

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

“What Is The Reason For Which You Have Come?” – Acts 10:21

By Chris Simmons

We read in Acts chapter 10 of the conversion of Cornelius and how that Cornelius was divinely directed to **“send to Joppa, and have Simon, who is also called Peter, brought here; and he shall speak words to you by which you will be saved”** (Acts 11:13-14). Cornelius obeyed and he sent three men to summon Peter. When they arrived at Joppa and asked for Peter (after Peter had seen his vision), Peter asked this question regarding the reason for which they had come. Though this question is very specific in this particular context as to why the contingent from Cornelius had come to Peter, it is a question that can help our spiritual growth and maturity when considered in a much different context. That is, when we consider our assembling together as a church today, **“what is the reason for which you have come?”** Why do we come together? There are two very different mind-sets to be considered when we answer this question.

The first mind-set is - to get something. Many souls have made decisions regarding if, when, and where to “go to church” based on what they get out of it. Many decisions have been made based on the fact that they didn’t get out of it what they were looking for. It is sad how often the expression has been uttered regarding the assembly of the saints, “I just didn’t get anything out of it!” The question is, what were they looking to get?

Many seek to be entertained in the assembly. God’s word is noticeably silent regarding the purpose of entertainment in the assembly and yet many make decisions on if and where to worship God based on the entertainment value that they get out of it.

Many come to get someone else to teach their children what they need to know. Such an attitude reflects an ignorance of the fact that it’s not the job of the church to bring up our children in the **“discipline and instruction of the Lord”** (Eph. 6:4-RSV). Rather, it is our job as parents to train our children and give them the spiritual instruction that they need. Our Bible classes should be viewed as an opportunity to further supplement the spiritual training being done at home and not as a substitute for it.

There are others who come to get attention and notoriety from others and to have the preeminence among the brethren. We read of the rebuke of Diotrephes in 3 John 9-10 who **“loveth to have the preeminence”** (ASV) among the brethren. We are also warned by Jesus to **“beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them”** (Matt. 6:1). Coming to be seen and then getting attention and notoriety from others is not a legitimate reason to come.

There are yet others who come to get others on “their side” of a particular issue and thus cause dissension. Timothy was warned of such people in 1 Timothy 6:3-5 where the apostle Paul wrote, **“If anyone advocates a different doctrine, and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, he is conceited and understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain.”**

The church will not grow when brethren have any of these reasons for assembling together.

There is, however, a second mind-set that we can (and should) have regarding why we assemble together. That is, instead of coming to get something, we come to give something.

We should come to give our worship and praise to God. God seeks those who desire to offer their worship to

Him ***“in spirit and truth”*** (Jn. 4:23-24). We should seek to offer our worship to God simply because ***“He Himself gives to all life and breath and all things; and He made from one, every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth”*** (Acts 17:25-26). Those who have obeyed the gospel should all the more seek to ***“turn back to give glory to God”*** for His mercy and grace that has been extended to us (Lk. 17:18; read verses 11-19). Our attitude should be that as expressed by David in Psalms 29:1-2, ***“Ascribe to the Lord, O sons of the mighty, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due to His name; worship the Lord in holy array”*** (cf. Psa. 148:1-14).

Another reason for coming should be to give our attention – to the songs being sung, the classes being taught, the prayers being spoken, and the sermons being proclaimed. Basically, we need to come ready to listen. Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 5:1, ***“Guard your steps as you go to the house of God, and draw near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools.”*** We also should do as Ezekiel was exhorted to do and ***“take into your heart all My words which I shall speak to you, and listen closely”*** (Ezek. 3:10). Do we pay enough attention to what takes place in the assembly that we can say “amen” to the songs, prayers, and lessons from God’s word? Do we involve our spirits and our minds in the worship that we give (cf. 1 Cor. 14:15)?

Do we come together to give our encouragement to others? We read in 1 Thessalonians 5:11-14, ***“Therefore encourage one another, and build up one another, just as you also are doing... And we urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all men.”*** Do we come to give our encouragement or only to get it (cf. Hebrews 3:13)?

Another reason for coming together is to give of our means. The instruction to give is clear (1 Cor. 16:1). There is to be planning, preparation, and purpose in our giving (2 Cor. 9:7-8), the most important part of which is in first giving ourselves to the Lord (2 Cor 8:1-5). Do we come to give of ourselves to the Lord, or do we come to get that which would please self?

The interesting thing is, when we truly come to give and not just to get, we will be blessed to receive many spiritual blessings from God. These include the edification and encouragement that we need to continue to run the race that is set before us (1 Thess. 5:11-14; Heb. 3:13; 12:1-2), the increased knowledge that we need to grow by and overcome temptations with (2 Pet. 3:17; Acts 20:32; Col. 1:9-12) and perhaps, most importantly, we receive God’s approval when we assemble and worship in the right way (according to faith) and for the right reasons (Heb. 11:2, 4, 39). – ***Fifth Street East church of Christ Bulletin Articles***, April 3, 2016. ■



The Devil’s Most Useful Tool

Author Unknown (edited by Norman Sewell)

It was once announced that the devil was going out of business and would offer all his tools for sale to whoever would pay his price.

On the night of the sale, they were all attractively displayed. Malice, Hatred, Lust, Envy, and all the other implements of evil were spread out, each marked with its price.

Apart from the rest lay a harmless looking wedge-shaped tool, much worn and higher in price than any of the others. Someone asked the devil what it was. “That’s Discouragement,” he replied. “Why do you have it priced so high?”

“Because,” the devil said, “It is the most useful tool I own. With it, I can pry open and get inside a man’s conscience when I could not get near him with any of the others. Once inside I can use him in whatever way suits me best. It is so worn because I use it with nearly everyone. Very few people know that it belongs to me.”

The devil’s price for Discouragement was so high that it was never sold. He still owns it and is still using it. ■

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

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