



Northside Proclaimer

Proclaiming The Word Of The Lord

1 Thessalonians 1:8

Northside Church Of Christ Welcomes You!

February 21, 2016

Keep the Church Pure

Johnny Ramsey

I once heard an aged brother pray these words: "Lord, help us to keep the spiritual body of Christ as pure as he kept his physical body." This statement, coming from a grand old soldier of the cross, has lingered in my memory for many years now. It is challenging and thought-provoking to every member of the body of Christ. We should all pray: "Lord, help us to keep the church pure." The very fact that the New Testament depicts the church as the bride of Christ, his body, God's family (Eph. 5; 1 Cor. 12; 2 Tim. 3:15) and other close relationships should cause each Christian to realize the need for purity in the Lord's church. Let me briefly list ways that we can, by God's instructions, keep the church pure.

1. Preach the Truth — The church can never be what the Lord desires until it stands as a bulwark of truth. The pure gospel must be preached if we are to keep the body of Christ uncontaminated. Substitutions, perversions, additions, subtractions, philosophical entreaties — all of these corrupt the purity of the message that God has left for the church to promulgate. Regardless of how intellectual the preacher might be, or how refined the congregation, there will never be a substitute for plain, fearless, heart-searching gospel preaching. This type of preaching has always been and shall continue to be one of the identifying marks of a pure church. We must not be ashamed of the gospel (Rom. 1:16) but preach it "in season and out" (2 Tim. 4:2) as we strive to keep Christ's kingdom undefiled. I verily believe that all the liberalism and modernism we have read about (and witnessed in some places) in the New York City, Chicago, and Pepperdine areas (within the church itself) can best be traced to a failure to keep the church pure by pure teaching from the pulpit and elsewhere. I once quoted Colossians 2:8 to a Catholic priest in Wisconsin to rebuke him for failing to teach New Testament Christianity. Those stirring words might well be remembered by all of us as well — lest we turn away from pure deliverance of the oracles of God. Paul was inspired to write: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." Over and over again in his epistles to Timothy and Titus, Paul exhorted those evangelists to be sure their message was "sound doctrine." (Titus 2:1) Brethren, if the spiritual body of Christ is as precious to us as it should be, we must preach the truth — all of the truth — to a lost and bewildered world. This is one step in our task of keeping the church pure. We must also:

2. Live right — Last year, while preaching in a gospel meeting in South Texas, I was impressed with the closing sentence of a brother's prayer. He said: "Lord, help us to live right." That simple statement becomes profound when we really try practicing it. All of the eloquent sermons a man can preach will never hide an impure life. Paul was very plain when he told Timothy: "Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine." (1 Tim. 4:16) An evangelist of the Lord must never condemn his own sermons by failing to practice what he preaches. Every child of God must remember that the most memorable, indelible sermons are the lives we live before our neighbors and friends.

Northside
church Of Christ

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Announcements

- Remember the shut in's.
- Pray for the church and one another.
- Remember the spiritual sick among us.
- Call or email Bryan to add announcements, thanks.
- We need volunteers for door knocking. Please see Bryan.
- We need volunteers for picking folks up. Please see Bryan.

Five Day A Week Reading Plan

Mon: Deut. 23-27

Tues: Deut. 28-32

Wed: Deut. 33 - Josh 3

Thurs: Josh 4-8

Fri: Josh 9-13

The population of heaven and hell will largely depend on how members of Christ's body conduct themselves in this pilgrim journey. Should we fail to live right, the day of judgment will be a sad, sad day for us. As Christians we must "abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul" and "cleanse ourselves of all defilement of flesh and spirit." (1 Peter 2:11; 2 Cor. 7:1)

This is another step we must accomplish if we keep the church pure. Not only must we preach right and live right we are also admonished to:

3. Withdraw from the ungodly — Regardless of how diligently the truth is preached and lived a congregation can still be impure if ungodly, worldly-minded brethren are not disciplined. The Lord has left specific instructions in his will concerning this matter. It seems that few of us are willing to abide by God's wishes for we fellowship anybody and everybody and precious little discipline is used in the church of the Lord today. As long as there is "sin in the camp" we can expect discord, worldliness and chaos from within the ranks of the Lord's army. The church at Corinth was commanded to "put away from among yourselves that wicked person" (1 Cor. 5:13) for "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." (Verse 6 of same chapter.) When we tolerate evil doing we are breeding corruption in the blood-bought church of Jesus Christ. It is impossible for elders in the church of God to condone and use adulterers, gamblers, drunkards, etc. and still fulfill their obligations as shepherds of the flock. It is also impossible for preachers of the gospel to preach the whole counsel of God and fail to condemn such immoral characters who cast the cause of Christ into ill repute by their hypocritical living.

If the church does not arise and fulfill its God-given duty in this realm we will fail in our efforts to keep the church pure. The purpose of "church discipline" is at least three-fold: (a) To bring the erring brother to his senses. (b) To keep the church clean and cause the other members of the body to take notice of how the Lord looks on sin. (c) To forever remind the world that the church stands for something and that there is a vast distinction between the children of God and the offspring of the devil!

But, there is still one more necessary element in a pure church and that is:

4. A burning zeal and enthusiasm — We have all seen congregations who preached the truth, lived as they should, and even disciplined their wayward members. Yet, something was still lacking. That something was enthusiasm. We must be on fire for the Lord. Too many of us seem contented and passive in the Lord's work. We have a nice, convenient religion and we need not be concerned over the teeming millions who do not share the rewarding pleasures of a Lord's day spent in true worship and service to God. Brethren, the greatest hindrance to the vitality of the church is our indifference and complacency. It is not enough to preach the truth and live accordingly — we must be energetic, zealous and fervent in our service to Christ. Laodicea's great sin was her indifference. (Revelation 3:14-16) There are congregations just like Laodicea today. They are much like a room where no fresh air ever enters, that is, stale, stagnant, lifeless. That room is not impure because of dangerous, deadly gas entering it — but because no air at all is there. Thus, many times the lack of growth in the church of the Lord can best be traced to no life at all instead of rank immorality.

The Lord of Glory shed his blood for the church. (Acts 20:28) He's coming one day to receive it unto himself. May we do all we can to keep the priceless possession pure "not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." (Eph. 5:27) (Gospel Guardian, April 21, 1955)