

The Church Assembly: Our Blessing and Duty of Worship

- I. God demands that He alone be worshipped and He visits judgment upon those who fail to do so. **EXO 20:3-6; MAT 4:10.**
 - A. The worship of God is also the fear of God. **MAT 4:10 c/w DEU 6:13 c/w PSA 5:7.**
 - B. Since the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, none are truly wise who do not worship God. **PRO 9:10.**
 - C. Since the judgment for not worshipping God is visited upon succeeding generations, it is important that parents train their children to worship Him according to His word. **PSA 78:4-7.**
 1. This training is by oral and written Biblical instruction. **DEU 6:7; EPH 6:4.**
 2. This training is by leadership and example: parents need to show their children that they prioritize regular assembly for public worship of God, show them that they respect church order and rule.
 - a. Parents can talk and teach about “the wonderful church” all they like but if their decisions and actions are telling their children something else, guess which “message” is doing the real training?
 - b. “Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?...” **(ROM 2:21).**
 - c. **(ISA 38:19)** The living, the living, he shall praise thee, **as I do** this day: the father to the children shall make known thy truth.
 - (1) Hezekiah had the house of God in mind. **ISA 38:20-22.**
 - (2) Private praise of God is good but it does not exempt one from God’s command for corporate praise at His appointed house.
- II. The gospel church is now God's house, the reformation and perfection of O.T. patriarchal and Mosaic worship (“our fathers”). **HEB 9:10 c/w ROM 4:1; 1CO 10:1; ACT 7:38 c/w 1TI 3:15.**
 - A. God’s house is God’s habitation through the Spirit. **EPH 2:19-22.**
 - B. God’s house is where God's honor dwells. **PSA 26:8.**
 - C. God’s house is a conduit for spiritual correspondence between heaven and earth. **GEN 28:17; HEB 12:22.**
 - D. God’s house primarily exists by and for God’s pleasure and glory. **EPH 3:21; REV 4:11.**
 1. Dispense with the notion that the church is primarily for your pleasure or convenience.
 2. Christ died to “...present it TO HIMSELF a glorious church...” **(EPH 5:25-27).**
 - E. God’s house is where the spiritual sacrifices of His worship are to be offered. **1PE 2:5.**
 1. Sacrifice has ever been a part of true worship from the beginning of the world. **HEB 11:4.**
 2. This pattern continues throughout Scripture. **2KI 17:36; PSA 96:8-9.**
 3. The sacrifices we offer in the N.T. do not require bloodshed and death as in the O.T.
 - a. We offer sacrifices of praise and thanks. **HEB 13:15 c/w PSA 69:30-31.**
 - b. We offer sacrifices of our material wealth. **HEB 13:16 c/w PHIL 4:15, 18.**
 4. We are to *present our bodies a living sacrifice*. **ROM 12:1.**
 - a. present: To make present to, bring into the presence of. To bring or place (a person) before, into the presence of, or under the notice of, another... b. To bring before or into the presence of God; to dedicate by so bringing.
 - b. **ROM 12:1** is written to baptized believers. This requires bringing oneself into the presence of God, to come to where He is, the assembly that convenes to render Him corporate praise. He is *in the midst* of His saints

who are GATHERED TOGETHER. **MAT 18:20.**

- c. The corporate aspect of **ROM 12:1** is seen in that it does not say “present your bodies living sacrificeS” but “present your bodies a living sacrifice,” i.e., the presentation of many bodies *together* is a sacrifice that pleases God.
- 5. N.T. church worship also requires sacrifices of our time, energy, pleasures, etc.
 - a. Sacrifice that is no expense to the offerer is not a sacrifice. **1CH 21:24.**
 - b. Christ frowns on the low-effort servant who will not put himself out to please his lord. **MAT 25:24-26.**
 - c. Years ago I reproved a saint for her laxity in basic Christian responsibility. She responded, “But I’ve never been in a church before where I had to do anything: I don’t think I should be in this church anymore.” She being unrepentant, I agreed, and her wish was granted by the church.
 - d. Coming to Christ is *to take His yoke upon oneself*, i.e., to work. And His yoke is easy. **MAT 11:28-30 c/w 1JO 5:3.**
 - e. **(JER 12:5)** If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?
- F. God’s house has been given distinguishing and glorious ordinances to *keep* (pay attention or regard to; to observe, stand to, or dutifully abide by). **1CO 11:1-2.**

III. The church consists of *members* (**1CO 12:27**) but church membership is not a club like Sam’s Club (or any other such club) where you can fully be a member but not fully engaged. The church is not “Jesus’s Club” where you go only when you feel like it or need something.

