

BAPTIST DISTINCTIVE #6
THE AUTONOMY OF THE LOCAL CHURCH
VARIOUS SCRIPTURE

INTRODUCTION

So far we have looked at five of the Distinctives of Baptist Belief:

1. The Bible Is The Only Rule For Faith And Practice.
2. A Regenerated Church Membersip.
3. Believer's Baptism By Immersion.
4. A Separated Church.
5. The Priesthood Of The Believer.

**Tonight we look at the sixth distinctive:
The Autonomy Of The Local Church!**

The Bible speaks of the **Local Church**: **1 Corinthians 12:12-14, 27**

The Bible speaks of the **Collective Church**: **Ephesians 2:16-22, 3:21**

1 Corinthians 15:9; Galatians 1:13; Philippians 3:6

Some call this "*The Universal Church*" but I personally don't like that name.

Autonomy means that the local church is *a self-governing body and cannot be part of another governing body nor subservient to another governing body.*

(Whether it be denominational hierarchy, a government, or some other governing body.)

Understand that local Baptist Churches can sometimes fellowship together to accomplish missionary work which they could not accomplish alone, but while doing so each should remain as a separate entity in itself.

What Churches do together may place a **moral obligation** on each church, **but neither legal nor organization obligation** should be placed on a true autonomous local Church!

I. THE AUTONOMY OF THE LOCAL CHURCH IS BASED ON TWO NEW TESTAMENT PRINCIPLES:

A. The Competency Of The Individual To Know God's Will.

Ephesians 5:17—"Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is."

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Well, why don't more believers know the will of God?

i. Some Don't Want To Know!

ii. Many Are Not In The Word To Know!

1. The Word Is The Authority For Each Individual!

2 Timothy 3:16-17 *16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*

2. A Responsibility To Obey Implies A Knowledge Of His Will. (Acts 5:29; James 1:22)

Acts 5:29—"Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, *We ought to obey God rather than men.*"

James 1:22—"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."

3. The Consecrated Christian Will Know His Will.

Romans 12:1-2—"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

4. The Holy Spirit Is The Teacher of Each Individual.

John 14:26—"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."
(Also 1 Corinthians 2:9-14)

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- 5. All Believers Are Equal Before God.**
Galatians 3:28—“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”

*THE AUTONOMY OF THE LOCAL CHURCH IS BASED ON TWO
NEW TESTAMENT PRINCIPLES:*

The Competency Of The Individual To Know God's Will.

- B. The Responsibility Of The Church To Carry Out God's Will On The Basis That Its Members Know God's Will.**
- 1. Christ Instructs The Church To Act.**
(Matthew 18:15-17)
 - 2. The Early Church Acted As A Body.**
(Acts 13:1-3 - Sent out missionaries; Acts 15:22-28)
 - 3. The Responsibilities Of The Church And State Are Separate.** (Matthew 22:17-21)

**II. THE AUTONOMY OF THE LOCAL CHURCH OPERATES IN
THREE SPHERES:**

- A. The Local Church Is Not Subject To Nor Part Of Any
Other Organizations Within Its Own Constituency.**
(Boards or Committees)

The local church is composed of individual members.
(Acts 2:41-42) Not deacon boards or committees.

- B. The Local Church Is Not Subject To Any Ecclesiastical
Powers Without.**
This means that the local church is not to have denominations
or conventions or any form of hierarchy over it telling it what it
must do!

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- C. The Local Church Is Not Subject To The State In Spiritual
Matters.** (Romans 13:1-10; Acts 5:29)