

Mark #1: Pure Preaching of the Gospel (Romans 1:16-17; Galatians 1:6-9)

- I. *True & False Churches, True & False Christians* (Mt. 7:21; Lk. 12:47-48; Heb. 10:26-31)
- II. The Pure Preaching of the Gospel (**Gal 1:8-9**; Jn. 8:31; 10:27; 2 Jn. 9)
- III. What Is the **Gospel** of Jesus Christ?
1. Sola Scriptura (Jas. 1:21; 2 Ti 3:14-15)
 2. Solus Christus (1 Ti. 2:5; Acts 4:12; 1 Cor. 15:3-4)
 3. Sola Fide (Rom. 3:21-25)
 4. Sola Gratia (Eph. 2:8-9)
 5. Soli Deo Gloria (Ps. 3:8; Rom. 9:16)
- IV. What Is the **Pure** Gospel? (Rev. 22:18-19; 2 Pet. 2:1; Mt. 6:19-20, 33; Col. 3:2; Jn. 14:6)
- V. What Is the **Preaching** of the Gospel? (Acts 20:31; 2 Tim. 2:15; Jas. 3:1; Rom. 10:14-17; **1:16**)

Belgic Confession Art. 29a: We believe that we ought to discern diligently and very carefully, by the Word of God, what is the true church—for all sects in the world today claim for themselves the name of “the church.”

We are not speaking here of the company of hypocrites who are mixed among the good in the church and who nonetheless are not part of it, even though they are physically there.

But we are speaking of distinguishing the body and fellowship of the true church from all sects that call themselves “the church.”

The true church can be recognized if it has the following marks: The church engages in the pure preaching of the gospel; it makes use of the pure administration of the sacraments as Christ instituted them; it practices church discipline for correcting faults.

In short, it governs itself according to the pure Word of God, rejecting all things contrary to it and holding Jesus Christ as the only Head. By these marks one can be assured of recognizing the true church—and no one ought to be separated from it.

Questions for Family Discussion

- Should we choose a church based on its size, the friendliness of its members, the style of music, the activities and programs, or because our friends and family attend there? How can choosing by these criteria be **dangerous**?
- Can a church be true if it **lacks** the pure preaching of the gospel? Why is this the most important of the 3 marks?
- How do the five Solas help us define the true gospel? Are all five of these Solas **essential**? Why or why not?
- Some false gospels include the Social Gospel, the Prosperity Gospel, Universalism, Moralism, and Antinomianism. Describe each of them, and explain how they contradict the true gospel, and why we must reject them.
- Should preaching be different from lecturing? How? Should a sermon ever end without making an authoritative claim on your life? Can a faithful sermon simply declare the gospel, without demanding that you respond to it?
- Is the gospel faithfully preached at *Bellingham URC*? Do you **treasure & actively receive** the gospel each Sabbath?