



The Southeast Sower

Southeast Church of Christ

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The Local Church (VIII)

("Our Responsibility To Attend All The Services")

by Vernon Teagarden

First century Christians were in the habit of assembling (1 Cor. 11:20; 14:23, 26; Acts 20:7; 2:42, 46). Many Christians eagerly look forward to every assembly of the local congregation, knowing that Christ said, "For where two or more are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20). Weak Christians do not understand the value of the assemblies. They have enough "religion" to soothe their conscience and they don't want to be viewed as a fanatic. However, the true Christian understands that there are good reasons for being at all the assemblies, and he will act on the basis of those reasons.

It is sad that some members of the Lord's body do not share this eagerness to assemble. Apparently, they are not convinced that they have the obligation to attend every service of the local church. They may be present on a fairly regular basis for the Sunday morning service when the Lord's Supper is eaten, but their attendance at the other services is sporadic at best. All kinds of excuses are given for their actions, but when it gets right down to it, what they are doing is following human reasoning, rejecting God's will (1 Cor. 2:12-14). I'm not writing about those who cannot attend all the services because of matters

beyond their control; but, I certainly am writing about those whose attitude is one of indifference regarding this subject.

In our consideration of the responsibilities of the individual to the local church, it is profitable for us to raise a simple question. "Why should one attend all the services of the local church?" If there are not good reasons for doing so we need not bother. However, if there are good reasons, those who are truly committed to Christ will act in harmony with those reasons.

THE PURPOSE OF THE ASSEMBLIES OF THE CHURCH

The writer of the book of Hebrews states, "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promises;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as you see the day approaching" (Heb. 10:24, 25). In verse twenty-four, the writer tells us that we are to "consider" one another. The word "consider" comes from the Greek word, "katanoeo," and it means to, "notice, observe, look at, consider, contemplate." Thayer says it means to, "fix one's eyes, or mind upon, to consider attentively." "Attentively" is defined by the American Heritage Dictionary as, "concentration of the mental powers upon an object."

The Southeast

Church of Christ meets at:

35 Walnut Court

Mogadore, OH 44260

Phone: 330.628.7432

SERVICES:

Sunday

Bible Study: 10:00 am

Worship: 10:30 am
6:00 pm

Wednesday

Bible Study: 7:30 pm

Christians must do more than casually think of one another. They must truly and intently contemplate each other's needs. The Christian is not selfish, but considerate of others. Paul said in Philippians, 2:4, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." When the Christian willfully misses the assemblies of the local church, it simply is an act of selfishness on his part. What he is announcing is that I care more

about my “own things” than I do the things of others.

Furthermore, the assembly provides an opportunity for Christians to “provoke one another unto love and good works.” The word “provoke” comes from the Greek word, “paroxusmos,” and it means, “to incite.” According to the American Heritage Dictionary, the word “incite” means, “to provoke to action.” Christians are duty-bound to stir each other up spiritually. The assemblies of the local church provide an opportunity to fulfill this command. Hence, here is another good reason to attend all the services of the local congregation.

Another very good, and important reason to attend, is that we are, “not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together.” The word “forsake” comes from the Greek word, “egkataleipo,” and it means, “leave behind, forsake, abandon, desert,” or as Thayer defines it, “to leave in straits.” Read, and please take note of how the word is used in the following passages (Matt. 27:46; Acts 2:27, 31; 2 Tim. 4:0, 16; Heb. 13:5). Wescott states that “The word . . . conveys the notion not simply of leaving, as no longer taking part in the assembly, but of abandoning, leaving the assembly exposed to peril in the conflict.” Some think that a Christian must be absent from the assemblies for weeks or even months before he is violation of Heb. 10:25. However, this is not true. When I willfully miss even one assembly, I have forsaken or abandon that assembly because I have abandon and deserted those in that gathering who need my help! I have left that particular assembly “exposed to peril in conflict.” Further, the Hebrew writer states that the “manner of some” was that they were forsaking the assemblies of the brethren (v. 25). “Manner” or “ethos” means, “habit, usage.” (cf. Lk. 22:39; Jn. 19:40). Again, when a Christian

“willfully” or voluntarily misses even one service, he has “forsaken,” or “abandoned” that assembly. According to this passage, there were Christians who had gotten into the habit of frequently forsaking the assemblies. However, in the same verse the writer provides the solution to the problem. STOP IT! Plainer, he could not be!

First century Christians were to “exhort” one another (v. 25). The word “exhort” comes from the word, “parakaleo,” which means “appeal to, exhort, encourage.” Christians must continually exhort one another (Heb. 3:12, 13). Not only were Christians to exhort one another not to forsake the assemblies, but they were also to understand that the assemblies themselves provided excellent opportunities to encourage one another. Moreover, they were to feel the urgency of encouraging each other because they to exhort one another, “so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (v. 25). “The day,” likely refers to the day of the destruction of Jerusalem, since the Lord had given signs by which one could know it was “approaching” (Matt. 24). This would have obvious importance to the Jewish Christian to whom this letter was originally written. But, what about “our day” coming, that is, the day of our death and subsequent judgment (Heb. 9:27)? That “day” is fast approaching for all of us, and we better be prepared. Being at all the services of the local church is certainly one way we can prepare for that day.

Because the assemblies are so vital to our spiritual well-being, negligence in attending always invites spiritual decline and death. Lax attendance and spiritual weakness go hand-in-hand. “Assembly and fellowship are two evidences of vital faith. When zeal flags and faith weakens, the desire to fellowship with other believers weakens also. Through such assembly the

provocation of verse 24 is possible. When Christians meet together, they exhort each other to fruitful service and unbroken fellowship. The danger of apostasy lurks in the failure of believers to meet together for mutual help . . . ‘mutual encouragement.’” We have opportunity to enjoy the fellowship of others who share our faith, ideals, and principles (Acts 2:42, 46). Moreover, the assembly is a place where one can receive much needed instruction and education in the scriptures (1 Tim. 4:13; Col. 4:16; 1 Thess. 5:27).

Being in attendance at all the assemblies is a very important part of the individual’s responsibility to the local church. What kind of example do we set for our spouses, our children, new converts, and the world when we voluntarily absent ourselves from the services of local congregation? Many excuses are offered for irregular attendance, but the real reasons are: (1) lack of understanding of the purpose and importance of the assemblies; (2) lack of appreciation of the benefits received in the assemblies; (3) indifference toward meeting my God-given obligations to the local church!

Why should one attend all the services of the local church? The answer is simple. We are “members one of another” with the responsibility to strengthen and encourage each other to be faithful. And, because “if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remained no more sacrifice for sins” (Heb. 10:26); or, in other words, we will be lost.

(Next, The Local Church (IV)
- “Our Financial
Responsibilities”)