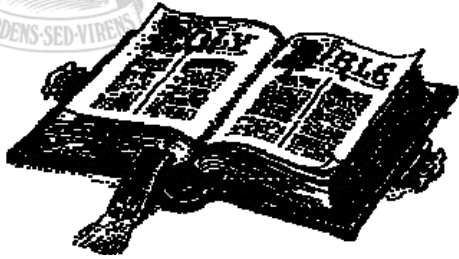




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No. 5 (part 1) - "Discipline"

"For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee," Titus 1:5.

We start a new chapter in our study of "Sin in the Church". We are going to look at the proper response to

sin in the midst of the church.

As the human body has a built-in mechanism that swings into action as soon as the body comes under attack from anything that threatens its health, so the Lord, the Creator of the human body, has ordained a proper process by which the health and well-being of the Church is safeguarded.

I would like to consider that mechanism by which the Lord preserves the health of the Church.

The Invisible Church is the Body of Christ, the faithful both in heaven and on earth who are spiritually united to Him. It is thus called, for the greater part of it is in heaven, invisible to the dwellers on earth.

The term "the church" may also be applied to a body of believers gathered together to worship God in some particular location. The term is so used in Philemon verses 1-2.

"Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy *our* brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer, and to *our* beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to the church in thy house." It is also to be found in many other places including 1 Corinthians 1:2 and Revelation 2:8. "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called *to be* saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." "And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive."

Today, I wish to consider:

TO THE CHURCH IS GIVEN THE MINISTRY, ORACLES AND ORDINANCES OF GOD

The church has power and authority, given of the Lord Jesus, the Great King and only Head of the Church which it exercises in matters of doctrine, the ordinances, discipline and government in accordance with the Word of God which is the sole rule of faith and practice.

These matters are given to the Church to administer and guard. It is not given to one man such as a pope! It is not given to an elite section of the church such as a "priesthood."! No, these matters rest in the hands of the people of God to be administered in accordance with God's Word.

Consider:

1. The church is the channel of truth to the world. In Matthew 5:14, the Lord Jesus says: "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid," Matthew 5:14. He is speaking to all His disciples here and He states that they are the "light of the world". Not just some of them, missionaries, ministers, evangelists and Sabbath school teachers, but all of God's people are to be lights in this world.

This duty is stated very clearly by Paul. "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons



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of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world," Philippians 2:15. Sometimes illuminated signs are incomplete because a bulb has blown and emits no light. How many dark spots there are on the sign God would have us hold up for all to see, because some Christians do not shine as they ought!

Paul describes the Church of God in 1 Timothy 3:15. ". . . the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." God's people, the Church, holds forth the truth, through its ministers. It supports and maintains truth. See how Paul calls ministers the pillars of the Church in Galatians 2:9. "And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we *should go* unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision."

It is the duty of people and preachers to see to it that a faithful witness is maintained. "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also," 2 Timothy 2:2.

Thus the truth is preserved and passed on.

2. The maintenance of the true worship of God is the responsibility of the church. It is the collective responsibility of all believers but the special responsibility of some. ". . . ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints," Jude 1:3. Please take note that the "faith" was delivered to the "saints"! Believers should give every support to ministers who contend for the faith for it is their duty to defend the faith of the gospel. The word "delivered" means "placed in the hands of". In your hands, dear Christian, God has placed His gospel for safe keeping!

Consider what Philippians 1:27 has to say to us. "Only let your conversation (behaviour and lifestyle) be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel." We are commanded to "hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus," 2 Timothy 1:13.

3. The church is to be governed in accordance with the teaching of the Bible. Paul left Titus in Crete to attend to the business of putting matters in their proper place within the church in Crete. The little phrase "set in order" means set up straight. It is the root from which we get "orthodox". Titus was a minister, a presbyter, and it was his responsibility, and that of all who share in that office, to establish and maintain orthodoxy in the church with the full support of the whole membership of it.

When we speak of orthodoxy we mean, of course, that which is so defined in accordance with God's Word.

This is the first part of our fifth study in a series of messages on "The problem of sin in the church". [Click here](#) to listen to/download a recording of each of the messages in the series.