



The Voice of Truth



August 23, 2009

The Church Doesn't Matter?

By Jimmy Pettigrew

The prevalent attitude toward the church among religious people for years has been, "Oh, the church is not important. It makes no difference whether one is a member or not. One church is just as good as another. The church is non-essential to man's eternal welfare." If what is meant by these statements concerns man-made churches, then we would agree heartily. Jesus said, "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up," (**Matt. 15:13**). Every last "church" built, named and governed by man is doomed to destruction. Jesus Christ fervently prayed against them all (**Jn. 17:20-21**). In reality Roman Catholicism and Protestantism have no connection at all with one's salvation. However, if some are saying that the Lord's church does not matter, now we got a problem, because I strongly protest. God's Book never has taught the concept that the church of Jesus Christ is a worthless institution, one void of all value. If the church doesn't matter, you are telling me, then:

That The Body Of Christ Doesn't Matter. Christ is the "saviour of the body," (**Eph. 5:23**). Paul teaches that there is one body (**Eph. 4:4**). How many bodies is He the Saviour of? "But now in deed there are many members, yet one body," (**1 Cor. 12:20**). Paul, as we see, has taught time after time the oneness of the body. What is the body? **THE CHURCH!** (**Eph. 1:22-23**). In this passage Paul tells us that the church is the body. In **Colossians 1:18** he teaches that the body is the church. So the church is the body and the body is the church. There is only one body; therefore there is only one church. How perfectly this agrees with the promise: "I will build my church" (**Matt. 16:18**). Salvation is found in this one church. This does not mean the church is the Savior. The church is the saved! If the church does not matter, neither does salvation matter which is gra-

ciously conferred within the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. When Paul was persecuting the church (**Acts 9**), he was persecuting Christ (**Acts 9:4**). The church and Christ cannot be separated. The church is important! If the church doesn't matter, then:

You Are Telling Me The Blood Of Christ Doesn't Matter. In his epistle to the Ephesian church Paul said that Jesus "loved the church, and gave himself for it; ..." (**Eph. 5:25**). Christ shed His blood for the church (**Acts 20:28**). How could anyone say the church is not important? The blood of Christ purchased the church. If the church doesn't matter, then the blood of Christ doesn't matter. It is the blood of Christ that made it possible for us to be reconciled back to God (**Rom. 5:10**). We are reconciled unto God in one body (**Eph. 2:16**), which is the church (**Col. 1:18, 24**). Thus, one is saved from his sins, reconciled unto God, when he enters the one body, the church of Christ (**Rom. 16:16**). Who would say that Christ wasted His blood on the cross for a worthless institution? You do if you say the church doesn't matter, that then church is unimportant.

Every Christian, child of God, is a member of the church of Christ. No one can be saved without the blood of Christ (**Heb. 9:22; Eph. 1:7**), and the church of Christ was purchased by the blood of Christ (**Acts 20:28**). Thus, there are no Christians who are not members of the church of Christ. If the church doesn't matter, then:

God's Eternal Plan Doesn't Matter. Who would say this? You do when you say the church is unimportant. The church was not an after-thought on God's part (**Eph. 3:8-11**). It existed in purpose before the world was; it existed in prophecy (**Isa. 2:2-4; Dan. 2:44**). God had His plan of redemption before He made man; the church was and is a central part of it. No other foundation is man permit-

ted to lay (**1 Cor. 3:11**). If the church does not matter, then:

The Lord's Supper Does Not Matter. The Lord's Supper is to be observed in His kingdom (**Lk. 22:29-30**). In **1 Corinthians 11:20-34** the sacred penman taught the brethren at Corinth to observe the Lord's Supper in their church assembly. The church at Troas observed the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week (**Acts 20:7**). This sacred feast was and is to be done in the church of the Lord. God never commanded anyone to partake of His Son's Supper save those in the church and only upon the first day of the week, Sunday. If the church doesn't matter, you're telling me the Lord's Supper doesn't matter. Who would do this? You, if you say the church is not important, one church is just as good as another. If the church doesn't matter, then:

