

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

Hebrews 10:25 In Context

By Johnny Stringer

Christians who are spiritually minded and thoroughly devoted to God will assemble with the saints for spiritual activities – not just because Hebrews 10:25 demands it, but because they want to. Those who would prefer secular activities but grudgingly assemble in order to obey Hebrew 10:25 are seriously deficient in spirituality. In order to get brethren to assemble, we need to begin not with Hebrews 10:25, but with the attitudes of their hearts.

Nevertheless, Hebrews 10:25 should be taught. When considered in its context, this passage impresses us with the importance of assembling with the saints.

Assembling for Mutual Exhortation

Hebrews was written to Jewish Christians who were being pressured to renounce Christianity and return to Judaism. They were urged to hold fast the profession of their faith without wavering (v. 23). The pressures they faced, however, were strong; consequently, they needed the encouragement and help of one another. So, the writer told them to provoke one another unto faithfulness (v. 24).

In the process of telling them to exhort one another, the inspired writer commanded them not to forsake the assembling of themselves as some were habitually doing (v. 25). The assembly is important as an occasion of exhortation. Verse 25 says, *“not forsaking the assembling...but exhorting one another.”* The exhorting referred to is not exhorting brethren to assemble; rather, it is exhorting one another in the assemblies.

The reason it was so important for brethren to assemble was the exhortation that took place in the assemblies. The exhortation that takes place when saints assemble is needed today as it was then. The world puts us under much pressure to forsake the Lord, and we need to assemble and encourage one another.

God recognized that Christians would need one another. He recognized the difficulties of trying to face the pressures of the world alone. Hence, he provided that local churches form and regularly assemble so that we could be encouraged to maintain our faithfulness. Those who fail to assemble not only are failing to receive the benefits it provides, but are failing to help encourage their brethren as we are taught to do.

As the Day Approaches

The Hebrew Christians were to be increasingly earnest about assembling for mutual exhortation as they saw the day approaching. What day? Some say the first day of the week, but this does not fit. It would not make sense to tell brethren to assemble for mutual exhortation as they saw the first day of the week approaching.

The context indicates that the day under discussion was a day of judgment (vv. 26-27). These brethren were being tempted to renounce Christ. If they did, they would be severely judged. Therefore, as they saw judgment approaching, they needed to be especially diligent to assemble to give and receive the exhortation they needed to prevent themselves from renouncing Christ and paying the horrible price.

What judgment? I believe the judgment these Jewish Christians saw approaching was the judgment on Jerusalem of which Jesus had warned in Matthew 24. As they saw that judgment approaching, they would need to take every possible step to maintain their steadfastness. Assembling for mutual exhortation was one of those steps, so they needed to be especially diligent to assemble regularly.

The same principle applies today. We see the final judgment approaching, and in view of it, we need to do whatever we can to strengthen ourselves so that we will continue steadfast. One of these steps is assembling with the saints for

mutual exhortation.

Forsaking

Some believe that one can willfully miss an assembly occasionally, yet not be guilty of forsaking the assembling. They argue that one has not forsaken the assembling until he has stopped assembling altogether - forever. They believe the term forsake indicates a complete apostasy. According to this view, one who just drops in occasionally has not violated Hebrews 10:25. Those who take this position point out that the word translated "**forsake**" (*egkatalaipo*) means "to abandon, desert" (*Thayer*, p. 166). They say that one has not abandoned or deserted the assembling of saints until he has quit assembling forever. To illustrate their view, they point out that one might neglect his wife without abandoning her. Similarly, they argue, one may occasionally neglect the assembling without abandoning it.

One problem with this view is that according to Hebrews 10:25, some brethren made a habit of forsaking the assembling. The word rendered "**manner**" (*ethos*) denotes a habit or custom. Forsaking the assembling was a habit of some. Forsaking, therefore, was something that could be repeated as a habit. To renounce assembling forever is a one-time thing, not something one could habitually do. Vincent remarks, "*Lunemann aptly says that the idea of apostasy . . . is excluded by ethos habit or custom, which implies an often recurring act on the part of the same persons*" (M.R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, p. 1148). When one willfully fails to assemble one time, he has forsaken or abandoned the assembling on that one occasion. If he often fails to assemble, he has made a habit of forsaking the assembling.

It is a mistake to think that one has to renounce assembling forever in order to be guilty of forsaking the assembling. A man may forsake or abandon his wife without leaving her forever. Suppose a man takes his wife to town and then drives off without returning for her until the next day. I believe she would feel abandoned, deserted, forsaken. Suppose he pulls the same stunt a few days later and then continues doing it fairly regularly. He has made a habit of forsaking her, leaving her abandoned. One can abandon his wife on certain occasions without renouncing her forever. Similarly, one can abandon the assembling on certain occasions without renouncing assembling forever.

Assembling for mutual exhortation is an activity God has planned for our good. It will keep us from apostatizing so that we will not have to suffer the horrible punishment to which apostates are doomed. Let us be diligent not to forsake the assembling at any time – and let us surely not make a habit of it as some do. – *Guardian of Truth, April 6, 1989.* ■

Can We See The Bible Alike?

By Johnny Polk

- Moses said we could (Deut. 29:29)
- David said we could (Psa. 119:104)
- John said we could (John 20:30, 31)
- Jesus prayed that we might (John 17:20)

All of these spokesmen for God have declared that through study of the Scriptures we are enabled to see them alike.

There are some things that HINDER a clear understanding of the Bible:

- Relatives (Matt. 19:29; 10:34-37)
- Pride (Prov. 14:12; 16:18; Rev. 3:17-18)
- Majority opinion (Ex. 23:2; Matt. 7:13-14, 21)
- False doctrines (Matt. 13:14-15; 2 Thess. 2:9-12)
- Satan (2 Cor. 4:3-4)

If we will accept only the word of God (1 Pet. 4:11), we would not only see the Bible alike, but understand and practice it alike (1 Cor. 1:10). ■

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

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