

Marks of a Healthy Church

Romans 14:1-9

Just as a person goes to a doctor for a health checkup, so too a church would do well to periodically assess her health. The manual that gives the standard of health for the church is the Word of God and there is no clearer description of a healthy church than the verses that form the text for this morning's message. Marks of a healthy church include . . .

I. A Warm Acceptance of Others -- "*him that is weak . . . receive ye*" (v.1).

The one weak in the faith could be the actively religious person or the new Christian. In context, the weaker brother is the one who follows strict dietary laws for holiness. "*Him that is weak . . . receive ye*" is an imperative in the second person singular. "*A cold church, like cold butter, never spreads well.*"

II. A Genuine Humility Regarding Ourselves -- "*let not him that eat despise others*" (v.3).

The word *despise* literally means *to set aside as nothing*. It is to treat with contempt. It is used a 12 times in the N.T. and it is most often the attitude of the self-righteous. "*And Jesus spake this parable unto certain ones who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised (set at naught or counted as nothing) others*" (Lk. 18:9).

III. A Strong Understanding of Justification by Grace -- "*God hath received him*" (v.3).

Justification is standing before God "just as if I never sinned" and "just as if I always fully obeyed." A healthy church will teach you that only God makes you righteous. The Apostle Paul goes to great lengths to emphasize God's justification of sinners. "*God is able to make him stand . . .*" (v.4). "*God hath received him*" (v.3). "*For to this end Christ both died, rose, and revived*" (v.9). God makes sinners acceptable.

(A). This is the basis for your acceptance of others . . . God accepts them.

A church ought to be *theologically* conservative and *culturally* liberal. Some churches are liberal in both areas, some are conservative in both areas.

(B). This is the basis for your humility in life . . . the admission of weaknesses and the ability to move forward is built around justification by grace.

IV. A Deep Gratitude for God's Work for Us -- "*he giveth God thanks*" (v.6).

A person may observe particular days as "holy" days, or spend a certain amount of time in his quiet time, or may abstain from alcoholic beverages or certain foods, but in all he does (or does not do) he is motivated by a deep sense of gratitude.

"*It ought to be as habitual to us to thank as it is to ask*" Charles Haddon Spurgeon.

V. A Willing Submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ -- "*we are the Lord's*" (v.8)

There is coming a day when every knee shall bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Church on earth is just a mirror of the Church in Heaven. We bow our knee to the Word and the Will of Jesus Christ. This is the mark of a healthy church. "*For none of us lives to himself, and no man dies to himself*" (v.7).