

REGENERATE CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

(Wrap-up – Practical Concerns)

TEXT: Acts 2:41, 46, 47

INTRODUCTION: Thus far in our study of this Baptist distinctive of a **regenerate church membership**, we have seen that the New Testament insists on the **new birth**. Before both John the Baptist and Paul would baptize professors, they stipulated, “*Bring forth fruits meet for [worthy of] repentance*” (Matt. 3:8; Acts 26:20). Because baptism is the doorway to membership in the local church (Acts 2:41) and only regenerate persons are to be baptized, it follows that local church membership should only be extended to those who have demonstrated that they are born again.

God holds the local church responsible for both **guarding the door** and **keeping the pen clean**. The church is to govern its own members and scripturally **discipline** those who offend. Failure to do so will result in a “mixed multitude” of both saved and unsaved in the local church. When unregenerate members outnumber the regenerate in a local church, the mind and voice of the Spirit will no longer be discerned.

OUTLINE: Before we leave this subject, let us note some practical concerns that cause us to **examine** ourselves in the light of this distinctive.

- A.** Are we **demanding** a true **public confession**?
- B.** Are we adequately **examining** candidates for church membership?
- C.** Are we placing an **overemphasis** on **numbers**?
 - 1. Membership
 - 2. Attendance
 - 3. “Decisions”
- D.** Are we advocating “**easy believism**” and **mechanical soul-winning**?

CONCLUSION: If a “mixed multitude” of mostly **unsaved** or **carnal** people constitute the majority of the voting members in a church, think of the implications for calling a pastor, electing deacons, drafting a constitution, etc. A church may pay lip-service to “Baptist distinctive,” but in practice they will have **denied** at least one of them!

Paul told the Corinthians that **God** judges the unsaved directly, but the **local church** is to lovingly and faithfully judge those that “*are within*,” i.e., its fellow members (1 Cor. 5:12). Are we up to the job?