

# What's Right With the Church?

Romans 16:16

In Romans chapter 16, verse 16, Paul said, the churches of Christ salute you. I'm grateful to be a member of the church of Christ. When I say that, what I mean is simply this, that I am a member of the church that belongs to Christ. I believe that the Bible, in a very clear and articulate way, tells me, tells us what to do to become a member of that church.

You know, in recent years, there have been some that have no doubt made statements about the church and have done so in a derogatory fashion. And that's probably normal and natural when it comes to members of the human family. But I think when we look at the scriptures that we can find what's right with the church of Christ.

Now, when we talk about the church of Christ, we're talking about the people that make up the church. We are fallible people. We're not perfect. We are imperfect people. But when we do what the Bible says to do, we become members of that divine body. And so we understand there is the divine side of the church. And then there's the human element of the church.

I am a part of the human element of the church of Christ. So when I say the church of Christ, I'm talking about the church again, that belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ. So what's right about the church of Christ? What can I find in the scriptures about the church of Christ that would suggest that she's right? Well, number one, I would submit to you that the church of Christ is right in her origination.

When we discuss the church of Christ, it's important for us to know that we're not talking about any type of manmade body. We're not talking about an institution that was born and bred in the mind of man, but rather the church of Christ exist according to God's eternal will. Ephesians three nine through 11. The church of Christ was in the mind of God before he ever created man.

Christ and the church go hand in hand. They're inseparable. Understand that we live in in a day, in time when people want to say, you can have a relationship with Jesus. Separate and apart from the church. But biblically, that's just not possible. So what about the origination of the church of Christ? Well, you remember, for example, in Matthew chapter 16, we find Jesus in northern Palestine.

And Jesus asked the disciples on that occasion who demand, say that out of the Son of Man am. And they said, some say you're John the Baptist, some Elijah, others Jeremiah, one of the prophets. Then Jesus asked this powerfully important question. But whom do you say that I am? And the Bible tells us that Peter spoke up and Peter said, You're the Christ, the son of the living God.

And then Jesus replied to that by saying, blessed are you, Simon of Barcelona. Flesh and blood is not revealed it unto you, but my father which is in heaven. Now listen to me. And I also say to you that you're Peter. And upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

Now there are a couple of thoughts that emerge out of this text. Number one, to understand that the Lord Jesus was not affirming that he would build the church on Peter. I know there are those today who allege that Peter's the foundation of the church, that the church has been built upon him. Well, I would agree there's a play on words there, but the Lord was saying to Peter that I'm going to build the church on you.

Number one, had the Lord built the church on Peter, he'd be building upon fallible man. And I don't think that's the case at all. But rather the church was built upon the foundation of Christ. Paul said in First Corinthians chapter three at verse 11, for no other foundation can any man lay than that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus.

But again, you go back to Matthew chapter 16, when Peter said, You're the Christ, the son of the living God. Jesus was simply affirming this truth, Peter, based upon that bedrock statement that you just made, that I'm the divine Son of God. I'm going to build my church. Well, when did the church originate? Well, about 2000 years ago, on Pentecost day.

You remember Isaiah the prophet saw the church as an exalted mountain into which all nations would flow. And he said, the word of the Lord would go forth from Jerusalem. And the idea is that the originating place of the church would be the city of Jerusalem. So you have the right place. But then Daniel said that the church would be an eternal kingdom.

Daniel, in chapter two of his great book, was talking to King Nebuchadnezzar, who had a dream, didn't understand the contents of that dream. And so what Daniel did was to preview those four world empires, beginning with Babylon, over which Nebuchadnezzar was had. The Babylonian Empire would later give way to the Magi and the Persians, which would in turn fall to the Grecian empire that would later yield to the Roman Empire.

And so in verse 44, Daniel said, in the days of these kings. What kings? The Roman kings. So now you have the right time and the right place. In the days of these kings, the God of heaven is going to set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed. It shall not be left to other people. It shall break in pieces and consume all those kingdoms.

And Daniel said, it shall stand forever. That's the kingdom we're talking about. So when John the Baptist began his earthly ministry, you remember he had a very succinct message. Matthew said that he went out and began preaching. Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Now that's the same kingdom that Daniel foretold, of the same institution that Isaiah talked about in chapter two of his book, Jesus, when he began his public ministry, recorded by Matthew, chapter four, verse 17 said the very same thing repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

And then listen to him in Mark nine verse one. Jesus said, verily there are some of you standing here that shall not taste death until you see the kingdom of God come with power. Did Jesus establish the kingdom or church as promised? Either he did or he didn't. If he didn't, then we have a problem, because that means the Divine Son of God made a promise that he didn't fulfill.