- A. The first N.T. church membership role was that of believers *gathered together in one place* for instruction and church order. **ACT 1:15-26.**
 - 1. It was upon this *assembly* that the Holy Ghost came. **ACT 2:1-4.**
 - 2. This was God taking up residence in His house, as in **EXO 40:33-34; 2CH 7:1.**
 - 3. Suffice it to say that God highly prioritizes His house over your house. **PSA 87:2.**
- B. Church = congregation. **PSA 22:22 c/w HEB 2:12.**
 - 1. congregation: The action of congregating or collecting in one body or mass.
 - 2. congregate: To collect or gather (things) together into a mass or crowd. 2. To assemble (people), *esp.* to a meeting.
 - 3. The very concept of church is not of scattered but gathered members.
- C. In assembling, the church comes together into *one place*. **ACT 2:1; 1CO 11:20; 14:23.**
 - 1. Coming together into one place demands both the elements of a *time* and a *place*. Otherwise, how could the whole church come together in one place?
 - 2. Techno-church where no assembly is required is not Biblical church.
- D. God presses the issue of assembly by commandment. **HEB 10:21-25.**

IV. How highly do you value God's house?

- A. Do you long for the opportunity to be in it? **PSA 84:1-2.**
- B. Do you prefer it to other things which you find enjoyable? **PSA 84:10; 137:6.**
- C. Do you love it enough to desire it all your days? **PSA 27:4; 23:6.**
- D. Do you have a zeal for it? **JOH 2:13-17.**
 - 1. It is good be zealously affected always in a good thing. **GAL 4:18.**
 - 2. Zeal in good things can inspire others. **2CO 9:2.**
 - 3. Where such zeal is lacking, repentance is needed. **REV 3:19.**
- E. Are you glad when it is time to attend its service? **PSA 122:1 c/w ZEC 8:21.**

1. “1. The invitation to them was very welcome. David was himself glad, and would have every Israelite to say that he was *glad*, when he was called upon to *go up to the house of the Lord*. Note, (1.) It is the will of God that we should worship him in concert, that many should join together to wait upon him in public ordinances. We ought to worship God in our own houses, but that is not enough; we must *go into the house of the Lord*, to pay our homage to him there, and *not forsake the assembling of ourselves together*. (2.) We should not only agree with one another, but excite and stir up one another, to go to worship God in public. *Let us go*; not, ‘Do you go and pray for us, and we will stay at home;’ but, *We will go also*, Zec 8:21. Not, ‘Do you go before, and we will follow at our leisure;’ or, ‘We will go first, and you shall come after us;’ but, ‘*Let us go together*, for the honour of God and for our mutual edification and encouragement.’ We ourselves are slow and backward, and others are so too, and therefore we should thus quicken and sharpen one another to that which is good, as iron sharpens iron. (3.) Those that rejoice in God will rejoice in calls and opportunities to wait upon him. David himself, though he had as little need of a spur to his zeal in religious exercises as any, yet was so far from taking it as an affront that he was glad of it as a kindness when he was called upon to *go up to the house of the Lord* with the meanest of his subjects.”
(Matthew Henry Commentary, on Psalm 122:1)
2. “The greatest of men are less than the least of the ordinances of Jesus Christ.”
(Matthew Henry)

- V. How highly do you value the Lord's table? It is *the Lord's supper*, not a common meal that one can indulge in or disregard. **1CO 11:20-22, 33-34.**
 - A. It's not optional. **MAT 28:19-20 c/w 1CO 11:2, 23-25.**
 - B. Communion is a *commandment* for the local church *in assembly*. Therefore, wilful refusal to observe it is sin. **JAM 4:17; 1JO 3:4.**
 - C. The church must separate company from publicly known sinners. **1CO 5:1-2.**
 - D. The Lord's table is the acid test of church membership since it cannot be observed if there is publicly known wickedness among the brethren. **1CO 5:11-13.**
 - E. It also puts pressure on the individual to examine himself. **1CO 11:28.**
 - F. We ought to discern in it the horrible sufferings inflicted upon the sinless Son of God for our sins and be thankful for the opportunity to be humbled by their memorial. **1CO 11:29.**
- VI. Church discipline is an act of the church *in assembly*. **1CO 5:4-5.**
 - A. It is a punishment *inflicted of many* (**2CO 2:6**) as opposed to *a few* (**JER 42:2**), and therefore is by a majority decision.
 - B. This is a public tribunal, not a “star-chamber” proceeding, or a purely ministerial function. Paul gave order, but the Corinthian church assembly was to inflict the punishment.
 - C. It would be improper to attempt this action without a church assembly, and those who presume to have an interest in church discipline should be in assembly.
- VII. God understands that circumstances may militate against known duty. **2CO 8:12.**
 - A. Church members should examine their situations to see if there is something they can do to alter their hindering circumstances.
 1. We all have the occasional ox fallen into a pit (**LUK 14:5**) but this should motivate us to build a fence, fill the pit or get rid of the ox.
 2. We should be willing to part with what pleases us in order to do what pleases God.

