

# The Importance of The LOCAL CHURCH



*“Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.”*  
-Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

*“But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.”*  
-1 Corinthians 12:18

In light of the great dearth of sound, Biblically ordered, Christian assemblies today, I feel compelled to post this series on what the Bible teaches about the local church. May it provoke and bless, especially to those without.

In our hour, the primary problem facing the professing church is the awful plague of religiosity, or false Christianity. Sadly, many join our churches and call themselves Christians before they have been born-again. Of course, this reveals a deeper, even more serious matter, as our converts are merely a reflection of the Gospel we preach. However, just as pressing is the almost universal lack of understanding regarding the importance of the local church. Almost daily, if not weekly, I speak to someone who fails to see their incredible lack simply because they are not in a good local church. Amazingly, tares join themselves to the church daily while seemingly many genuine believers drift aimlessly in confusion.

*Matthew 9:36 But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.*

Unfortunately, independence is the norm for our day. Few seem to realize that God

never intended for the new creature to be alone. No man is an island unto himself. God ordained that every new believer be planted in the local church. Are there exceptions? Yes, where it is utterly impossible and where every effort to find a good local church has been exhausted, God would indeed grant grace (for example, where someone is, say, in jail). Yet, people often seem to be unaware of the importance of the local church and oblivious to the enemy's plot to prevent them from finding God's will regarding this important truth. In many cases, it is not that men can't, but that men won't. This is generally true because they fail to see the absolute necessity of the local church. Sadly, the best the solitary soul can hope for is a spiritual wilderness; an experience of spiritual weakness, just trying to survive from day to day.

In this article, I want to outline certain absolutes necessary to spiritual growth. Furthermore, I want to show that God has ordained that these things are to be found only in the local church.

## **THE LOCAL CHURCH PROVIDES THE MINISTRY OF PERFECTION**

*Ephesians 4:11-12 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ...*

Perfecting: (Greek) *kat-ar-tis-mos*, Complete furnishing.

Now, according to the Scriptures, the "Five-Fold Ministry" is God's means for the equipping of the saints. Thus, it stands to reason, men who refuse to subject themselves to the five-fold ministry cannot be perfected for ministry. We will not find the five-fold ministry apart from the local church. How can we disciple anyone, if we ourselves refuse discipleship?

The pattern was set by the Lord Jesus Christ himself. In Him, is the five-fold ministry embodied. He is the model Evangelist. The perfect Pastor/Teacher. He represents the *office gifts* but likewise, he also typifies the local church; and we must see that the two are inseparable, you can't have one w/out the other. If the twelve are to be prepared for their calling they must follow Him, there were no stragglers.

We see the same pattern in the early church. The 120 cannot be filled with the Holy Ghost except they be gathered together with the Apostles in the upper room. In the *Book of Acts* when men were born-again it says they were added to the church. Even

when we read of rare cases like that of Apollos, men who apparently were detached from the local church, they are confronted and challenged...

*Acts 18:26 ...whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.*

Whatever the complete context of what Aquila and Priscilla told Apollos, he was enlightened regarding the body of Christ as he obviously was a vital part of the church.

People often quote Jesus' saying about two or three gathered as an attempt to simplify or excuse away the need for the local church.

*Matthew 18:20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*

He never meant this as a definition for the local church as 'two or three' gathering is good, but doesn't necessarily constitute exposure and submission to the *five-fold ministry*.

*Titus 1:5 For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee...*

In the natural, an unstable home life or absentee parent is always a grave disadvantage for any child.

*Proverbs 29:15 The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.*

What hope would there be for a child completely left to survive alone? So it is in the spirit.

*Proverbs 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*

God ordained that the new creature immediately come under the tutelage of the local church for discipleship.

## **A PLACE OF COMMITMENT**

*1 Peter 3:8 Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous...*

To be part of a *Local Church* is a covenant relationship.

*Romans 12:15 Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.*

True Christianity encompasses right relationships. And right relationships, divine or otherwise, are built on commitment and faithfulness. What makes a good wife? It's not beauty, or prudence, or social grace but commitment; every day faithfulness. Today, what I call the campmeeting/vagabound spirit, is so prevalent. Where men crave the experience that going from one meeting to the next provides. However, often times such men, though hungry and sincere, usually have never committed to anything. We must understand, spiritual growth does not come by chance. The spiritual conviction and moral character that can withstand the winds of opposition only comes through the experience of discipleship. And we cannot be discipled without the stability of commitment. I contend, the local church is where the new believer learns faithfulness and commitment. It is more than simply attending a Sunday morning service in a particular place. We are to commit to a local body of believers. We are to obligate ourselves to the assembling of that body. I was taught and resigned to the fact that every time we met corporately I was to be there. Without commitment there can be no real church life. This is the reason that church life is so shallow in most cases.

## **AN ATMOSPHERE OF LOVE, SUPPORT ACCOUNTABILITY, AND PROVOKING FELLOWSHIP**

*Hebrews 10:24-25 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

This is a spiritual fact: Christians generally need one another. When we are alone, we are robbed of the grace that flows freely through the body and the unique giftings of each member. But we tend to thrive in an atmosphere of mutual comfort, challenge, and obligation.

*Proverbs 27:17 Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.*

There are times where we need to experience, see, or hear the work of God manifested in other human vessels.

*Proverbs 27:9 Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel.*

Likewise, in moments of great temptation and testing we often need a divine word spoken through some willing human agent.

*1 Samuel 23:16 And Jonathan Saul's son arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God.*

This is part of the ministry of the local church. However, when men are alone, they forfeit this privilege.

## **A PLACE OF SPIRITUAL LABOR**

*1 Corinthians 12:20-21 But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.*

So often, men are hungry to do something for God but fail to see this is limited, even fruitless, apart from the vehicle of the Local Church. We cannot say that we can perform our spiritual function apart from joining ourselves tangibly to the rest of the body. Now, we are practically joined to the body of Christ by our relationship with the local church. We are to pour ourselves out in the context of the local church. To exercise our gifts for the edification of the body. Now, whatever gifts we possess are there solely for the strengthening of Christ's body. Ironically, many want to labor to built the local church while they themselves have never submitted to the local church. How can a man built what he refuses to see?

May we once again, see the importance of the local church.

–B.W.