

## WHAT'S WRONG AND WHAT'S RIGHT WITH THE CHURCH

I COR. 1:1-3; 10:13; 3:1-4; 16:5; 5:1-2; 5:12; 12:13; 1:1-ff.;  
~~THE TROUBLE WITH THE CHURCH~~ 15:3-8

INTRODUCTION: Not too long ago someone said to me:

"What's the trouble with the church?"

The church doesn't seem to be reaching the people and influencing them like it used to. What's wrong? Now, in speaking on this subject today, I hope you will be kind and understanding enough to realize several things:

First of all, I'M not talking about THIS PARTICULAR church, because I don't know enough about this church.

Second, remember that I am talking about the universal church, or the church in general, in a much wider sense than the local church. Baptists used to believe in the universal church, as illustrated in the Philadelphia Confession of Faith of 1742, proclaimed by the oldest organization or association of Baptists in Amer.

Third, I admit I am generalizing; but I am generalizing on the basis of two things:

1. Current information and widespread opinion in which there is general agreement.

2. The Example in the scriptures of the Church at Corinth. They certainly had trouble in their church. Some of it they knew about, and some of it they pretended not to know about.

Fourth, I am not going to stop by discussing what is the trouble with the church, or what is wrong with it, but if you will hear me out I will tell you, before I close, some of the things that are RIGHT with the church.

There are several reasons why we need to listen carefully to such a message as this today.

If we do not admit that there is deep and serious trouble with the church today, we are blind and neurotic.

If we admit it but do not face up to it and deal with it we are foolish.

If we realize it, but are resigned to it and pessimistic and say there is nothing that can be done about it,

we are hopeless and faithless.

1. The Roman Catholic Church has realized that it is in trouble, and is going to be in worse trouble in this modern generation unless it reforms and renews itself and becomes up-dated and able to communicate with people of our modern generation and meet the real needs and problems which face us today.

2. For example think about the Vatican Council, and some young, brilliant priests (like Father James Kavanaugh,) (See article in Look magazine 1967 "A Modern Priest Looks at his Outdated Church.")

He says "it is time to question and to surge ahead.... One day, history will record the madness of my Church and amend the rules made by monks and celibates." Concerning Pope ~~they say~~, "We do not need his blessing, we need his openness to honest reform."

3. But some of you say, "That is the Catholic Church. But surely the Baptist churches are not in any similar trouble."

On the other hand, many Baptist are waving the same warning flag before us, too. L.D. Johnson, of Furman University, Greenville, S.C., wrote in a leading Baptist publication, "I believe it is no longer possible for us to survive as a major religious force in this country without serious reevaluation and re-direction. While giving the appearance of self-assurance to the point of cockiness, we have concentrated on keeping the blinds drawn and the doors locked against the possibility of someone else in Christendom being able to influence us to consider ideas other than our own.... Something must be done, and be done quickly, to reverse the downward trend, or the church of the '80s will be in desperate plight."

## I. The Trouble with the Church Today.

- A. It has lost its spirituality & dedication
- B. It has lost its good influence in society & culture
- C. It has lost its appeal to young & intelligent people
- D. It is losing the race with the world population explosion.
- E. It has lost its responsibility for social concerns.
- F. It has lost awareness of true success symbols
- G. It has lost contact and relevance with our generation.

## I. The Trouble with the Church at Corinth.

### A. "Concerning the Corinthians"

Notice the word "concerning..."

In I Cor 7:1, Paul says "Now concerning the matters about which you wrote..." (The morality crisis)

#### 1. Concerning marriage, 7:1 & (25. - the "unmarried")

a. His advice based on personal opinion -

not on revelation or command of God, v.25

b. His opinion was strongly conditioned by his belief that Jesus was going to return in his lifetime and that great distress and tribulation was in store for his generation, v.26.

c. Therefore, although he said marriage was not sinful, he inclined to recommend refraining from marriage rather than to get married.

d. He seemed to modify his views as he grew older; we find none of these ideas in his later epistles.

#### 2. Concerning food offered to idols, 8:1

a. The responsibility of conscience

b. Consideration for a weak brother

Some were very serious problems

#### 3. Concerning spiritual gifts, 12:1

a. The varieties of gifts, 12:4

b. Speaking with tongues

the charismatc controversy

c. The excellence of love, 12:31 & ch 13

This was what really mattered

#### 4. Concerning the collection, 16:1

a. The practical matter of stewardship, coming right after the profound doctrine of the resurrection

b. This is God's plan for the support of His cause.

