

The Churches Distinctives
Selected Scriptures
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INTRODUCTION

1. This morning we have been talking about the church—Changed By Grace Community Church.
2. We have seen what God has done in the previous year and now we're anticipating what He has in store for us in the next.
3. As we look back and forward, we need to always be reminded that God is faithful.
4. 1 Corinthians 1:9 says, "God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord."
5. A.W. Pink says, "When we contemplate the characteristics of this divine excellency, we cannot do otherwise than bless God for it. His mercy is 'great' (1 Kings 3:6); 'plenteous' (Ps.86:5); 'tender' (Lk.1:78); 'abundant' (1 Pet.1:3); it is 'from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him' (Ps.103:17). Well may we say with the psalmist, 'I will sing aloud of thy mercy' (Ps.59:16) [Gleanings in the Godhead, 68].
6. Psalm 89:8 says, "O LORD God of hosts, who is like Thee, O mighty LORD? Thy faithfulness also surrounds Thee."
7. "Far above all infinite comprehension is the unchanging faithfulness of God. Everything about God is great, vast,

incomparable. He never forgets, never fails, never falters, never forfeits His word” (Pink, 47).

8. He has chosen to bless Changed By Grace Community Church in many ways.
9. We have already looked at some of those ways.
10. But it does beg a question—why?
11. Why has He blessed us like He has?
12. Is it because of our name?
13. After all Changed By Grace does reflect what He did in our lives and how He did it.
14. No—I think there are two reasons why He has blessed us the way that He has.
15. First, of course, is because He chose to.
16. He chose from eternity past to pour out His blessing on the church and we are the recipients of that blessing.
17. Paul said in Ephesians 1:3 that we have been “blessed...with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.”
18. 1 Peter 1:3 says that He has “granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.”
19. But there is another reason.

20. I believe it has to do with what we're committed to here as a church.
21. There are certain distinctives we have laid out to you for almost 6 years and we haven't swayed from them yet.
22. These distinctives has been our line drawn in the sand, if you will, and we're not crossing over.
23. What are those distinctives?
24. That question can be answered in 3 ways.
25. It can be seen in *the formation of the church*, *the purpose of the church*, and *the organization of the church*.
26. I want to spend our time this morning looking at all three.
27. The first is ***the formation of the church***.

I. The Formation of the Church

A. The Church was Formed in Eternity Past by God

This is the Body *invisible*

1. Ephesians 1:3-6

“God chose certain individuals and passed over others, and He made that choice in eternity past before the foundation of the world” (MacArthur).

2. 1 Peter 1:2 says, “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied” (NKJV).

The word “foreknowledge” (prognosis) means “to know beforehand” (Vines), “forethought, prearrangement” (Thayer).

3. 1 Corinthians 12:13 says, “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.”

B. The Church was Formed by the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost

This is the Body *visible*.

1. Acts 2:1-4

2. Acts 2:22-41

II. The Purpose of the Church

A. To Glorify God

1. The church exists for the glory of God.
Everything about her should reflect His glory.

Ephesians 3:20-21 says, “Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, 21 to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.”

2. You glorify God by praise and obedience to Him

Psalm 50:23 says, “Whoever offers praise glorifies Me; And to him who orders his conduct aright I will show the salvation of God” (NKJV).

Thomas Watson said that “Praising God is one of the highest and purest acts of religion. In prayer we act like men; in praise we act like angels.”

3. You glorify God when you use your spiritual gifts

1 Peter 4:11 says, “Whoever speaks, let him speak, as it were, the utterances of God; whoever serves, let him do so as by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and

ever. Amen.”

B. To Equip the Saints

1. Ephesians 4:11-15
2. Colossians 1:28 says, “Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.” (NKJV).

C. To Evangelize the Lost

1. Matthew 28:19-20
2. Mark 16:15 says, “And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.”

Richard Baxter said, “We have greater work to do here than merely securing our own salvation. We are members of the world and Church, and we must labor to do good to many. We are trusted with our Master’s talents for His service, in our places to do our best to propagate His truth, and grace, and Church, and to bring home souls, and honor His cause, and edify His flock, and further the salvation of as many as we can. All this is to be done on earth, if we will secure the end of all in heaven.”

III. The Organization of the Church

A. Christ is the Head of the Church

1. Colossians 1:18 says, “He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything.”

2. Ephesians 5:23 says, “ For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body.”

B. The Pastors or Elders Are the Shepherds of the Church

1. These are gifted men that God has placed in the church
 - a) Ephesians 4:8 says that Christ gave gifts to “men” and then names them in verse 11: apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers.
 - b) 1 Timothy 3:1 says, “It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do.”
 - c) Titus 1:5-6 says, “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you might set in order what remains, and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, 6 namely, if any man be above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion.”
 - d) 1 Timothy 2:11-15
2. There are more than one in a given church
 - a) Acts 14:23 (elders)
 - b) Acts 15:2, 6, 22, 23 (elders)
 - c) Philippians 1:1 says, “Paul and Timothy,

bond-servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons.”

d) Titus 1:5 says, “ For this reason I left you in Crete, that you might set in order what remains, and appoint elders in every city as I directed you.