The Gospel Doesn't Matter. The gospel of Christ produces the church of Christ; it is the seed (**Lk. 8:11**). If the gospel had never been preached, then the church never could have existed. The church and the gospel are inseparably linked. If the church doesn't matter, neither does the gospel matter. The gospel is composed of facts that must be believed. We must believe Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, that He died, was buried and rose again for our sins according to the Scriptures (**1 Cor. 15:1-4**). The gospel tells us what we must do to be saved. One must hear God's Word (**Rom. 10:17**); believe it (**Mk. 16:16**); repent (**Lk. 13:3, 5**); confessing Christ is the Son of God (**Rom. 10:9-10**); being baptized for the remission of sins (**Acts 2:38**) and live a life of continued faithfulness (**Rev. 2:10**). None of these are important if the church doesn't matter. If the church is of no value, neither is the Bible which produces the church. Who would say this?

Does the church really matter to you?

The Problem Of Self **By Gene Taylor**

Those who comprise our society seem to be consumed with self. The "me" generation we heard so much of has aged to become the most influential segment of society. So

many of the products and services which are popular today are those which are aimed at improving the individual. The "self-help" books and seminars intended to improve self-image have been embraced by nearly everyone. "Infomercials" abound on television for all sorts of fitness gadgets so individuals can not only stay healthy but also develop that physique which allows one to be proud of self and the way he/she looks. A majority of the adult population in this country is on some sort of diet all the time in order to meet the ideal, not of the American Medical Association, but the fashion world or their peers. While many of these things are, in reality, harmless enough in and of themselves, there is a darker side to emphasis on self.

Many of the ills which plague our society are rooted in self. You name it – theft, murder, immorality, etc. – while often blamed on a "poor self image" are really rooted in self.

As a nation we have become obsessed with "rights" with little or no regard as to their effects upon others. Consider the "pro-choice" advocates—they demand their individual rights "to do with their bodies what they choose," while at the same time showing no regard for the child. This fact is illustrated by an excerpt from an article which appeared in the *Tallahassee Democrat* on April 5, 1994. In commenting on the child she had aborted, a woman said, "It wasn't a fetus. It was like a cancer. It was, 'OK, get this out of me and let's get on with my life.'" Self was the only one for whom she had any consideration.

The problem of self is neither new nor peculiar to our time. From Eden to eternity the chief cause of sin has been self and selfishness. It is at the root of all sin. "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death." (**Jas. 1:13-15**).

When it comes to sin, who is our biggest enemy? We might be quick to say that it is

Satan. He is described in **1 Peter 5:8** as a "roaring lion" who walks about seeing whom he may devour. Actually, though, he can only overcome those who through self-will give themselves over to him. Someone has said, "To conquer self is to conquer all." We are prone to blame Satan and others but we must look to self.

The proper attitude toward self is a sign of maturity. We can somewhat condone selfishness in a child because he does not know better but immaturity and ignorance are never excuses for an adult, especially one who claims to be a Christian, to be selfish in his attitudes and actions (**Acts 17:30**).

I hope you will thoughtfully consider this article – for to be a successful Christian, one must heed the command of Jesus in **Matthew 16:24**, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." *Credit: www.padfield.com*

"Our Attitude Toward Faithful Attendance" By Jarrod Jacobs

If we were to visit a local congregation in just about any part of these United States, I believe we would see, generally, people who are unfaithful in attending the services of the local church. We might visit a congregation and see a steady drop in attendance from Sunday morning, to Sunday night, to their mid-week Bible study (generally Wednesday night). We know that this is a problem at Southside as well. Why is that? Why do some "Christians" suppose that one service is "better" or "more important" than another? Let us turn to God's word and learn the consequences of unfaithful attendance.

Unfaithful Attendance Is Associated With A Lack Of Zeal.

To have zeal is, "to be jealous, also signifies to seek or desire eagerly, in the sense of taking a warm interest in, i.e. to be the object of warm interest on the part of others" (*Vine's*, p. 1272). God's people are to be zealous (**Titus 2:14**). They are to have an eager desire for following the Lord's will. In this case, an eager desire for assembling and sharing in fellowship with God and the brethren. A good example of a zealous Chris-

tian is a man named Apollos (**Acts 18:25**). The Bible says he was fervent. The root word for "zeal" is found in the word "fervent." Therefore, when we read about Apollos (or anyone in the Bible) being fervent, we know they were zealous! Can one be zealous or fervent for the Lord and yet refuse to assemble to worship Him? Of course, not! You show me a man or woman that is unfaithful in their attendance, and I'll show you a man or woman who has lost that fire, that zeal, for the Lord they once had!

