



Systematic Theology

A study of the major doctrines of Scripture

TOPIC 6 – THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH
LESSON 116 – MARKS OF A HEALTHY CHURCH – PART 7
WRITTEN BY PHILLIP M WAY

UNLESS OTHERWISE INDICATED, ALL SCRIPTURE TAKEN FROM THE NEW KING JAMES VERSION. COPYRIGHT © 1982 BY THOMAS NELSON, INC.. USED BY PERMISSION. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

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

Three Marks of a True Church

- ▶ In these 3 lessons we have been taking a closer look at the 3 marks of a true church that we introduced in the first lesson:
- ▶ The Word of God is faithfully preached, taught, and heard – Acts 6:4, 13:44; Rom.10:17; 2Tim.4:2
- ▶ The Ordinances of Baptism and Communion are administered – Acts 2:42; Mat.28:19
- ▶ Discipline of the membership is Biblically administered – 1 Cor.5:10-13; Mat.18:15-17

Sixth Mark: Church Discipline

- ▶ The Sixth Mark of a Healthy Church: Discipline of the Membership is Biblically Administered
- ▶ 1 Corinthians 5:10-13 – Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner—not even to eat with such a person. For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? But those who are outside God judges. Therefore “put away from yourselves the evil person.
- ▶ Matthew 18:15-17 – Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that “by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’ And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

Sixth Mark: Church Discipline

- ▶ A healthy church is always striving to be a pure church. Does that mean that a healthy church will be without sin or impurity? No. But it does mean that a healthy church is faithful to practice discipline and thus protect the membership from the influence of sin and the infiltration of false doctrine.
- ▶ It is the responsibility of the church leaders to protect the flock just as it is the charge of the members to watch over one another. That is what it means to love one another!
- ▶ The church leadership is ultimately responsible before God for the membership and its spiritual condition. They will give account directly to God for those He has put in their care.

Sixth Mark: Church Discipline

- ▶ The proper form for this discipline is laid out for us in the Scriptures. The Bible tells us:
- ▶ Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that “by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.” And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. Matthew 18:15-17
- ▶ Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Galatians 6:1-3

Sixth Mark: Church Discipline

- ▶ The process of discipline given in these texts tell us that it is the responsibility of those in the church to care for one another by being willing to admonish and confront, in absolute love, any sin which is not dealt with in the life of the church! The simple steps are as follows. If any member of the church sins:
- ▶ 1. He is to obey the Lord and heed his conscience by repenting and being reconciled to God and to anyone else he has sinned against (1 John 1:9; Matt. 5:23-24; James 5:16).
- ▶ 2. If he does not repent, he is to be reprovved in private (Matt. 18:15).
- ▶ 3. If he still does not repent, he is to be reprovved a second time with two or three witnesses who may confirm his response (Matt. 18:16).
- ▶ 4. If he still does not repent, the matter is to be taken before the church (Matt. 18:17).
- ▶ 5. If he will not listen to the church, then the church is to remove him from fellowship and membership (Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:12-13).

Sixth Mark: Church Discipline

- ▶ The whole process is to be carried out in love with the ultimate goal at all times being the restoration of a sinning member to fellowship. This is to be done with care and gentleness. And if at any point, including after removal from the church, the sinning member repents, he is to be immediately restored to fellowship. We are to “forgive and comfort” him (2 Cor. 2:7), and “reaffirm your love” for him (2 Cor. 2:8).
- ▶ Church discipline is to be carried out without partiality in the case of ANY member who sins (1 Tim. 5:19-21; Gal. 2:11).
- ▶ Even pastors/elders are subject to discipline and a more severe judgment (James 3:1), to the point that we are commanded, “Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear. I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality.”

Sixth Mark: Church Discipline

- ▶ The Example in the Corinthian Church:
- ▶ 1 Corinthians 5:1 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles—that a man has his father's wife! 2 And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you. 3 For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed. 4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, 5 deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. 6 Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? 7 Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. 8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Sixth Mark: Church Discipline

- ▶ 1 Corinthians 5:9 I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. 10 Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. 11 But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner—not even to eat with such a person. 12 For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? 13 But those who are outside God judges. Therefore “put away from yourselves the evil person.”

Sixth Mark: Church Discipline

- ▶ 2 Corinthians 2:3 And I wrote this very thing to you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow over those from whom I ought to have joy, having confidence in you all that my joy is the joy of you all. 4 For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you. 5 But if anyone has caused grief, he has not grieved me, but all of you to some extent—not to be too severe. 6 This punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man, 7 so that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow. 8 Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to him. 9 For to this end I also wrote, that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things. 10 Now whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ, 11 lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices.

Sixth Mark: Church Discipline

- ▶ PRBC Church Membership Covenant:
- ▶ We do promise and covenant to watch over one another and not sin against one another, so far as God shall reveal it to us, or to any of us, and to stir up one another to love and good works; to warn, rebuke, and admonish one another with meekness, according to the will of God as recorded in His Word.
- ▶ We do promise and covenant to bear with one another's weaknesses, failings, and infirmities, with much tenderness and love, not publicly revealing these things to anyone outside the Church, or any within, except doing so according to Christ's rule and the order of the Gospel provided in that case.
- ▶ We do promise and covenant to grow together in the truths of the Gospel and the purity of God's ways and ordinances, to avoid causing (and the Causers of) disputes and division, endeavoring at all times to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Sixth Mark: Church Discipline

- ▶ Hebrews 13:7 Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct. 8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. 9 Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines. For it is good that the heart be established by grace, not with foods which have not profited those who have been occupied with them.
- ▶ Hebrews 13:17 Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.
- ▶ 2 Thessalonians 5:12 And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, 13 and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves. 14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all. 15 See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all.