

Belgic Confession 28 – Join the Church论每个人都当加入真教会

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Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: The Food and Drug Administration of the US has a Food Defect Action Levels list, which indicates the limits for "natural or unavoidable" substances in processed food. For example: TOMATOES can have an average of 2 maggots蛆per 17½-oz can. RAISINS can have 35 fruit fly eggs per 8-oz. CHOCOLATE can have 1 rat hair 老鼠毛per large candy bar. Mushrooms can have 20 maggots per 3½-oz can. PEACHES can be 3% moldy 发霉or wormy蛀虫. These are all eatable foods. They are not perfect, but you still enjoy them. If you want perfect food you will wait for a long time. And neither is the church perfect. She has hypocrites虚伪. She is sometimes fighting among herself. She is sometimes lazy. But you still have an obligation责任to join her, serve her, submit服从to her, and separate from wicked people when you join her. This is what we will examine today.

Our headings are: **You have a duty to join and serve the church, You have to Duty to Submit to the Church,** and **You have a Duty to Separate from Non-believers.**

Our goals are: **That you will hear the call to separate from the wicked and actively join the church and submit to its overseers,** and when you do join, that **you will work to preserve保持the church by building it up, helping the weaker ones in it, and submitting to its authority.**

You have a Duty to join and serve the church

We believe, since this holy congregation is an assembly of those who are saved, and outside of it there is no salvation, that no person of whatsoever state or condition he may be, ought to withdraw from it, content to be by himself; but that all men are in duty bound to join and unite themselves with it; maintaining the unity of the Church; submitting themselves to the doctrine and discipline thereof; **bowing their necks under the yoke** of Jesus Christ; and as mutual members of the same body, servicing to the edification of the brethren, according to the talents God has given them.

我们相信此圣教会既然是那些得救之人的聚集，并在此之外无救恩，就无一人，不论情形如何，可以置身度外，离开教会而生活；都当与教会联合，维持教会的合一，服从教会的教义与纪律；在基督的轭下而虚怀若谷，互相为肢体，按着神所给的恩赐彼此服事，造就弟兄。

1. You should **want** to join the church of Jesus Christ. You should not want to stay out of it. You see, the church is built by God. It has a sure foundation and will last forever. Who wouldn't want to be on that sure foundation?

Acts 2:47...And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

The visible可见的church is God's special bride新娘with all kinds of rights and privileges特权. Who wouldn't want to be part of this special bride? The church is united, holy, universal, and Christian (belongs to Christ). Who would not want to be part of the greatest organization in the whole world?

2. You **need** to join the church of Jesus Christ. You cannot have salvation if you are willfully outside of the church. The church is where the Gospel is preached. And when the Gospel of Christ is

preached faith comes. And faith is the means by which you are nourished and strengthened加强. If you don't regularly go to church you will die...or at least be spiritually malnourished.

Acts 2:42 - And they continued steadfastly坚定 in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Furthermore, the church is where you are disciplined训导. One was never considered a Christian until he was baptized and received into the church. (Acts 1:5, 1:22, 2:38, 2:41, 8:12, 8:13, 8:16, 8:36, 8:38, 9:18, 10:37, 10:47, 10:48, 11:16, 13:24, 16:15, 16:33, 18:8, 18:25, 19:3, 19:4, 19:5, 22:16).

3. You are **commanded** to stay in the church and attend regularly. You have a duty to not withdraw from the visible church. "You cannot have God as your Father and refuse 拒绝 to have the church as your mother." (John Calvin) It is a sin to withdraw退出 or resign放弃 from the church. It is legal to leave the church but it is not moral. It is a sin.

Hebrews 10:25 - **not forsaking the assembling**集合 of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting 激励 one another, and so much the more as you see the Day [of judgment] approaching临近.

You may move to another good congregation, but you may not leave the church without incurring guilt. It is also wrong to leave one congregation to go to another congregation because it demands less accountability. You must not want to "jump ship"跳船 as soon as there is some difficulty in the church.

4. You do have to attend worship regularly. Why? You have **commanded** duty职务 in the church to others in the congregation. You have brothers and sisters whom you may not ignore. (Do you do this at home?) You are to work to maintain the unity团结 of the church by helping others – building them up. If you don't fulfill this duty you allow Christ to see a black-eyed, bruised瘀伤, and limping bride一瘸一拐的. But even with this increasing duty, you can also be assured that God has equipped装备 you with gifts that you are to use for the service of the other members: elders长老, deacons执事, showing hospitality好客, counselors顾问... **All parts of the church work better when they work in conjunction**联合 with other parts.

1 Corinthians 12: 21-22 And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." 22 No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.

As you can see from this verse, you need others as well to do your work. This is why we read stories of Christians meeting in caves山洞 to have meetings that were forbidden禁止 by civil governments...or meeting in Siberian forests to avoid the communists. You even have a duty to help those who are coming to Christ.

Zechariah 8:23—"Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp抓紧 the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.'"

