The Consequences of Disregarding the Teachings of Christ

So that we are not deceived, we need to examine the signs by which we can tell a *living Church that Christ cares for* from a dead one, where Christ is not involved in the growth of its members. (For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church. Ephesians 5:29)

It is vitally important to know what kind of church we belong to, because our salvation depends on it. Only in the Body of Christ is there real life, where we grow as disciples of Christ through what every joint supplies, until we come to the measure of the stature of His fulness.

Scripture warns us of the danger we are in and tells us to beware of people and churches who claim to be with God but in reality are not. (Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing. Matthew 7:15)

We must check very carefully whether the church we belong to has the marks of the Body of Christ or not.

A Reflection of the Natural Order

When it comes to the human body, things are quite simple. The life of a member is bound up with the life of the body. We all know that when a person is dead, every member of his body is dead.

There is no such thing as a dead body with living members, or a living body with dead members. If, in a living body, a member dies and is not removed in time, gangrene will spread through the whole body. It is the same with the spiritual body. A church, a body, where sin is tolerated has no life, because Christ does not tolerate filth in His body. (He hath nothing in me. John 14:30)

We warn you not to fool yourself into thinking you can stay in a dead church where sin is tolerated in order to be a light there, because there is no such thing as a dead body with living members. A member is joined to other members, and it must receive from them and pass on to them. If there were dead members in the body, what would they give to the living members, and what would the living give to the dead?

Scripture states very clearly that if someone does not have the doctrine of Christ, he is spiritually dead; that is, he has no life from God. That may be a person or a church. It cannot have life, because life comes only from Christ. (Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. 2 John 1:9; The Son quickeneth whom he will. John 5:21)

Do not be deceived! If in the Body of Christ, in the Church, a member dies and is not removed in time, gangrene will spread through the whole body! (Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth

the whole lump? 1 Corinthians 5:6; see the case of the church in Thyatira, where the Lord Jesus says He will kill her children with death…)

The Doctrine of Christ

One of the signs by which we can check whether a Church truly belongs to Christ is the doctrine, the teaching, that it accepts and practises.

When a Church does not have the doctrine of Christ, it is in practice disregarding Christ and refusing His lordship. (He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings. John 14:24; He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 1 John 2:4)

So it is extremely important to check whether the teachings of the Lord Jesus are being ignored and disregarded, left unkept and unpractised.

These teachings are meant to help restore the image of God in us, so that we can live for eternity with the saints, with those who are conformed to the image of His Son, the people of the household of God. (Ephesians 2:19)

It is essential to understand that all the Lord's commandments by which we must live are a faithful picture of His character, of the way He is; they show us how He lived, they show us His ways. All of His commandments, absolutely all of them, actually represent Him.

That is why we cannot neglect any commandment, because the Lord's features are found in His commandments. In every one of His teachings a feature of the Lord lies hidden. Just as all the features of the person about to be born are hidden in the human embryo, so the features of the Lord Jesus are hidden in the seed of God. (The seed is the word of God. Luke 8:11)

The Holy Spirit uses these commandments and works with us to change us into the image of the Lord. (We… are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. 2 Corinthians 3:18)

One example is the Lord's teaching on non-resistance. (But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil… And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. Matthew 5:39-44; Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again. Luke 6:30)

Only by keeping these words, which teach us not to resist the one who does us harm, do longsuffering, kindness and the rest bear fruit in us… These are the character traits of the new man, which resemble the Lord's. (The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy. Psalm 145:8)

It is easy to see that a Church or denomination that disregards Christ and does not abide in this teaching of His will consent to its members enlisting in institutions that practise resistance and the taking of oaths (for example the army, the police, the military police, security and protection services, and so on), and likewise to claiming its rights by the means the secular world provides (for example going to court to reclaim buildings, land, and so on).

Reality shows that many churches belonging to various religious movements are in this situation today. Many are or have been in lawsuits over their property or their rights.

By such actions they give their members permission to do the same when they have a dispute with their neighbours, and in this way they encourage them to neglect the Lord's teachings, which lead to Christ being formed in a person.

The Body of Christ

Another sign by which we can check whether a Church has Christ as its head is its teaching and practice regarding the relationships between the members of the Body of Christ.

- The scattered flock: A church that disregards and does not practise the teaching of a body tightly joined and fitly compacted, in which every member must have its God-given role for the spiritual benefit of the others, does not have Christ. (From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body. Ephesians 4:16)

- In such churches, God has been pushed aside and is not allowed to form the body and set the members in the body as He wills. (But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. 1 Corinthians 12:18)

- There are many souls whom no one cares for and whom no one holds accountable, where submission, rebuke and discipline are not practised.

If the Church **does not watch over and check** whether the members are seeking the good of the other members, that church does not have Christ. (Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth. 1 Corinthians 10:24)

Where there is a living Church, the members care for one another. (That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it. 1 Corinthians 12:25-26)

You can do a test in your own church: if a member is suffering from a spiritual or physical illness, how many members care for him? No one, one or two, or all the members?

