

True Churches and False Ideologies

(All Scripture quotes from the New American Standard Bible NASB)

There are so many churches today. Each one claiming that they are more correct than the others. But what are the Biblical requirements for a true christian church? Can we find Scripture to tell us who is and who is not truly following the Bible?

Taking a look in the Bible we find that Jesus laid out some powerful commandments of what the church should be like and what it should do.

14 And afterward He appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at the table; and He reproached them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who had seen Him after He had risen.

15 And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.

16 "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but He who has disbelieved shall be condemned.

17 "And these signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues;

18 they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it shall not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover." Mark 16:14-18

This definitely shows us how the church should look and the power it should have within it. It states far more than is commonly quoted when we in the church quote the great commission; for it does not stop at "going into all the world," but continues to lay out the power which is given us to us from on high: that we will in Jesus Name baptize, cast out demons, speak with new tongues, pick up serpents, not be hurt by poison, and heal the sick.

While I can think of only a few of the many churches I have been in and visited throughout my life as being powerful churches; still I cannot think of one that walked in all the power that Jesus laid out above. So is this the power that the first century church walked in? Can we find Scripture to show that this is how the early church walked with the Lord on a daily basis?

43 And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. Acts 2:43

12 At the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's portico. Acts 5:1

13 And even Simon himself believed; and after being baptized, he continued on with Philip; and as he observed signs and great miracles taking place, he was constantly amazed. Acts 8:13

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18 For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed.

19 in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. Romans 15:18-19

4 God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will. Hebrews 2:4

All of these quotes from the Bible show that signs and wonders and great miracles were the norm in the early church. Indeed, this is precisely what Jesus states in Mark which I quoted above. So now the question becomes: why do we not see this level of power within the churches today?

For the beginning of this answer we will look at the Corinth church.

10 Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree, and there be no divisions among you, but you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.

11 For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you.

12 Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ."

13 Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

14 I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius,

15 that no man should say you were baptized in my name. I Corinthians 1:10-15

In the church in Corinth we begin to see a turning away from the simplicity of the power of Christ to man-made divisions. People were starting to identify with a man rather than with Christ. They were starting to follow man and to place that man in charge.

But the Lord Jesus Christ is the One who should be in charge. He is the One we should follow. When we place man in charge and look up to man, or a man-made division, we have left following Christ and have begun to follow man. Our attitude should be: we believe what is written in the Bible--no matter what we find there--rather than to consult the statement of beliefs in our denomination.

Once we have crossed the line of no longer placing Jesus Christ in charge of all, and we begin to place a denomination in charge, we have committed the same sin as the Corinth church. Where in the Bible can we find a denomination or division that God

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sanctions? It is an argument of silence. No where in Scripture can we find agreement with divisions of Christ; and that is exactly what a denomination is.

The problem of the lack of power of God within our churches comes from this situation. We have placed man's division over that of Christ being in charge. If you do not believe this, look at the average evangelical church. What do you see? You will see its name in large letters; but Jesus Name is not mentioned. They have placed themselves as more important than any other church.

But it was not like this in the original church that we find in Acts. It was **one church**: each church was a local church, and part of the whole world-wide church. There may have been many churches in a given city, but they operated together as one true church, and not as divisions within the Body of Christ.

The Corinth church is an example of why there was a reduction in power from what we see in the book of Acts. This turning away from allowing the Lord to be in control is at the root of the problem. It is not the entire problem, but it is the root of it. At the root of the problem of divisions we will find pride (in their denomination), and control of the people.

30 But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,
31 that, just as it is written, "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord. I Corinthians 1:30-31

We should be looking to Jesus as the only source of our pride, and the only source of control. When the Lord is in control then the miracles, and signs and wonders will again occur as they did at the beginning of the church age.

As power fades in churches there is a tendency to turn to religious thinking and teaching. But this teaching is without the power of God. Indeed, this is prophesied in the Word.

