

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

The Lord’s People – The Church

By Lowell Blasingame

W.E. Vine defines *ekklesia*, “from *ek*, out of, and *klesis*, a calling (*kaleo*, to call),” (*Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*). This is the word which is commonly rendered “*church*” in our English versions of the New Testament where it occurs 115 times. Once it is used of Israel (Acts 7:38), which had been “*called out*” of Egypt and, at the time, was in the wilderness making her way to the land which had been promised to her as an inheritance. Three times the word is translated “*assembly*,” once of the group called out by Demetrius, the silversmith (Acts 19:32) and twice of an assembly convened by the town clerk (Acts 19:39, 41). This leaves 111 times that it occurs either in its singular or plural form of the Lord’s people and we should be impressed by the Holy Spirit’s giving us so much information about the Lord’s *ekklesia*.

While the word identifies us as His “*called out*,” this word does not tell us how or by what we are called. People have strange ideas about how the Lord calls people. Some recite strange or unusual experiences which they have had and which they interpret to mean is a call from the Lord. Usually, this will be an emotional sensation which they haven’t experienced before. Or it may be something strange which they hear or see and they interpret this to be a call from the Lord. Since the Lord isn’t a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34-35) and isn’t willing that any perish (2 Pet. 3:9), but wishes that all come to repentance, it would appear that He would call all in the same way.

The Scriptures teach us how the Lord calls us. Paul said, “*Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (2 Thess. 2:14) and “*For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present life*” (Titus 2:11-12). So the medium through which God calls is the gospel, which is “*the word of His grace*” (Acts 20:32) and the gospel is to be taught to all nations or every creature (Matt. 28:19; Mk. 16:15). Without exception, each case of conversion related in the book of Acts has persons first being *taught*.

Ekklesia identifies us as the Lord’s “*called out*,” but the word doesn’t tell us “*out of*” what or “*into*” what we are called, but the Scriptures do. They tell us that sin severs our spiritual relationship with God making us “*dead in trespasses and sins*” (Eph. 2:1) and by such, we become “*servants of sin*” (Rom. 6:17) and need to be “*delivered from the power of darkness*” (Col. 1:13). It is by our obedience to the gospel or response to God’s *call* that we are delivered from the power of darkness and “*translated into the kingdom of His dear Son*” (Col. 1:13), or “*Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness*” (Rom. 6:18). The consummating act of obedience to this form of doctrine is obedience to the command to be baptized. In this act, we enter “*into Christ*” (Gal. 3:27), where we become “*new creatures*” (2 Cor. 5:17) and we are buried and raised “*to walk in newness of life*” (Rom. 6:3-4). So, we are “*called out*” of an old relationship of alienation from God into one in which our union with Him is restored.

Ekklesia tells us that we are “*called out*” but not the reason or why we are called out. But the Scriptures tell us this also. “*Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light*” (Col. 1:13) and that “*ye should show forth the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light*” (1 Pet. 2:9). This ought to motivate one to respond to the call of the gospel and thereafter to live faithfully for the Lord. Think how wonderful it will be to hear Him say, “*Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*” (Matt. 25:34). This will come only to those who respond to the call of the gospel. – *From the Fifth Street East church of Christ Bulletin*, November 20, 2016. 

Missing Services

By Joel Raulerson

I remember my grandfather telling me a number of years ago, about an elderly gentleman who had an accident while farming. His tractor had tipped over, pinning the man for two days underneath the tractor. The way in which the man was discovered was something that was reported by a few local news organizations. It was reported that members of the church he attended came and discovered him pinned underneath his tractor. What was the reason they sought him out? The elderly farmer, who was faithful to attend when the church assembled, had missed Wednesday night services. What does this say about us?

On one hand, we can ask the question, “Does it seem strange for me to miss services?” Remember, the reason some of the members of that congregation had gone looking for the elderly farmer was due to the fact he had missed a Wednesday night service. Is our attendance here that consistent? If we are following the pattern God has established, it will be! Hebrews 10:25 says, *“not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”*

What if you were to have a similar emergency? Would your absence be noticed? Or, would members here assume that you just decided not to come today because you were tired, or one of many excuses you constantly offer? Ask yourself, how many services have you missed in the last year? Can you honestly count yourself as a faithful, regular worshipper at this congregation? Some brethren seem to think, “So what if I’m just at services every now and then? If that’s the worst sin I ever commit, I’ll make it to Heaven.” Are you sure of that? The Bible says that all sin separates us from God (Isa. 59:1-2; Rom. 6:23). The Bible makes it clear that we can lose our souls over just one sin (Acts 8:13-24). How many times does a person have to willfully miss to commit a sin? The first time is just as much a sin as the fourth time or the fortieth time, if it is willful sin (Heb. 10:26).

Another lesson we can take from this story is the care that the brethren show for one another. The Hebrew writer told us in Hebrews 10:24, *“Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works.”* We should be doing this by attending services and encouraging one another. However, the brethren also showed concern for their brother when he was not at services. They had a concern for their brother’s soul and for his physical well-being when he was not at services. Do we have the same care and compassion? Whenever brethren are absent do we check up on them? Even when they give a reason for their absence, do we attempt to check up on them ourselves? Let us obey Hebrews 10:24 and show our love toward our brethren. – Shared via email by Brother Morris Bowers, Athens, AL. 

Everybody, Somebody, Anybody & Nobody

Author Unknown - Revised

Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and **Nobody** were all neighbors in a community. These four fellows worshiped at the same congregation. Yet, they were unlike you and me, for they were more mature in their judgments.

Everybody was out of town most Sundays visiting relatives and **Somebody**, a real sport, usually went fishing, hiking, hunting or golfing. **Anybody** could have gone to worship services but he thought he wouldn’t really be missed since **Nobody** would be there. So, **Nobody** went to church services.

One day, one of the elders needed a teacher for one of the Bible classes. **Everybody** thought **Somebody** would teach the class and **Somebody** thought **Anybody** could do the teaching. So, they wound up with **Nobody** teaching the class.

It seems that **Nobody** was the only decent chap among them. **Nobody** did the work when **Everybody** didn’t, when **Somebody** wouldn’t and when **Anybody** couldn’t.

One day, an unbeliever moved into the community. **Everybody** honestly believed **Somebody** would teach him. **Somebody** thought **Anybody** could while **Anybody** thought **Everybody** had already talked to this man.

The years went by and these four chaps (**Everybody, Somebody, Anybody** and **Nobody**) died and went to meet their maker. Care to guess who finally went to heaven? That’s right — **Nobody!** 

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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