

Title: **THREE GOSPEL ORDINANCES**

Text: 1 Timothy 3:14-15

Subject: *Baptism, Church Membership
 And The Lord's Supper*

Date: Sunday Morning — August 2, 2009

Reading: *1 Timothy 3:1-16*

Tape: #Z-68b

Introduction:

You will find my text in Paul's first Pastoral Epistle, 1 Timothy 3:14-15.

(1 Timothy 3:14-15) “These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: (15) But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”

Paul's object in his Pastoral Epistles (1st and 2nd Timothy and Titus, was to teach us how to behave, how to conduct ourselves in the house of God. This morning, I want to address three aspects of that behavior. I want to show you from the Word of God three things about how we ought to behave ourselves in the house of God. The title of my message tonight is **THREE GOSPEL ORDINANCES**. These three ordinances of divine worship are far too often neglected and far too often abused because of ignorance.

In the house of God, when we come together in the assembly of God's saints, we worship our God by the means and in the manner set before us in the New Testament.

- Scripture Reading
- Prayer
- Praise – Singing
- Gospel Preaching

And there are three ordinances set before us in the New Testament that are to be maintained as long as time stands. Those three ordinances are baptism, church membership and the Lord's Supper. Let me show them to you in the very earliest gathering of God's saints in worship in Acts 2.

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Gospel ordinances. These are things which should be of great interest and concern to every believer. They are matters about which every local church needs to be informed and well established.

UNIVERSAL CHURCH

We recognize the fact that the church of God is made up of all true believers in every age. God's elect are his church. Some are in heaven, and some are on the earth. But we are all one body in Christ (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 1:22-23; 3:15-16; 5:25-27; Heb. 12:22-24).

(Matthew 16:18) "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

(Ephesians 1:22-23) "And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church, (23) Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

(Ephesians 3:15-16) "Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, (16) That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;"

(Ephesians 5:25-27) "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; (26) That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, (27) That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

(Hebrews 12:22-24) "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, (23) To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, (24) And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than *that of* Abel."

LOCAL CHURCH

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(Ephesians 4:1-7) “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, (2) With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; (3) Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (4) *There is* one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; (5) One Lord, one faith, one baptism, (6) One God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all. (7) But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.”

- Christ is the Head of each local church.
- Upon his ascension, he received gifts for men, yea for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them. Among those gifts he received for his church, are pastors according to his own heart.

(Ephesians 4:11-16) “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; (12) For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: (13) Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: (14) That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; (15) But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ: (16) From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”

Proposition: Our relationship to the church of Christ is a matter of obedience to Christ himself.

- It is a great privilege and blessing to be a part of a true gospel church.
- With this great privilege, we assume a great responsibility.
- Our relationship with the church of Christ, in great measure, reveals our relationship to Christ.

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Only the blood of Christ can do that. He put away all the sins of God's elect, which were imputed to him when he died as our Substitute (Heb. 9:26). But baptism is a picture of our sins being washed away by our Savior's blood. We are buried with Christ, symbolically, in baptism, because we died with him and were buried with him when he bore the wrath of God as our Substitute. Baptism has nothing to do with the accomplishment of salvation, but it is a symbolic figure of salvation's accomplishment by the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, the sinner's substitute (1 Peter 3:21).

(1 Peter 3:21) "The like figure whereunto *even* baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:"

Baptism is the believer's public identification with Christ and his people in this world. When God saves one of his elect, the one who has been saved separates himself from unsaved family and friends by his baptism. His baptism says, "I was lost and blind, groping about in the darkness of false religion. But now God has saved me by his free grace in Christ. And I want all to know that this sovereign Christ is my Savior and Lord and his people are my people."

Baptism is the believer's public avowal of commitment to Christ as Lord and the glory of his great name. As we have been raised together with Christ representatively (Eph. 2:5-6) and raised from spiritual death to spiritual life in Christ by the power of his grace (John 5:25), we rise up out of the waters of baptism declaring to all the world that we will henceforth walk with our Lord in the newness of life (Rom. 6:4).

Many reasons might be given why all believers should be baptized, but for the sake of brevity I will simply give here three reasons for our baptism.

- First, our Lord did it (Mark 1:9-11).
- Second, our Lord commands it (Mark 16:15-16).

(Mark 16:15-16) "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. (16) He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

THREE GOSPEL ORDINANCES

Church membership is vital. You and I simply cannot exist without the ministry of the Word and the fellowship of God's saints in worship.

Basically, membership in a local church involves three things.

1. **Church membership is an openly avowed, public commitment to the body of Christ** (Phil. 2:1-4). It is like a marriage ceremony. Without inward commitment the ceremony is nothing. But for a woman to move in with a man who will not make a public commitment to her is an act of desperation, or folly, or both.

If we are committed to the family of believers to which we belong, we enjoy their company, pray for their spiritual well-being, give to meet the needs of the family, serve the family's interest, speak well of the family members and promote the family's interest. Let each one of us see that we live up to our professed commitment.

2. **Church membership gives us the privilege of communion and fellowship with the body of Christ.** — *“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity”* (Ps. 133:1). The fellowship of God's people in public worship is most delightful and blessed because in the fellowship of God's saints we find fellowship with Christ (Matt. 18:20). Our Savior still walks in the midst of the golden lampstands and makes himself known in his churches (Rev. 1:12, 13, 20).

Who can estimate the value and privilege of being a member of a local church where Christ is honored by the unity, peace, fellowship and love of the saints? If God has given us such a privilege, let us jealously guard and promote the unity of the Spirit, the bond of peace and the fellowship of love he has given (Eph. 4:17).

Church membership is much more than having your name on a church register. It is commitment to the body of Christ. It is communion with Christ in his body.

3. **Church membership is care for the body of Christ** (1 Cor. 12:24-27). God's people care for and take care of one another. Within the local church family, believers look out for one another's welfare.

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