

The "Called Out" Body

In examining the church a little bit, one can learn a lot from examining the terms used to describe it. The term "church" is derived from the word *kuriakos* which means "of or belonging to the Lord." The actual term used by Jesus and the apostles is *ekklesia*, which means "to call out." *Ekklesia* is translated as "church" 112 times in the New Testament and as "assembly" 3 times (Acts 19:32, 39, 41). The Greeks used this word for the assembly of free citizens in a Greek city to discuss affairs of state (hence the use in Acts 19). The word is also used in the Septuagint where it has reference to the "congregation" of Israel (cf. Acts 7:38; Hebrews 2:12). The church in the New Testament simply means a "called out body of people."

The term "*church*" is used in two senses in the New Testament. It refers to all those who are called out of the world into God's service (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 5:23-25). We normally refer to this as the "universal" church. It refers to all those called out into God's service in any given locality (1 Corinthians 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1). We normally refer to this as the "local" church.

"Call" is derived from the verb *kaleo*, which means "to invite or summon." It is used especially of the divine call to partake of the blessings of redemption. The nature of our calling has several very important facets. First, we are called by God, therefore it is a divine calling (1 Peter 5:10). Second, the agency of our calling is the gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14). Third, we are called into the fellowship Christ (1 Corinthians 1:9). Fourth, our calling is made possible by the suffering of Christ (1 Peter 2:21). Fifth, we are called to be children of God (1 John 3:1). Sixth, we are called to be saints (Romans 1:7). Seventh, we are called to live a holy life (1 Thessalonians 4:7). Eighth, we are called out of darkness (1 Peter 2:9). Ninth, we were called that we may be worthy (2 Thessalonians 1:11-12). Tenth, we were called to perfection (Philippians 3:13-16). Eleventh, we were called to inherit a blessing (1 Peter 3:9).

All of these rich facets ought to make us very grateful for the rich blessings we enjoy in Christ. In fact, Peter emphasizes that it is our duty to make our calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:10). Let's make sure that we are up to that task!

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