

# Essential Commitments of a Local Church

## Pt. 1

### Selected Scriptures

## Introduction:

The most important institution on this planet is the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The plan and purpose of the church Ordained by God.

It is more important than any social movement. Any Government and any state or nation.

There is no plan or persecution that can be offered by man or the devil that can stop.

Matthew 16:18 (NKJV)

**18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.**

A Chinese pastor arrested with 100 members of his congregation said that while he is "filled with anger and disgust" at the persecution Christians endure in the country, he accepts and respects the fact that

the "evil" Communist regime has been "allowed by God to rule temporarily."

On Sunday, Wang Yi, Senior Pastor of Early Rain Covenant Church and one of China's most prominent Protestant pastors, was arrested along with over 100 members of his congregation.

Anticipating his arrest, the pastor wrote a declaration in September to be published should he be detained for more than 48 hours. Church members released the letter on Wednesday.

In the [lengthy letter](#), which has been translated into English, the pastor said he is "filled with anger and disgust at the persecution of the church by this Communist regime, at the wickedness of their depriving people of the freedoms of religion and of conscience."

However, he emphasized that changing social and political institutions is "not the mission I have been called to, and it is not the goal for which God has given his people the gospel."

Instead, he vowed to use non-violent methods to stand by his faith and oppose the laws that he said were against biblical commandments. He reminded Chinese Christians that life is brief -- and the sufferings of the present pale in comparison to eternity.

"For this reason, I accept and respect the fact that this communist regime has been allowed by God to rule temporarily," he explained. "As the Lord's servant [16th century theologian] John Calvin said, wicked rulers are the judgment of God on a wicked people, the goal being to urge God's people to repent and turn again toward Him. For this reason, I am joyfully willing to submit myself to their enforcement of the law as though submitting to the discipline and training of the Lord."

According to the [South China Morning Post](#), Wang has been placed under criminal detention for allegedly inciting subversion of state power. Under China's criminal code, the charges could result in a sentence of up to five years, but up to 15 years in extreme cases.

Wang's wife Jiang Rong is implicated along with her outspoken husband and could be detained for up to six months, according to her lawyer. In his letter, the pastor clarified that his civil disobedience - done with the goal of elevating the Gospel - must not be misinterpreted as political activism.

"As a pastor, the only thing I care about is the disruption of man's sinful nature by this faithful disobedience and the testimony it bears for the cross of Christ," he wrote. "As a pastor, my disobedience is one part of the Gospel commission."

Christ's Great Commission requires of us great disobedience. The goal of disobedience is not to change the world, but to testify about another world." Wang's arrest comes amid a crackdown on illegal house churches following the implementation of the Chinese Communist Party's updated [Regulations for Religious Affairs](#) in February.

Detained Chinese Pastor Wrote Powerful Letter Ahead of Arrest Condemning 'Evil' Persecution of Christians, Vowed Civil Disobedience  
By [LEAH MARIEANN KLETT](#)

## Lesson

I. We are Committed to a High View God Rather than a Deification of Man.

II. We are Committed to the Absolute Authority of Scriptures Rather than the Tradition of Man

III. We are Committed to Sound Doctrine Rather Than the Dumbing Down of Doctrine.

IV. We are Committed to the Preaching of the Word Rather than Pragmatic Methodology

V. We are Committed to Integrated Worship with the Family rather than the Segregation of the Family

VI. We are Committed to Personal Holiness Rather than Worldliness.

VII. We are Committed to Evangelism of the Sinner rather than Moral Reform of the Society.

VIII. We are Committed to the Return of Jesus Christ rather than the Riches of Earth

**I. We are Committed to a High View God Rather than a Deification of Man.**

It is absolutely essential that the church perceive herself as an institution for the Glory of God.

The Church in America has descended to an church for the help of men.

It is the the goal now of the church to make you feel better.

Andy Stanley recently said, one of his Goals is to Teach you what Jesus Said so you will have a better life and be better at life, so he challenges the lost people who attend his church to “Try Jesus”.  
(interview of Andy Stanley on the Leighton Flowers Podcast)

The Goal of the church is not to make you a better you.

Rather it is to teach you who the Biblical God is so you can know Him. And in Him all your needs are met. It is not found in the pseudo god of the American Evangelism.

This is why we stress so much here a right understanding of God. This why we show the deficiency of the teaching of so many preachers and False teachers today because these wrong view affect your view of God.

