



# Systematic Theology

A study of the major doctrines of Scripture

TOPIC 6 – THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

LESSON 113 – MARKS OF A HEALTHY CHURCH – PART 4

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# Seven Marks of a Healthy Church

- ▶ What then are the marks of a sound church according to the Bible? We will summarize them into seven points over the next few weeks. These seven things must be present for a church to claim rightly that they are a church that is obedient to the Lord Jesus Christ.
- ▶ 1. God is worshipped in spirit and truth – Rom.12:1; Philip.3:3; John 4:5-26
- ▶ 2. Prayer is central – Acts 2:42, 1Thes.5:17
- ▶ 3. Love for Christ and the Brethren is demonstrated – 1 Pet.1:22, Jam.1:22
- ▶ 4. The Word of God is faithfully preached, taught, and heard – Acts 6:4, 13:44; Rom.10:17; 2Tim.4:2
- ▶ 5. The Ordinances of Baptism and Communion are administered – Acts 2:42; Mat.28:19
- ▶ 6. Discipline of the membership is Biblically administered – 1 Cor.5:10-13; Mat.18:15-17
- ▶ 7. Church government and leadership as instituted by the Apostles is established – Acts 14:23, 6:2-3; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9

# Third Mark – Love for Christ and His Church

- ▶ The Third Mark of a Healthy Church: Love for Christ and His Church are Demonstrated
- ▶ 1 Peter 1:22 – “Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart,”
- ▶ John 13:35 – “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”
- ▶ This third mark is often misunderstood. Many people in churches today are more than willing to say that they love Christ and that they love one another. However, when the Bible talks about love it is often a very different quality than what we think of when we talk about love.

# Third Mark – Love for Christ and His Church

- ▶ We think about an emotion. It comes and goes. You may fall in love, love chocolate, love your new house, love your children, and you might even fall “out” of love. We have allowed love to become an ever-changing warm, fuzzy feeling when in reality, love is a decision of the will! That’s right. Biblical love is a choice.
- ▶ When I say Biblical love I am specifically speaking of love as translated from the Greek word agape. There are other Greek words used in the Bible and other ancient literature that are also translated “love,” but I am not referring to any of them. The word phileo for instance refers to family love, as between brothers and sisters. The word storge also refers to familiar love, or affection. A better translation would be the word “like” instead of love. And the word eros refers to physical love and is often confused with sexual lust!
- ▶ But agape is different. It is always desiring and thinking the best for the one you love. This is how God loves us and it is how He expects us to love Him and each other. It is not unconditional! It is conditioned on the very nature and character of God, who is Love.



# Third Mark – Love for Christ and His Church

- ▶ 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.
- ▶ According to this inspired text, true love is patient, suffering long if necessary.
- ▶ Love is kind and gentle, always!
- ▶ It is not envious or jealous.
- ▶ It does not parade itself as a public spectacle of pride.

# Third Mark – Love for Christ and His Church

- ▶ Love is not full of itself and puffed up.
- ▶ It never behaves rudely and never seeks its own way.
- ▶ Love cannot be provoked and will not think evil!
- ▶ It does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth.
- ▶ Love also bears up under all things, believes the best, hopes always, and endures any situation, encounter, or treatment!
- ▶ True love never fails.
- ▶ That is love – and we are commanded to love God and one another like this.

# Third Mark – Love for Christ and His Church

- ▶ We are to love one another in the body of Christ. If there is pride, arguments, fighting, and rivalries – there is not love. If there is evil speaking, backbiting, gossip, and slander – there is not love. If there is rudeness and envy – there is not love. There is disobedience!
- ▶ And remember that love is a choice of the will. We decide to love one another.
- ▶ Often in Scripture we are even told that in the church a proof of love is our willingness to put up with each other.
- ▶ Christ said we would be known for our love for each other. The New Testament church was known for the way they loved each other. Is our church known for the way the members love and care for each other?
- ▶ Above all, we are to love Jesus! And it is not an easy thing to live up to exactly what that means. When we talk about loving God, often we think that it is a normal thing to love God. How many people would answer the question with a “No” if they were asked if they loved God?

# Third Mark – Love for Christ and His Church

- ▶ Loving God means some very specific things to Him! He says in His Word that to love Him is to obey Him! That's exactly what it means to love God. If we dare say that we love God and then live in blatant disregard of His Word, we have proved with our behavior that we certainly do NOT love God! Many people stop here and say that surely I cannot seriously believe that to love God means to obey Him. But listen to what He has to say for Himself about what it means to love Him and love His church. Jesus said in John 14:15, "If you love Me, keep My commands."
- ▶ John also wrote in 1 John 2:3-5, Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.



# Third Mark – Love for Christ and His Church

- ▶ 1 John 5:3-4 - By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. For whatever is born of God overcomes the world.
- ▶ If we really do know and love Jesus Christ, then we will obey Him and love each other. If we think His commands are burdensome and hard to keep then we are not loving Him. If the church attempts to carry out its mission without loving, and therefore obeying His Word, then that church is not a healthy church, and it will ultimately fail.
- ▶ All of the Scriptures are summed up, Jesus said, in two commandments. Love God with everything you are. And love everyone else just as you love yourself. He came to give us the power to do just that. To obey Him and love Him and each other in ways that were impossible for us to love before He gave us a new heart.