Many logs make a brighter fire.

Ephesians 2:19 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and **members of the household of God**,

55 Q. WHAT DO YOU UNDERSTAND BY "THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS"? A.

First, that believers one and all, as members of this community, share in Christ and in all his treasures and gifts. Second, that each member should consider it his duty to use his gifts readily and cheerfully for the service and enrichment of the other members.

5. You are **ble~~s~~sed or re~~w~~arded** 回报 when you join the church of Jesus Christ. David describes his love for the saints, and this caused David to not to want to be by himself.

Psalm 16:3 As for the saints who are on the earth, "They are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight."

Psalm 122:1-2 - I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go into the house of the LORD." 2 Our feet have been standing Within your gates, O Jerusalem!

What greater reward can there be than true happiness?

You have a Duty to Submit to the church

1. Each one must work to maintain the unity 团结 of the church by submitting to the elders of the church.

This is what "bowing 弯身 under the yoke 牛轭" meant. Yoke = offices and responsibilities Christ gave to his church. Like the church, there may be some "maggots and rat hairs" among the elders, but there are still benefits 有益 that you must not refuse.

2. You show this submission when you submit to the Word of God that is preached. You have to faithfully listen to and submit to their corrections and rebukes 训斥.

3. You show this submission when you submit to Christian discipline 训导.

Matthew 18, teaches about submission to discipline in the church...and the writer of Hebrews!

Matthew 18:17 "And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

Hebrews 13:17 Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive 顺从, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.

Even if what the elders are asking you to do is hard, you must submit...you may only refuse to submit if they ask you to something unbiblical or ungodly.

Private or public churches, without elders and discipline, are unbiblical and ungodly. Don't touch them with a 39 1/2 foot pole.

You have a Duty to Separate from Unbelievers

And that this may be the more effectually observed, it is the duty of all believers, according to the Word of God, to separate themselves from all those who do not belong to the Church, and to join themselves to this congregation, wherever God has established it, even though the magistrates and edicts of princes were against it, yea, though they should suffer death or any other corporal punishment. Therefore all those who separate themselves from the same or do not join themselves to it act contrary to the ordinance of God.

愿大家共同遵守，根据神的话，这是众信徒的本份，要与那些不与教会来往的人分别为圣，加入此教会，不拘神在何处设立的，甚至受到执政掌权者的反对，或受到死亡与身体之刑罚的威胁。因此，那些凡离开此教会，或不加入此教会的人是反对神的旨意而行事。

1. If you are going to submit better to Christ and his Word, and if you are to serve your brothers better, you will have to separate from those who would hinder you from doing those things. Those who are non-Christians live for themselves. You and the non-Christian have two different lords...two different loyalties. (This is not a command to leave an unbelieving spouse, but a warning that sometimes you have to give up friends who hinder your service to the Lord.)

2. And you are to join the church and separate from unbelievers even if the world were against you joining the church, and even if it insulted 侮辱 or threaten 威胁 you for joining the church.
This willingness to separate from the wicked was most clearly seen in the life of Ruth when she left her family and joined with her mother-in-law's people.

Ruth 1:16-..."Entreat 哀求 me not to leave you, Or to turn back from following after you; For wherever you go, I will go; And wherever you lodge 居住, I will lodge; Your people shall be my people, And your God, my God.

This is quite similar to the time of the Reformation. And remember David's warning:
Psalm 1:5 Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners [stand] in the congregation of the righteous.

3. No one is saying that the church (pastor and members) has no sins. We have our maggots and flies.
Yet God separated you to be his children, and you are to stay in the church as he cleans you out. This is why Paul referred to the sinful people as the church at Corinth...or the church at Ephesus. You are the church in Scarborough.

Conclusion:

Know the benefits of being part of Christ's church (the church which God calls, gathers together, forms and secures for eternity). **Know that you have Christ's obedience and death counted as yours so you could become a member of his church and receive his benefits.** **Know that** you have his Holy Spirit in you. **Know that** you have the church (members and elders) to watch over your soul and care for you, and to teach, discipline, and love you. **Know that** you are commanded to join the church. **Know that** God does not want you to be an "island," but a part of the community of believers. And **know that** you have a command to be a servant to other Christians in the church.

So don't stay away from the church – join her and attend her worship services faithfully and thank God for his blessings. Submit to the teaching and discipline of the elders. Work hard, using your gifts, for the good of the other Christians. Accept the help of other Christians when they offer. (This is how a family works.) Call others into Christ's church by teaching them God's Word about who they are, what God has done for them, and how they could get the benefits of Christ. Remember, membership is not only a privilege 特权, it is a responsibility as well.

Finally, it is wonderful that those who are not Christians are here today. But it is not enough. You need to be joined to the church of Jesus Christ and regularly attend to receive the full effects of his blessings. I trust that you will ask God today to accept you as his child so that from today you will enjoy all of his benefits and you can serve him as you should.