**Exodus 20:1–5** (NKJV)

**20** And God spoke all these words, saying:

- <sup>2</sup> “I *am* the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.
- <sup>3</sup> “You shall have no other gods before Me.
- <sup>4</sup> “You shall not make for yourself a carved image— any likeness *of anything* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth; <sup>5</sup> you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth *generations* of those who hate Me,

These commandments are very clear and are a strong prohibition against any polytheism or Idolatry of any kind.

We may read these and believe that we have not violated any of these commandments.

We argue that we are monotheists, we worship one God.

And we have never made an image of God to worship.

But what is so often missed is that we may not worship an idol made of stone or Gold, but we come up with a God from the Bible that is not the God of the Bible.

Hence, you worship not the true God, but a God of your own imagination.

A.W. Tozer

“The Knowledge of the Holy”

## **THE ESSENCE OF IDOLATRY**

“Among the sins to which the human heart is prone, hardly any other is more hateful to God than idolatry, for idolatry is at bottom a libel on His character. The idolatrous heart assumes that God is other than He is -- in itself a monstrous sin -- and substitutes for the true God one made after its own likeness.

Always this God will conform to the image of the one who created it and will be base or pure, cruel or kind, according to the moral state of the mind from which it emerges.”

“The Knowledge of the Holy”

**A. W. Tozer:**

What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.

The history of mankind will probably show that no people has ever risen above its religion, and man's spiritual history will positively demonstrate that no religion has ever been greater than its



idea of God. Worship is pure or base as the worshiper entertains high or low thoughts of God. For this reason the gravest question before the Church is always God Himself, and the most portentous fact about any man is not what he at a given time may say or do, but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like.

Always the most revealing thing about the Church is her idea of God, just as her most significant message is what she says about Him or leaves unsaid, for her silence is often more eloquent than her speech. She can never escape the self-disclosure of her witness concerning God.

“The Knowledge of the Holy”

So the Historic Debates over Theology Proper, or the person and Character of God are no small matter.

They are not to be relegated to dark halls of academia. This is not for the Theologians and pastors only. This is the Foundation of the Church.

Your view of God changes everything  
What you think of  
Heaven, Hell

Man, Sin  
life, Death  
Salvation  
Atonement  
The Purpose of life  
The purpose of evil  
Evil, Good  
Love, Hate  
Race and Relationships  
Marriage And Children  
The Devil and Disease  
Abortion and Euthanasia  
Justice and injustice  
Holiness, or Immorality  
Time and Eternity  
Destruction and Calamity  
The past and the Future

Historically this debate has settled into two theological Camps.

1. Calvinism    2. Arminianism

Calvinism- named after John Calvin, which later became known as the 5 points of Calvinism although John Calvin never intended a Theology

to be named after him. He did not term his Theology the 5 points of calvinism. He wrote and preached on much much more than that.

The Doctrine of Calvinism can be summed up by saying that God is exalted in His Sovereignty over the affairs of Man in his life and His Salvation.

## 2. Arminianism

Arminianism is a system of belief that attempts to explain the relationship between God's sovereignty and mankind's free will, especially in relation to salvation. Arminianism is named after [Jacobus Arminius](#) (1560—1609), a Dutch theologian. While Calvinism emphasizes the sovereignty of God, Arminianism emphasizes the responsibility of man and his free will. (Got Questions)

Calvinism emphasis would be God's Sovereign and Free to Save whomever He wills.

Arminianism emphasis would be on the Freedom of the will of man to choose to be saved which God's Sovereignty is dependent one.

## More specifically

Calvinism- God Decrees what will come to pass

Arminianism- God depends on man to make a choice so he can fulfill His Plan

Calvinism- God is Sovereign man is not.

Arminianism- Man is Sovereign, God is not

Calvinism - Places the future fully in the hand of God

Arminianism- Puts the future fully in the hands of man

Calvinism- Gives Reason and purpose for the existence of Evil

Arminianism- God is not Sovereign over Evil but is a reacts to whatever the Devil and the sinful choices of man, with no control over it.

## Recent Article

Southern Baptist Convention President J.D. Greear has urged Christians not to "tear apart" their unity over theological disagreements, such as Calvinism.

"It is the Gospel that is the source of our renewal, and it is the Gospel that should be our defining characteristic as a people," Greear said in his first presidential address at the SBC on Monday in Nashville.

[Baptist Press](#) reported that The Summit Church, in Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina pastor made a promise to preach the Gospel "above all."

