

HOW TO FIND THE PERFECT CHURCH

By Pastor Del Wray

I was saved many years ago in May 1960, while seated in the balcony of Ivy Memorial Baptist Church in Newport News, VA. I was baptized and received into the church as a member immediately. During the next few months I attended every Bible study I could so that I might learn more about the Lord and what He wanted me to do with my new life in Him. After many months I seriously began to look for a place to go where I could worship the Lord and learn about Him. I knew one thing - I wanted to hear about Jesus. No man had taught me about the importance of the local church or had even suggested that I should find a good church to attend. I just knew that God wanted me in a good local, visible church. While I was on a trip to visit my grandparents in Martinsville, VA God sent some young men by my way that gave me a Gospel tract and invited me to their church. I read the tract, Ford Porter's '*God's Simple Plan of Salvation*', and I asked the Lord to save me again as I did in the balcony of the church I mention above. When I arrived back home, I told everyone I could about what had happened on that Saturday morning, how those guys showed me the Gospel tract. I suggested that they pray and ask the Lord to save them. I decided that maybe since I was living at the time in downtown Newport News, that I find a good church that I could walk to and attend, and on Sunday morning I went to First Baptist Church in Newport News for the morning service. I knew that this was the church that God wanted me to attend then. After I heard Dr. Price preach about Jesus Christ as the only Saviour for mankind. God confirmed to me, to my heart and me through His Word that this was the church that He wanted me to join in order to get busy for Him. I did just that, and God blessed me immensely because I was obeying Him.

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.

I have been a member of a Bible believing independent Baptist church ever since then, even though I have moved many times in my travels for Him, Tabernacle Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina under the leadership of Dr. Harold Sightler has always been my home church and Dr. Sightler, my pastor. In all those years of travel though, I never found a perfect church from the standpoint of finding a church with no defects or problems. Believe it or not, I have never looked for a perfect church, but in every case, I was right in the middle of God's will. You can search the Word of God from Genesis to Revelation, and you will not find God telling you to find a perfect church to join. One man said it this way many years ago, "*If you ever could find a perfect church, and you joined it, it would no longer be perfect.*" This was a deflating thing for me to learn, but it was so true.

Not only have I never been a member of a perfect church, but I have never been a member of a church in which I have agreed with everything taught by the Pastor and or those who preached from the pulpit. Yet, I remind you, I was doing God's will by being a part of that church. God

definitely put me in those churches. And guess what? God knew that the church wasn't perfect. Yes, indeed, God was not caught by surprise at the imperfections of the church in which He, I emphasize, **He** placed me. I repeat it was **God's will** that I become a member of an imperfect church and a church in which I did not agree with every point of teaching. There are, believe it or not, some sanctimonious sages out there who are convinced that unless you believe just like they believe, you are a heretic.

At the age of 40 I met my wife Laura and married in the Bible Baptist Church, which I had previously founded in Salisbury, MD. It too was filled with imperfect members. Still I was in God's perfect will for my life in an imperfect church. It came as no surprise for I was being brought to the understanding that God knew His people were not perfect and that they would not be until He took them home. God does not expect perfection, He expects and demands obedience!

Mark 3:35, "For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother."

Over the past 50 years plus that I have pastored I have seen many people come through the church's doors looking for an independent, fundamental, Bible believing, Baptist church in which to become members. After taking one hour to listen to the pastor, they walked out the front door never to return again. Many of these folks never one time prayed and asked God to show them His will about attending or joining the church. Some little thing kept them from becoming members of our church. I have heard about people who would not join a church because the Pastor didn't give an invitation during one of the services. I have heard about people who would not join because the Pastor didn't require the ushers to wear a tie. I have heard about folks who would never join a church because the Pastor wore a colored shirt instead of a white one. The reasons for not attending or joining were many and varied, but never one time have I had a person say, I prayed about whether God would have me to join, and He showed me that I shouldn't join this church. This is not surprising, since most Christians today do not have the slightest idea how to determine God's will for their lives. As a result, they are missing many of God's richest blessings and are never able to experience the fullness of God's blessings on their life.

The perfect church that you are looking for is the one that God desires for you. It might be one that you don't agree with in all of its teachings, and it sure will be one that is not perfect. If you really want to find the perfect church, you will have to learn how to find God's will for your life.

Now, I'm not suggesting that God would have you join a church which is corrupt in its biblical doctrines, such as the inspiration of the Scriptures, the Deity of Christ Jesus, the blood atonement, salvation by grace, and other basic fundamental doctrines that everyone who is a born again Christian knows and believes. God would never have you join a church that violates His Word. However, we have set up doctrines not taught in the Word of God that have become litmus tests to establishing whether a person is 'sound' doctrinally. I mentioned some of them earlier and you could probably add to the list. One of the main problems with our brethren today is this tendency to 'add' to the Word of God their own little pet doctrine(s) and insist that all must agree or they are to be shunned and or branded as heretics.

Mark 7:7 Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

If you really want to find the perfect church, here are three primary actions that you must take:

1. Make sure that you are really saved. No one can find the will of God in their life until they are saved. If you have never been truly born again, then you must repent by trusting in the risen Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour.

2 Corinthian 13:5 *“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates”?*

John 3:3 *Jesus answered and said unto him, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”*

2. Promise God that you will submit to His will no matter what He directs you to do in your life.

John 7:17 *“If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself”.*

3. Get into the Word of God and read and study until God shows you His direction.

Hebrews 5:14 *“But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil”*

God will show you the 'perfect' church for you as He grows you in your Christian life. He may have you join a church that isn't just exactly what you think it should be in order to teach you some valuable lessons that you need in your life. He may have you in a church that needs your particular talent in order to bring that church in to conformity to His direction. Whatever the reason, when you obey God, you will be blessed and will grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Then when you walk into a church searching for God's will, He will direct you to do His will, and you will be a blessing and will be blessed in your walk with Him. This has been written by an imperfect pastor ministering to imperfect people who expect perfection in the local assembly and well we all should but also we must acknowledge that only true perfection will be found once the calling out has taken place and He who is perfect will change us to be like Himself! Be ye holy!