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28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. **29** Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. **30** For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. (Matt. 11:28-30).

Will YOU obey God? Heb. 5:9

♥ We admonish you:
believe and **obey** the Lord (Heb. 5:8, 9) ♥

Who will be saved?

Answer: Matt. 7:21.

How Valuable Are You???

For a few verses to answer this see:

- ♥ Luke 12:7.
- ♥ Matt. 16:26.
- ♥ Matt. 6:25, 26, 33, 34.
- ♥ 1 Peter 5:7.
- ♥ Heb. 13:5, 6.
- ♥ Rom. 5:8; 1 Peter 3:18.



Sound Words



“Hold fast the form of sound words”

SW

(2 Tim. 1:13 cf. Tit. 1:9; Jude 3)

SW

Church of Christ (Rom. 16:16) Mission USA

(All verses from KJV unless otherwise noted)

Drifting Away

(What A Terrible Thought)

Is The Local Church Important?

by Perry Sexton

Many denominational people have said that **the church** is not important. No doubt this is said because of what their preachers have said and it shows a gross misunderstanding and plain rejection of what the Bible says (Please note **John 12:48**). Their preachers say such things to get around certain Bible teachings they do not like. But this study concerns what **some in the church of Christ** say about **the local church**. And is it not to get around something they do not like in the Bible?

First, "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**" (Acts 20:28). Certainly, we can see the value of the local church by this one verse. Clearly this is speaking of **the local church**, "the flock" over which these elders were appointed "overseers."

Second, Note the strict qualifications for elders in 1 Timothy 3:1-11. And of the deacons beginning in verse 12. It seems to me that these leaders and special servants point to the fact that the local church is very important. In fact, it is just as important as the universal church. **How can one really separate the two?** How can the universal church accomplish anything without the local church?

Third, we see the saved make up **the church**: "Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to **the church**

daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47, read from at least v.37). Are we, you/I important? God thinks so (John 3:16).

Some among us in the church of Christ teach that the **local church** is not important, but the **universal church** is. I must say right off that I cannot comprehend where they are coming from. I do not know the motive for such a statement, but I can guess that it has to do with "getting around" such verses as Hebrews 10:25, etc. But nothing changes Hebrews 10:25 nor any other binding truth for us today.

Clearly in the Bible we read of the church (ekklesia) in the **universal sense** and the **local sense**. And much more in the local sense. As seen above in Acts 2:47 the church is made up of the saved. **Christians are the church universally and locally**. We see in this chapter that the gospel was preached (v.22ff). And those who obeyed the gospel, received the forgiveness of sins (v.37,38,41) and were **added to the church**, the saved (v.41,47). These same saved people continued in the doctrine or teaching of Christ (v.42). **Locally and universally**.

Clear instruction for the members of the church is to **assemble themselves** together in **worship** to God (Heb. 10:25; Acts 20:7). In first Corinthians 11:18; 14:23; Acts 14:27, etc. the church is seen coming together. We know this is not speaking of every member of the church throughout the whole world, that is impossible. **But members of the church (universal) coming together in their locality**. Is this important? Yes, by order of God.

Note that Peter addressed **the elect (church members)** "... scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ... (1 Peter 1:1,2). And further said, "**The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you**, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son" (1 Peter 5:13). The church in different locations yet "elected together."

I fail to see how one can separate the local church from the universal church. How can one be a member of one without being a member of the other? And there are no rules that I know of stating the local church must be a certain number of people. Think of the eunuch in Acts 8. When he was converted was he the church in his home area? Of course. Compare Romans 16:5; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 1:2.

Please note a few things **below**. When I mention "to all saints" it may have been given first in a letter to a specific congregation, but I think we all know that it includes **all saints**. We have the complete Bible today. Even when certain things were written specifically to a local congregation, we know the principles involved apply to all saints and of course any commands and examples as in Acts 20:7 and 1 Cor. 16:1,2.

- ✓ Obey elders (Heb. 13:7,17), to all saints, if we have elders.

- ✓ Evangelize (Matt. 28:18-20), to all saints.
- ✓ Discipline (2 Thess. 3:6), to all saints.
- ✓ Worship (John 4:24), to all saints.
- ✓ The New Testament, to all saints.
- ✓ Edification, benevolence, etc., to all saints.

We understand that we, the saints, are under the New Testament regardless of what part of the world we are in and what local congregation we gather with to worship and work.

The **Israelites stand as a great example for us** (Rom. 15:4; the book of Hebrews, for example). Think of the **twelve tribes** that made up the **Israelites**. Think of the different roles, but how they co-operated for major battles for example. The law was given to them yet different tribes. Were the tribes important? I think so and I believe some thought and comparisons along these lines can help us in our understanding of the local church and universal church relationship.

I fear that such beliefs as the local church not being important will surely cause members **to drift away**. To **backslide** in many ways. If we fail to hit the mark in this vital matter, we will likely miss the mark in other ways. See former articles.

I wrote this in another article titled: **SIN**. Sin is "a failing to hit the mark ... a sinning, whether it occurs by omission or commission, in thought and feeling or in speech and action" [Thayer].

As Christians, preachers and teachers we need to be very careful that we do not open "gates" that will bring in sin and error of any kind. I believe many things that started out innocently, **but** others, on down the road, took them deeper to a sinful state. And unauthorized practices.

We must remember such admonitions as given to Israel, "And thou shalt not go aside from any of the words which I command thee this day, to the right hand, or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them." (Deuteronomy 28:14). And, "Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left;" (Joshua 23:6). **And never compromise** (cf. Exodus 10:26).

Remembering always the great and serious consequences that our Lord showed in **Matthew 7:13-27**.

Sin has terrible consequences: "For the wages of sin *is* death ..." (Rom. 6:23).

Which road are you on, the road of compromise or the road right down the line truth? ♥