"Our disagreement on finer points of theology should not tear apart our unity in the Gospel," Greear said. "Calvinism is never an issue to me.... I can assure you that what is not biblical is sitting around bickering about finer points of theology when people are lost and going to Hell."

"I agree with (former SBC president) Johnny Hunt. I do not know all there is to know about the

particulars of Calvinism," he added, "but what I do know is that the more I go and share Christ, the more people seem to keep getting elected."

JD Greear: Don't Split Over Calvinism, Bicker About Theology 'When People Are Lost, Going to Hell' By [Stoyan Zaimov](#), Christian Post Reporter

I understand the heart behind this statement. and I agree that the Gospel is the most important message the church has.

But I can't disagree with him more on this statement "I can assure you that what is not biblical is sitting around bickering about finer points of theology when people are lost and going to Hell."

The views of God are Radically different. It should not be stated that these are minor issues. They are major.

The Reason we are in the mess we are in in the church is precisely because we have not been discussing these things in detail.

Pastors for the most part today are not Theologians.

They are Hipster CEOs, Entertainers, fashion models Culturally Cool.

I believe that we are where we are today with the contemporary church and its market driven, entertainment oriented flesh satisfying culture because of the theology of Arminianism.

If man and his will are the ultimate cause of his salvation.... then what ever it takes is what you use.

So with that said

There are 2 Overarching Characteristics of God That we stress here and should be in every church.

## 1. God is Sovereign

## 2. God is HOLY.

### 1. God is Sovereign

Daniel 4:30–35 (NKJV)

<sup>30</sup> The king spoke, saying, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?”

<sup>31</sup> While the word *was still* in the king’s mouth, a voice fell from heaven: “King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you! <sup>32</sup> And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling *shall be* with the beasts of the field. They shall make you eat grass like oxen; and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses.”

<sup>33</sup> That very hour the word was fulfilled concerning Nebuchadnezzar; he was driven from men and ate grass like oxen; his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair had grown like eagles’ *feathers* and his nails like birds’ *claws*.

<sup>34</sup> And at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding



returned to me; and I blessed the Most High and  
 praised and honored Him who lives forever:  
 For His dominion *is* an everlasting dominion,  
 And His kingdom *is* from generation to generation.

<sup>35</sup> All the inhabitants of the earth *are* reputed as  
 nothing;

He does according to His will in the army of heaven  
 And *among* the inhabitants of the earth.

No one can restrain His hand  
 Or say to Him, “What have You done?”

### **Psalm 33:9–11** (NKJV)

<sup>9</sup> For He spoke, and it was *done*;  
 He commanded, and it stood fast.

<sup>10</sup> The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to  
 nothing;  
 He makes the plans of the peoples of no effect.

<sup>11</sup> The counsel of the Lord stands forever,  
 The plans of His heart to all generations.

### Psalm 115:3 (NKJV)

<sup>3</sup> But our God *is* in heaven;  
 He does whatever He pleases.

### Isaiah 14:24–27 (NKJV)

<sup>24</sup> The Lord of hosts has sworn, saying,

“Surely, as I have thought, so it shall come to pass,

And as I have purposed, so it shall stand:

<sup>25</sup> That I will break the Assyrian in My land,  
And on My mountains tread him underfoot.

Then his yoke shall be removed from them,  
And his burden removed from their shoulders.

<sup>26</sup> This *is* the purpose that is purposed against the  
whole earth,

And this *is* the hand that is stretched out over all  
the nations.

<sup>27</sup> For the Lord of hosts has purposed,

And who will annul *it*?

His hand *is* stretched out,

And who will turn it back?”

### **Martin Luther wrote**

This, therefore, is also essentially necessary and wholesome for Christians to know: That God foreknows nothing by contingency, but that He foresees, purposes, and does all things according to His immutable, eternal, and infallible will.”

“... it follows unalterably, that all things which we do, although they may appear to us to be done

mutably and contingently, and even may be done thus contingently by us, are yet, in reality, done necessarily and immutably, with respect to the will of God [The Bondage of the Will – Martin Luther, The Sovereignty of God](#)

## Arthur Pink “Sovereignty of God”

“Who is regulating affairs on this earth today: God or the devil? That God reigns supreme in heaven is generally conceded; that He does so over this world is almost universally denied—if not directly, then indirectly. More and more are men, in their philosophizing and theorizing, relegating God to the background.

