

General Topics :: On Confessing Christ and Joining a Local Church by Spurgeon

On Confessing Christ and Joining a Local Church by Spurgeon - posted by Oracio (), on: 2011/6/8 12:36

"I. First, then, ADDITIONS TO THE CHURCH, WHAT ABOUT THEM? "The Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."

It seems to have been the custom in the earliest times for persons who had been converted to Christ to join themselves with the church of Jesus Christ.

From that fact, I feel persuaded that they did not conceal their convictions. It is a strong temptation with many to say, "I have believed in Jesus, but that is a matter between God and my own soul, there is no need that I should tell this to others. Can't I quietly go to heaven and be a Nicodemus, or a Joseph of Arimathea?" To which I reply, Yes, you can quietly go to heaven, and we hope you will do so, but that is a different thing from being cowardly and ashamed of Christ. We will not object to your being a Nicodemus if you will go with him when he carries spices to the grave of Jesus; and you may be a Joseph of Arimathea if you will attend him when he goes boldly to Pilate and begs for the body of Jesus. Neither of these two brethren were cowards after the cross had been set up before their eyes, neither were they ashamed to identify themselves with the crucified Christ. Follow them, not in the infancy of their love, but in its more mature days. Remember, dear friends, the promise of the gospel runs like this, "He that believes in his heart, and confesses Christ with his mouth, will be saved." Do not, I charge you, neglect half of the command! The gospel commission which we have received is this: "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved." That is the message as we find it, we did not insert the clause concerning baptism, neither do we dare to leave it out, or advise you to neglect it. I give you the very words of the Savior. Do not, therefore, divide the gospel command in order to throw half of it away, but believe it all and affirm your belief, and be added to the church.

It is quite clear, too, that believers in those days did not try to go to heaven alone. However, there has been a great deal said in these days about simply being a Christian and not joining any particular church, this is clearly a piece of hypocrisy, and in all cases a mistake.

This idea of not joining any one particular church, and instead simply belonging to the "church at large" is often advocated in the name of unity, and yet it is clear to everyone that it is just the opposite of unity, and is intended to put an end to all visible church fellowship. The good people mentioned in our text immediately join the church of the Living God in Jerusalem. I dare say that even in those days, had they criticized the church, they would have found faults in her, certainly within a few weeks there were great faults that had to be remedied; but these converts felt that the group of Christians at Jerusalem was indeed the true church of Jesus Christ, and, therefore, they joined it. All of you can find true churches of Jesus Christ if you choose to look for them. If you wait for a perfect church, you must wait until you get to heaven; and even if you could find a perfect church on earth, I am sure they would not admit you to their fellowship, for you yourself are not perfect. Find those people who are nearest to the Scriptures, who hold the truth in doctrine and in practice, and are most like the apostolic church, and then join them, and you will be blessed for it. Consider the matter, and reflect that if it would be right for you to remain out of church fellowship, it must be right for every other believer to remain in the same condition, and then there would be no visible church on earth at all, and no body of people banded together to maintain and teach Christian commands and practices. Christian fellowship, especially the celebration of the Lord's Supper, and the maintenance of an evangelistic ministry, would become an impossibility, if no one openly declared the Savior's cause. Act then according to your duty, and if you are a Christian, join with Christians; if you love the Master, love the servants; if you love the Captain, unite with the army, and join that regiment of it which you think adheres the closest to the Master's word."

The above excerpt was taken from C.H. Spurgeon's sermon titled "Additions to the Church". You can read the complete sermon here: www.biblebb.com/files/spurgeon/1167.htm

Re: On Confessing Christ and Joining a Local Church by Spurgeon - posted by UntoBabes (), on: 2011/6/8 14:54

Thanks Oracio.

In John 12 there were people that denied Jesus because they were afraid to be put out of the church. I think we are living in a rather similar time. Most churches in America are dead and hostile to true believers.

John 12

42 Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; 43 for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

Re: - posted by Oracio (), on: 2011/6/8 15:33

Good point and interesting verse UntoBabes. Regarding confessing Christ, I think Spurgeon's point is that true believers will eventually mature in their boldness, like we see with Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. I would agree with Spurgeon there. I remember when I used to be a "false convert" I was completely afraid of telling everyone I was a follower of Christ, and in my mind and heart I was deceived into thinking I was one. Sometimes one of the signs of a false conversion is a complete fear of confessing Christ to others. I say sometimes because there are many out there who boldly confess Christ yet are false converts also.

Regarding the state of most churches in America, I agree with you. However, I would say there are still enough churches here that are "solid enough" for believers to join in some way. I think many believers get caught up in too much nit picking and criticizing all churches that they miss out on good genuine fellowship with other Christians. I think many of us don't make a big enough effort to find a solid enough church nearest to us, but instead make excuses for not trying our best to find one. Of course, every situation is different. For example, if you live in a rural area where there are absolutely no "solid-enough" churches, I'd say you have a valid excuse not to join a church. In that situation I would suggest praying hard that God would raise up a work in your area, and that you be willing to let God use you for that work.

Re: - posted by UntoBabes (), on: 2011/6/8 15:47

Hello Oracio,

I do go to a Mennonite church which I like very much, and wearing a Mennonite head-cover gets the attention of many inquiring about my beliefs. However, I do believe that the church is dead all over from Mennonite, to Pentecostal, to Baptist that it is actually causing many people to see no power in Christianity and rather go to the world. At least the world is not playing the hypocrite as the church is.

I know no church is perfect but this phrase is being abused. Remember that out of seven churches there were two who did not receive a word of condemnation from our Lord. I don't know about you, but if Jesus did not find one single word of criticism to say to two churches, that is perfect enough for me.

Re: - posted by lylewise, on: 2011/6/8 19:16

I was a false convert also, but there was occasion that I did witness, but rarely. How does one not born in Christ witness? Just like they pray, just like they study, just like they fellowship. It is a fleshly venture of one who is deceived. It seems right, but there is no life in it. No true joy. A false convert can hold to a very strong assurance that they are saved.

Oracio this is the greatest problem for evangelism here in the USA and wherever else we have exported it. I was a casualty, you were a casualty. How many there are that believe the lie as we did. We even had testimonies but they too were of the flesh. We were imposters and we did not know it. I thank God as you do that His mercy was granted me and He opened my eyes just as He opened yours.

I was finished writing when I remembered this thought. At one time I had a good friend I did business with. She was Jewish, but as most you will find, not practicing. She was going to travel somewhere and I remember being concerned for her salvation. I witnessed to her (one of the few times I did and at this time I had not been born again). Eventually she married and married a Jewish doctor and moved to Florida. She would mention some things about Christianity and that she believed and accepted Christ, but there was no foundation, no life. She even attended a few bible studies etc... but she was worldly and Mammon and wealth were her true comfort and God.

I have been thinking of her since becoming a true believer. I will be calling her. What will she say when I give her my real testimony? Remember she has heard my previous testimony which was no testimony at all, for I was not saved when I witnessed to her last. Quite the mess (false conversion that is). So I was false and she is false. I was just a little more religious than she was but we were both desperately lost. That was then and this is now. Thank God for His Mercy oh my soul!

Re: - posted by Oracio (), on: 2011/6/9 1:44

Untobabes, I hear you sister. We must hang in there and continue to pray for revival.

lylewise, thanks for sharing some of your testimony. False conversion is a huge mess indeed. Our heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. But like you said, praise God for His grace in awakening us out of deception and calling us to be truly born again of His Spirit. To Him be the glory. I will pray for your friend and your upcoming call to her.