. In other words; before these things can take place; before God's people can grow, he has to teach. See the responsibility placed upon the pastor.

The deacons have to serve the membership, because they are God's little children. Some of them need help. They need to be served. That's what the dispute was over in Acts chapter 6. The deacons have to be full of the Holy Spirit, they have to be learned, they have to be wise, full of wisdom, in order to know how to do these things. The members are to be busy doing the will of God. You see how it comes through teaching.

Remember when they elected deacons and they began to do their job. Acts 6:7, "And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly..." People were added to the church, the Lord really blessed it. Everybody has a job to do in the body. Do you believe the head is doing his job? That's Jesus Christ, do you believe he is doing his job? Isn't it the pastor's responsibility to do his job? Do you believe the deacons ought to be doing their job? Do you believe that the members ought to be doing their job? I believe all need to be doing our jobs.

If the body is growing, working, and edifying itself in love, we can get the job done. But all of us have to work. Some of us have more responsibility, more

ability than others. The pastor, I believe, has the greatest responsibility, and I will have to give an account of the church he has made me overseer, our assistant pastor will have to give an account of how he leads the church. And so the deacons will give an account on how they served. And every church member is going to give an account on how they have served the Lord.

There is a great responsibility on me. I need to set the example, as Jesus Christ set my example in what He did. I am to set the example before the people and the people need to follow. I don't need to set a poor example. I need to set a good example for you to follow.

Simple, isn't it? Friend, that is the way the church grows. If we are all doing the work that God called us to do, and will go out and start witnessing, I believe God will use us to save some people. Don't depend on the pastor to lead people to Christ; every member of this church ought to be able to sit down with people and tell them about Jesus Christ. Then God can use that to the salvation of souls.

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