

Authority in the Local Church: the Spoken Word, 1 Tim 4:15; the Local Church: Only Legitimate Classroom for Christianity; the Church at Troas, Acts 20:6-9

18. In the first three centuries of the Church Age, believers met primarily in homes. Buildings did not come into vogue until the early fourth century.
19. The New Testament documents several people who opened their homes as places of worship for the local community of believers: Prisca and Aquilla at Rome (Romans 16:3-5a), Philemon at Colossae (Philemon 1:1-2), Lydia at Thessalonica (Acts 16:40; 1 Thessalonians 1:1), Nympha at Laodicea (Colossians 4:15).
20. The New Testament church consisted of believers who met together in (1) the “unity of the Spirit”: the filling of the Holy Spirit producing status quo spirituality (Ephesians 4:3), and (2) sustained spiritually by the communication of “sound doctrine”: spiritual growth (Titus 1:9).
21. Under these two foundational principles, where two or three are gathered together to worship Christ (Matthew 18:20), a local church is established (example: the church at Troas, Acts 20:6-7).
22. Paul classifies such an arrangement as **οἶκος Θεοῦ, oikōi Theou**: “the house of God.”
23. Whenever a group of believers gather together and submit to the authority of the pastor-teacher, then that place becomes a “house of God.”
24. PRINCIPLE: The local church is the only legitimate classroom for Christianity. This why it is called the Church Age. Legitimacy is established when (1) a local body of believers gathers together at a specific geographic location and (2) submit to the authority of the pastor-teacher, preferably one who communicates sound doctrine.
25. Regardless of any other factors, no church can prosper without these two priorities being in place. If believers gather together and there is not an established, qualified pastor overseeing the organization then that organization will in time become evil.
26. Scripture clearly reveals that in the Church Age the means by which believers become effective for Christ is by assembling themselves together in a local church.
27. The Bible has nothing to say about (1) joining a church, (2) membership in one, or (3) the union of local churches into a denomination.
28. The overriding purpose of the local church is worship and the primary expression of worship is Bible study.

29. Those hungry and thirsty for the Word are willing to endure hours upon hours of preaching, although some find it boring to the point of death.
30. Excellent examples are, for the positive, the congregation of the church at Troas and, for the bored, the teenager Eutychus \ ū'-ti-kus\ (**Εὐτυχός, Eutuchos**: good fortune) who went to sleep and fell to his death.
31. Paul is able to capitalize on both categories in his efforts to demonstrate the authority of the Word of God.
32. We now take up a study on this subject in Acts 20:6-12.

Acts 20:6 - **We [Luke and Paul] sailed from Philippi [they left Philippi and went by land to Neapolis: a Macedonian seaport nine miles from Philippi] after the days of Unleavened Bread, and came to them [the seven men mentioned in v. 4] at Troas [Τρωάς, Trōas: near ancient Troy; officially Alexandria Troas, raised by Augustus to be a colonia with *Ius Italicum*: the legal rights of Italians, i.e., *poletuma* status] within five days [a trip of about 170 miles]; and there we stayed seven days.**

v. 7 - **On the first day of the week [Sunday], when we were gathered together to break bread [observe the Eucharist], Paul began talking to them [διαλέγομαι, *dialegomai*: teaching], intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message to midnight.**

NOTE: Luke's use of *dialegomai* is important to our study for it emphasizes what is the top priority in the function of a local church. The verb is an imperfect middle indicative:

- imperfect: Ingressive: stresses the beginning of an action, with the implication that it continued for some time.
- middle: Deponent: a middle voice but active in meaning, thus Paul produces the action. In the middle voice the subject acts with a vested interest and Paul's is edification of the believers at Troas.
- indicative: Declarative; this report is historically accurate.

The Socratic use of *dialegomai* had to do with dialogue, i.e., question and answer through which edification was achieved. It is possible that there was some exchange between Paul and the congregation but the emphasis is on his preaching, a point emphasized later in the verse.

The communication of Scripture is the *sine qua non* of the local church. This Latin phrase is literally translated "without which not," an idiom that refers to its antecedent as an absolute necessity or an indispensable condition for the existence or legitimacy of the subject.

For example: "The soul is the *sine qua non* of human life, without which no human life would exist."

In our context, the communication of Bible doctrine is the *sine qua non* of the local church, without which it would not exist, and if it were to exist it would have no legitimacy.

1. When Paul began his sermon it went on for hours. It was customary in the early days of the church to assemble on Sunday, which was referred to as the Lord's Day, making reference to the day of His resurrection. It was also customary for this assembly to occur at night in remembrance of the Lord's Supper at the last Passover.
2. This means that they assembled shortly after 6 o'clock in the evening meaning Paul's sermon went on for four to five hours for the verse states, "He prolonged his message to midnight."
3. The word "message" is actually the word **λόγος, logos**. By comparing *logos* with *dialegomai*, used earlier in the verse, we are able to derive that this use of *logos* refers to teaching and instruction. Paul's sermon went on for around five hours. And only one person went to sleep.

Acts 20:8 - There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered together.

v. 9 - And there was a young man [νεανίας, *neanias*: a young man between 21 and 40, or a servant] named Eutychus sitting on the window sill, sinking into a deep sleep; and as Paul kept on talking, [διαλέγομαι, *dialegomai*: teaching] he was overcome by sleep and fell down from the third floor and was picked up dead.