2KI 4:7; LUK 12:33.

- B. God sees a willing heart but also expects performance, which may require an adjustment of our will to match His will. **ISA 1:19; 2CO 8:11; PHIL 2:13.**
- C. Oppressed by chastening or circumstances, etc.? Public worship is very appropriate. **2SAM 12:20; PSA 42:1-4.**

VIII. Some take the position that their service to God need go no further than their pursuit of noble causes and therefore immerse themselves in them to the exclusion of God's house.

- A. Be cautious about getting so caught up in serving others that you have not got time for simple attendance to Christ. **LUK 10:38-42.**
- B. Our Lord Jesus recognized that noble causes must be placed on a lower order of priority sometimes. **MAT 26:7-11.**
- C. God expects His kingdom and its order to receive first priority. **MAT 6:31-33.**

IX. Do not underestimate the value of prayer *in* the house of God.
MAT 21:13; 2CH 7:15 c/w ACT 4:23-31.

X. Public assembly fosters the personal interactions God has ordained for the perfecting of our faith.

- A. We are to comfort (strengthen) ourselves *together* and edify (build) one another up in the faith. **1TH 5:11.**
- B. We are to admonish one another (to put in mind of duties). **ROM 15:14.**
- C. We are to exhort one another. **HEB 3:13.**
- D. We are to provoke one another to love and good works. **HEB 10:24-25.**
- E. There is no substitute for face to face interaction. **1TH 2:17; 3:10; 2JO 1:12.**

XI. Questions, etc.

- A. "What determines when the church assembles for worship?"
 - 1. There is no commanded day of the week for assembly; we are not under the Sabbath command of the Law of Moses. **COL 2:16-17.**
 - 2. Such decisions are made by the pastors who rule the church by Scripture. **HEB 13:7, 17.**
 - a. Christ's minister is His steward. **TIT 1:7.**
 - b. steward: An official who controls the domestic affairs of a household, supervising the service of his master's table, directing the domestics, and regulating household expenditure; a major-domo.
 - c. God's steward is not to be selfwilled (**TIT 1:7**). As such, I give due consideration to the concerns of the brethren: our Sunday worship is as much by mutual agreement as it is by pastoral rule.
 - 3. The apostles and early church did place special emphasis on the first day of the week. **ACT 20:7; 1CO 16:2.**
- B. "Is missing church assembly sometimes a forsaking of assembling?"
 - 1. forsake: To deny, renounce, or repudiate allegiance to (God, a lord, etc.).
 - 2. Missing church sometimes is not necessarily a renunciation of one's duty to God's house but it could lead to that if it becomes too frequent by *choice*. Would you consider someone to be a faithful assembler who *chose* only to come to public worship once per year?
 - 3. One's actions speak louder than his words. Someone might profess to not be renouncing their allegiance to the house of God but be delinquent in actually attending the assembly. This is hypocrisy which God condemns.

MAT 15:7-8; TIT 1:16.

4. If I find out there is an unjustifiable absence from church assembly, expect to hear from me. If this becomes a chronic matter, God will bring it to light (**1CO 4:5**) one way or the other and it will ultimately result in dismissal from church membership.
- C. “Pastor, how do you govern this issue?”
1. I am commanded to give an account to God of the saints’ performance (**HEB 13:17**). I will answer to Him for delinquency in this regard, and therefore I take an active interest in determining why saints do not come to the worship service which we all agree is to be held on Sunday mornings.
 2. I keep a record of church absences and categorize them:
 - a. Sickness.
 - b. Family necessity (sickness, frailty, travel for funeral, etc.).
 - c. Work. Sometimes work-related issues frustrate faithful intentions. I give special consideration to those whose work is in the interests of public health, safety and security.
 - d. Personal (vacation, special event, etc.). When these become too frequent, I will caution and advise accordingly.
 - e. Unjustifiable absences. Examples: “I just didn’t feel like it,” “I partied too hard on Saturday night,” “I have a beef with the pastor (or a member).”
 3. I am all for personal liberty and will err on the side of mercy in this area but I cannot turn a blind eye to the obvious. And God certainly sees well.
- D. Where is your treasure? **MAT 6:21; 13:44-46.**