1 But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come.
2. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy,
3 unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good,
4 treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God;
5 holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; and avoid such men as these. II Timothy 3:5

As we can see here once the power of God is faded from the churches there is a turning to religious thinking that is filled with various evils, which are now considered normal. Once a church arrives at a lack of power, and perhaps more importantly, a lack of

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control of Jesus, there are various sins which will show themselves over time. Not all of these will be in every church that has fallen into the snare of pride and of controlling itself, but many of them will show up in each church.

8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons; freely you received, freely give.

9 Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper for your money belts.

10 or a bag for your journey, or even two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for the worker is worthy of his support. Matthew 10:8-10

Here we see the power that the disciples walked in when Jesus sent them out to preach. The important point I wish to make here is the quote “freely you received, freely give.” Money is not the point of a ministry or church. Reaching the lost and building up the saints is the point. Let the Lord provide your finances. Freely give; do not charge for anything; and you will not fall into the trap of the love of money.

14 And He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the moneychangers seated.

15 And He made a scourge of cords, and drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the moneychangers, and overturned their tables;

16 And to those who were selling the doves He said, “Take these things away; stop making My Father’s house a house of merchandise.” John 2:14-16

Without doubt Jesus took a stand against those selling items in the synagogue. But how many churches today think nothing of doing just that?

18 What then is My reward? That, when I preach the gospel, I may offer the gospel **without charge**, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel. I Corinthians 9:18

17 For we are not like many, **peddling** the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God. II Corinthians 2:17

The word **peddling** in the Greek means *to retail, or sell, or huckster* (which means to promote by showmanship!). This is what we have come to accept has the norm in the church. Yet here in the Bible it is spoken against, leaving no possible explanation other than this is wrong and that it is sin!

Let’s now look at scriptures that deal with giving to ministries to find out the Biblical model for giving and receiving.

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1 Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia,
2 that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of you and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality,
3 For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability **they gave of their own accord.** II Corinthians 8:1-3

15 And you yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I departed from Macedonia, **no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone;**
16 for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs.
17 Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account. Philippians 4:15-17

From the second quote in Philippians we can see that Paul did not ask for money, but only received it as the churches brought up the matter before him. He was willing to receive, but not willing to ask for finances. After leaving Macedonia and travelling to Thessalonica he received gifts from the Philippians, but not from the churches he was visiting. Paul states that **no church shared with me in the matter of giving** showing that he did not ask of anyone, nor did they give him contributions. This definitely is not the way we see it today. But throughout the Bible we find that this is the way it was during the beginning of the church age; and the way it must be today if we are to return to the powerful church that Christ has prepared for us.

The love of money has always been condemned in Scripture. We can see below and Jesus made some strong statements against this evil.

16 And behold, one came to Him and said, "Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?"
17 And He said to him, "Why are you asking Me about what is good? There is only One who is good; but if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments."
18 He said to Him "Which ones?" And Jesus said, "You shall not commit murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness;
19 Honor your father and mother; and you shall love your neighbor as yourself."
20 The young man said to Him, "All these things I have kept; what am I still lacking?"
21 Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."
22 But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieved; for he was one who owned much property.
23 And Jesus said to His disciples, "Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.
24 "And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."
25 And when the disciples heard this, they were very astonished and said, "Then who can be saved?"

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26 And looking upon them Jesus said to them “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

27 Then Peter answered and said to Him, “Behold we have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for us?”

28 And Jesus said to them “Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

29 And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My names’s sake, shall receive many times as much, and shall inherit eternal life.

30 “But many who are first will be last; and the last, first. Matthew 19:16-30

There are many good points that are missed by many in this passage from the Bible. When Jesus asked the rich man to sell and give, He did not ask that the money be given to His ministry but rather it be given to the poor. Even Jesus would not ask for finances, but directed the man to give to those in need.

