THE MARKS OF A PROGRESSIVE CONGREGATION

INTRODUCTION:

1. A diagnosis is needed in every congregation of how the congregation is doing in the work God would have it to do.

2. In this study we want to study the marks of a progressive congregation.

   (1) By “marks” we mean characteristics.

   (2) By “progressive” we mean that a congregation is moving forward in the characteristics that please God.

3. These marks will help us make a diagnosis of ourselves.

I. A PROGRESSIVE CONGREGATION IS WHERE “ALL THE COUNSEL OF GOD” IS PREACHED. Acts 20: 27; 20:20

1. Faithful gospel preaching is by the authority of Christ. Matt. 28: 18; I Pet. 4: 11; Heb. 1: 1 – 2; Eph. 1: 22 – 23

   (1) Nothing is preached that cannot be backed up by Christ’s authority.

   (2) With this kind of preaching, men’s faith will not stand in the wisdom of men. I Cor. 2: 4 -5

2. Faithful preaching is done without fear or favor.

   (1) II Tim. 4: 1 -5; Gal. 1:10; I Tim. 5: 21

3. Faithful preaching exposes worldliness and deals with every vital issue that faces God’s people. I Tim. 4:6

4. No congregation is progressive in the work of God that will not encourage strong preaching and aggressive attacks on the devil. Eph. 6: 10 – 17

II. A PROGRESSIVE CONGREGATION IS WHERE DISCIPLINE IS MAINTAINED.

1. Discipline defined: “Teaching; instruction; that which is taught to pupils; training which corrects, molds, strengthens or perfects; punishment; chastisement”…Webster

2. From this definition we see there are two kinds of discipline.
(1) INSTRUCTIVE discipline is preventative in nature.

A. Ways of instructive discipline:


b. Reproving and rebuking. II Tim. 4:2; II Tim. 3: 16 – 17; I Tim. 5:20; Tit. 1:13

c. Through encouragement. I Thess. 5: 11, 14; Acts 2:40

e. Training in service. Heb. 5: 12 – 14; Lk. 11: 1

(2) CORRECTIVE discipline is to be resorted to when all other means of discipline have failed.

A. The purpose of corrective discipline:

a. To save the person guilty of sin. I Cor. 5:5; Matt. 18: 15 – 17; James 5:20

b. Corrective discipline is God’s plan to save the sinners inside the church – to put him to shame. II Thess. 3: 14

c. To maintain the authority of Christ. II Thess. 3:6

d. To maintain the purity of the church. I Cor. 5: 6 – 7

B. The scriptural course to pursue:


b. A false teacher. Tit. 3:10; Rom. 16: 17 – 18

c. Public sin.
   i. Try to convert and restore. James 5: 19 – 20; Gal. 6:1
   ii. Admonish. I Thess. 5:14
   iii. As a last resort – withdraw. II Thess. 3:6, 14

III. A PROGRESSIVE CONGREGATION IS BUSY REAPING THE HARVEST.

2. Ways it carries the gospel to the world. I Thess. 1:8
   
   (1) From house to house. Acts 20:20
   
   (2) From the assemblies. Acts 20:7
   
   (3) Publically by radio or TV. Acts 20: 20
   
   (4) By sending men out to preach. Acts 11: 22 – 26
   
   (5) Sending support to a man. Phil. 4: 14 – 17
   
   (6) By having a successful teaching program. Eph. 4: 11 – 12; I Tim. 3:15

3. By its work.
   
   (1) It will have additions by baptisms. Acts 2: 41; 4:4; 5: 14; 6:7
   
   (2) It will restore those overtaken in sin. Gal. 6:1; James 5: 19 – 20

IV. A PROGRESSIVE CONGREGATION IS FAITHFUL IN DUTY.


2. Faithful in giving. I Cor. 16: 1 – 2; II Cor. 8: 1 – 5; 9: 6 – 10

3. Faithful in living. Tit. 2: 11 – 12; I John 2; 15 – 17

4. Faithful in studying. II Tim. 2:15; Heb. 5: 12- 14

V. IN A PROGRESSIVE CONGREGATION, UNITY AMONG THE BRETHREN PREVAILS.

1. God demands unity of believers in the local church. I Cor. 1: 10; Eph. 4: 1 – 3; Phil. 1:27; John 17: 20 – 21

2. Where there is bickering, fighting, and constant personality clashes there cannot be a good progressive church by any standard. Gal. 5: 15; James 3: 16; I Pet. 2:1

3. When brethren can talk to each other and express their sentiments on matters of judgment, without developing antagonism and bitterness, you have a good working situation.
4. Unity is a pleasant thing. Ps. 133: 1

CONCLUSION:

(Riverbend 1994; Legan Springs 1979)