

What Is a “Sound” Church?

Introduction:

1. You no doubt have heard the statement “are you a ‘sound’ church?”

A. **Sound:** “normal and healthy; not weak, diseased, or impaired; firm, safe, secure; based on truth or valid reasoning; accurate, reliable, sensible; morally strong; honest, honorable, loyal.”

2. But what is a sound church?

A. For the answer to that question we should turn to the pages of the Bible and notice what scripture says in relationship to the word “sound.”

1 Tim 1:9-10 knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to **sound doctrine**,

1 Tim 6:3 If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to **wholesome words**, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness,

2 Tim 1:13 Hold fast the pattern of **sound words** which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.

2 Tim 4:3 For the time will come when they will not endure **sound doctrine**,...

Titus 1:9 holding fast the **faithful word** as he has been taught, that he may be able, by **sound doctrine**, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.

Titus 2:1 But as for you, speak the things which are proper for **sound doctrine**:

3. We see then that which is “sound” is that which is STABLE, SAFE, SECURE, WHOLESOME, and HEALTHY.

4. What is the church? The Bible says:

Rom 16:1 I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea,

Rom 16:16The churches of Christ greet you.

A. It does not say the Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian churches greet you, it says the churches of Christ.

1 Cor 1:2 To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, *called to be saints*, with all who in every place *call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord*, both theirs and ours:

Acts 8:1-3 Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.

B. Did Saul make havoc of brick and mortar? No ---- He made havoc of the men and women ---- those that make up the church.

Acts 11:21-26

5. We see then that the “church” is that which is made up by Baptized Believers, the Saved.

Acts 2:38-47

6. Are all churches “sound” churches? We can see from scripture that all churches were not sound because they were not STABLE, SAFE, SECURE, WHOLESOME, and HEALTHY.

A. Look at the church in Corinth. It was the Lord’s church made up of baptized believers but they were not sound.

1 Cor 3:1-3 And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for **you are still carnal**. For where there are **envy, strife, and divisions among you**, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?

1 Cor 11:17-18 Now in giving these instructions I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better but for the worse. For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that **there are divisions among you**, and in part I believe it.

1 Cor 11:22 What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do **you despise the church of God** and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you.

B. We can also look at the church in Galatia. Also made up of baptized believers, but look what begins to happen.

Galatians 1:2-9

Gal 3:1 O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that **you should not obey the truth**, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?

Gal 5:7 You ran well. Who hindered you **from obeying the truth**?

- 1) They began the race, but then began to depart from the “soundness” that makes a “sound church.”**

A Church Is Not Sound Just Because:

1. It is NOT Liberal.

- A. Just because we don't entice people to come to services by offering fun, food, and frolic doesn't in and of itself make this a sound church.

2. It has the RIGHT Doctrine.

Rev 2:2-5 2) "I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; 3) "and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary. 4) "Nevertheless I have this against you, that **you have left your first love**. 5) "Remember therefore from where you have fallen; **repent and do the first works**, or else I will come to you quickly and *remove your lampstand* from its place-- unless you repent.

- A. What was happening? They were going through the motions of keeping the doctrine but lost their true love of God.

3. It is MATERIALLY Rich.

- A. Just because a building looks good with a paved parking lot and the whole nine yards does not mean it is sound.

Rev 3:15-17 "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. "So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. "Because **you say, 'I am rich**, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'-- and do not know that you are **wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked**--

- 1) Often times when a building gets completed many think the work is now done - but rather should be saying "it is just beginning."

4. **It has a good NAME and REPUTATION.**

- A. The church might have a good name or reputation for being sound but in fact may be a “dead” church.**

Rev 3:1-3 "And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, 'These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: "I know your works, that **you have a name** that you are alive, but you are dead. 2) "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have **not found your works perfect before God**. 3) "Remember therefore how you have received and heard; **hold fast and repent**. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.

5. **It is an ACTIVE church.**

- A. An active church is great but not at the expense of neglecting the “whole counsel of God” and practicing the doctrine of Christ.**

Rev 2:19-20 "I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first. "Nevertheless I have a few things against you, **because you allow** that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.

- 1) Just because a church does these things does not in and of itself make it a “sound” church. The church must be doing all things which are STABLE, SAFE, SECURE, WHOLESOME, and HEALTHY.**

TONIGHT: The Characteristics of a “sound” church

Characteristics of a Sound Church:

1. **Seeks Scriptural Organization:**

The Valley congregation here in Grand Junction will fit into one of the next four categories that I will be describing. Every congregation will fit into one of these four categories.

A. *Scripturally Unorganized.*

Acts 14:23 So when they had **appointed elders** in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

- 1) **Before Elders were appointed they were still a church. A church can be scriptural but not organized.**
- 2) **It could be that there are men that are not qualified to serve as elders, or who do not desire the office. In this case the church is scriptural but not organized according to God's pattern.**

B. *Scripturally Organized.*

Phil 1:1 Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the **bishops and deacons**:

- 1) **A church is considered scripturally organized when there are QUALIFIED men that have been appointed and are serving as elders.**
 - A. **QUALIFIED is the key word. When good men of God are serving as elders the church will run smoothly as God intended.**

C. *Unscripturally Organized.*

3 Jn 9 I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, **who loves to have the preeminence among them,** does not receive us.

