

Salvation and Local Church Membership – Pt. 2

INTRODUCTION:

1. Last week we began examining the relationship between salvation in Christ and local church membership. We looked at how...
 - A. There is a pattern in the N.T. where the gospel produces disciples, or followers of Christ, who then formed local churches where, according to God's will, they were to assemble, work and worship together, as well as to edify each other through teaching the word of God.
 - B. We also looked at how the local church was created for the spiritual welfare of disciples related both to spiritual oversight and edification and how disciples are to take advantage of these benefits and duties provided for and fulfilled as members of the local church.
2. Today I want to continue our examination of this subject.
 - A. I want to focus again and expand on the role of the local church in the life of a Christian.
 - B. I also want to look at the differences in the actions, attitude, and the benefits given those who are committed **members** of the local church and those who are simply **attenders**.

BODY:

I. The role of the local church in God's plan:

- A. The local church is to assemble on a weekly basis to partake of the Lord's Supper.
 1. Weekly observance was the practice of the church at Troas (Acts 20:7 – "Now on the **first day of the week**, when the disciples came together **to break bread**, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.").
 2. 1 Corinthians 11 teaches that assembling to partake of this Supper in proper fashion is necessary for the *spiritual health* and *salvation* of its members.
 - a. In 11:17-26 Paul rebukes the local church for their improper observance of this Supper and instructs them again concerning the Lord's commands concerning the purpose behind their assembling to partake of the bread and the cup.
 - b. Individual responsibilities, fulfilled while the church is partaking, result in one being strengthened/encouraged or becoming spiritually weak, sick, or dead (**11:27-32**).
 - c. Thus, the local church and its members are warned to come together and partake properly as a memorial, not as a common meal, or be judged by God (**11:33-34**).
 3. So, there are individual responsibilities that must be fulfilled in connection with the assemblies of the local church and its worship in order to be faithful and saved.
- B. The local church is to assemble for worship and edification.
 1. We see this in the instructions to the church at Corinth (1 Cor. 14:26-31)
 - a. Although these commands (14:37) were specifically applied to assemblies involving miraculous gifts, there are general principles that apply to the local church's work today.
 - b. General principles:
 - i. The local church assembling regularly for worship and teaching is assumed—this is what disciples do (11:26 – **whenever/when**, not **if** you come together).
 - ii. LC assembles for *edification*, or building up, by the word of God (11:26).
 - iii. So, the teaching/worship of the local church must be done in an orderly fashion that "all might **learn** and be **encouraged**" (14:31).
 - iv. Again, we see the connection of disciples, those who *follow* Christ, and the purpose of the local church which is to *teach* that all might learn/be edified/encouraged.
 2. The local church at Jerusalem gathered for edification at times *other than Sunday worship* (Acts 2:42, 46 – "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching" and were "⁴⁶...continuing daily with one accord in the temple...").
 - a. Therefore, it is according to God's will for the local church to provide opportunities for learning, such as our Bible classes, in addition to Sunday worship.
 - b. True disciples understand the spiritual *need* and *benefit* of these times of study as well as their *responsibility* to attend, or be a part, of them.
- C. The local church is to be attuned to the lives and faithfulness of its members.

1. Note why Christians are to assemble (Heb. 10:24-25 – “And let us **consider one another** in order to **stir up love and good works**,²⁵ **not forsaking the assembling** of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”).
 - a. So, disciples assemble not just to be encouraged, but to do their duty to encourage others.
 - b. This is one of the reasons why we are not to neglect attending the times of assembling.
2. The local church/members must consider the lives lived by each member and discipline those who no longer live in obedience to Christ (1 Cor. 5:1, 4-5, 11 – “It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles—that a man has his father’s wife!...⁴ In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, **when you are gathered together**, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,⁵ deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, **that his spirit may be saved** in the day of the Lord Jesus...¹¹ But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner—not even to eat with such a person.”).
3. Again we see that the local church has a focus of assuring the spiritual welfare of the disciples who make up that congregation!
- D. There are some other things we could list here, but I think these are sufficient to show that the role of the local church in a Christian’s service to God and salvation is substantial!

