

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

What One Who Forsakes the Assembly Does Not Do!

The Hebrew writer warned those of his today to not forsake the assembly. Said he, *“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching”* (Heb. 10:25).

This was a practice of some brethren of that point in time evidenced by the warning that was issued. Some today contend that one does not forsake the assembly by missing a service once in a while. I recently heard a gospel preacher make this claim. The word **“forsaking”** means, *to leave behind in some place, i.e. (in a good sense) let remain over, or (in a bad sense) to desert:--forsake, leave.* **Strong’s Dictionary.** If one willfully chooses not to attend one service when they could attend, this one has left that particular service behind; they have deserted it; they have forsaken that opportunity to worship and thus they show disregard to God and their brethren. Consider what one does not do when they forsake the assembling of the saints. They **DO NOT...**

- Glorify Christ, the **“High Priest over the house of God”** - vs. 21
- Draw near to God with a faithful heart - vs. 22
- Hold fast the confession of faith, but they waver in faith - vs. 23
- Consider and provoke (stir up) others to love and good works - vs. 24
- Exhort others to consider the day drawing near - vs. 25
- Heed the warning of willful sin – vs. 26
- Respect the Spirit of grace and the blood of Christ - vs. 29
- Fear the vengeance and judgment of the Lord - vs. 30
- Remember their former state - vss. 32, 33
- Have compassion for the sufferings of others - vs. 34
- Have confidence in the eternal reward - vss. 34, 35
- Have a saving faith because they draw back - vs. 38
- Please the Lord in steadfastness - vss. 38, 39

Considering these truths from the scriptures, forsaking the assembling is a serious matter! Those who willfully forsake the assembling of the saints need to give the words of the Hebrew writer serious thought and repent. Where will you be each time the saints assemble to worship God? – **tgmc** ■

Who is a Christian?

By Heath Rogers

1. A Christian is a disciple of Christ. *“And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch”* (Acts 11:26).
2. A Christian is a new creature. *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new”* (2 Cor. 5:17).
3. A Christian is a child of God. *“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!”* (1 Jn. 3:1).
4. A Christian is an heir. *“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and*

if children, then heirs - heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together” (Rom. 8:16-17).

5. **A Christian is a saint.** *“To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours”* (1 Cor. 1:2).
6. **A Christian is a priest.** *“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light”* (1 Pet. 2:9).
7. **A Christian is a servant.** *“So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do’”* (Lk. 17:10).
8. **A Christian is a soldier.** *“You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ”* (2 Tim. 2:3). – *Knollwood church of Christ Articles*, April 2020. ■

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“Where Two or Three Are Gathered Together in My Name”

By Greg Gwin

In a frequently cited verse Jesus promises *“where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them”* (Matt. 18:20). Often folks apply this to situations where they join with one another in prayer about a specific problem. The idea is that if they agree together and jointly offer prayers, Jesus is ‘with them’ in regard to the desired outcome. Even more often this verse is used concerning worship. The concept is that Jesus approves and is effectively ‘there’ in any assembly of two or more that have joined in worship.

While people have drawn comfort from both of these notions, they sadly represent a rather serious misuse of the text in question. As in all studies, the context of Matthew 18:20 must be considered in order to draw a true conclusion about its meaning.

Jesus’ specific contextual thoughts begin in verse 15 where He addresses a situation in which a brother has committed a trespass. He instructs us to *“go and tell him his fault.”* If he *“will not hear thee”* then the next step is to *“take with thee two or three witnesses.”* Finally, in the case of an unrepentant brother, we must *“tell it unto the church”* and if that fails he is to *“be unto thee as an heathen and a publican.”* Jesus is, of course, describing a very serious and sad consequence. We commonly refer to this as ‘church discipline.’ In these matters He gives assurance that *“whatsoever ye bind on earth shall be bound in heaven”* (vs. 18). It is in this specific sense that He promises *“where two or three are gathered together in my name”* (or by His authority) *“there am I in the midst of them.”* He is ‘with us’ in the sense of approving our actions.

Thus, we see that the frequently quoted phrase really does not have ‘prayer groups’ or, especially, worship assemblies in view at all. To use (misuse) the passage in this way has led Christians to faulty conclusions like this: go ahead and skip the regular assembling of the church, have a brief devotional in their hotel room, and then head off to the amusement park for fun and games. Folks who do so should not take any false comfort in the idea that Jesus is ‘with them’ in such abuses. Matthew 18:20 offers no such justification. Think!

Special note: The misuse of Matthew 18:20 has been very evident in our current coronavirus crisis. Brethren are using this verse to justify the ‘virtual’, ‘online’, ‘remote’, ‘at home’ observance of the Lord’s Supper. Again, the text in question does not speak to or authorize such. We firmly believe, as many have expressed, that the Lord’s Supper is to be done when *“the whole church has come together into one place”* (1 Cor. 14:23 – see also 1 Cor. 11:18, 20, 34 and Acts 20:7). – *Colleevue church of Christ Bulletin*, April 19, 2020. ■

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

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