And I don't believe that to be the case. Now, some would say that when Jesus came to earth because he was rejected by the Jews, that parenthetically, God set up what they call the church age. Well, you need to understand the church in the Kingdom are often used interchangeably. In Matthew 16:19, after promising to build the church. You remember Jesus said to Peter, and of course this would be applicable to all the apostles.

He said, I'll give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Kingdom. Church. Semester. Tuition. So when Jesus said, there are some of you standing here that will not taste death, do you see the kingdom of God come with power? He's talking about this divine institution, not a carnal institution, not a physical entity, but rather a spiritual institution.

The Lord Jesus said before Pontius Pilate, My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight. But it's not a physical entity, not a carnal institution. It is a spiritual institution. So back in Matthew chapter 16, verse 18,

Jesus said, I will build my church. Number one, the Lord only promised to build one church.

Now wait a minute. Are you telling me then, that the Lord only envisioned and only promised to establish one body, one church? Well, don't take my word for it. Listen to Paul in Ephesians four, in verse four. Paul said, there's one body and one spirit, even as you're called in one hope of your calling. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God who's over all through all, and in you all.

Okay, there's one body. What then is the body? In Ephesians 122 and 23. The Bible says he put all things in subjection under his feet, made him to be head over all things to the church. Listen to him which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. Colossians 118. The Bible says, he is the head of the body, the church which is the beginning, that word beginning.

There is a very important term. It means the source from which something came into being. Active call, as you might say. And what Paul is affirming there is that Jesus was the active cause. He was the originating cause of the church or body. But then not only did Jesus promise to build one church, but he said the church would belong to him.

Listen again. He said, I will build my church. The church doesn't belong to me. Does it belong to you? Does it belong to any man? No. The church belongs to Christ. Now think about it like this. Jesus is the builder of the church. The Lord Jesus came to planet Earth, went to the cross of Calvary, shed his divine blood, took that blood, and with that blood he purchased the church.

To those who say the church of Christ is not an important entity. Need to rethink that thought because we're talking about the blood bought body of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And Paul said in Ephesians 525, husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it. Jesus died for the establishment of the church.

And so when we talk about the church to understand, Jesus built it. He bought it with his blood. Acts 20 verse 28 Paul said to the Ephesian elders, take heed to yourselves to all the flock over which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Listen to him to feed the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood.

So Jesus built a church. He bought it with his blood. If he built it and he bought it, and he did, it belongs to him, I guess. Not my church. Not your church, not any one person's church. It's the Lord's church. That's why when Paul wrote to the saints in Rome and he said, the churches of Christ salute you.

He's simply saying that the churches that belong to Christ salute you. The word Christian, the term Christian is an interesting word. That that suffix r a n means belonging to. And the idea is, if I say I'm a Christian, what I'm affirming is I belong to Christ. When I say I'm a member of the church of Christ, what I'm acknowledging years I am a member of the church that belongs to Jesus.

You remember in Hebrews chapter 12 at verse 23, the writer said to the General assembly and church of the firstborn, which are registered in heaven. What did he mean when he used that expression? Church of the firstborn. Back in Exodus chapter 13. You remember in chapter 12, God gave instruction instructions concerning the Passover. In chapter 13, God said through Moses in the long ago, I want you to sanctify to me the firstborn.

In other words, I want you to set them apart. He said, whatever opens the worm, whether man or beast. Here's what he said. It is mine. God laid claim to the firstborn. So what the

Hebrew writer is saying is that when we obeyed the gospel and our names were written in the Lamb's book of life, that we become a part of that divine body, and we belong to him.

Listen to Peter in first Peter two and verse nine. Peter writes, you're an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation. Now note A people for God's own possession, whom he called out of darkness into his marvelous light. So when we're talking about the church, well, the church of Christ is right in her origination. You've got the church beginning at the right place, at the right time, and by the right person, that being the Lord Jesus Christ.

So the church exists today. It was in the mind of God before time began. And what a blessing it is to be a member of that institution. Now there's a second thought. Number one, the church of Christ is right in her origination. Number two, the church of Christ is right in her authorization. And by that I simply mean this.

The church of Christ is guided by the teaching of the Bible. Now, sometimes you'll hear individuals say, well, you know, the authority rest in the church. No, it doesn't rest in the church. Churches can be wrong. The Bible's always right. In first Timothy chapter three at verse 15. Paul wanted to wanted to meet with Timothy, but he said, if I, Terry Long, I'm writing these things.

