

'RIGHT AND READY!'

(Fall Sunday Bible Study Series – 'Ready or Not, Jesus Is Coming!')

Studies in 1 Thessalonians

Church Election

(God chose you to be saved; He lets you choose a church family for growth in grace)

When you were born, you had very little to do with it. Even the family you were born into wasn't up to you. Similarly, when we are *born-again* by trusting Christ as Savior and Lord, we had little to do with it – God *conceived* the idea of choosing us, adopting us, and predestining us to be His child before creation (***Ephesians 1:4, Romans 8:29-30***). Even our spiritual family called the *body of Christ* (***1 Corinthians 12:27***) was His sovereign decision (***1 Corinthians 12:12-13***). In these initial stages of our salvation, God, our wise and almighty Parent, decided all the correct choices to get us started in the Christian life.

Now, there are vital things He strongly commands us to do as His child, but leaves it up to us whether to obey or not – reading the Bible daily, prayer with Him, getting baptized, separation from bad influences and getting new godly friends, and connecting with a good Bible-teaching, Christ-centered, church ministry where we can grow up and become spiritually mature in the Lord (***Ephesians 4:12-16***). Then as a Christian faithfully attends, serves, and is spiritually maturing in a good biblical church home, he or she also learns all about *the Lord's Supper*, tithes and giving, spiritual gifts, and sharing the gospel with others.

Using our *free will* really didn't help prior to receiving Christ as Savior; for the most part *free will* while *unsaved* gets us into trouble and even keeps us from coming to salvation (***Ephesians 4:17-19***), but after we turn to Christ *free will* has everything to do with picking the best church family possible to grow up in spiritually. Once a Christian's *free will* is functioning properly under the guidance the indwelling Holy Spirit, God expects us to use *free will* in making every decision in a way that shows how much we love Him and His Word (***John 14:15***).

After *deciding* by God's grace to turn to Jesus (***Ephesians 2:8-9***), the most important *decision* you will make is what church to become a part of. God expects you to *choose* the very best possible church home in order for you, your family, and friends to progress in the faith from believer, to follower, to disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ (***Ephesians 3:14-21***). Some people aren't aware they must make a *church choice* – they think that because they were born into a certain denomination or church, they are obliged to stay in it no matter what. This is incorrect thinking and may ruin or at least stunt your spiritual development.

Church isn't about keeping up a family tradition, or being possessed by a religious organization – it is about prayerfully letting the Holy Spirit and the Word of God guide you to a church family that has been clearly established according to Scripture (*Bible-teaching, Christ-centered, mature biblical leadership* (***1 Timothy 3, Titus 1, 1 Peter 5, etc.***)). A biblical congregation of friendly, vibrant believers, an outreach and missions ministry, opportunities for you to get involved discovering and using your spiritual gifts are positive indicators of a church God is leading you to join.

At CBF we prioritize these biblical priorities in our name: **Christ** (*The Lord is central to everything*), **Bible** (*it's the inerrant, infallible and authoritative Word of God for all of us*) and **Fellowship** (*loving brothers and sisters in Christ who share spiritual life with you in worship, service and fellowship*). We are thankful for all serious Christians whom the Lord leads to *choose* CBF as their church home!

In the beginning of the **Church Age** it was easy to *choose* a church – the only ones around were the ones just being started. Today, there are a plethora of churches trying to get people to choose them as *their*

church. Sadly, the competition to get people even includes what is called *proselytization* (**Matthew 23:15**/ *trying to pry people out of good churches into another one*). This is a sign of an unbiblical church.

Churches exist for *reaching out* to lost souls in their community, not to *reaching into* biblical churches and *pick off* people who are saved already. True churches of God know that the mandate from our Savior is to ***be fishers of men*** not ***rustlers of sheep*** to grow. We are thankful to God that although from time to time He does lead believers out of other religious groups to CBF for various biblical reasons, we never, ever purposely attempt to ***build on other men's foundations*** (**Romans 15:20-21**) through proselytizing other biblical New Testament churches. The choice of a church home truly is a major life-changing decision for every Christian, their families, and friends. Thanks to God for prayerfully guiding many believers by His Spirit to *pick* CBF for their spiritual needs. May God help all of us grow in grace and glorify Him 'til He comes (**Ephesians 3:20-21**)! **PtL**

Spiritual Family Planning

(Biblical Planned Parenthood for Christians)

1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

Biblical Church-Home Foundations

(Ministries You Can Trust)

The Right Methods

“For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain. But even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict. For our exhortation did not come from error or uncleanness, nor was it in deceit.” **2:1-3**

The Right Motives

But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God Who tests our hearts. For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness – God is witness. Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ.” **2:4-6**

Biblical Church Leadership Features

(Ministers You Can Trust)

The Right Message(s)

“But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. So affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. For you remember brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God.” **2:7-9**

The Right Mentors

You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; as you know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children that you would walk worthy of God Who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.” **2:10-12**