

# Do We Really Need The Church?

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## *Part One*

### **INTRODUCTION**

- A. You, no doubt, have heard preachers close their television sermons with something like, “Come to the altar and be saved. You don’t need to be a member of any church to be saved. Being a part of a church has nothing to do with being saved.”
- B. That’s a funny statement to make in light of Scripture.
  - 1. “The husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior” (Eph. 5:23).
  - 2. “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood” (Acts 20:28).
  - 3. “The Lord added to their number [the church] day by day those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47).
- C. The whole idea behind one’s not needing to be a member of the church to be saved is the idea that the church really isn’t that important. Yet, the church must be important.
  - 1. Jesus died for the church - “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” (Eph. 5:25).
  - 2. Jesus promised to build the church.
    - a. “On this rock I will build my church” (Mt. 16:18).
    - b. Why would Jesus build something that isn’t important?
  - 3. Through prophets, God promised those of long ago that the church would be built.
    - a. Some prophecies concerning the church:
      - 1) “It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it, and many peoples shall come, and say: ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.’ For out of Zion shall go the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore” (Is. 2:2-4).
      - 2) “In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever” (Dan. 2:44).
    - b. Why would the Lord give such hope to the remnant if the church really wasn’t that important?
- D. Why is the church important? Why did the Lord build his church?
  - 1. There are two main reasons that God established the church - the fellowship of believers and the cooperation of believers.
  - 2. This evening, we want to examine the fellowship of believers and next Lord’s day we’ll examine the cooperation of believers.

### **THE CHURCH IS FOR THE FELLOWSHIP OF BELIEVERS**

- A. People are by nature social beings; they want to be a part of a group.
  - 1. After the creation of man, we read: “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him” (Gn 2:18).
  - 2. Man was not created to live alone, but he was created to live in fellowship. The church partially fulfills this need.
- B. The New Testament speaks concerning this fellowship which exists between believers.
  - 1. “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42).
  - 2. “If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 Jn. 1:7).

- C. This Christian fellowship is vital for our spiritual lives.
1. Part of this fellowship involves encouraging one another to live right before God.
    - a. Two passages:
      - 1) “Exhort one another every day, as long as it is called ‘today,’ that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin” (Heb. 3:13).
      - 2) Paul, Titus, and those with him worked for the edification of the Corinthians: “It is in the sight of God that we have been speaking in Christ, and all for your upbuilding, beloved” (2 Cor. 12:19).
    - b. This exhortation is vital.
      - 1) How many times do we feel like throwing up our hands and quitting? How many times do we think, “I just can’t live this life anymore”?
      - 2) Encouragement says, “Come on. I’ll help you. We can do it together.”
      - 3) Edward Steichen, who eventually became one of the world’s most renowned photographers, almost gave up on the day he shot his first pictures.
        - a) At 16, young Steichen bought a camera and took 50 photos. But, only one turned out—a portrait of his sister at the piano.
        - b) Edward’s father thought that was a poor showing. But his mother insisted that the photograph of his sister was so beautiful that it more than compensated for 49 failures.
          - i. Her encouragement convinced the youngster to stick with his new hobby.
          - ii. He stayed with it for the rest of his life, but it had been a close call.
      - 4) Encouragement changed Edward Steichen’s life. Encouragement can change the lives of our brethren. Are you encouraging your brethren?
  2. Part of this fellowship involves helping brethren face difficult times.
    - a. Some passages:
      - 1) “Weep with those who weep” (Rom. 12:15).
      - 2) “Jesus wept” (Jn. 11:35). Jesus did not weep because Lazarus had died; he wept because he loved Mary and Martha!
    - b. This comfort we give our brethren is vital.
      - 1) Who has not had his spirits lifted during a difficult moment by a Christian brother’s saying, “I care. I love you. If you need me, I’m here”?
      - 2) A little girl came home from a neighbor’s house where her little friend had died.
        - a) “Why did you go?” questioned her father.
        - b) “To comfort her mother,” said the child.
        - c) “What could you do to comfort her?” “I climbed into her lap and cried with her.”
  3. Part of this fellowship involves helping brethren rid their lives of sin.
    - a. “Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal 6:1-2).
    - b. This support we receive is vital.
      - 1) Who among us has not sinned? Who among us has not asked a brother to pray that we might be strengthened against a certain temptation?
      - 2) We need to know that we can go to our brethren and say, “Would you help me? Would you pray for me?”
  4. Love for one another permeates this fellowship.
    - a. God expects his children to love one another.
      - 1) “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn. 13:35).
      - 2) “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God” (1 Jn. 4:7).
    - b. The church must be a place of love.
      - 1) This world is a cold, cold place; too many people never experience love.
      - 2) The church must be a place where people are loved, where one’s concerns and fears can be expressed, where one doesn’t have to pretend to be something he isn’t.
      - 3) Do you love your brethren?
- D. Why did God want the church to have such close fellowship?
1. This type of fellowship will attract unbelievers.
    - a. So many in this world care only for themselves; they will trample upon anyone who gets in their way of

- achieving what they want.
    - b. Christians look at one another differently - they put the needs of others in front of themselves.
    - c. For so many in this world, that is a welcomed change.
  - 2. This type of fellowship prepares us for the difficult times in life.
    - a. We've all been there - the dearest person in our world has died, a child has done the unthinkable, our employer says it's time to find a different job.
    - b. Where are we going to turn in such difficult times?
      - 1) If we are not surrounded with people who love us, we're going to struggle greatly.
      - 2) But, if we are surrounded with people who love us, we can call in the middle of the night and say, "I need to talk." When we call, we will not find annoyance but love and concern.
  - 3. This type of fellowship restores those who have fallen into sin.
    - a. "When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord" (1 Cor. 5:4-5).
      - 1) Immorality in the church cannot be accepted; those who practice sin and refuse to change must be put away from us.
      - 2) But, this putting away is for one's own benefit- "that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."
    - b. How can being cast away from the church help one to be saved on the last day?
      - 1) That group that loves him does not accept his behavior, that group that loves him refuses to have contact with him, that group that loves him no longer invites him to have dinner with him.
      - 2) Once he has been disfellowshipped, the unrepentant sinner realizes what he's missing, corrects his sin, and comes home.
        - a) That is precisely the way things worked with the Prodigal Son: When he had no food, he said to himself, "How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger!" (Lk 16:17).
        - b) He realized what he was missing, corrected his behavior, & returned home.

## **CONCLUSION**

- A. The church serves a valuable service to its members - the fellowship of believers.
- B. You need to provide a valuable service to the church - you need to fellowship with your brethren.
  - 1. In order to be of value in the church, you need to be a faithful member of the church.
  - 2. Are you a faithful member of the church?