- 1) An unscripturally organized church can be a nightmare for a local congregation. There can be several problems.**
 - a. One man rule**
 - b. Church bosses**
 - c. Attitude problems**
 - d. Elders not shepherding but Lording**

D. *Unscripturally Unorganized*

Titus 1:5 For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should **set in order the things that are lacking,** and **appoint elders** in every city as I commanded you--

- 1) You may have a congregation that have qualified men who desire to serve as elders but are not appointed for various reasons.**
 - a. There may be one or several men in the congregation that are filled with pride - wanting the “preeminence.”**
 - b. Or the congregation is not helping to promote and strive to be scripturally organized.**

The question: Which of these four describes this church?

2. **Members Know Their Place:**

A. **In the times of battle, every man knew his place.**

Josh 6:5 "It shall come to pass, when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when you hear the sound of the trumpet, that all the people shall shout with a great shout; then the wall of the city will fall down flat. And the people shall go up **every man straight before him.**"

Judg 7:21 And every man **stood in his place** all around the camp;...

Neh 4:15 And it happened, when our enemies heard that it was known to us, and that God had brought their plot to nothing, that all of us returned to the wall, **everyone to his work.**

1 Chr 6:32 They were ministering with music before the dwelling place of the tabernacle of meeting, until Solomon had built the house of the LORD in Jerusalem, and **they served in their office according to their order.**

Prov 27:8 Like a bird that wanders from its nest is a man who **wanders** from his place.

B. **Everyone of us has a place. There are things that we can do. We need to recognize what those things are and do them while abstaining from those things we know we have no "place" in.**

1) **The New Testament also informs us of our place.** **1 Corinthians 12:18-27**

Rom 12:4-8 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members **do not have the same function**, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

2) **ELDERS:**

1 Pet 5:2 **Shepherd the flock of God** which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly;

3) DEACONS: (1 Tim 3 - Servants)

4) PREACHER:

1 Tim 4:13.....give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

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

5) MEMBERS:

Eph 4:16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

3. Demands Plain Preaching:

A. Warns of Trends. Does not tolerate doctrinal error to infiltrate the Lord's church.

Ezek 3:17-18 "Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me: "When I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand.

2 Tim 4:5 But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

- 1) A preacher wants to be liked and be popular with the brethren but has a responsibility to first preach the truth of God and warn all of the consequences when we don't obey.**
- 2) It is hoped that the preacher is liked and popular with**

the local brethren because he is doing those things first.

a. To be forewarned is to be forearmed.

Isa 58:1 "**Cry aloud**, spare not; lift up your voice like a trumpet; tell My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.

B. Names Names and may Offend:

1) There was a New Testament preacher who offended many with his words of truth.

Matthew 15: 8-13

Luke 11:45 Then one of the lawyers answered and said to Him, "Teacher, by saying these things You reproach **(INSULT)** us also."

2) Other preachers also named those that were not abiding in the doctrine of Christ.

2 Tim 2:16-18 But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. And their message will spread like cancer. **Hymenaeus and Philetus** are of this sort, who have **strayed concerning the truth**, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some.

2 Tim 4:10 for **Demas** has forsaken me, having **loved this present world**, and has departed for Thessalonica-- Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia.

3 Jn 9 I wrote to the church, but **Diotrephes**, who **loves to have the preeminence** among them, does not receive us.

3) A preacher MUST not be afraid to speak the truth and exposing error where it needs exposed. Our Lord did it, and the apostles did it.

4. **Evangelistic.**

1Thes 1:8 For from you the word of the Lord has **sounded forth**, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything.

- A. **Locally (Macedonia)**
- B. **Regionally (Achaia)**
- C. **Internationally (Every Place)**

1) **A sound church is one that rings out the word of God.**

5. **Pure.**

Phil 1:27 Only **let your conduct** be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel,

Heb 12:14 **Pursue peace** with all people, and **holiness**, without which no one will see the Lord:

Rom 12:1-2 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies **a living sacrifice**, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may **prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.**

Titus 2:12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we **should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age,**

6. **United.**

1 Pet 3:8 Finally, all of you **be of one mind**, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous;

Rom 14:19 Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may **edify another**.

Eph 4:1-3 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to **walk worthy of the calling with which you were called**, with all **lowliness** and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, **endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit** in the bond of peace.

7. **Not Content.**

Phil 3:13-14 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Conclusion:

1. **A “sound” church is one that is STABLE, SAFE, SECURE, WHOLESOME, and HEALTHY.**
2. **A sound “church” is made up of baptized believers that are saved.**
3. **Just because a church:**
 - A. **Is not liberal**
 - B. **Has the right doctrine**
 - C. **Is materially rich**
 - D. **Has a good name and reputation**
 - E. **Is active**
 - 1) **Does not in and of itself make that church a “sound” church.**

- 4. A sound church is one that:**
 - A. Seeks Scriptural Organization**
 - B. The members know their place**
 - C. Demands plain preaching**
 - D. Is evangelistic**
 - E. Is pure**
 - F. Is united**
 - G. Is NOT content**

- 5. Is this a “sound” church?” If not, why not? What things must we change to be a “sound” church in the sight of God?**

- 6. I hope and pray that the brethren that meet here will always strive to ensure that the Lord’s church is a “sound” church!**

Invitation:

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