

# BIBLE CHALLENGE 2019

Week 27: June 30-July 6

## *What is the Difference between the True and the False Church*

Read: Exodus 28:36-30; 31:15; Leviticus 27:28-32; Deuteronomy 7:6; 14:2; 26:17-18; 2 Chronicles 19:2; Job 5:17; Psalm 2:8; 27:4; 36:8; 63:1-2; 65:4; 84:1-4,10; 87:5-6; 92:13-14; 133:1-2; 141:5; Proverbs 13:24; 27:17; 19:18; Isaiah 44:5; 52:8; Matthew 5:15-16; 10:11-14,32-33; 18:15-20; 24:14; 26:26-30; 28:19; Mark 8:38; 14:22-25; 16:15-16; Luke 12:8-9; 22:14-20; 24:47; John 8:31-32,47; 13:34; 14:15,23-24; 15:12,17; 17:16-23; 20:21; Acts 1:8; 2:42; 13:47; 20:37-38; Romans 10:9-14; 12:4-10; 13:34-35; 14:19; 15:1-3,5-6,12; 17:20-22; 1 Corinthians 1:10; 5:1-13; 10:20; 11:23-30; 14:1,33,40; 15:3; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Galatians 1:6-10; 5:13; 6:1; Ephesians 2:20; 4:1-6,15-16,29; 5:11; Colossians 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:11; 2 Thessalonians 3:6,14-15; 2 Timothy 1:13; 2:2,12; 3:5; Titus 3:10-11; Hebrews 3:13; 10:24-25; 12:5-11; 1 Peter 1:14-16; 2:9; 1 John 4:1-3,15; 2 John 9-11; Jude 3. Also read 1 Corinthians 12 and Revelation 2-3 in full.

One of the things that I am often asked to do, when people move away, is to offer suggestions as to churches that they might want to visit, which will be located near their new home. Usually, I try and steer people toward denominations like the PCA, the URCNA, the RCUS, the OPC, or the ARP, but I also look at statements of faith at some of the independent churches in the area to see if they would align with our beliefs. The goal is to help ease the transition of the family or person from our congregation into a like-minded congregation elsewhere.

The fundamental principle behind this is that Christians should always strive to be united with a local body of faith so they can grow in Christian nourishment. Just as a branch gets its nourishment from the main trunk of a plant, so too we gain our spiritual nourishment in the same fashion, most commonly, though the "Means of Grace" — or simply by the teaching, preaching, public reading of scripture, sacraments, corporate prayer, and church discipline. The Heidelberg Catechism speaks of this in the context of the "Keys to the Kingdom," which are centered around preaching and discipline.

The Belgic Confession (a historic Confession of Faith written about the time of Heidelberg) speaks of the church membership in this way:

*"All men are duty bound to join and unite themselves with it; maintaining the unity of the Church; submitting themselves to the doctrine and discipline thereof; bowing their necks under the yoke of Jesus Christ; and as mutual members of the same body, serving to the edification of the brethren according to the talents God has given them."*

Further, if it be discovered that the church we are in membership with is a false church, then:

*"It is the duty of all believers, according to the Word of God, to separate themselves from all those who do not belong to the Church, and to join themselves to this congregation, wheresoever God has established it, even if the magistrates and princes are against it, yea, though they should suffer death or any other corporeal punishment."*

### **Marks of the True Church**

So, how do we distinguish between a true church and a false one? To answer this question, theologians through history have put forth what they call the "Marks" of the True Church. There have been different ways in which this has been described, but within Reformed circles, these marks are handled under three headings.

**The Preaching of the Pure Doctrine of the Gospel:** The Apostle Paul stated unambiguously that anyone (even an angel from heaven!) that taught a gospel different from that which he taught should be considered accursed. In the second century AD, the Bishop of Lyons, France wrote a little book entitled, *The Proof of the Apostolic Preaching*, to help warn Christians against the errors that were abounding all around him. Herein he laid out for the people of Lyons and for the church, those things that were faithful to the teaching of Paul. Thus, if someone heard a preacher preaching otherwise, they could recognize said preacher as an imposter and a heretic. During the early years of the Reformation, John Calvin wrote the first draft of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* to again be a handbook for the people of France and Europe as to understand the Gospel and how to live life as a Christian.

This means that not only is preaching an essential part of the worship of God's people, but that it must be Biblical and faithful to the doctrine contained within the Scriptures. When a preacher moves outside of that which is plainly taught or can be plainly inferred from God's Word, his preaching ceases to be that of the True Church and if not corrected,

may lead the congregation down the road into oblivion.

