

Milk & Honey

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Spiritual Food and Encouragement for Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ

The Church and The Home

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In some areas a conflict is arising between the local church and the home. Some are excited about home schooling their children and see the vital importance of the home. And this is good. Many today are schooling their children at home with great success. But some have gone on to feel that the home also displaces the church, the local assembly. As the head of the home the father is commanded to teach his children. "You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up" (Deut. 6:7 NKJ). Thus there is no need for the church; the home is adequate for all spiritual needs. We must escape the world and its corrupting influences. The home then becomes a citadel, a sanctuary, a refuge, into which we may escape.

There is an element of truth here. Home schooling can be a great blessing and can draw the family together. The father should take leadership and teach his family the Word. But there are dangers, if you leave the local church. There is the possibility of the father taking on an extreme, authoritarian role. He can rule like a dictator in the confines of his own home and that can be attractive to the male ego. The family is also cut off from the nourishing life of the assembly, the love and encouragement we all need. The teaching of one man also can become unbalanced and extreme, even heretical. There is no accountability to other believers. There are no other men who will check and correct him if needed.

There is a Scriptural balance. Home schooling can be good, but not all feel they can do this. Some may choose to send their children to a Christian school or a good public school, and we must be careful about being judgmental in this area. Surely the father should be a spiritual leader in his own home. And the home needs to be saturated with the Word of God, not the TV.

But does this eliminate the vital importance of the local assembly? The Scripture would teach the opposite. The

apostles preached the gospel and established churches wherever they went. Elders were appointed (Acts 14:23) and commanded to shepherd the flock of God. "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:20). The elders take ultimate responsibility for the flock, the local church. And fathers, as part of the flock, are to submit to them (Heb. 13:17). Plurality in oversight of the assembly was the rule.

The church provides for the exercise of various gifts, all contributing to the health and growth of the fellowship (Rom. 12:3-8). A family does not have the rich resource of gift that a church has. It is a place where all may develop their gifts and grow, thus blessing themselves and others. We grow by participation and exercise. The church provides the fellowship and love that all of us need. A wife needs the friendship and understanding of other women. She may need the advice of older, godly women. This her husband cannot provide. He needs other men with whom he can talk and discuss problems. This his wife cannot supply. The children need to interact with other children and form friendships which may last for a lifetime. The young can contribute energy to the assembly; the old can supply wisdom. We need one another. And there are times when we may need, not only instruction, but also discipline by the body to correct our thinking and behavior. There is a richness to corporate worship which the home is unable to supply, as various brothers pour out their hearts in praise and adoration.

We are told that the local assembly is a "temple of God" and that we are builders in it (I Cor. 3:11-17). It is to be a holy place and we are warned against defiling or destroying it. "If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are" (I Cor. 3:17). Paul is emphasizing the importance of the local church and our own responsibility in connection with it. Be a builder, not a destroyer, of God's work. Since it is God's temple, instructions are given as to how it should function (I Tim. 3:15) and it is described as "the pillar and ground of the truth." Paul exalts the importance of the local church.

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The Importance of Prayer

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Author Unknown

I. THE NEED OF MORE PRAYER. Prayer touches every department of life. It affects the individual, the church at large, and every kind of service for the Lord. Often it has been noticed in the history of the church that prayer and the manifestation of divine blessing accompany each other. "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication" (Acts 1:14). The necessity for this is so obvious that it might seem unnecessary to say much about it, were it not equally clear *how much it is neglected*; and in a day like the present there is special need that the importance of prayer should be insisted upon.

II. HOW WE ARE TO PRAY.

1. We are to pray in the Holy Spirit. "But you, beloved brethren, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit" (Jude 20). We need to realize our entire dependence upon Him if we are to pray aright. A man of prayer will generally be a man filled with the Holy Spirit. We must be very dependent and self-emptied to pray in the Holy Spirit. He would lead us to think not merely of our personal needs, but of Christ's interests and what concerns the glory of God. He would also keep us in the conscious sense of being in the presence of God and of addressing Him.

2. We must pray earnestly if our prayers are to be of much avail. Earnestness is almost the life of prayer. We can be earnest in our business, our studies, our various pursuits. Then let us be downright in earnest when we pray. "The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain" (Jam. 5:16, 17). It was effectual because it was fervent. May such fervor ever characterize our prayer!

3. We should pray always. This does mean we are always to be on our knees, or even always speaking audibly to God. We can breathe without ourselves or anyone else being conscious of it. May our praying become almost as natural and continuous. "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit" (Eph. 6:18). "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17). Habitual prayerfulness infallibly tells its tale. Satan will suggest all kinds of difficulties, and put obstacles in the way; and what is far more of a hindrance, there may be disinclination on our own part. But all this can be overcome by the grace of God. Let us pray that we may pray.

4. We should pray everywhere. "Therefore I desire that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting" (1 Tim. 1:8). Do not let us suppose the bedside to be the only place. Our Lord used a mountain and withdrew Himself into the wilderness. In Acts we learn that they prayed on the housetop, by the river, and even in prison. Indeed, where is prayer out of place? It is not only then that men everywhere are to pray, but men may also pray everywhere.

III. A FEW LEADING TOPICS FOR PRAYER.

1. We are told to pray for all saints. "Praying...with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints" (Eph. 6:18). Alas! how frequently we neglect this holy and priceless privilege, if we do not forget it altogether. So important is this that we may well ask the reader not to allow even a day to pass without praying for all saints in general, and for some in particular.

2. It is needful that we should pray regularly for the Lord's servants. More than many Christians, they are exposed to the attacks of Satan, and to be led astray by their own hearts, and sorely need the prayers of others. We need to pray for them in a two fold way: that they may be preserved, and that utterance may be given unto them. Pray "for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel" (Eph. 6:19). Praying for the workmen is one of the most effectual means of aiding in the work.

3. We are exhorted to pray for all men. "I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority" (1 Tim. 2:1,2). While we pray for saints and for servants, let us pray for all men, even for kings. Better to pray for a king than to be one. A praying Christian wields a mightier weapon than earth's greatest potentate.

If prayer is of such importance, then the neglect of it must be of serious consequence. How many a wrong step would never have been taken if there had been more prayer about it in secret, and with others. On the other hand, how many a good intention has never ripened into action, and many a first effort in the right direction has in the end borne no fruit, for want of prayer. Many a downward course would have been prevented if there had been more frequent access to the throne of grace. *

Quote

"It is always a mark of a false prophecies that in a day of evil they promised prosperity. ...A true prophet, on the contrary, in the day of evil warns of the coming of the Lord to judge the ungodly." Wm. Kelly, writing on Jeremiah.

