

“DR. TOM MALONE PREACHES ON THE CHURCH”

By Dr. Tom Malone, Sr.

The main purpose of Dr. Tom Malone’s book was to give a broad overview of what the church is and what it is not. Dr. Malone, Sr., is well studied in the Scriptures, and he provided a topical study covering Ecclesiology.

Dr. Malone’s premise for the entire series was the foundational truth of Matthew 16:18 where Jesus said, “I will build my church.” Dr. Malone tried to determine exactly when the church began, and he concluded that it officially started when the church had all of its components. This assumption is well supported in the text and provided a credible basis for examining the structure of the church. Concerning the focal point of the church, Dr. Malone stated, “Isn’t it strange that that which was closest to the heart of Jesus, is furthest from the heart of the average Christian” (p. 126). As it pertains to soul winning, Dr. Malone sadly pointed out that, “Some churches are not bothered when no one is saved” (p. 168). Both of these statements are true in the modern church today and he has correctly diagnosed the current condition of the American church.

Dr. Malone ventured into what would be a controversial matter for many when he pointed out that the church is not a denomination. He stated very clearly that there is no teaching in the entire Bible to substantiate the matter of organized denominations. Dr. Malone also visited the position of deaconess, which many would not lend credence to with a ten-foot pole. It would have been easier for him to avoid these often divisive issues, but he tackled them with loyalty to the Scriptures.

In addressing church leadership, Dr. Malone explained the difference between commanded and not demanded positions of leadership (for example, a church treasurer or

a Christian education director are not commanded in the Scriptures as church offices). Regarding these church administrative matters, Dr. Malone is Biblically correct and stands against common traditions and dispositions of the modern church. While some churches hold to the authoritative rule of a single pastor, this book made a strong case for the plurality of elders in the church. Concerning the position and role of the deacon, Dr. Malone warned to beware of traditional ideology. The responsibility and requirements of the deacon were stressed according to the Biblical model laid out in Scripture. The model set forth in this book regarding elders and deacons is similar to our church leadership and it has been very successful.

Dr. Malone covered the ordinances of the church. He did a good job of laying out the Lord's Supper in expressing that we look back to a finished work on the cross and upward to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. He also thoroughly covered the ramifications of taking the Lords Supper unworthily. Regarding baptism, he pointed out that most know the reason for it, but they cannot support it Biblically; he then explained it step by step.

Regarding the ordinances, Dr. Malone is to the point in his statements concerning what is right and wrong. He gave concise and clear truths to validate his teachings. One such pointed fact was the comment made that, "no one has a right to baptism but believers" (p. 73). He also addressed those who refuse to be baptized with an excellent and applicable principle from James 4:16, "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." He explained that the Biblical ordinances of the church do not include foot washing, even though it is a picture of servant hood.

One minor area of disagreement was Dr. Malone's statement concerning the

parable of the tares in Matthew 13. According to Dr. Malone, the men who slept should have been awake, and he used this as an indictment upon the church that is asleep (p. 242). Even though it is correct that the church is often sleeping, this passage does not indict the sleeping workers as sinners. Moreover, the use of this parable to make such an assumption is a stretch, and Dr. Malone's effort to make such a broad statement out of the details of a parable is not a good example of exegesis. This point is minor and the only unconstructive idea conveyed in the text.

Dr. Malone and his series of sermons on the church are true to the Scriptures. His book presents a tremendous resource for correctly structuring the church with foundational truths and he graciously handled divisive issues without harsh dogmatism. He was straightforward yet with a tender and gracious spirit. This book would be a great resource for any pastor who is preaching a series on the church according to the Scriptures.