

THE IMPORTANCE OF MEMBERSHIP & FAITHFULNESS WITHIN THE LOCAL CHURCH

Text: Acts 9:26-28

INTRO: One of the many problems faced by most local churches in our time is that numerous individuals who should be active members of local churches either never establish that relationship, or do not take seriously the responsibilities that are theirs as members of a local church.

I. EVIDENCE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF A LOCAL CHURCH.

- A. Soon after Saul of Tarsus obeyed the gospel, he went to Jerusalem & there sought to attach himself to the band of disciples who were there, Acts 9:26-28.
- B. Local church membership was emphasized in Acts 13:1 and many other passages.

Now in the church that was at Antioch, there were certain prophets & teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, & Saul (Acts 13:1)

- C. The brethren in Ephesus wrote a letter to the disciples in Corinth to receive Apollos. READ ACTS 18:27-28.
- D. Paul commended Phebe to the church in Rome, that she be received & assisted in any way necessary, Rom. 16:1-2.
- E. Ten of the 27 books of the NT were addressed to local churches.
- F. Every place Paul & others went in their travels, if there was not already a local church, they tried to begin one. If there was a local church, they assembled with it. This is proof positive that the local church arrangement is of God.

II. REASONS WHY THE LOCAL CHURCH IS IMPORTANT.

- A. The social nature of man. Needs friends. Gen. 2:18.
- B. The local church is God's arrangement for collective action in evangelism & edification.

1. Evangelism. 2 Cor. 11:8; Phil. 4:15-16
2. Edification. 1 Cor. 14:19, 23, 26

C. God has placed spiritual oversight within the local church--for our good.

Obey those who have the rule over you, & submit yourselves, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do it with joy & not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you (Heb 13:17)

Acts 14:23

D. God has arranged discipline in the local church--for our good. READ I COR. 5:1-5

NOTE: Someone once said, "If I fall away, I hope I don't fall from here."

E. There is a unique fellowship with Jesus in the local church relationship. Rev. 1:13, 20.

III. FOR OUR OWN GOOD, WE SHOULD COMPLY & CO-OPERATE WITH GOD'S WILL REGARDING THE LOCAL CHURCH.

A. To willfully, intentionally remain aloof from the local church is to sin by violating the teachings of all the Scriptures we have examined in this lesson.

B. Perhaps the seriousness of this sin can best be emphasized by looking at the result that would be accomplished if ALL Christians were to follow that example.

1. If it is right for one Christian to ignore God's local church arrangement, it would be right for ALL of them to do so.
2. Yet, if ALL Christians should ignore God's plan for the local church, all local churches would soon disappear from the earth.

3. Therefore, we can be assured that it is wrong, sinful, for ANY Christian to willfully, intentionally remain aloof from the local church relationship.

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