

Two Views Of The Church

Introduction. Some who think that one can be saved in any church say, "There is error in all churches." They think that since all men sin and have shortcomings, all churches have error and shortcomings. Also, when we try to expose a certain error in their church, they say, "I don't go along with everything my church teaches. I know we have some error, but all churches have some error. We have some error and some good, and you have some error and some good." Also, they say, "How can you keep saying you are the only ones right when we have members as good as yours?" They conclude, "You people claim you are the only ones going to heaven, because you think you are better than everyone else. You church of Christ people are a very conceited and arrogant people."

However, these objections confuse the human side with the divine side. All churches have error in the human side, but any church that has error on the divine side is an apostate church.

I. ***The Divine Side Of The Church***

A. Principles relating to the church.

1. Its origin.
 - a) At hand (Matthew 3:1-2; 10:7; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 10:9).
 - b) Yet future (Matthew 16:18; Mark 9:1; Luke 23:51; 24:49; Acts 1:5, 8).
 - c) On Pentecost the Holy Spirit came with power (Acts 2:1-4).
2. Its builder.
 - a) It must be built by the Lord (Psalm 127:1; Matthew 16:18) and it must have Christ as its only foundation (Isaiah 28:16; 1 Corinthians 3:10-11).
 - b) Furthermore, the church is not answerable to earthly headquarters (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:23).
 - c) To be built by the Lord, it must be built according to the Lord's pattern (Hebrews 8:5). Christ alone has the right to declare what He wants in His church.
3. Its organization.
 - a) The qualifications cannot be ignored (1 Timothy 3:1-10; Titus 1:5-9).
 - b) We cannot add other officers and overseers (Acts 14:23; Philippians 1:1).
4. Its worship.
 - a) Prayer (1 Corinthians 14:15).
 - b) Singing (Hebrews 2:12).
 - c) Devotion to the word (Acts 19:9; 20:7).
 - d) Giving (1 Corinthians 16:2).

- e) Partaking of the Lord's supper (Acts 20:7).
- 5. Its mission or work.
 - a) Evangelism (1 Thessalonians 1:8).
 - b) Edification (Acts 11:22-23).
 - c) Benevolence (Acts 11:27-30; 1 Timothy 5:16).
- 6. Its requirements for membership.
 - a) Hear and believe the word (John 6:45; Romans 10:17).
 - b) Repent of sins (Acts 2:38; 3:19).
 - c) Confess Jesus as the Son of God (Matthew 10:32; Acts 8:37).
 - d) Be washed in baptism for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16).
- B. This is God's arrangement.
 - 1. Anything different is error and is condemned (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12).
 - 2. Those who would teach differently have the curse of God on them (Galatians 1:8-9).
 - 3. Those who follow false teachers are likewise condemned (Matthew 15:9, 14).

II. ***The Human Side Of The Church***

- A. The church is composed of mere mortals (Matthew 26:41).
 - 1. The way we should look at ourselves is found in Luke 17:10.
 - 2. No flesh glories before God (1 Corinthians 1:27-31).
- B. Men can and do sin (Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:8-10).
 - 1. James 1:12-15 explains the progression of sin. Sin is not inherited from our ancestors.
 - 2. Men have faults (Galatians 2:11; James 5:16), but the divine side is not faulty.
- C. We must restore (Galatians 6:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:14; James 5:19-20).
 - 1. We can help men, but we cannot help God in His arrangement.
 - 2. Many creeds and organizations have been devised for the purpose of aiding God.
- D. We must discipline (1 Corinthians 5:4-5; 2 Thessalonians 3:6).
 - 1. The scriptures are given for correction (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
 - 2. Men need correction, but God does not.
- E. We should improve ourselves (Romans 12:1-2; Titus 2:11-12).
 - 1. We need to learn to love the world less and develop spiritually for the better (1 Peter 2:2; 3:18; 1 John 2:15-17).
 - 2. We can improve ourselves, but we cannot improve upon the divine order and we dare not change God's arrangement.

F. We should recognize our weaknesses (Luke 18:10-14; 1 Corinthians 10:12).

1. We should know our temptations and take the utmost care to avoid them.
2. However, at the same time, we need to realize that there are no weaknesses on the divine side. No part of God's plan needs "tweaking."

Conclusion. God made provisions for weaknesses and error on the human side, but on the divine side, He allows for no error. We are saying we are right and others wrong, not because we are perfect (on the human side), but because we respect God's arrangement. The greatness of the church has nothing to do with any special greatness that Christians possess, its greatness is in the Lord's design, and it is an absolute necessity that it be right. Anything other than God's arrangement is lawlessness, error, and the curse of God rests on it.