II. Being a Member versus an Attender of a local church:

- A. For the local church to be organized and function properly requires a great deal of work and commitment on the part of disciples.
 1. Everything you see around you concerning this worship and the various works carried on here are the result of someone’s actions, someone willing to obey the Lord and do their part.
 2. To help us see this better and to emphasize the importance of membership in the local church I want to ask some questions for your consideration.
- B. Since local churches are a required part of God’s plan for our service and salvation, who assures that a local church is formed and organized properly for the saved to worship and be edified?
 1. Only those who recognize that **membership** and **service** in the **local church** is their **duty** will put forth the effort needed for the formation and proper organization of a local church.
 2. **Attendees**, however, show up and enjoy what the *members* do, missing out on their part in assuring that the local church both *exists* and *functions* as God desires.
- C. Since the local church is to provide spiritual oversight of the disciples, who will assure that the souls within the local church are overseen and properly cared for?
 1. **Elders** are to oversee the spiritual lives of the **members** of the local flock. But they are appointed from men **who are members of the local church** whose life, character, and commitment to the Lord are well known, as the qualification indicate (1 Tim. 3; Titus 1).
 2. **Elders** are to lead by example (1 Pet. 5:1-3 – “The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: ² Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; ³ nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but **being examples to the flock**”).
 3. **Attendees** can never fulfill this role or others like it, seeing their lack of commitment to the local church and its work keeps them from setting the proper example!
- D. Since the local church is to worship weekly, who will assure that it does so as God demands?
 1. For the local church to assemble and worship properly...
 - a. A suitable place for assembling must be secured (buildings, etc., don’t just appear).
 - b. Bills must be paid, and maintenance done, so that the facility can continue to be used.
 - c. Needed aids for worship must be secured (i.e., song books, microphones, PowerPoint projectors, etc.)
 - d. The bread, fruit of the vine, and the vessels needed for the Lord’s Supper must be obtained and properly laid out.

- e. The proper order of worship must be established, and faithful men secured and prepared to fulfill the needed roles.
- f. All these things are critical to meeting this goal, which in the end allows Christians to focus on worship with the proper attitude.
- 2. To answer the question, it is the **members** who do these things on a regular basis, choosing to be committed and concerned for the wellbeing of this church and their brethren.
- 3. **Attendees**, however, miss out, never doing their part to fulfill these responsibilities, leaving every aspect of faithful worship, which is critical to their salvation, to someone else!
- E. Who is to assure that *proper edification* takes place?
 - 1. Edification necessitates the faithful presentation of Gods' word, which requires preparation and dedication.
 - a. **Preachers** (1 Tim. 4:16 – "Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.").
 - b. **Teachers** (2 Tim. 2:2 – "And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to **faithful men** who will be able to teach others also.").
 - c. **Faithful women** also need to teach other women and children (Titus 2:3 – "the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things").
 - 2. **Attendees** miss out because in their non-committed state they will never have the joy of fulfilling their responsibility to edify others as preachers, teachers, or members must do.

III. Making the commitment:

- A. I understand how all these duties and responsibilities can be overwhelming and you may be thinking...
 - 1. That you could never really do these so there is no point in becoming a member.
 - 2. That you will hold out until you can make what you may perceive as a *meaningful* contribution to this local church.
 - 3. But you know what? You are wrong! This is the way Satan wants you to think.
- B. If you commit to being a faithful member and doing what you can do, that commitment will result in you doing a valuable service for the Lord's kingdom (1 Cor. 12:12-26).
 - 1. You may never become what you *perceive* to be an important part of the body (i.e., an eye, a hand, etc.).
 - a. But God wants you to understand that as a faithful disciple of Christ fulfilling your duties, you are part **of the body** and **needed in this body** for the job that only you can do.
 - b. And, you **will have honor** within this body as God demands.
 - 2. Why not choose to be what God would have you to be and fulfill the duties required of you as a disciple by becoming a member of this body, this local church for the benefit of yourself and your brethren?

CONCLUSION:

- 1. I hope I sufficiently shown that...
 - A. The local church has a significant and vital role in the service and salvation of a Christian, a disciple of Christ.
 - B. There is a great gap between being a **member** and being an **attender**, seeing when it comes down to making it all happen as God demands, it is the **members**, not the attenders, who do so!
 - C. You can be a valuable part of the Lord's work...no matter who you are...if you so desire.
- 2. So, whether you are an *attender* or a *member*, you need to examine your present state and determine whether you are living acceptably before the Lord and obeying His commands.
 - A. If not, you need to repent and get busy and do what God commands by becoming a faithful and active member of this or another faithful local church.
 - B. If you are a committed member, you can always ask yourself if there is more that you can do.
- 3. If you have never committed yourself to Jesus as you Lord and Savior, you need to F-R-C-B and then become an active member of a local church that you might fulfill the duties God and live faithfully until the end.

