

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

Attendance

By Roy E. Cogdill

Attendance at the services of the church is the best index of interest in one's own spiritual growth, and is a certain indication of one's own interest in the Lord's church.

One of the purposes for which God gave the church is that we might be edified as a member of the body (Eph. 4:16). The edification of the body as a whole depends upon each member contributing his individual part thereto. This is the object of worship and fellowship in the church. We need this strength for life's problems and temptations, and we cannot successfully live the Christian life and render an acceptable service to God without it. Every one of us should be determined, therefore, to obtain it by attending every service that it is possible for us to attend. The services of the church are designed for this very purpose. They can be a blessing for our souls and make us stronger Christians. We must attend them, however, with the right attitude if we are to receive a blessing from them. No service can do us any good without our being present, no matter how much truth is preached. Every service will benefit us unless we come to it with an improper attitude—unteachable and prejudiced in heart. We rob ourselves of the strength we need if we fail to attend with the right disposition of soul.

In these services, through study and instruction, and the worship ordained of God, we receive admonition and exhortation, and therefore strength. No member of the church can be the strong Christian that he should be without attending every service possible. It is entirely impossible for us to be Christians that we must be in order to please God, and grow as we should, if we habitually miss the services held for the very purpose of helping us. Neither is it possible for us to please God, and grow as we should, by merely attending on Sunday morning. Sunday morning Christianity is half-hearted Christianity, and the person who has it needs a whole-hearted conversion to the Lord.

When our services on Sunday evening present only about 60% of our attendance on Sunday morning; when, on Wednesday night, we have only about half of those present for the breaking of bread on Sunday morning; when attendance at the Bible classes is less than the membership of the congregation; and when more than half of the membership of a congregation do not attend and support a series of gospel meetings to preach the Gospel; something is seriously wrong with the church. Such half-hearted devotion to duty and the interests of the kingdom can only be a reproach to the church, and be disappointing to the Lord. Where do you, as an individual, fit into the picture? If you have been attending only a part of the services, won't you become a full-time Christian? — *Truth Magazine*, May 9, 1974. ■

Our Assembling Together

By Micky Galloway

One of the more visible signs of straying from the faith is the habitual neglect of Christians to come together with their brethren for edification. This seems to be a wide-spread problem in most every congregation of God's people, especially on Sunday night and Wednesday night. However, the fact that it is widespread does not justify the practice. When approached concerning their absence, many may ask, "Where's the scripture that says I have to come Wednesday nights?" or "Why do I have to attend every service?" To ask these questions evidences the problem. The one who asks these is untaught concerning the purpose of our assembling together, or simply does not appreciate the blessings that are received in them.

In Hebrews 10:24-25, we can see the command "**not forsaking our own assembling together.**" This instruction is too plain to miss without help. It was the "custom" of some (they had this problem too, in the first century) to "**forsake**" this blessing and not "**consider one another to provoke unto love and good works.**" To "**forsake**" is defined: "*egkataleipo (eng-kat-al-i'-po); to leave behind in some place...or to desert*" (**Strong**). **Thayer** defines this word: "*to abandon, i.e. to leave in straits, leave helpless, to desert, forsake.*" What is it that we are not to

“forsake”? We are not to forsake **“our own assembling together.”** The word translated **“assembling together”** is from *episunagoge* (ep-ee-soon-ag-o-gay’); and is defined as: *“a complete collection; especially a Christian meeting (for worship)”* (**Strong**). **Thayer** defines it as *“the religious assembly of Christians”* and offers Hebrews 10:25 as an illustration.

Our faithful attendance is one way that we show consideration for the spiritual well being of one another (Heb. 10:24). Our willful absence in essence says we are not concerned about such spiritual well being of others. Obviously, there is value in our assembling together, who can deny it?

God, in His infinite wisdom, commanded that we meet together to edify each other. The basic meaning of the word **“church,”** *ekklesia*, is *“called out people.”* The word **“church”** may refer to all Christians everywhere, as in Matthew 16:18 and Ephesians 1:22. It may refer to a local group of disciples having mutual responsibilities to one another, a certain organizational structure, and its own peculiar work, as in Acts 20:17-35. This constitutes a local congregation with certain mutual responsibilities, whether in assembly or not, as in 1 Timothy 5:16. The word **“church”** may apply to an actual assembly of disciples in one place, as in 1 Corinthians 11:18, 14:19, 23, 35. The word **“church”** may refer to the disciples dispersed over the city, a distributive sense. Saul **“laid waste the church, entering into every house, and dragging men and women, committed them to prison”** (Acts 8:3). After one obeys the gospel and is added to the Lord’s universal church (Acts 2:47), he must join himself to a local congregation of God’s people in a specific place to worship and work (Acts 9:26). In this capacity he has the responsibility (response in accord to ability) to come together (**assemble**) with these disciples, to whom he has joined himself, as often as they meet together.

The apostle Peter teaches us to **“long for the spiritual milk”** (1 Pet. 2:2), and **“grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”** (2 Pet. 3:18). Our assembling together is designed by God for that very purpose. We come together to worship God in prayer, songs of praise and thanksgiving, and study of the Bible. Upon the first day of the week we are to partake of the Lord’s Supper (Acts 20:7) and also give back to God a portion of that which He has blessed us with, as we have purposed in our hearts and according to how we have prospered (1 Cor. 16:1ff; 2 Cor. 8 & 9). These commandments are given so the Christian may be built up in his faith and grow to maturity. These matters are not done when an individual deliberately chooses not to assemble together with the saints.

Something is terribly wrong, brethren, when Christians feel they do not need to come together with those of **“like precious faith.”** I know many, whose “custom” this is, who are not so slack when it comes to attending their jobs, ball games, picnics or the many other secular activities that one may choose to involve themselves with.

It is also wrong for these brethren to excuse themselves by saying, “the Bible doesn’t say not to,” and then be quick to condemn denominational arguments which use the same reasoning for their additions to God’s Word. Such is unauthorized, whether it be members of denominations or the brethren (2 Jn. 9; 1 Cor. 4:6)!

We need to realize, also, that simply attending services doesn’t make a person’s heart right with God. Jesus said, **“they that worship Him must worship in spirit and truth”** (Jn. 4:24). Our motivations for attending services must be to please God, not to socialize or to be done grudgingly to keep the preacher off your back. **“For as he thinketh within himself, so is he...”** (Prov. 23:7). This pin-points the real problem with those who willfully forsake the assembling together of the saints. If one’s heart is not right before God, simply preaching on attendance is not enough. We must repent and change our heart.

Finally, our influence is damaged if we willfully forsake the worship services. Not only is our personal influence damaged, but we harm the influence of the church. Jesus showed the tremendous influence Christians have in the world (Matt. 5:13-16), and we can be guilty, among other things, of being a stumbling-block to our husbands, wives, children, brothers and sisters in Christ and yes, even those in the world by neglecting the assembling of the saints together. Whether it is Sunday or Wednesday night, we cannot show those who watch us that we love the Lord and **“hunger and thirst after righteousness”** (Matt. 5:6), when we fail to assemble with the saints. Brethren, let us realize the purpose of our coming together is that praise and glory may be given to God and that we may be edified **“that I with you may be comforted in you, each of us by the other’s faith, both yours and mine”** (Rom. 1:12). — **Fifth Street East Church of Christ Bulletin**, May 14, 2006. ■

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

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