Why, Paul, why are you writing these things? He said, so that you might know how to behave yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. Paul's affirming to Timothy. I'm writing so that you might know how to conduct yourself in the house of God. Now Paul was an inspired apostle.

Matter of fact, in first Corinthians chapter 14, verse 37, he said, the things that I write to you are the commandments of the Lord. Well, where then do we receive our authority to engage in certain activities? Well, all falls under the banner of the authority of Christ, the authority of Scripture. Listen to Jesus in Matthew 28 verse 18.

Jesus said, all authority, all power has been given to me in heaven. And on earth. In Matthew chapter 17, when Jesus was transfigured on the mountaintop. You remember Peter, James and John were present on that very occasion. Moses and Elijah appeared. Moses standing for the great law. He was the leader and lawgiver of ancient Israel. Elijah for the prophets of God.

And so here's what the father said. This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear him. Now the Lord's simply saying this when my son speaks, you need to listen to what he has to say. Why? Because he has all authority. Matthew 28:18 Jesus Christ has the authority to regulate the behavior of his church. It belongs to him.

If you started a church and put your name on it, it belonged to you. But in the church of Christ, the authority belongs to the one who possesses it. That being Jesus, the Son of God. Now Colossians chapter three, in verse 17, Paul said, whatsoever you do in word, that's what you say. Indeed, that's what you do. He said, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What does it mean to do something in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ? Well, let me do it by authority. So what we're doing is we're trying to follow the authoritative teaching of the Bible. Now, that encompasses a wealth of information because you see the Bible. The Bible furnishes us with all things that pertain to life and godliness.

Everything I need to know is found in the scriptures. You remember Paul said, Second Timothy chapter three, beginning in verse 16. All Scripture is inspired of God. Now listen to him and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness, that the

man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped unto every good work. So we're talking about the all sufficiency of the scriptures.

Now here's the question. Am I willing to alter my life to fit the teaching of the Bible? You say we're to submit our lives to the teaching of Jesus. Didn't Jesus say, if you love me, keep my commandments? And didn't the Lord say in that great sermon on the Mount, not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he that do it, the will of my father which is in heaven.

Sure. And didn't John ride in revelation chapter 22? Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have ride to the tree of life and enter through the gates into the city. Does it mean, then, that I've got to alter my lifestyle to fit the teaching of Scripture? The answer is yes. So who then regulates the church of Christ?

Answer Jesus. We look to him as our authority in God and all things. You may have an estate, and maybe you've already written your will, and your will outlines how your estate is to be distributed when, not while you're alive, but rather at your how then, how do you control your estate once you leave this world? How do you know who's going to get what?

Well, you write a will, don't you? And when death occurs, that will may be probated and then executed. Well, by the same token, Jesus has left us his will. Hebrews 9:15-17 the Lord Jesus Christ, not his will, is now operative, and so we have to follow it. There's a third thought here. I mentioned a moment ago that the church of Christ is right in her origination.

The church of Christ is right in her authorization. But thirdly, the church of Christ is right in salvation. The Bible tells us plainly what to do to become a child of God. Let's go back again and look at Matthew 16 for a minute. In verse 18, Jesus promised to build a church. In verse 19, the Lord said to Peter, I'll give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

Keys signify authority. On Pentecost day, the apostles were endowed with the baptismal measure of the Holy Spirit. Luke said in chapter two, verse four, they began to speak in other tongues as the spirit gave them utterance. So I would deduce from that that you have inspired me in preaching and inspired message. The apostles were earthen vessels into which the Word of God was deposited.

So they preach and teach the death, burial, resurrection, coronation of Jesus, his being seated at the right hand of God. He's sitting upon the throne of David, which is a spiritual throne. And you remember Peter said, let all the house of Israel know surely this same Jesus whom you crucified. God's made both Lord and Christ. Now Luke said that when they heard this, they were cut to the heart.

The Lord Jesus had promised the apostles back in chapters 14-15:16, that they would be the recipients of the comforter, the helper, the Holy Spirit. In chapter 14, Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would teach them all things and bring to remembrance all things they had said to him. He didn't say that to me. Said it to the apostles in chapter 16, and verse seven.

Jesus said, it is to your advantage that I go away. He said, if I do not go away, the comforter will not come. But he said, the father part, I'll send him to you. When it comes, here's what he's going to do. He's going to convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment to come. Now let's look again at acts two.

Those who were present and heard that gospel sermon in all of its fullness for the very

first time. Luke said they were cut or pricked in their heart. What happened? They were convicted. They just put the Son of God to death. They've been indicted by inspired apostles, and so they want to know men and brethren, what shall we do?

