

# “THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

## ZOOM

By Keith Sharp

Before March of this year, I don't think I had ever heard of ZOOM. Now this web program has become an important part of my life. For about six weeks I worshiped on the first day of the week exclusively by what I could receive over the internet from William Stewart and the Limestone Church of Christ in Kingston, Ontario, Canada. During this time Michelle Sharp figured out how to use ZOOM to teach children's classes online, and she and Sandy now conduct three classes a week for children here and in Conway, New York City, and Kingston, Ontario, Canada. Manny Ebong in Lagos, Nigeria is preaching to congregations in London, England and Melbourne, Australia, and he and I are having classes with a young man in London. Wow! A year ago, who could have imagined it!

But technology is morally and spiritually neutral. It can be used for good or bad. And, it can allow new ways for Satan to lead the unwary astray. We must not be ignorant of his devices (2 Cor. 2:11; cf. Eph. 6:11; 1 Pet. 5:8).

It's a lot easier to sit at home in our pajamas and watch a TV program than it is to get dressed and go to the church building for an hour or two of worship. But we are commanded to assemble with the people of God for worship. *“And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works; not forsaking our own assembling together, as the custom of some is, but exhorting (one another); and so much the more, as ye see the day drawing nigh”* (Heb. 10:24-25).

The same consideration that would lead me to stay at home if I am sick so as not to infect others (Heb. 13:1), directs me to stay at home when the government warns that being together in crowds is spreading a deadly disease. But, when civil rulers allow bars and casinos to be open and decree churches must close, religious persecution has begun, and *“we ought to obey God rather than men”* (Acts 5:29).

Some brethren have used the fear of Covid-19 and the use of modern technology to introduce unauthorized practices. New Testament Christians observed the Lord's Supper in the public worship assembly of the church exclusively. *“And upon the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul discoursed with them, intending to depart on the morrow; and prolonged his speech until midnight”* (Acts 20:7). *“For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and I partly believe it”* (1 Cor. 11:18). *“When therefore ye assemble yourselves together (into one place, KJV), it is not possible to eat the Lord's supper ...”* (1 Cor. 11:20). *“Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, wait one for another. If any man is hungry, let him eat at home; that your coming together be not unto judgment. And the rest will I set in order whensoever I come”* (1 Cor. 11:33-34). There is spiritual significance to eating the Lord's Supper in the public worship assembly of the church – we thus *“proclaim the Lord's death till he comes”* (1 Cor. 11:26). It took courage during the Jewish, Neronian, or Domitian persecutions for Christians to assemble with the church and proclaim their faith in Christ by eating the Lord's Supper with the brethren. It takes neither courage nor energy to sit at home in front of the TV set and “virtually participate” with others in their own homes. Furthermore, this is a violation of the New Testament pattern for the Lord's Supper.

The “when” for the Lord's Supper, the first day of the week, is revealed only one time (Acts 20:7). The “where” is stated four times (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:18, 20, 33). There is spiritual significance to each. Why do brethren bind the *when* and loose the *where*?

And this also has unforeseen consequences. I have been engaged in a written discussion with three Nigerian preachers who believe there should be one eldership for each city regardless of the number of congregations there. Of course, this is wrong (Acts 14:23; 1 Pet. 5:1-2).

But what's keeping brethren from all over from doing what many are doing now – sitting in our homes in front of the TV sets and virtually worshiping with other virtual worshipers all over the country, or world, listening to the preacher we like best, regardless of where he is, sending a contribution to the elders where he is a member, and just forgetting about assembling with the saints (Heb. 10:24-25). Just think, you could live in Anchorage, Alaska and be a “virtual” member of a congregation in Tampa, Florida! So much for local congregations (1 Cor. 1:2)!

Brethren, I'm thankful for the possibilities for good that technology offers. But don't abuse the technology. Assemble with the saints where you live and are a member to eat the Lord's Supper. As soon as things return to normal, put the Lord first by being in all the worship assemblies and classes of the local church as you can (Matt. 6:33).

Use technology for good. Don't allow it to corrupt the divine pattern or contribute to our spiritual laziness. ■

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## I DID MY DUTY SUNDAY

Jerral Kay

I am so proud that I “went to church.” Jesus knows that I paid my OBLIGATION. I did what I was commanded to do. Jesus can't say I didn't obey Him. Did you do your duty Sunday? I know you are glad to get it over with and to get back to your life.

But I was reading today of what apostle Paul said to his friend Philemon in verse 14 - ***“...I want your good to not be of necessity, but willingly.”*** I seem to recognize right away that my friends and Christ should not have to do things for me, because they feel obligated. Yes, I want to be pleased from a spirit of love and appreciation. Do you know of marriages that are based solely on duty? They do things for each other, but not from love, devotion and appreciation for the other mate. I know of people that have been married over 50 years that “Put Up With Each Other,” for survival or self-interest.

Wow! Then I remember something Jesus said that makes our duty and responsibility worthless to him, even though we do everything He tells us to do. He gives us an illustration of His servant who obeyed completely, from compulsion by his Master. Read Luke 17:7-10. I would think that is a perfect servant, wouldn't you? He does his duty and doesn't complain, but Jesus said this about His obedient servant in verse ten – ***“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.’”*** It is evident that the majority of church-goers feel they do their duty by obeying, but in reality they are worthless to the cause and kingdom of Christ. Why are they worthless? Read on.

Jesus wants each person to ***“give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver”*** (2 Cor. 9:7). This doesn't apply only to money, but everything a servant is commanded – singing, teaching, worship services of the church, Bible classes, praying, Lord's Supper, personal evangelism, work as a Christian laborer, etc.

God wants us to be willing, not feel obligated. His people rejoice to give willingly, with their whole hearts, ***“offering freely and joyously”*** to him (1 Chron. 29:9, 17). He wants our generosity to be ***“as a willing gift, not just as an obligation”*** (2 Cor. 9:5-8). It is ***“a willing spirit”*** that tastes the joy of his salvation (Psa. 51:12), and it is a glory to our King when his people ***“offer themselves freely”*** to his worship, work in His Vineyard and service (Psalm 110:3). Christian faith cannot be forced. God wants to win us from within, and empower Christians by his Spirit to live willing, freely, from the heart.

Duty to Christ, family, nation and neighbors is not in vain when it comes from a spirit of love, appreciation and thankfulness. Luke 10:27 teaches the real Christian spirit – ***“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.”*** ■

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

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