Unfaithful Attendance Shows A Disrespect For God's Word.

The Bible is clear in the command for Christians to assemble together. We see this in **Hebrews 10:25**, where the Holy Spirit penned, "*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*" The writer warned that the manner of some was to not assemble, and that was wrong! Whenever we decide that we can obey certain commands, and leave others alone, we are no longer a servant, and instead have become Lord over our own lives rather than letting God be our Lord (**Rom. 12:1-2; Lk. 6:46**). When one disobeys God's word and refuses to assemble with the saints, there are severe consequences. God says, "*For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries*" (**Heb. 10:26-27**). Do you want to be a part of this number? Make no mistake, your willful absence in the assembly, this willful sin, means you are present in the service of Satan!

Unfaithful Attendance Has Other Sins Associated With It.

What sins does one commit when he refuses to assemble with the saints? Some may have never realized that there was any sin involved in unfaithful attendance. Rest assured there is! Please notice some sins that are the product of unfaithful attendance.

1. A person sins because he has violated the command to assemble (**Heb. 10:25**).

2. A person sins because he has violated the command to sing and teach “one another” (**Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16**).

3. A person sins because he is not present to edify the brethren who have assembled (**Rom. 14:19; I Thess. 5:11**).

4. Refusing to assemble not only effects the soul of the person who is absent, but also effects other people’s souls. This is because by being absent, he misses the training in God’s Word which could equip him to teach others (**II Tim. 2:2; Heb. 5:12**).

Let us not forget that one who refuses to assemble with the saints is refusing to be in the presence of Jesus Himself (**Rev. 2:1**).

Conclusion

Yes, we know of occasions where our absence is unavoidable (poor health, bad roads, etc.). However, those are exceptions, and not the reason why attendance sees a steady decline week-by-week. Jesus gave His body and His life’s blood for the church (**Jn. 19:33-34; Acts 20:28**). Could we honestly say that Jesus would treat such a valuable possession as nothing more than a social club? *Credit: www.southside-churchofchrist.com*

What’s the Difference?

BETWEEN the atheist who would not dream of financially supporting the church and the Christian who will not financially support the Lord’s church?

BETWEEN the skeptic who does not believe the Bible and the negligent Christian who never reads it?

BETWEEN those who do not believe in Bible classes and those who choose never to attend a class?

BETWEEN the atheist who does nothing to build up the Lord’s church and the Christian

who finds fault with others, but does nothing himself?

BETWEEN a man of the world, and a person in the church who lives like a man in the world?

BETWEEN a man of the world who lives for self and a person in the church who lives for self, not God?

These are tough questions for Christians who live in a tough world. The fact is, Christians make no difference until they are different. Again, **WHAT’S THE DIFFERENCE?**

Five Firsts to Success

1. Give God the **FIRST HOUR** of the day.
2. Give God the **FIRST DAY** of the week.
3. Give God the **FIRST PORTION** of your pay.
4. Give God the **FIRST CONSIDERATION** in every decision.
5. Give God the **FIRST PLACE** in your heart. And it really works, too!

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear and Learn - **Rom. 10:17 m. 10:9-10 ; 1 Pet. 3:21 ; John 6:45; 17:3**

Believe - **Heb. 11:6; John 6:29; 8:24**

Repent - **Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19; 17:30**

Confess the Lord - **Matt. 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10; 1 Pet. 3:21**

Be Baptized - **Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16; Gal. 3:26-27**

Continue in the Apostles’ Teaching - **Acts 2:42; 2 Tim. 3:14-17**

About the Hillcrest church of Christ

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How to Contact Us

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Our Address

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Schedule of Assembly

Bible Study: Sunday, 9:00am
Worship Service: Sunday, 10:00am
Bible Study: Wednesday, 7:00pm*

*A song service is held on the last Wednesday of every month

www.hillcrestchurchofchrist.com