

The Church

Wednesday, July 20, 2022
Mike Miller
Straight Paths Bible Church

Acts 20:28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

Romans 16:1 I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cencrea:

- I. What the church really is and what the word means has become a controversial matter in the past few generations.
 - A. There have been those of every generation who made up their own opinions and judgements about church, church attendance, church membership, and have either abandoned the church or joined themselves to one.
 - B. There have been many who attempted to join themselves to a church and finally abandoned it.
 1. One of two things was the cause of this: Either they were not born again and tried to join themselves to a church that was spiritual, or, they tried to join a group of people who were trying to identify as a church, but the Spirit of God would not visit.
 - C. It is undeniable as you read the New Testament that any reference to “church” is almost always referring to a particular local assembly of believers.
 1. It is also undeniable that “church” refers to all those who are truly born again.
 2. The word “Catholic” means “universal” church.
 3. Therefore, I do not like to use that word to refer to the church to which all belong who are truly saved.
 - D. We need to be careful in referring to the church in that sense because:
 1. There are many people who believe that is good enough and therefore they have no need of a local church.
 2. These are always people who are not truly submitted to God, because if they read the Bible even casually with any understanding at all, they quickly realize the importance that God puts on the local church.
 - E. The church “triumphant” is not assembled together yet, and will not be until Jesus comes and takes us all out.
 1. There will then be no local churches, but one great multitude, which no man can number, all together with the Lord forever.
 - F. But until the trumpet sounds we serve God together in local churches.
- II. What is the local church?
 - A. A local church is a company of believers serving the Lord together in a certain location. (the church at Ephesus, the church at Smyrna, the church at Philidelphia, etc.)
 - B. A local church is like a colony of ransomed souls dwelling together apart from the world.
 - C. A local church is like a division of soldiers on foreign soil.

- D. It is like a group of laborers working a farm together.
- E. It is a visible representative of the invisible God.
- F. A local church is not a “work” or some kind of business, or social club, but it is a mission station; it is a fort, or safe place for God’s people, or those who are seeking for God.
- G. It is not a venue where the world and its philosophies and wicked devices can be promoted and flaunted.
- H. If a local church is truly a part of the bride of Christ it will be a supernatural thing.
 - 1. It will be a holy, supernatural thing, not a superstitious thing.
 - 2. The supernatural thing about a local church will be the reality of the redeemed souls who make up its membership.
 - 3. The spiritual atmosphere among the people of the local church identify it as a true church.
 - 4. It is not a church, but a social group that gathers at appointed times, if the atmosphere is primarily social instead of spiritual.
- I. A local church that is nothing more than a social group can be reproduced anywhere and anytime by people, whether they are religious or not.
- J. A spiritual local church has an atmosphere that cannot be possible except among people who are truly redeemed.

III. How important is it to be a part of a local church?

- A. There is an old saying that has been proven to be true: “Birds of a feather flock together.”
- B. Even animals, with very few exceptions, stay in the company of their own kind.
- C. People are much more prone to this in every area of life, and spend a lot of their mental power, time, money, and efforts to find a group to belong to.
- D. Therefore, it is simply unnatural for a person who is born again to want to be joined to people who are totally different than him in every important way.
- E. And it is also completely unnatural for him not to want to be with those who are likeminded and working for the same Lord.
- F. For someone to claim to be a child of God and despise the local church leaves no logical conclusion to come to except that they are not really born again and have deceived themselves.
- G. The church is the pillar and ground of the truth.
 - 1. If the truth is to be found it will be found with the people of God, not in the counsels of the wicked.
- H. The local church is the means that God established for his work to be done and his message of redemption to be preached to the world.
 - 1. God does not appoint heroes to do what the churches are supposed to be doing.
- I. Much of the New Testament is instruction and correction to the churches, much more than to individuals.
- J. No man is an island and we need one another, to learn and to grow.
 - 1. That is why He appointed some apostles, some prophets, some pastors and teachers.
- K. And then that important matter of how we are to love one another, and that is the evidence that we are disciples of Christ.
 - 1. How can we do that if we are hostile toward the local church?