(The controversy over the Coop. Program)

## *Spiritual*

### II. The Deeper or Real Trouble with the Church

A. It is common that people often do not mention the real problem or trouble that is bothering them when they come to a minister or someone else for counseling. B. Paul mentions in other places some of their real problems and troubles:

1. Immaturity, 3:1, babes in Christ, carnal, of the flesh, "ordinary men, merely men", 3:3,4  
"Do not be children in your thinking" 14:20

2. Quarreling, 1:11; 11:18-19

\*3. Factionalism, or party spirit, 1:12-13

4. Jealousy, strife

Someone recently wrote: "A man may disrupt the fellowship of the church, assassinate the good name and the influence of his pastor, sow seeds of dissension and suspicion like tares in the field at night, harrass and badger and threaten, and deplete the spiritual resources of the entire church fellowship to the point of making it incapable of fulfilling its mission, and yet go on self-righteously confident that he is serving Jesus. He may withdraw his support in prayer, in attendance, and in financial contribution and no one is terribly concerned about the fellowship of the church, but only that someone has offended the dear brother and it would be nice to get him to come back into the fold."

5. Immorality, incest, homosexuality, prostitution, "You Name It" - it was in that church circle.

6. Boasting

7. Lawsuits with each other

8. Idolatry

9. Shameful conduct at the Lord's Table

C. All of these terrible sins were prevalent right in the membership of the church; and yet they were concerned with whether marriage was sinful or not, whether it was right or wrong to buy meat in the public butcher shop without cautiously asking beforehand whether or not it had ever been offered to an idol, and about what to do if someone started speaking in an unknown tongue, or whether or not a woman should speak publicly in church.

Likewise we today live in a world on the brink of nuclear destruction, where billions of people are hungry, where thousands of our ~~close~~ neighbors (living in beautiful condominiums) are without faith in Christ, where our cities are besieged by enormous problems of crime, narcotics, unemployment, racism, and bigotry.

Yet many Christians in our churches are blindly oblivious to these larger issues, and spend their time talking about whether the King James Version is without error, or whether we should tithe before or after taxes, or whether the Lord's Supper should be "open" or "closed," or whether deacons must attend every single service of the church every time the doors are opened, or whether the "Moral Majority" is right or wrong, or whether women are to be included in the total ministries of the church, or a thousand other such questions.

We so easily get excited and disturbed over everything except the things that would arouse the righteous indignation of Jesus Christ that would drive us to put our own personal opinions aside and roll up our sleeves and get to work trying to win our generation to Christ.

IV. But this Same Letter also Tells Us What's Right  
With the Church.

1. They are called "Sanctified, Saints, sustained by the Lord" 1:1-9
2. "Called and Chosen of God" 1:26-31
3. With a Gospel which is the Wisdom & Power of God,  
*15:1-3 1:18-2:5*  
with a Great Mission - (see sep. notes)
4. We are God's Temple: God's Spirit dwells in us"  
*3:16 Meaningful worship Services; 14:24-26, 33, 40*
5. Great ordinances in the Lord's Supper, 11:23-26  
and in Baptism
6. Great Challenge in the Way of Love, ch 13
7. Great Hope in the Resurrection, ch 15
8. The Body of Christ, of which He is Head, is  
loved by Him, bought with His blood, *1 Cor. 12:13*  
to be sanctified & cleansed by Him,  
to be presented finally holy & without spot,  
or wrinkle or blemish, *Eph. 5:23-27*

CONCLUSION: True, the church is not yet perfect,  
but it is the only institution founded personally by  
Jesus Christ. It is made up of imperfect people who  
have not yet attained that full spiritual maturity  
that God wills; yet they are pressing forward toward  
the mark for that prize of the high calling of God  
in Christ Jesus. There is some trouble here and now  
with the church of Jesus Christ; yet there is no  
trouble or problem with which we cannot deal effectively  
by the power of the Spirit of God and with His help.  
It is still one of our greatest privileges to be  
a part of this church and let God work through us  
both to will and to do His good pleasure. The skeptics  
are too quick in singing the funeral dirge of the church  
for Jesus Himself said, "it's my church; and the gates  
of death shall not prevail against it."

1<sup>st</sup> S. B. Sh. Col. 5993, 1 Oct 67

Bardmoor Bap. Ch. Nov. 15, '81 settled case with full V.

Norwood Pap. ch. 10/31/82 before site visit. f

Pasadena Bap. Ch. 2-15-87

700 ni aifseachadh a' bòd teaganach a' bòd eile an.

## \*The Danger of Factionalism

When the Day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all together in ONE PLACE. This place was probably the temple, rather than in the Upper Room, as commonly assumed. They were in unity in God's House of Prayer.

The story is told of a group of tribal chieftans sitting in council. Each had his own plan for meeting a threatened attack. An old and wise chief then gave each man a single stick and told him to break it. Each did so without difficulty. Gathering the same number of sticks again, the old chief bound them together into a bundle. This he passed to each man, bidding him to break it. Not even the strongest was now able to do so. Thus, the wise chieftain enforced the necessity of their unity. That is why one cannot be as good a

(over)

cont:

Christian without the fellowship of a church.

In the church he bands himself together with others for common prayer, worship, study, and service.

Answers can come to prayers that are made by people together and success can attend work that is done by people together which could not be otherwise.

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III. for Sermon "The Cost of Pentecost" and "The Marks of a Vital Church"