

Baptist Distinctives- Ecclesiology
12/06/2023

Key Terms:

Autonomy

Ecclesiology

Autonomy

- The right or condition of self-government.
- The idea of church autonomy is that each church governs itself according to the Bible.
- There is no Biblical precedent for a hierarchical structure that exists to oversee local congregations.
- That doesn't mean that these ideas are bad necessarily it just means that the Bible is silent on there being a governing body over local congregations.
- As Baptists we have long held the belief that each church is responsible to God and is governed by His Word.

Associations

- Here at Pisgah Forest Baptist Church we are a part of 3 entities: Transylvania Baptist Association, Baptist State Convention of NC, and the Southern Baptist Convention.
- Each one of these affiliations is completely voluntary.
- We remain in them as long as the entities stay within the Biblical bounds.
- If a church is found to be outside of the core beliefs of each association then they can be removed but the association itself has no governing authority over the local church itself.

Saddleback Church

- Formerly pastored by Rick Warren.
- Based in Lake Forest, CA.
- Was found to be ordaining and commissioning women to the role of pastor/elder.
- This is in direct violation of Scripture as well as the Baptist Faith and Message 2000.
- The Southern Baptist Convention voted in June Of 2023 to disfellowship with Saddleback.
- We had no authority to force Saddleback to change but we could disfellowship them.

The churches within Baptist life tell the associations how to operate while other denominations work in the opposite direction.

Ecclesiology

- Theology as applied to the nature and structure of the Christian church.
- Every entity has a structure of process and leadership.
- The church is no different.
- The Bible actually has a lot to say about how the church is to be governed and run.

Apostles, Prophets, and Evangelists

- Ephesians 4:11
- The office of the apostle was specifically given to 12 men, then Matthias and Paul after Judas betrayed Christ and committed suicide.
- The office of apostle ended with John's death.
- Prophets also was an office that was utilized but has since been removed in the sense of new revelation coming to the people.

- The message of the Bible is complete.

Overseer, Elder, Pastor- *Episkopos, Presbyteros, Poimen*

- Acts 20:17;28, Titus 1:5
- This office is largely interchangeable in the New Testament.
- This is to be the authority, as well as, spiritual leadership within the local churches.

Qualifications for Pastor/Elder

- 1 Timothy 3:1-7
 - 1 Timothy 5:17
 - Titus 1:5-9
- 1) The role of pastor/elder is reserved for men.
 - 2) He must be above reproach not only within the church but in the community.
 - 3) Able to teach
 - 4) One woman man.
 - 5) His children are well-behaved. His household must be managed well.
 - 6) Must not be arrogant or quick-tempered.
 - 7) Must not be a drunkard.
 - 8) Not violent.
 - 9) Not greedy.
 - 10) Must be hospitable.
 - 11) He loves what is good.
 - 12) Self-controlled.
 - 13) Upright, holy, and disciplined.
 - 14) Holds firm to the Word and sound doctrine.

The authority of pastors/elders comes from God and His Word not the congregation.

Main responsibilities

- 1) Leader
- 2) Shepherd
- 3) Teacher
- 4) Equipper

The responsibilities of the pastors/elders are to be shared by qualified men.

The CEO model of leadership is not Biblical.

Deacons- *Diakonos*

- To make dust.
- Acts 6:1-6
- The job of the deacon is to lead by serving.
- The idea that deacons are to be in charge of the local church is an unbiblical one.
- The purpose of their appointment in Acts 6 was to make sure that the Hellenist widows were being taken care of alongside of the Jewish widows.
- The pastors/elders lead the church in teaching and authority while the deacons make sure the service of the people is carried out.

Qualifications for Deacons

- 1 Timothy 3:8-12
- 1) Dignified
 - 2) Not double tongued
 - 3) Not a drunkard

- 4) Not greedy
- 5) Must hold to sound doctrine
- 6) An office reserved for men
- 7) Their wives must be of good standing and repute
- 8) One woman man
- 9) Well-managed households

The similarities between the qualifications of pastors/elders and deacons are striking.

There is one noteworthy and that is that deacons are not commanded to be able to teach.

This is because the role of deacon is not to be one of authority but rather service.

Biblical Model

- The Biblical model is that the church is governed by Scripture first and foremost.
- It is to be handled, administered, and enforced by a team of elders. (Plurality of elders)
- The deacons should be the driving force of the elders to ensure that the needs of the people are being met.
- The people lovingly submit to the authority of the pastors/elders so far as they stay within Biblical bounds.
- Congregationalism is an unbiblical form of church government in which the people run the affairs of the church and the office of pastor/elder is largely ornamental.