But this was a problem for the man, for he was one who was rich. Jesus got directly to the root of the problem by asking Him to give up everything. And he could not do this because of the love for his money. The money was more important to him than his eternal life.

Then there are those who will use verse 29 as a “prosperity gospel” passage, trying to prove that loving money is not only acceptable, but commanded in Scripture. But look at the motive that we find here.

Jesus states, “And everyone who has left . . . **for My names’s sake.**” Those who give up for the Kingdom of God or for Jesus’ sake shall receive many times as much. It does not say those who give up for their selfish desires shall receive more. The heart’s motive is most important. Giving for Jesus’ sake is rewarded; giving for your own sake is not rewarded!

This cannot be overemphasized. If the heart’s desire and the basis of your giving is the love of money and the desire to receive much more, then your giving is in vain. It is only when the motive is to bless the kingdom of God, with no thought for yourself, that God will reach down and bless you for your sacrifice to Him.

One of the main ways one can differentiate between true ministries and false ideologies is money. Those who preach the desire for money are rooted in the love of money. This is not condoned anywhere in the Bible.

Another problem with false ideologies is that of control. When man is in control, man’s power is foremost within the church. When Jesus is in control His power will reign. However, this brings many to say that there would be anarchy if it were so today.

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1 But a certain man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property,
2 and kept back some of the price for himself, with his wife's full knowledge, and
bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles' feet.
3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit,
and to keep back some of the price of the land?
4 "While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it
not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You
have not lied to men, but to God."
5 And as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last; and great fear
came upon all who heard of it.
6 And the young men arose and covered him up, and after carrying him out, they buried
him.
7 Now there elapsed an interval of about three hours, and his wife came in, not knowing
what had happened.
8 And Peter responded to her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for such and such a
price?" And she said "Yes, that was the price."
9 Then Peter said to her, "Why is it that you have agreed together to put the Spirit of
the Lord to the test? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the
door, and they shall carry you out as well."
10 And she fell immediately at his feet, and breathed her last; and the young men came
in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband.
11 And great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all who heard of these things.
Acts 5:1-11

Here we see that the sin of the love of money attempting to make inroads into this church. But the Lord Jesus Christ was in power here, and there was no room for sin! Ananias attempted to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep some of the money when others were giving their all. He did this not only for the love of money, but also because he wished for those within the church to look up to him by his appearing to give all. This was not only the love of money, but also pride.

As we can see when the Lord Jesus is in control, sin is stopped at the door. Even when man cannot, by his natural state, know anything of the sin, Jesus is in control and sin is stopped before it can get a foothold in the church.

Once the spirit of these sins enters a church by one man, it would have continued to grow. Satan would push for such a person to become a leader within the church. Then the leadership is tainted with the spirit of the sin of the love of money and of pride. And so it would grow within this church had the Lord not stopped it.

But today such sins go unchecked in most churches because man is in charge and Jesus is pushed to the background. This is a dangerous way to run a church. It is then open for whatever sins Satan can push through the lusts of the flesh. As we can see in Acts 5, the sin will enter without anyone being able to see it (in the natural) and then the possibility for it to grow is strong.

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The control of man always stops the move of God. Controlling spirits are not of heaven, but of hell. In the Kingdom of God we should submit to the Holy Spirit in everything, giving God the control of our lives and of His church.

Those who have true Godliness have the power of God operating through them. This is true both of individuals and of churches. God's power flows through those who have humbled themselves to His will. Those who take control of the ministry or of a church lack a power of God. Again, the level that should be manifested with our ministries and churches is found in Mark 16, which is the first quote that I used in the beginning this article.

In making these very strong statements, I do not want to appear to be against all churches. Indeed, I am for the church that will humble themselves and obey the Word of God, letting Jesus have control, not having pride in themselves, but are a true local church, and a part of the world-wide church of Lord Jesus Christ.

Articles, books, prophecies, and other materials are available from the web site, The Prophetic Word: prophetic-word.org

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