

Rise Up And Build

"So They said, 'Let us rise up and build,' Then they set their hands to do this good work," Neh. 2:18

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Do You Attend A Sound Church?

By Everett Hardin

Do you ever wonder, "is the church where I worship a sound church?" We are to test or prove it to see if it is a sound church. The Lord has told us to "*Prove all things: hold fast that which is good*" (1 Thess. 5:21). We are to "*Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves*" (2 Cor. 13:5). Paul issues a warning that they must conform to the truth of the gospel both in belief and practice. "*Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord*" (Eph. 5:10).

What do we mean by a "sound church?" We mean an assembly of Christians in a local place who are following the word of God in doctrine and practice. To pervert the gospel of Christ is to turn away from man's only access to God. "*I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed*" (Gal. 1:6-8). If you cannot find what a church preaches and practices in the New Testament, then you can know that it is not a sound church.

Now let us consider what constitutes a sound church. Men may call a church "*sound*" when it is not. So, what makes a church sound according to the teaching of the word of God? Soundness often denotes that which is healthy in a physical body. Paul uses it to denote spiritual health. A sound church is one that is:

Sound In Doctrine

A sound church is doctrinally sound in all of its teaching, in worship, work, and the plan of salvation. "*In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine showing incorruptness, gravity, sincerity*" (Tit. 2:7). To Timothy Paul said, "*For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine*" (2 Tim. 4:3). Teaching that which is not sound will exact a toll and leave corrupt churches.

Sound In Worship

"A sound church will only engage in those acts of worship ordained of God. (1) It will preach and teach the doctrine of Christ, not the doctrines of men (Acts 2:42; 2 John 9-11). (2) Give as the Lord prospers you (1 Cor. 16:1,2), not conduct rummage sales, etc. (3) Partake of the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:23-26), not monthly, quarterly, or

some other day. (4) Pray to their Father in heaven through one Mediator, Christ Jesus (I Tim. 2:5). (5) praise God by singing and making melody in our heart (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).

Sound In Work

Christ provided for the work of the church when He ascended on high. *“He gave some apostles; and some prophets: and some, evangelists: and some, pastors and teachers: For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ”* (Eph. 4:11-12). The Philippian church had fellowship with Paul from the first day (Phil. 1:5). When he departed from Macedonia, *“no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again to my necessity”* (Phil. 4:15-16). The church is edified by teaching the word of God. *“And now brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace which is able to build you up, and give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified”* (Acts 20:32). The church provides benevolence, providing relief for needy members, not for the world’s needy (I Tim. 5:16; Acts 2:44-45; 6:1-6; 11:27-30).

Does the church where you attend do only those works authorized by Christ, the Head of the Church, or do they turn their oversight and money over to human organizations to do it for them? Which?

A sound church will discipline its members. After proper instruction in the word of God and exhortation to repent, if the immoral, false teachers and disobedient refuse to heed, they must be withdrawn from (I Cor. 5:1-13; 2 Thess. 3:6; Tit.3:10).

Does the church where you worship practice discipline? Do they keep company with immoral members, false teachers, and disobedient brethren? Why?

Sound In Morals

A sound church will teach its members to be morally pure. God’s people must be pure and holy by keeping God’s moral laws. *“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God”* (Matt. 5:8). As obedient children we must be holy in all manner of living (I Pet. 1:13-16). Children of God will be cursed when they return to the old manner of corruption (2 Pet. 2:10-22). A Christian must *“keep himself unspotted from the world”* (Jas. 1:27).

Paul warned the Christians at Galatia about walking after the flesh. *“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: Adultery fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies. Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings and such like; of the which I have told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God”* (Gal. 5:19-21).

The church is the holy, pure, bride of Christ, *“adorned for her husband”* (Rev. 21:2). It is to be a chaste, pure virgin for its husband, Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 11:2). When the Lord returns, He will present the church to Himself, *“a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish”* (Eph. 5:27).

Is the church where you worship pure and holy? Does it allow immoral members to participate in public worship? Why?

Sound In Zeal

A sound church will be zealously working according to the Word of God. Christ *“gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar*

people zealous of good works” (Ti. 2:14). “*Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, and to obey magistrates, to be ready unto every good work*” (Tit. 3:1). “*Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord*” (Rom. 12:11).

The individual members will recognize their responsibility to work zealously according to ability (Matt. 25:14-30). You will find the members assembling regularly with the church (Heb. 10:25); studying and teaching God’s word (2 Tim 2:15; Acts 8:4); singing with “*the spirit and the understanding*” (I Cor. 14:15), giving of their means as God has prospered them (I Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 9:6-7). They will visit the sick, widows, orphans, visitors, etc., living pure, holy, consecrated lives (I Pet. 1:15-16; Jas. 1:27), praying ‘*without ceasing*’ (I Thess. 5:17). Are you zealous in these good works?

Do you attend a sound church? Does the congregation do the things ordained of God? Does it do some things not authorized by Christ? Does it support human institutions to do the work of evangelism, edification, and benevolence? Does it engage in the social gospel, entertainment and have a fellowship hall? If so where is the Bible authority for such practices? The Lord will reject workers of iniquity. “*Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works. And I will profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from Me ye that work iniquity*” (Matt. 7:22-23). “*Iniquity*” means “lawlessness,” without lawful authority from the Lord. God regards all service to Him, save obedience to His commands, as iniquity and sin. Many who claim to be His servants and doing wonders in His name will be driven from the presence of God for what they imagined was service to Him!

To be a sound church it must have the characteristics of the New Testament church. It must teach the truth in the pulpit and classroom. It must seek to have a scriptural organization — that is elders and deacons who are qualified and who serve correctly;. It must work each member in his proper place. While working in his (her) proper place each is encouraged to develop their abilities for greater service. It must demand (not just tolerate) plain Bible teaching. It must insist that every member live a moral life as the Bible teaches. It does not wink at open sin. Its work and worship must be as set forth in the word of God. Worship must be “*in spirit and in truth*” (John 4:24). The church is “*the pillar and ground of the truth*” (I Tim. 3:15). To turn from either of these means a church is not sound. Let us strive to make the church here what God would have it be, and seek to influence others in word and deed to do as the Lord desires. If you are not attending a sound church you need to be alarmed. Your soul and salvation is at stake.
