

The Stolen Church

In some sense, the New Testament church has been stolen. When we talk about “my church” in conversations, we really mean what we say.

The church belongs to God. He created it. He planted it. He financed it. He brought people to it. It belongs to Him. Some well-meaning believers took it away from Him, but, it still belongs to Him. And, He wants it back.

In the process of stealing the church, we have changed it. It used to be operated by faith. Now we operate church by committee and majority vote. Seldom do we ask God what He is thinking, we just go ahead and do what we want. Let me ask you, has your church made a “faith decision” lately? (Let me explain, I mean, has your church made a decision based on what you think the Lord wants you to do in building His Kingdom? You didn’t know the details, you didn’t know how much it would cost, but, you decided to go ahead because you sensed that the Lord was leading you. Has your church made a faith decision lately?) I don’t know many that have. I have concluded, after being in Baptist life for many years, that we usually decide to walk by sight rather than walk by faith. To walk by faith, you really have to trust God. Most don’t want to do that. It is uncomfortable for us humans to trust God. To trust God, we have to exercise faith in Him. The Bible is clear about one point: you cannot please God without exercising your faith. But, when someone gets an idea, we all know what the first question is: “How much will it cost?” But the real question is: “Is this an activity that God wants us to do through us?”

It seems that many people are so out of touch with God, they don’t know how to answer that last question. So, when we can’t get a direction from God on what He wants the church to do, we start getting committees together to decide what WE want to do. At that point, we have taken the church away from God. That is where we get into trouble. Many times, that is when problems arise and sooner or later, the church starts to decline.

How do you get out of that downward cycle of decline? You have to start with repentance—yes, you, the church members need to repent—repent for taking the church away from the One who owns it. Then the church needs to figure out how to give the church (control) back to its rightful Owner.

(May I suggest a book to read from Lifeway: *By Faith* written by John Franklin and Lonnie Riley.) Obviously, not all churches act as I have indicated above. But a lot do. Has your church been stolen from the Lord?

Larry Richmond; July 2009