

Burning Down God's House

"May the God who has caused his name to dwell there overthrow any king or people who shall put out a hand to alter this, or to destroy this house of God that is in Jerusalem. I Darius make a decree; let it be done with all diligence." (Ezra 6:12, ESV)

I read a news brief recently which said this, "Members of St. Luke Baptist Church in Buffalo showed Sunday they don't need their historic building to have church. They say those flames that destroyed it last Sunday only added fuel to their spirit of faith. [. . .] They say they are family, and their bonds are stronger than brick and mortar. 'You really show your strength and faith in each other and in God, mostly in God,' said church deacon Jimmy Peake. Members hope to rebuild by this time next year. The investigation into what started last week's blaze is still on going."

This could have happened in any place, even here, right? God's word instructs a church to assemble, in general, and God's people have the specific expedient choice: Where do we meet? Perhaps in a home, outside, on a patio, or in a building. (cf. Heb. 10:23-25; Ac. 19:9; Jam. 2:2) God's people have met in various and sundry places, depending on the need and size of the family of God. God's people during the exile were scattered and unable to assemble in the physical temple, yet they still were his people in exile. Christ made his church, and his church may assemble in buildings made by hands.

A certain man's house burns down one evening. Escaping the smoke and the flames, he prays to God in thanks: he's thankful that his spouse and his children are alive. This family isn't shaken to the point of unraveling, but grows stronger in the face of adversity. The family is not the building, the building is not the family. Destroy this building and this house, this family, will yet stand, if the Lord wills.

If something ever happened to the physical structure of our church building, let us realize that buildings can be rebuilt. Let us focus on keeping up the church building, but let us always focus first on the house of God—God's family that is where we are—with all diligence, knowing that God has laid Christ as our foundation and desires us to edify the structure of his house, his people, his church. (1 Cor. 3:11) Our bonds are stronger than brick and mortar. Let us regularly keep up our attention to God's house, being cleansed with Christ's Word (Eph. 5:26), being established by the efforts of one another as pillars to support the ceiling (Rom. 15:2; 1 Tim. 3:15), being nourished by the Cornerstone (Col. 2:19; Mat. 21:42), and being watchful for the return of the Master of the house (Mat. 24:42). Let us dedicate ourselves to peace, knowing that whoever destroys God's house, God himself will recompense. (1 Cor. 3:17)