

THE PERFECT CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

- A. The Lord's church is perfect.
 - 1. Ephesians 4:11-13, 15; 5:25-27
 - 2. 1 John 1:5
 - 3. 1 Peter 1:15-16
- B. Sadly, God's people fall terribly short of that holiness.
 - 1. The apostle Paul lists on several occasions the characteristics that should be seen in our lives as Christians.
 - 2. Ephesians 4:17 – 5:14
 - 3. This morning we will look at characteristics listed in Romans 12.

I. CHARACTERISTICS.

- A. Sincere Love. vs. 9
 - 1. We sometimes talk about love when our hearts really aren't in it.
 - a. God anticipated that and gave the solution in 1 Timothy 1:5.
 - b. We obeyed His commands for a specific purpose. 1 Peter 1:22
 - c. Peter went on to say – 1 Peter 2:1.
 - 2. Sincere love also has to do with the truth. 1 Corinthians 13:6
 - a. Look at Peter in Antioch. Galatians 2:11-13
 - b. Vs. 14 – Peter's love for the Gentiles was hypocritical.
 - c. Romans 12:9b
 - i. Strong negative attitude toward what is bad and a strong attraction to what is good.
- B. Brotherly Spirit. vs. 10
 - 1. We are part of a family.
 - a. We ought to be aware of this since we are taught by God to love one another, 1 Thessalonians 4:9.
 - 2. "Give preference to one another in honor." Vs. 10a
 - a. Most difficult, Philippians 2:3.
 - b. Can never work until we realize that none of us has any right to claim special privileges.
- C. Wholehearted Commitment. vs. 11
 - 1. This verse insists on intensity in the Christian life.
 - a. God demands our total being. Luke 9:23
 - 2. "Lacking in zeal" translates the Greek word which describes the "lazy" slave in the parable of the talents. Matthew 25:14-30
 - 3. "Fervor" comes from the Greek root meaning "to boil".
 - 4. Paul gives a progression:
 - a. Zeal – our attitude.
 - b. Spiritual fervor – stirred up by the Spirit.
 - c. Serving the Lord – action as a result.
 - 5. Acts 18:25-26
- D. Heavenly Focus. vs. 12
 - 1. "Rejoicing in hope".
 - a. Hope may involve any or all of three elements:
 - i. Expectation of the future.
 - ii. Trust in God.

- iii. Patient waiting.
 - b. An anchor of the soul.
 - 2. "Persevering in tribulation".
 - a. The true attitude of the Christian in the face of evil and injustice is patient endurance.
 - b. The Hebrews were told – Hebrews 10:32-36.
 - 3. "Devoted to prayer".
 - a. If we are to be "rejoicing in hope" and "persevering in tribulation", we must carry on a constant and fervent communication with the Lord.
 - b. It was inevitable that the early church would be described as it was in Acts 2:42.
 - c. In fact, right after the resurrection, Acts 1:14.
- E. Helpful Personality. vs. 13
- 1. To identify with them and make their needs our very own.
 - 2. "Practice hospitality".
 - a. "Practice" is from a Greek word which means to "pursue" or "strive after" and is the usual word for "persecute". To be done with heartiness or energy.
 - 3. How far are we to go in helping others? vs. 14
 - a. This should relieve our minds as to whether people deserve it or not.
- F. Sincere Sympathy. vs. 15
- 1. It is hard for us to become emotionally involved with those from whom we are physically remote.
 - a. There is a solution for this – Hebrews 13:3.
 - b. "Imaginative sympathy."
- G. Harmony. vs. 16
- 1. Paul is asking for harmony, not uniformity (Romans 14).
 - 2. "Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position."
 - a. This forbids a social aristocracy in the church.
 - 3. "Do not be conceited."
 - a. This prohibits an intellectual aristocracy in the church.
 - b. We must be open to other's views.
- H. Respect to God. vss. 17-20
- 1. Negative – "Do not repay anyone for evil."
 - 2. Positive – "Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody."
 - a. We are taught to be actively good – not just passively good.
 - 3. The demand to be at peace in vs. 18 is qualified in two ways:
 - a. Others may prevent us from being at peace with them.
 - b. The conditions for peace laid down by others may be at odds with our Christian principles.
 - 4. Vs. 19
 - a. I read of a bumper sticker which read, "I don't get angry, I get even."
 - b. We are not only to not get revenge – we are to lose all thought of revenge and turn it over to God.
- I. Conquering Goodness. vs. 21
- 1. This sums up the whole list of features of perfection.
 - a. There can be no higher term for us as a community of believers than the word "good".
 - b. We can desire no more favorable judgment than to have it said that we are good people, serving a good God and overcoming evil with good.