3. These gifted pastors have a specific function

a) They equip the saints for ministry
(Eph.4:11-12)

b) They preach the Word of God

(1) 1 Timothy 3:2 says they are to be
“able to teach.”

(2) 2 Timothy 4:1-2 says, “I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: 2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.”

(3) Titus 2:1 says, “But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine.”

c) They baptize new believers

Acts 2:41 says, “So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and there

were added that day about three thousand souls.”

d) They rebuke false teaching

- (1) Titus 1:9-13
- (2) Acts 20:28-31

e) They labor in the Word of God

- (1) 1 Timothy 5:17

“Labor” (kopiao) means, “to work, to labor, to work until one is exhausted” (Rienecker, 631).

- (2) Titus 1:9 says, “Holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching.

f) They ordain other elders into ministry

- (1) In Acts 14:23 Paul and Barnabas “appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.”
- (2) 1 Timothy 4:14 says, “Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed upon you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery.”

“To lay hands upon someone...was to affirm their suitability for and

acceptance into public ministry. It expressed solidarity, union, and identification with them”
(MacArthur).

- (3) 1 Timothy 5:22 says, “Do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily and thus share responsibility for the sins of others; keep yourself free from sin.”

“Thorough investigation must precede ordination. To fail to do so leaves the church liable to share responsibility for the sins of others”
(MacArthur).

g) They rule in the church

- (1) 1 Timothy 5:17 (rule)

“Rule” (proistemi) means, “to stand first.”

Elder’s are first in terms of leadership. They have the oversight of the church and are to care for it.

It also means they “rule” or “preside, lead, direct” (Rienecker). This word describes “the duties allotted to all presbyters.”

- (2) 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 (over you)
(3) Hebrews 13:7, 17 (rule)
(4) 1 Peter 5:2-3 (overseers)

h) They model righteousness

- (1) 1 Timothy 3:1-7
- (2) Titus 1:5-9
- (3) 1 Timothy 4:12 says, “ Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe.”

i) They pray over the spiritual weak

James 5:14-16 says, “ Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; 15 and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. 16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.”

“Let the spiritually weak go to the spiritually strong.”

j) They oversee the finances of the church

Acts 11:27-30 says, “Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. 28 And one of them named Agabus stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. And this

took place in the reign of Claudius. 29
And in the proportion that any of the
disciples had means, each of them
determined to send a contribution for the
relief of the brethren living in Judea. 30
And this they did, sending it in charge of
Barnabas and Saul to the elders.”

4. Christ mediates His rule through godly men called pastors or elders
 - a) 1 Timothy 5:17
 - b) 1 Peter 5
 - c) Hebrews 13:17 says, “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you” (NKJV).

C. The Deacons Are the Servants of the Church

1. They are called “servants” in 1 Timothy 3:8
“Likewise deacons”
“Deacons” (diakonos) means, “servant”
2. They are recognized as servants in the church
Philippians 1:1 says, “Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons.”
3. They function in serving

- a) That is seen by the use of the term
 - b) It is most basic meaning it refers to serving tables (Acts 6)
4. They are qualified to serve - 1 Timothy 3:8-13
- D. The Congregation Models Submission
1. Ephesians 5:21 says, “Be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.”
 2. Hebrews 13:17 says, “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you” (NKJV).
 3. 1 Peter 5:5 says, “You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.”

CONCLUSION

1. These truths are what have distinguished us from other churches.
2. Many talk about these things but do not practice them.
3. Changed By Grace is committed to these truths will continue to teach them as long as God has us here.
4. A.W. Tozer said, “The dead church holds to the shell of truth without surrendering the will to it, while the church

that wills to do God's will is immediately blessed with a visitation of spiritual powers."

5. We are committed to these truths and will "to do God's will."
6. Will you continue in that commitment with your elders this year?
7. Last week I talked about us being "doers of the Word." Are you making a more conscious effort to apply the Word to your lives?
8. Are you receiving it in humility?
9. One of the surest signs that you're doing what the Word says is when you're a servant.
10. Let's serve one another as we pray.
11. If you're here today and haven't surrendered your life to Jesus Christ, I want to call you to do so now. Repent and believe in Him and what He has done on your behalf.
12. Let's pray.