

I. The Necessity of Church Membership.**A.** Exposition of the Text**B.** Doctrines from the Text

- 1) For it is commanded by God. *Belgic Confession 28*, 'We believe that since this holy assembly and congregation is the gathering of those who are saved and there is no salvation apart from it, no one ought to withdraw from it, content to be by himself, regardless of his status or condition. But all people are obliged to join and unite with it, keeping the unity of the church by submitting to its instruction and discipline, by bending their necks under the yoke of Jesus Christ, and by serving to build up one another, according to the gifts God has given them as members of each other in the same body.'
- 2) For outside the Visible Church there is no ordinary salvation. *WCF 25.2*, 'The visible Church, which is also catholic or universal under the gospel (not confined to one nation as before under the law), consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion; and of their children: and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.' This is because in the Visible Church are:
 - a) The ordinary administration of the Word
 - b) The administration of the Sacraments
 - c) The prayers of the saints
 - d) The fellowship of the saints
 - e) The presence of God

C. Answering Objections to the Text

- 1) Objection 1: Isn't my private worship enough? (*Psa 87:2*)
- 2) Objection 2: Why can't I just be a part of a parachurch?
- 3) Objection 3: But the churches around me are so impure!
- 4) Objection 4: How can I trust the Church when I've been under abusive or immoral leadership before?

D. Uses from the Text

- 1) Let us look to and delight in Christ (*Heb 13:12*)
- 2) Let us love the Church, and rejoice to the Lord that we are made members therein.

II. The Priority of Church Membership.**A.** Exposition of the Text**B.** Doctrines from the Text

- 1) The Visible Church is our priority
 - a) Our chief identity is union with Christ (*Gal 2:20*)

b) Our chief citizenship is with the Church (*Phil 3:20*)

c) Our works (outside the care we are to provide for our families) are focused first upon the Church (*Gal 6:10*)

2) The Church takes priority over our own comfort

a) More so than our own preferences (*Eph 5:21*)

b) More so than our own time (*Eph 5:16, 18b-19*)

c) More so than our own financial ease (*Mt 6:19-21*)

C. Answering Objections to the Text

- 1) Objection 1: But shouldn't we prioritize the community first?
- 2) Objection 2: But I don't get along with the other members of the Church! (*1 Jn 4:11-12*)

D. Uses from the Text

- 1) Be diligent in the fellowship of the saints (*Heidel. Cat. 55*)
- 2) Let us not forget that the whole family is a part of the communion of saints.

III. The Duties of Church Membership.**A.** Exposition of the Text**B.** Doctrines from the Text

- 1) We all have particular duties in the Church according to our station.
 - a) What is common to all Christians (*Mt 6:33*): (i) To kill our sin; (ii) To obey God's Law; (iii) To seek the good of the Church; (iv) To pursue the advancing of the Gospel; (v) To attend the means of grace.
 - b) What is unique: (i) Our vocations and stations in life; (ii) Our vocations and maturity in the faith.
- 2) The way we mature in the Lord is by being a part of the Church (*Eph 3:18-19*)

C. Answering Objections to the Text

- 1) Objection 1: But what can I really do?
- 2) Objection 2: But I don't seem to be growing the Lord!

D. Uses from the Text

- 1) Self-Examination:
 - a) Are you being faithful in your duties to the Lord, particularly as it concerns the Visible Church?
 - b) How can you grow now in service to the Lord within the Visible Church?
 - c) How would you like to grow and mature? Do you have a view of ways you would like to serve?
- 2) Let us be faithful in our duties and content in our stations and vocations now (*Lk 16:10*)
- 3) Though we have different duties, let us look to the same reward.