**The Pure Administration of the Sacraments as Instituted by Christ:** Sacraments are not just things that we do, but they are means of grace. In other words, while the sacraments are highly symbolic, when joined by faith, they become one way in which God nourishes that faith. In this way, then, a right and proper use, or administration, of the Sacraments becomes of immeasurable value. This then includes the conversations of 1) what constitutes a sacrament, 2) what the individual sacrament represents, and 3) who should participate in the sacraments when offered.

**Church Discipline Exercised according to the Pure Word of God:** Discipline serves two functions. First, it is meant to preserve peace amongst the brethren by establishing clearly patterns of behavior that rightly belong to the members of the church of Jesus Christ. Secondly, it sets up a means by which the church leadership can both fence the Lord's Table from unbelief and properly discipline those who refuse to repent of their sins when confronted.

Arguably, this is probably the mark that people in the church struggle with the most, though I would argue that it is probably the mark which most churches need the most. People feel uncomfortable approaching friends and family members and saying, "you are sinning in this and I think you need to repent of it before God." Yet, isn't that what we do with our own children? And why is that? It is to train them up in a way so that they can live out their adult lives faithfully and with honor. In contrast, undisciplined children become obnoxious and spoiled, assuming that the world revolves around them and their preferences. How often people in the church behave in the same fashion when the leadership does not correct and reprove sin.

### **Anything Else?**

The marks noted above are certainly not exhaustive of what we might ideally desire to see in a church, but they are essential attributes. And, if one discovers that one of these marks is entirely ignored or rejected, then one ought to either see it reformed or flee to a body where the marks are present. This is not a denominational thing, though some denominations do a better job with these three than others. This is not a style of worship thing, though I do think that there are some churches that are more God-honoring than others. So what are some attributes of a healthy church?

**Love:** A church should strive to exemplify the love of Christ within its body and grace and mercy to those in the community around them.

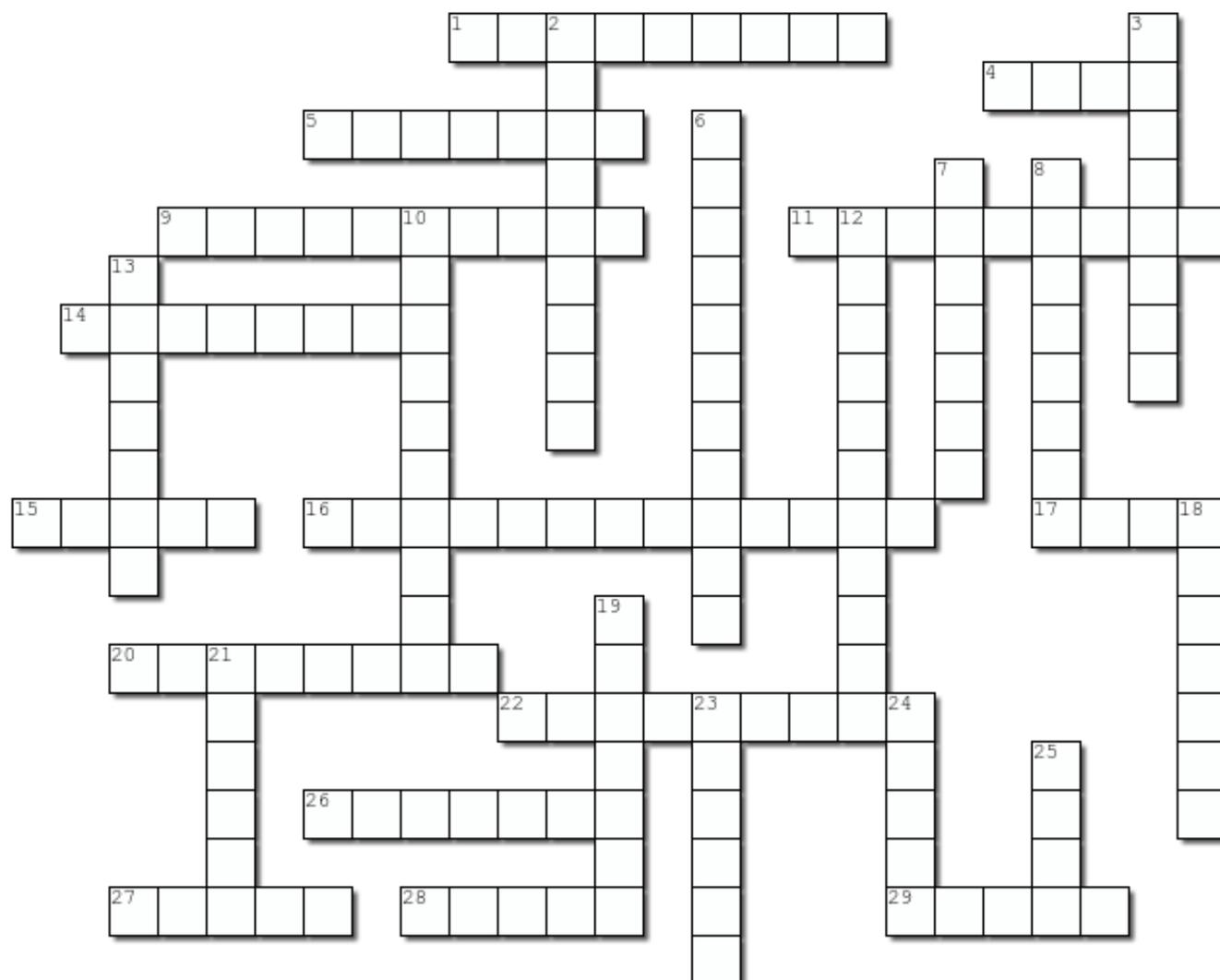
**Unity:** Jesus prayed that the church be united as he was united with the Father. We are one church after all and one body of Christ.

