

The Growth of the Church

Keeping the Church Pure

Introduction

1. Along with our efforts to teach the gospel to the lost here and in other places, there must be a constant effort to maintain the purity of the faith in doctrine and practice in our own ranks.

2 Timothy 4:1-8

A. Paul tells Timothy to "take charge" - verse 2.

2. The church has to be perpetually (constantly) taught.

Matthew 28:20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you....

A. Jesus set the standard for us to follow and now it is up to us as Christians to enforce it.

3. Church Purity is further emphasized when we consider that **only one book** of the New Testament is designed to show men how to become Christians while **21** are devoted to teaching them how to live as Christians!

Let's Notice

1. The rebuilding of Jerusalem (Ezra and Neh) is typical of the struggles involved in building and maintaining the church here or elsewhere.
 - A. The enemy ridiculed God's people.
Nehemiah 4:3-8
 - B. They conspired to make war against them.
Nehemiah 4:7-8
 - C. They wanted to kill Nehemiah so the work would stop.
Nehemiah 6:2-3
 - 1) By prayer and work Nehemiah and Israel succeeded.
Nehemiah 4:9, 16-18, 6
2. There is a parallel from this reading that we can learn from today.
 - A. We should constantly be engaged in building (working) the kingdom of God by converting sinners.
1 Corinthians 9:16-22
 - B. We must put on God's armor (the word) to defend ourselves from the world — we must have a mind to work for God!
Ephesians 6:10-18

3. Neither ridicule nor opposition can defeat us if we remain pure in doctrine and practice - and refuse to compromise with error!

A. The greatest dangers to the church come from within.

1) False doctrines arise.

Acts 20:30 Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.

2) People will push their persuasions on the church.

a. Man-made churches everywhere!

3) Some push to the same extent as Diotrephes.

3 John 9-10 I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church.

4) Worldliness (if not taught on) is condoned.

1 John 2:15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

James 4:4 Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

4. To maintain the purity of the church in both doctrine and practice we must preach the word.

2 Timothy 4:2 Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

A. We can do this in home classes, extra classes, etc.

B. The word is like a hammer to break the rocks of rebellion.

Jeremiah 23:29 "Is not My word like a fire?" says the LORD, "And like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?"

C. The word is food to strengthen.

Matthew 4:4 But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.' "

- 1) **Do we keep the word on our minds? Is Jesus at the forefront of our thoughts?**

D. The word is light to illuminate pit-falls and to guide our feet.

Psalms 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.

E. The word sanctifies (sets apart from the world) and makes holy.

John 17:17 Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.

F. The word releases us from sin.

John 8:32 and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. "

- 1) **We see in Hebrews that this sword is sharper than any other, having the ability to destroy and to captivate.**

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

- 2) **Notice if you will, what the apostle Paul says:**
2 Corinthians 10:3-5

- a. **If we treated God's word like the apostle Paul did - we would be a valuable servant of God.**

5. **When the preaching of the word fails, the false teacher or immoral person must be disciplined.**
2 Thessalonians 3:6
Titus 3:10-11
1 Corinthians 5:11-13
 - A. **We should not be influenced by friendly ties nor fleshly relationships but "be urgent in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke, and exhort with great patience and instruction." (2 Timothy 4:2)**
 - B. **We must remember to put God first and all others second. A friend worth having is a friend worth saving - we must correct all who are in error.**

Conclusion

1. ***"Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty"* (Patrick Henry).**
2. **We must never lower the standard, but rather raise ourselves and the church to meet it. God set the standard and He'll accept nothing less than total submission to it!**
3. **Can it be said that you are truly doing everything that you can to ensure that the church remains pure?**

