

GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

Vol. X

June 17, 2001

No. 24

The church: pillar and ground of the truth

By: Jerry Fite

Some churches today are having seminars designed to address the question of what is the church's identity in today's society. One answer, though too simplistic for some, is Paul's inspired statement to Timothy. *“These things I write unto thee, hoping to come to thee shortly; but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God the pillar and ground of the truth”* (I Timothy 3:15).

The church of Christ does not have to search for its identity. God has already determined that His church should be the “pillar and ground of the truth”. The two words, “pillar” and “ground” emphasize the church as a “support” of the truth. The truth is not some subjective feeling that man would like to call “truth”. Nor is it some hazy objective for which all should strive to obtain, but never can realistically grasp. The “truth” is the objective teaching which came through Christ and is contained in the Gospel (John 1:17, Ephesians 1:13). And, as men abide in Christ's revealed word, they “shall know the truth and the truth shall make you

free” (John 8:31-32). Truth has been revealed - we do not have to theorize about what it is. Truth can be known— we do not have to be hazy in defining it. Truth needs to be supported— we do not need to wonder about the church's identity in the world today.

The church is the support of the truth, not the origin of truth. The Catholic church will place church tradition before revealed truth found in the New Testament. For example, when a Catholic Priest is reminded with the truth of the Gospel that Peter was a married man (Matthew 8:14, I Corinthians 9:5), and that Jesus had brothers and sisters (Matthew 13:55-56) and asked how can the Catholic Church reconcile her doctrine of “celibacy” and the “perpetual virginity of Mary”, the Priest's response is that the tradition of the church is what he upholds. The church through its own traditions do not make up what truth is. The church is to be a support of the truth already revealed in the New Testament.

The church of Christ becomes identified as a pillar and ground of the truth when the members of the church are busily engaged in teaching and supporting

the preaching of the truth of the Gospel. Individually, like the Christians of old, they take the gospel and preach it to others (Acts 8:4). Collectively, they support preachers as they go to other places preaching the truth of the Gospel (Philippians 1:5,7). The members of the church belonging to Christ will not be shy when it comes to the truth, for they will defend it (Philippians 1:16, I Peter 3:15).

Is the emphasis upon “truth” in the church of which you are a member? One sees the emphasis being placed upon all of the social functions that the church provides. Even when the teaching of the word is advertised, you will see the biographical background of the speaker with all his academic credentials being emphasized. Paul did not come to people with excellency of speech or the wisdom of man, but came proclaiming Christ crucified (I Corinthians 1:23, 2:1-4). The emphasis should be on will the man preach the truth of the gospel, not on how many degrees of higher learning he has acquired.

May our emphasis always be on proclaiming the truth!