

Devotional Thought
Week of July 6, 2008

THEME: Church Membership

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teachings and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common.”

Acts 2:42-44

Accepting membership in a particular church can never secure for us a place in heaven. For this reason, some Christians think that joining a church is unimportant. After all, doesn't trusting Christ put us in the "church universal" and make us citizens of heaven?

But suppose such reasoning were applied to a country defending itself against tyranny. The government issues a call to arms. Able-bodied men and women volunteer and gather weekly for a stirring speech. Then they are sent out to "go it alone." They wear no uniform, take orders from no one, and have no corporate strategy or battle plan. The wounded lie unattended on the battlefield for weeks. The "troops" are unidentified, not sure where they fit in, and accountable to no one.

The church can't carry out loving discipline or mobilize for effective service if Christians refuse to identify with and commit themselves to the organization of a local body of believers. The church can't be the church until the officers and members commit themselves, not only to the Sunday worship service, but also to the planning meetings, church conferences, and other organizational meetings that are important to developing the program of the church.

If you are born again but haven't joined the believing, Christ-honoring assembled called the Church, you are depriving yourself and the church of strength and identity. If you are an officer of the local church and are committed only to the Sunday worship service then you also deprive the Church of God of your strength and identity and you are not likely to feel accountable to its leaders and members. Ask God, "Should my commitment to Christ include church membership and what does membership in the church require of me?"

We join our hearts and hands together,
Faithful to the Lord's Command;
We hold each other to God's standards,
All that truth and love demand.

Prayer: Blessed Father, help us to be committed to your church and remind us of our responsibility to become involved in its ministries. Make us mindful that this requires more than attendance at Sunday worship but makes us accountable to the leadership provided under the authority of the Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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