Now, what did Peter say? Let me tell you what he didn't say. Peter didn't say. As you often hear today in denominational circles, you'll hear this time and again on television, you'll hear it on the radio. You'll hear it in pulpits all across this country. I would even say around the globe, they'll tell you you need to accept the Lord Jesus Christ into your heart.

And then what you need to do is bow your head and say what they call the sinner's prayer. And once you do that, you're a child of God. Well, that's not what Peter said. What did Peter know what he was talking about? What a question. He was an inspired man. He had been given the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

He's not setting for terms of admission into the church or kingdom of God based upon his own whims and his own thinking. No, he is an inspired spokesman for God. And here's what Peter said. Number one, you need to repent. Repentance is a change of mind followed by a change in how we're living. He said, you need to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins.

Now, what does it mean to do something in the name of it means to do it by his authority? So what Peter and the apostles were commanded, what they were commanding was the authoritative word of the living God. They were setting forth the terms of admission into the kingdom of God. If a person has not put their faith and trust in Jesus as the Son of God, repented of their sins, confessed his name, and been immersed in water, they don't enjoy forgiveness of sins.

Just not possible. Now, I said a moment ago that Jesus built the church he bought. The church belongs to it. If we want to be a member of the church that we read about in the Bible, we've got to do what they did on Pentecost day in acts two, verse 41. Luke said, some 3000 people obeyed the gospel on that day.

In verse 47, the Bible says, the Lord added to the church daily those who are being saved. That means the saved were in the church. The church was comprised of the say now wait a man. Are you trying to say that I've got to be a member of the church of Christ to go to heaven? Well, you know, in the Bible I read about the church.

Acts two, verse 47, I read about the kingdom of heaven in Matthew 4:17 and read about the kingdom of God. Mark nine verse one. I can read about the churches of Christ, Romans 16:16. I can read about the Church of God. First Corinthians chapter one, verse two. I can read about the church of the Living God well, where salvation is in Christ.

But when I obey the gospel, what happens? Do I join the church? Do I select the church of. No. No. The Bible says the Lord added to the church daily those who are being saved. That means when I do what they did, the Lord then puts me in that divine body. Well, do I have to be a member of that body to go to heaven?

Listen to Paul in Ephesians five verse 23. Paul said, he is the Savior of the body. Or what's the body? He's the head of the body of the church. Colossians 1:18. So if there's just one body in one church, and Jesus is the head of that one body in the one church, and Jesus said, or Jesus has promised to save those who are in the church, why would I not want to be a member of the church?

Salvation exclusive to Christ and His church. Now, I want you to understand something very

quickly. When I talk about the church of Christ. I'm not using that in the sense that you might think there are some that have the idea that what we're saying is that the church of Christ is just another denomination, and the church of Christ is better than all the other.

No, I'm not saying that. What I'm trying to say is the church of Christ is non-denominational, pre denominational. That if we just go back and read acts chapter two and study what the apostles taught, we can find out what to do to become a Christian. We can find out what to do to become a member of the church.

So is the church of Christ right in her origination? The answer is yes. Is the church of Christ right in terms of her authorization? Again, the answer would be yes. Is the church of Christ right? Is the church of Christ right in terms of salvation? Well, again, the answer would be yes. I challenge you read through the book of acts and look.

Do it to satisfy yourself. I want to encourage you to be like the Bereans, to search the scriptures daily. You make sure that what you hear coincides with the scriptures. You know, Paul asked the question in Romans chapter four, verse three. What does the Scripture say? It really doesn't matter what I say. What matters is what does the Lord say?

Now our goal, as Peter said, if any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God. First Peter chapter four, verse 11. I'm trying to give you book, chapter and verse for what I believe and what I preach. But I would encourage you go back and read the book of acts and look at what people did in the first century to become children of God.

What did they do? They did the exact same thing in every instance in acts chapter eight, when Philip went down and preach Christ to the people. The Bible tells us that they believe the things that Peter preached concerning the kingdom of God, the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now hearing, here's what Luke said. And they were baptized, both men and women.

Why? To be saved. Mark 1616 so that their sins might be remitted or forgiven. Acts two, verse 47. Verse 38. And they were baptized so that their sins might be washed away. Acts 2216 I want to ask you a question. This a very important question. Are you a member of the church that you can read about in this book that we call the Bible?

I want to encourage you search the scriptures. You make sure that what you believe in practice is found in this book. If what you believe and practices in this book, then you stay that course. But if not, I would beg you to come out and become a member of the Body of Christ. Thank you so much. I'll see you back here next week.

Until then, God bless.