

Finding a Good Church (2)

by Anton Bosch

Finding a good church requires a willingness to adjust expectations, make sacrifices, and take personal responsibility for one's actions.

Scripture: Matthew 9:13, Luke 7:34, Romans 12:2, Hebrews 10:25, 1 Peter 1:16

Topics: "Church Membership", "Christian Community"

Description

Anton Bosch preaches about the importance of matching a person with a church, emphasizing that the problem often lies with the individual's attitude and expectations rather than the church itself. He challenges listeners to assess their commitment to finding a church, adjust their expectations of perfection, and be willing to make sacrifices in terms of time, money, and personal preferences. Bosch highlights the need for grace towards imperfect churches and fellow believers, urging against seeking perfection in a flawed world. He addresses the reluctance to adhere to church rules and the misconception of avoiding sinners in church, emphasizing the importance of holiness and reaching out to those in need of salvation.

Transcript

In trying to match a person with a church there are two parts to the equation: The church and the individual. That seems obvious, but to most people it is not that obvious. I say that because every time someone does not find a suitable church they blame the churches for not being what they want them to be. I have never heard anyone say they could not find a church because they have a problem in themselves!

Yet, the problem is often with the individual and not the church. I agree, there are not many churches that are sound and very few pastors still preach the whole council of God, but I also know that many people would find fault with the few good churches that remain. So let's talk about our attitude and expectations when we do decide to obey God's word and not forsake the assembling of ourselves together (Hebrews 10:25).

Before we even begin to think about looking for a church, we need to decide whether we really are serious about finding a church. Many folk do not really want a church and so they will find every excuse to disqualify the various options. They have become accustomed to a self-centered lifestyle outside of church and so find it hard to sacrifice their independence, money and time to commit. For many who get used to sleeping in on Sundays and then go out for a leisurely brunch or who spend Sundays at the

beach, the discipline of attending church regularly requires too much sacrifice. The financial sacrifice as well as the responsibility to be faithful to something other than self is quite a challenge to many in modern society. So before beginning the search, you must answer this question: "Am I really committed to being obedient to the Scriptures in this regard and will I make the sacrifices required of a good member?" If the answer is no, then stop the charade and just admit that you are not willing to be obedient to the Word.

Those who are serious about finding a church, often need to adjust their expectations. Most people who are looking for a church are looking for the perfect church. Well, it does not exist. (Not this side of heaven, anyway.) I am amazed at how almost everybody lives in imperfect houses, drives motor cars which are far from the ideal and slog away at jobs that are definitely not perfect. Yet, when it comes to the church they expect it to be perfect. Just as everything else in life is tainted and corrupted by sin, so is the church because it is made up of imperfect people. Most of us are quite happy with our own imperfections, yet we are not willing to endure (often the same) flaws in others.

There is an old saying that if you find that perfect church you should not join it because once you join it, it will no longer be perfect. That may be funny, but it is true. We live in an imperfect world and we are not perfect, so let's have a bit of grace with others who also have flaws just like us.

Once we have decided that we are serious about finding a church and have adjusted our expectations, the next thing we need to do is be willing to make some sacrifices. I often come across people who wail that they cannot find a good church and that they will do anything to be part of a good church. When I tell them there is an excellent church less than one hour's drive from their home, they protest that that is too far. These same people will commute longer distances to work and won't hesitate to drive an hour to the beach or a game. I recently came across someone who complained that they could not afford the gasoline to make the meetings, yet the same person, in one night, spent more money on a party than all the gasoline he would use in his entire Christian life to drive to all the meetings!

You may also have to make some adjustments to your time-table. When people call our church office to find out what time the meetings are, they often find that the meeting is either too early or too late! Jesus was very busy and far more important than we are. Yet, He set aside everything to come to earth and to redeem us while we find it just too hard when we have to rise a little earlier on a Sunday to meet with Him! Even if you had to be in the assembly every night of the week and all day Sunday, that would still be nothing in comparison to what He did for you. We gladly sacrifice the time and things we do not have any other use for. But when He asks for a small sacrifice of something that has value to us, we find that price too high.

Some people shy away from churches where there are rules. Rules may include things like a dress code, the need to abstain from sin, obedient children or any other things that sets the church apart from the world. Some of it may be legalism, but standards in the church have sunk so low, that anyone who does not speak, dress, look and think like the world is viewed as "legalistic" "strange" and "peculiar". If that is what prevents you from attending a church, you had better examine whether you are not too liberal before accusing them of being legalistic. Holiness is not a swear word nor is it a heresy. If you are put off from joining a particular group because they emphasize being separate from the world then you are doing the right thing, because such churches do not need to be contaminated by your worldliness.

On the other extreme, people are often put off by a church because sinners go there! I praise God for every felon and gang banger who gets saved. And if you are put off because people at the church have

tattoos and other evidence of a misspent youth, then you ought not join that church either. You will be out of place amongst those who have been forgiven much. Jesus came to seek and save that which was lost and the healthy do not need a physician. As for myself, I would gladly exchange ten rich, hypocritical, religious snobs for one sinner who has not forgotten the gutter from which he has been saved. But did they not say of Jesus: "Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!" (Luke 7:34).

(To be continued)

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