

Lecture 21-The Church (II)**Prayer**

O faithful Father and Savior, we commend to Thee in our prayers all whom Thou hast appointed pastors over Thy faithful, and to whose guidance Thou hast committed our souls; All whom Thou hast been pleased to make the dispensers of Thy holy Gospel; That Thou wouldst guide them by Thy Holy Spirit. So make them honest and faithful ministers of Thy glory. Making in all their study and directing all their endeavors to gather together all the desolate sheep which are still wandering astray. Bring them back to Jesus Christ, the Chief Shepherd and Prince of Bishops that they may increase in righteousness and holiness everyday. Amen

The Church (II)**I. Introduction****II. Nature of the Church****A. Visible and invisible church****B. True and false church**

1. Marks of the true church (4, 1, 9)
 - a. "The word of God purely preached and heard" (4, 1, 10; 4, 1, 5)
 - b. "Sacraments administered according to Christ's institution" (4, 1, 10; 4, 17, 43-44)
 - c. Discipline is not a third mark - but indispensable ("like the sinews..." 4, 12, 1)
 - 1) Aims of discipline (4, 12, 5)
 - a) Preserves the honor of God
 - b) Protects the good from the wicked
 - c) Leads the offender to repentance (4, 12, 8; 4, 12, 11; Sermon on Galatians 6:1, 2)
 - 2) Steps of discipline
 - a) Private warning
 - b) Public admonition
 - c) Exclusion from communication
2. As long as the church retains its marks, we must not reject it "even if it otherwise swarms with many faults" (4, 1, 12)
 - a. There may be some "fault" in doctrine or sacrament (4, 1, 12)
 - b. "Imperfections of life" (4, 1, 13; cf. 4, 1, 14; 4, 1, 18; 4, 1, 20; 4, 1, 13; *Commentary* on 1 Corinthians 1:2)
3. "Comparison of the false and the true church"
 - a. Two levels of false churches
 - 1) Lacks "lawful form" - marks missing (4, 2, 1); Christ absent (4, 2, 12)
 - 2) Calvin separated from the Roman Catholic church ("they have expelled us" [4, 2, 6]; *Commentary* on Zechariah 8:23)
 - 3) Requirements of the true church (4, 1-4) followed by arguments that the Roman Catholic church is not a true church (4, 5-11)
 - a) "The papacy itself is directly contrary to church order" (4, 12, 26)
 - b) But "traces of the church" remain (4, 2, 11)
 - (1) "A remnant of his people" (4, 2, 12)
 - (2) Baptism and "other vestiges" (4, 2, 11)

III. Church Order

- A. Scripture reveals an order of permanent validity (4, 4, 1)

- B. With considerable freedom (4, 10, 30-32; *Commentary* on 1 Corinthians 14:40)
 - 1. Love should be “our guide” (4, 10, 30)
 - 2. Importance of decorum, dignity, propriety (4, 10, 30; *Commentary* on 1 Corinthians 11:2 and 11:4; Letter to the English exiles at Wesel [March 13, 1554], Letter to King Sigismund [Dec. 5, 1554], Letter concerning the Anglican Prayer Book [Jan.13, 1554])
 - 3. Importance of peace in the church (Letter to Bullinger [March 1551])

IV. Church Offices

- A. Head of the church is Christ (4, 3, 1)
- B. Christ works through the ministry of men (4, 3, 1; *Commentary* on Malachi 4:6)
 - 1. “His regard for us” (4, 3, 1)
 - 2. “Exercise in humility” (4, 3, 1)
 - 3. “Fosters mutual love” (4, 3, 1)

For Further Study

Walker, G. S. M. “Calvin and the Church.” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 16 (1963): 371-89.