A church that is structured and organised in such a way that it asks its members only to attend worship two or three times a week does not have Christ as its head. Where the vast majority of members serve only as consumers of religious programmes, that church does not belong to Christ.

With this kind of organisation, the members are not asked to take part in the life of the body, the family, which is to serve the good of the other members. It thus promotes self-love, where everyone is busy with his own concerns and personal interests.

- Submission among brethren: Another sign by which we can check whether a Church has Christ as its head is whether it accepts and practises the teachings on submission among

brethren. (Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account. Hebrews 13:17; Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. 1 Peter 5:5)

We can check: if the Church belongs to Christ, the members live in submission to Christ and to their spiritual fathers. (Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Ephesians 5:21)

If the Church belongs to Christ, it will practise discipline towards those who, out of pride, will not submit to the leaders of the church. (But if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Matthew 18:17)

It is easy to see that where there is a scattered flock, those in authority do not ask for submission (submission has nothing to attach to; it cannot be practised).

- The purity of the Church: Yet another sign by which we can check whether a Church has Christ as its head is its teaching on the purity of the Church.

So a church that disregards and does not keep the teaching that tells us to watch so that no one among us is worldly is, in practice, disregarding Christ and His body. (Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person… Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God. Hebrews 12:15-16)

You can also check whether rebuke and discipline are disregarded and left unpractised. (Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, **go** and tell him his fault… but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an **heathen man**. Matthew 18:15, 17)

Check whether the Church you belong to promotes the teaching that in His Church, His Body, there are both children of light, the wheat, and children of darkness, the tares.

This disregards the Lord's teaching that the children of light cannot be together with the children of darkness, and the clear teaching that the tares are sown in the field, which is the world, and by no means the Church! (What communion hath light with darkness?… or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? 2 Corinthians 6:14, 15; **The field is the world.** Matthew 13:38)

The fruit of this teaching is the toleration of sin, the leaven that leavens the whole lump and brings death to the flock. (Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? 1 Corinthians 5:6)

Questions for Personal Reflection

If we are in a church where the vast majority of members serve only as consumers of religious programmes, let us ask ourselves:

Is this what the Lord planned: a mere institution where parishioners gather, where most people are only consumers with no role and no responsibility? Can we have life from Christ in a church where the members are not tightly joined together?

Can we have life in a church where the brethren do not care for one another, do not bear one another's burdens, and do not fulfil the law of Christ? (Galatians 6:2) Is God involved in any way where His teachings are ignored and disregarded?

Can a body be alive if it receives no commands from Christ? If a church does not submit to Christ, can there be living members in that body? Perhaps many of us say that God has children of His own even in churches that disregard the lordship of Christ. Can such a claim be supported from the Bible?

So that you can check whether your Church ignores the Lord's teachings and fails to put them into practice, we will list a few of them.

- That ye resist not evil… (Matthew 5:39)

- And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat… (Matthew 5:40)

- Bear ye one another's burdens. (Galatians 6:2)

- Lest there be any… profane person. (Hebrews 12:16)

- Take heed that ye despise not… (Matthew 18:10) Not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be… a railer. (1 Corinthians 5:11)

- Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak… for it is a shame for women to speak in the church. (1 Corinthians 14:34, 35) But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. (1 Timothy 2:12)

- Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's. (Luke 20:25) With this commandment, check whether undeclared, cash-in-hand work, software piracy or bribery are tolerated…

If you find yourself in a scattered flock that disregards the Lord's teachings and tolerates worldly people, we urge you to examine yourself most seriously before the Lord. (See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise. Ephesians 5:15)

Step 1. Examine your life and begin obeying everything the Lord says, so that you are not destroyed. (Him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, **shall be destroyed from among the people.** Acts 3:22, 23) **Step 2.** Pay attention to what the Lord says and do not join yourself to those who ignore His teachings and disregard the doctrine of Christ. (Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed:

For he that biddeth him God speed **is partaker of his evil deeds.** 2 John 1:9-11)

Trust in the Lord, who tells you that light cannot be together with darkness, and do not be unequally yoked. (Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship

hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and **what communion hath light with darkness?** 2 Corinthians 6:14)

Heed the Lord's warning and keep what He says: "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and **touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you**, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters." (2 Corinthians 6:17, 18) Stop building together with those who also serve other gods! (Ezra 4:1-5) **Step 3.** Fulfil the commandment: "Flee also youthful lusts: but **follow** righteousness, faith, charity, peace, **with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.**" (2 Timothy 2:22) Look for people with a pure heart, and the Lord will bring them across your path! (For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth. Matthew 7:8; **Those that seek me early shall find me.** Proverbs 8:17)

The Lord is faithful and He will do His part. (I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. Hebrews 13:5) Flee from the scattered flock; do not look for churches with religious programmes, but look for the Body of Christ, tightly joined and fitly compacted, where He is Lord and where His teachings are kept. Only in His Body can you grow healthily; there you are protected from ravening wolves. (From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth… maketh increase of the body. Ephesians 4:16)

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