**Holiness:** Holiness means to be set apart for God's use. Those in the church must clearly understand that the church does not exist primarily for anything else but to glorify Christ and to build his kingdom. If the church seeks to promote its own ends, then the church is straying.

**Catholicity:** This is not a reference to Rome but to the idea that there is one church that universally exists in this world and in heaven. We are brothers and sisters in Christ with Christians in Africa, South America, Asia, Europe, and other parts of America as well. Do you pray for them? Do you hurt when they hurt and celebrate when they celebrate? You should.

**Apostolicity:** The church is built on the foundation of the prophets and Apostles. We have no right to deviate off of that foundation if we wish for the church to stand.

# Week 27 - The True Church



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## Across

1. We are to make this of all the nations.
4. 'Your \_\_\_\_ is truth.'
5. 'Let love be \_\_\_\_; abhor what is evil.'
9. We proclaim this when we partake of Communion. (2 words)
11. 'How are they to hear without someone \_\_\_\_.'
14. 'We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the \_\_\_\_ of the weak.'
15. Paul instructs the church in Corinth to deliver the immoral member to \_\_\_\_ in the hopes he will repent.
16. The Priest wore a signet on his turban with these words written on it (4 words).
17. If you go to a town and they reject you, you are to shake this off your feet.
20. 'If anyone is preaching to you a Gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be \_\_\_\_'
22. 'The Lord has chosen you as a people for his \_\_\_\_ possession out of the peoples who are on the face of the earth.
26. We are one body but many \_\_\_\_.
27. John tells the 'elect lady' that if you do this to a false teacher, you participate in his works.
28. Jesus refers to the passover wine as the ' \_\_\_\_ of the covenant.'
29. 'For the Lord disciplines those he \_\_\_\_'

## Down

2. 'I have looked upon you in the \_\_\_\_, beholding your power and glory.'
3. We are to keep away from the brother who walks in \_\_\_\_ and not on the traditions inherited from the Apostles.
6. 'A new \_\_\_\_ I give you you, that you are to love one another: just as I have loved you, you are to love one another.'
7. We have 'one Lord, one faith, one \_\_\_\_'.
8. 'For a day in your house is better than a \_\_\_\_ elsewhere.'
10. '\_\_\_\_ your son for there is hope; do not set your heart on putting him to death.'
12. 'Do this in \_\_\_\_ of me.'
13. This is the day that God set apart as holy to his name.
18. This fellow served as Paul's scribe when he wrote the letter of Romans.
19. ' \_\_\_\_ is the one whom God reproves.'
21. 'Blessed is the one you \_\_\_\_ to bring near.'
23. 'I found it necessary to contend for the faith that was once and for all delivered to the \_\_\_\_.'
24. 'One thing I have asked of the Lord, that I will seek after: that I may \_\_\_\_ in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.'
25. 'Shall you love the wicked and love those who \_\_\_\_ the Lord?'