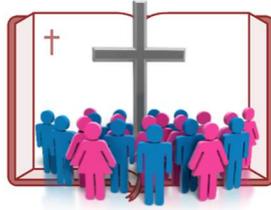


Being Baptist

"You have given me the heritage of those who fear Your name."
Psalm 61:5



Lesson 3

"YOU'RE NOT THE BOSS OF ME" Autonomy of the Local Church

LESSON AIM: To describe the New Testament teaching about the independence and autonomy of each local congregation and how that differs from many Christian denominational organizations today.

- **WELCOME & PRAYER / LESSON INTRODUCTION / THEME VERSE / LESSON AIM**
- **QUICK REVIEW: LESSONS 1-2**
- **PART 1: THE BAPTIST DOCTRINAL HALLMARKS (Continued)**
 - The Baptist Distinctives
 - B – Biblical Authority & The Lordship of Christ
 - A – Autonomy of the Local Church
 - P – Priesthood of Believers
 - T – Two Ordinances: Baptism & Communion
 - I – Individual Soul Liberty
 - S – Saved Church Membership
 - T – Two Offices: Pastors & Deacons
 - S – Separation of Church & State
- **SECOND DISTINCTIVE: "A" = AUTONOMY OF THE LOCAL CHURCH**
 - Meaning of Local Church Autonomy
 - Key Reference: 1 Timothy 3:15
 - Description: Each local Baptist congregation is independent or sovereign in and of itself
 - Biblical Distinction: "Universal" Church vs. "Local" Church

QUOTABLE QUOTE: "Each local Baptist church is an independent unit, responsible to no one but Jesus Christ, the Head of the church, transacting its own business, ordaining and instituting its own programs, determining its own voluntary course of cooperation and fellowship with other churches and organizations, and deferring to no higher earthly court of appeals than itself" (Virgil W. Bopp, *Confidently Committed: A Look at the Baptist Heritage, 1987*).

- What Constitutes a Baptist Church?

- Good Characterization: A Baptist Church = A New Testament Church
- Christ: The Only Head (Eph. 1:22-23; Eph. 3:20-21; Col. 1:18)

➤ Various Forms of Church Polity (Government)

- Hierarchical/Episcopal
- Presbyterianism
- Congregationalism
 - Voluntary Cooperation
 - Equality of Membership

➤ Importance of Local Church Autonomy

- No Outside Control
 - “Baptist churches” vs. “The Baptist Church” (Acts 16:5 + 35 NT verses)
- Final Authority in Disputes (Acts 15; Gal. 2:2)
- Elects Own Officers/Leaders (Acts 6:1-7; Phil. 1:1; Acts 14:23, 20:17)
- Directs Own Missions/Evangelism Goals (Acts 13:1-4; 14:26-27)
- Final Authority in Church Discipline (Mt. 18:15-17; 1 Cor. 5:1-5; 2 Thess. 3:14-15)

➤ Practical Implications of Church Autonomy—“We Are the Church”

- You Need a New Testament Church
 - Identification with God’s Son
 - Education in God’s Scriptures
 - Participation in God’s Service
 - Exhortation from God’s Shepherds
 - Affiliation with God’s Saints
 - Celebration of God’s Supremacy
 - Implementation of God’s Strategy

- A New Testament Church Needs You

• **SUMMATION / PREVIEW OF LESSON 4 / QUESTION & ANSWER TIME / BENEDICTION**