

“The State of the Church Address!”

Romans 12:18; 1 Corinthians 14:40

Intro. – Alexander Pope said, “Order is Heaven’s first law.” Whether or not he is correct may be open to debated, but certainly *order* is in the top ten! All one has to do is look at God’s creation and see that order is a priority with God. God is not the author of chaos!

When I hear a preacher or leader boast of disorganization by saying things like, “We’re just informal here...” “We let the Spirit move us here...” or “We fly by the seat of our pants here...” I know such cannot be the thinking of God. Why? Because God *always* does things orderly and with purpose...

The worst form of government is not communism, fascism, or dictatorship... The worst form of government is anarchy. This is where everyone is in charge of everything... Such is the condition of many churches today. These local bodies are laden with strikers and snipers. Physical and verbal abuse is common and complainers/grumblers are the rule rather than the exception in these church situations.

My point? Organization helps prevent such warring amongst ourselves. Our text makes clear – “*everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.*” The word *peace* in the Romans passage literally means “*orderly*”. Such must certainly be the case in the Lord’s Church. This brings me to the purpose of this message

Purpose: to review how we are doing as a local church in accordance to God’s Word

How is the Lord’s Body doing right here in Eaton, Ohio? How are we in fulfilling the purpose of this local church? Is Christ the Head of this local body or are we simply giving lip service? Is the Bible our sole source of authority in matters of faith and practice or do we placate to our own ideas, wishes and wants to the neglect of God’s Word? Is Bible knowledge a priority of this church? Is soul winning a priority of this church? Is “*truth*” a priority of this church? These and like questions will be answered through this message in an attempt to give this “state of the church address” to the Church of Christ at Eaton, Ohio.

There are two avenues I want to pursue that are brought out in our texts to accomplish this:

I The Church is Divine II The Church is Human

I THE CHURCH IS DIVINE

- Is this local church or any local church, for that matter, a result of human effort or human ingenuity?
- A. The Church is Divine in PURPOSE
 1. Divinely *Headed* – the purpose of the church is most clear = *win the lost and build the won* (i.e. making disciples is our purpose as revealed in Matthew 28:19-20 – “*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you, and lo, I am with you always even to the end of the age.*”
 2. Evangelism is the divine purpose of this church (nothing more/less) = winning & building souls...
- B. The Church is Divine in PATTERN
 1. Doctrine = Bible is final, complete, inerrant revelation from God... doctrine really does matter...
 2. Government (polity/organization) = Christ is Head (Theocracy... not democracy... not socialism... not anarchy)... Christ has delegated responsibility... elders/pastors of the church...
 3. Worship = how and why a church gathers for corporate worship is in the Book...

With the divine pattern working, the church will be recognized just as she really is – DIVINE!

II THE CHURCH IS HUMAN

- Human in practice and service. This is where the real evaluation should come in from our end:
- A. Divine in PATTERN – Human in PRACTICE
 1. All three essential elements of local church illustrate this: doctrine, government; worship
 2. Let’s evaluate our situation in these three key areas:

- a. doctrine: we're growing in this with room to grow... there's constant need to search the Scriptures daily to see what's true and what's not... to see what's necessary and what's not...
- b. government: again, we're growing with room to grow... there are some ways we go about some matters in this area that are not consistent with Scripture...
- c. worship: again, we're learning more and more what worship is... still have room for growth... It's not about us (what we "get out of worship" time is 2nd to what God receives from it... as song says, "We're getting back to the heart of worship – It's all about You...")

B. Divine in PURPOSE – Human in SERVICE

- 1. To say we are not "making disciples"... would be false, BUT we can always do better in making disciples according to our potential... (one of two churches in Preble County...)
- 2. A better understanding of our "purpose" and of "grace" will correct this...
- 3. Present situation:
 - a. leadership – always need for more men to be equipped and willing to be pastors of church...
 - b. every activity, event, happening whether study, fellowship or just plain fun time – ultimate goal must be to win and build people in Christ... if not, time to drop because there are too many things vying for time, money and energy to waste anything in the Lord's church!
 - c. challenges in resolving to communicate so much better... involving more people more areas...
- 4. Personal situation:
 - a. personal goal of involving myself in more soul winning... know we need to GO to them...
 - b. leadership prep... identifying, preparing and equipping men/families for future leadership...
 - c. making sure communicate the purpose of the church (grace) again and again...

Conclusion – We're living in a changing world. The message we are commissioned to take, however is changeless. Our methods in presenting the Gospel of God's grace must be flexible: "*Methods are many, principles are few; methods always change but principles never do.*" It is better described in Matthew 24:35 "*Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words shall not pass away.*" Certainly if men, women and young people are going to be won to the Lord we must be "fishers of men"! God has given the Church of Christ at Eaton wonderful opportunities. The potential for many victories to our Lord's honor is evident.

I'm going on 50 plus years of age. Time is rapidly going. Friends, neighbors and acquaintances cannot afford you and me "playing church." Thus, in summary, here is where the Church of Christ is: She is *divine* and *human*. God gives us more than reason to believe His side of this equation is covered... The human side obviously needs work. My prayer, goal and aim is that through every effort of this church, 2010 can and will be a banner year unto the glory of our Lord and Savior through this local church!

GIVE US A WATCHWORD

(by Henry Crocker)

Give us a watchword for the hour,
 A thrilling word, a word of power,
 A battle-cry, a flaming breath,
 That calls to conquest or to death.
 A word to rouse the church from rest,
 To heed her Master's high bequest.
 The call is given: Ye hosts arise,
 Our watchword is EVANGELIZE!
 The glad evangel now proclaim,
 Through all the earth in Jesus' name;
 This word is ringing through the skies,
 Evangelize! Evangelize!
 To dying men, a sin torn race,
 Make known the gift of gospel grace,
 The world that now in darkness lies,
 Evangelize! Evangelize!