How different is the God of the Bible from the god of modern Christendom! The conception of deity that prevails most widely today, even among those who profess to give heed to the Scriptures, is a miserable caricature, a blasphemous travesty of the truth. The god of the twentieth century is a helpless, effeminate being who commands the respect of no really thoughtful man. The god of the popular mind is the creation of maudlin sentimentality. The god

of many a present-day pulpit is an object of pity rather than of awe-inspiring reverence.

The sovereignty of the God of Scripture is absolute, irresistible, and infinite. When we say that God is sovereign, we affirm His right to govern the universe that He has made for His own glory, just as He pleases. We affirm that His right is the right of the potter over the clay (Isa 64:8), i.e., that He may mold that clay into whatsoever form He chooses, fashioning out of the same lump one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor. We affirm that He is under no rule or law outside of His own will and nature, that God is a law unto Himself, and that He is under no obligation to give an account of His matters to any.”

**Theology Proper**  
by **Charles Hodge**

Sovereignty is not a property of the divine nature, but a prerogative arising out of the perfections of the Supreme Being.

## Steve Lawson

The sovereignty of God is not a secondary doctrine that is relegated to an obscure corner in the Bible. Rather, this truth is the very bedrock doctrine of all Scripture. This is the Mount Everest of biblical teaching, the towering truth that transcends all theology. From its opening verse, the Bible asserts in no uncertain terms that God is and that God reigns. In other words, He is *God*—not merely in name, but in full reality. God does as He pleases, when He pleases, where He pleases, how He pleases, and with whom He pleases in saving undeserving sinners. All other doctrines of the Christian faith must be brought into alignment with this keystone truth.

The sovereignty of God is the free exercise of His supreme authority in executing and administering His eternal purposes. God must be sovereign if He is to be truly God. A god who is not sovereign is not God at all. Such is an imposter, an idol, a mere caricature formed in man's fallen imagination. A god who is less than fully sovereign is not worthy of our worship, much less our witness.

1. God is Sovereign
2. God is HOLY.

## 2. God is HOLY.

The Holiness of God is being systematically removed from much of the preaching today. Its not popular, Its not practical, Its to preachy.

So you will see more and more ridiculous and irreverent things done in church in the name of ministry.

### **Exodus 19:10–25** (NKJV)

<sup>10</sup> Then the Lord said to Moses, “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes. <sup>11</sup> And let them be ready for the third day. For on the third day the Lord will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. <sup>12</sup> You shall set bounds for the people all around, saying, ‘Take heed to yourselves *that* you do *not* go up to the mountain or touch its base. Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death. <sup>13</sup> Not a hand shall touch him, but he shall surely be stoned or shot *with an arrow*; whether man or beast, he shall not live.’ When the trumpet sounds long, they shall come near the mountain.”

<sup>14</sup> So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and sanctified the people, and they washed

their clothes. <sup>15</sup> And he said to the people, “Be ready for the third day; do not come near *your* wives.”

<sup>16</sup> Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who *were* in the camp trembled. <sup>17</sup> And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. <sup>18</sup> Now Mount Sinai *was* completely in smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. <sup>19</sup> And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice. <sup>20</sup> Then the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain. And the Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up.

<sup>21</sup> And the Lord said to Moses, “Go down and warn the people, lest they break through to gaze at the Lord, and many of them perish. <sup>22</sup> Also let the priests who come near the Lord consecrate themselves, lest the Lord break out against them.”

<sup>23</sup> But Moses said to the Lord, “The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai; for You warned us, saying, ‘Set bounds around the mountain and consecrate it.’ ”

<sup>24</sup> Then the Lord said to him, “Away! Get down and then come up, you and Aaron with you. But do not let

the priests and the people break through to come up to the Lord, lest He break out against them.”<sup>25</sup> So Moses went down to the people and spoke to them.

### **The biblical definition of “holiness.”**

The basic Old Testament Hebrew word for “holy”, as an adjective, is, wOdqf, qadōs. The noun form describes “holiness” while the verb form means “to sanctify.” The

root meaning in the Old Testament is that of “purity which is set apart from impurity,” hence “separation from defilement,” “otherness” in relation to that which is common. The aspect of negative “apartness from,” when applied to God declares Him, in all of His being, to be above and beyond all creation, matter, darkness, and especially in the earthly moral sphere. However it is the positive encounter and identification with the pure that is of greatest importance, rather than separation from the impure. Of course, in the case of God, His holiness concerns being set apart unto Himself since there is no higher standard. So, in confirming the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 22:17), “since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself” (Heb. 6:13). Thus Charnock declares:



The holiness of God negatively is a perfect and unpolluted freedom from all evil. As we call gold pure that is not imbedded by any dross, and that garment clean that is free from any spot, so the nature of God is estranged from all shadow of evil, all imaginable contagion. Positively, it is the rectitude or integrity of the divine nature, or that conformity of it in affection and action to the divine will as to his eternal law, whereby he works with a becomingness to his own excellency, and whereby he hath a delight and complacency [tranquility] in everything agreeable to his will.<sup>3</sup>

In the New Testament, the parallel word is ἅγιος, hagios, which, via the Greek language, heavily draws upon the Hebrew concept, and thus has the closely related meaning of “moral purity, sanctity, consecration, veneration” in both the negative and positive senses. So, “like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy’” (I Pet. 1:15- 16).

Barry Horner

**Isaiah 6:1–5** (NKJV)

**6** In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His *robe* filled the temple. <sup>2</sup> Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.

<sup>3</sup> And one cried to another and said:

“Holy, holy, holy *is* the Lord of hosts;  
The whole earth *is* full of His glory!”

<sup>4</sup> And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke.

**<sup>5</sup> So I said:**

**“Woe *is* me, for I am undone!**

**Because I *am* a man of unclean lips,**

**And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips;**

**For my eyes have seen the King,**

The Lord of hosts.”

Although we could quote hundreds of verses that state and illustrate the holiness of God, there is no clearer picture of God's holiness than what we see his hatred of Sin and evil.

When Isaiah saw the Lord, the very first words out of his mouth were words of despair and death. All he could see is his sin and the sin of his people.

The Holiness of God exposes the Wretched vial nature we have.

This is Peters response after the Ressurrection

“Depart from me a sinful man”

This is John’s response on the isle of Patmos with the vision of Christ. Fall down as a dead man.

The Holiness of God creates an overwhelming sense of our own sinfulness.

### We here statements like

God created Hell for the Devil and his angels

or

God hates the sin but not sinner.

These are given in attempts to help us put our minds around the horrific nature of eternal hell, as if it somehow rescue God from His Responsibility for putting sinners there.

But these are not helpful in fact they are harmful to our understanding of God’s Holiness.

**First** God does not just put the Devil in the Angels there, He will put sinners there

He will put you there if you don’t repent

## Second.

He does hate sin, I agree,  
But he does not put the sin there, he puts the sinner  
there.

He will put you there if you do not repent.

## Here's another way to understand the severity of God's Holiness.

At any given time, God is fully conscious of the millions of people burning in Hell. Every minute of every day, God is 100% aware of the immense pain and sufferings sinners are experiencing in Hell.

And yet He has no regrets placing them there and there no chance of Him ever changing His Mind and letting them out.

For many as I speak this morning, the flames of Hell are licking at their feet, and they could plunge into its fiery pit at any moment. Yet you continue in your unbelief and the love of your sin, accusing God of not being good. You know nothing of his Holiness You blaspheme the Holy One of Israel.

That is God's Holiness and his Holy hatred.

A.W Pink

The "god" which the vast majority of professing Christians "love," is looked upon very much like an indulgent old man, who himself has no relish for folly, but leniently winks at the "indiscretions" of youth. But the Word says, "Thou hatest all workers of iniquity" (Ps. 5:5). And again, "God is angry with the wicked every day" (Ps. 7:11). But men refuse to believe in this God, and gnash their teeth when His hatred of sin is faithfully pressed upon their attention. No, sinful man was no more likely to devise a holy God than to create the Lake of fire in which he will be tormented for ever and ever.

### **The Greatest display of Holiness was the Cross**

That even though God loves the sinner with a vast and immeasurable love

He would not compromise His character to forgive you and to save you

**Romans 3:23–26** (NKJV)

<sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

<sup>24</sup> being justified freely by His grace through the

redemption that is in Christ Jesus, <sup>25</sup> whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, <sup>26</sup> to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Wondrously and yet most solemnly does the Atonement display God's infinite holiness and abhorrence of sin. How hateful must sin be to God for Him to punish it to its utmost deserts when it was imputed to His Son!

Not all the vials of judgment that have or shall be poured out upon the wicked world, nor the flaming furnace of a sinner's conscience, nor the irreversible sentence pronounced against the rebellious demons, nor the groans of the damned creatures, give such a demonstration of God's hatred of sin, as the wrath of God let loose upon His Son. Never did Divine holiness appear more beautiful and lovely than at the time our Saviour's countenance was most marred in the midst of His dying groans. (S. Charnock).