

Not Forsaking the Assembling of Ourselves Together

By Paul O. Nichols

In the first century during the days of the apostles there was a problem in the church. Some of the members were neglecting their worship to God. For one reason or another they failed to assemble with other Christians of the community. Today we have the same problem in many places. The need for dealing with this violation of God's will is just as great now as it was at that time.

Jesus taught that God seeks those who will worship Him **“in spirit and in truth”** (John 4:23). If one is a Christian, his desire should be to worship and serve God. Upon one occasion Jesus said, **“Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve”** (Matt. 4:10).

The writer of the book of Hebrews says, **“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). Teaching was needed in Paul's day to help the members of the church realize that they must not neglect their

worship to the Lord. Apparently there were some who were rebellious, and others who were careless and indifferent, just as there are today. We can profit from Paul's teaching, if we will listen to him.

By example we learn that we are to worship God on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). This is the day that we, as Christians, are to **“break bread”** in memory of Jesus. Also, Paul, the apostle, binds on us the giving of our means on this day as God prospers us (I Cor. 16:1, 2). The first day is a special day, and is called by John **“the Lord's day”** (Rev. 1:10).

“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together” simply means that Christians are not to willfully, of their own volition, choose to do something else in preference to gathering with other disciples in corporate worship to God. Jesus taught His followers, **“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness”** (Matt. 6:33). When sickness or accident, which is beyond one's control, keeps him from the assembly, he is not in violation of the above command. But when a person chooses to work, go fishing, hunting, camping, visiting, or go on vacation away from any faithful congregation, then he certainly does forsake the worship assembly and he does not seek first the kingdom of God. And Paul teaches that we are to exhort one another to not neglect our duty. He says, **“Exhorting one another: and so much the more as ye see the day approaching.”**

The preposition **“for”** in verse 26 connects the next thought with the preceding command. He says, **“For if we sin willfully after we have**

received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.” It is not only a mistake for us to fail to meet with other Christians for worship, but Paul classes it a willful sin. And there is no worse sin than that which is deliberate.

In verse 27, the writer indicates that for such willful sin one will be brought into condemnation. He says that which awaits such an individual is **“judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.”** No wonder, for in the preceding verse he points out that the action of the person who deliberately refuses to assemble for worship indicates that the sacrifice Christ made for his salvation is not important enough to him to put the Lord first in his life. But he would remind us that there is no other sacrifice through which we can obtain salvation. **“There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.”**

Next, he makes a comparison in verses 28 and 29. He uses for an example the punishment that was meted out to those who violated the laws of God under the Mosaic dispensation. He reminds us that the violator was stoned to death, if there were as few as two or three witnesses to his act of disobedience. Then he suggests that a person who violates the law of Christ is worthy of worse punishment, because it is tantamount to trampling under foot the Son of God who was the testator. And by his actions he considers the blood of Christ, which ratified the covenant, **“an unholy thing.”** He also accuses the guilty of doing **“despite* unto the Spirit of grace”** (*embrace --“to treat insultingly, which suggests the insulting disdain of one who considers himself superior”). Any one of these things is bad in itself, but how

much worse is it when a person is guilty of all three of these condemning wrongs? One renders himself guilty of all three when he deliberately forsakes assembling with others for the purpose of worshipping God and commemorating the sacrifice of Jesus.

There is no doubt that it is good for Christians to gather together for the purpose of worshipping the Lord. No one would dare deny this, because it is the will of God. But James says, **“Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin”** (James 4:17). So regardless of how one may seek to justify doing otherwise, the scriptures teach

- (1) **We must seek first the kingdom and righteousness of God,**
- (2) **We are not to forsake the assembly for worship,**
- (3) **That if we do deliberately choose to do otherwise, that we are guilty of willful sin.**

The pertinent question sometimes arises, “What about the other services of the church besides Lord’s day worship?”

The one service in which God demands our presence is the worship service in which we commemorate the great sacrifice of His love, Jesus Christ, His Son. The other services of the church, both time and number, are arranged by the congregation. A local church could have religious meetings every day of the week, if it chose to do so, or on the other hand it could choose to meet only once a week. This is an arbitrary choice of the congregation. However, no church could decide to not have a worship service on Lord’s

day, for this would violate the teaching of the Bible (Acts 20: 7, I Cor. 16:1,2). So the service on Lord’s day is not the same as those in which a congregation engages in worship at other times. While God demands that we assemble on the first day of the week in worship to Him, the other services are voluntary, and should be considered as **“second mile religion”** (Matt. 5:41). God commands that we go that “first mile,” but by attending the other meetings of the church we volunteer to go that **“second mile.”** Let us not forget that Jesus taught that when one does the bare stint of duty, he is unprofitable. He said, **“When ye have done all those things which are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do”** (Luke 17:10). The Lord expects us to have such desire to please Him that we are willing to do volunteer service in whatever way we can, and we should be willing to gather for worship more often than just once a week (our duty) if the church has more services.

In conclusion, remember, Jesus said, **“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.”** In the day of judgment it will prove to be worth it all.

Paul O. Nichols has served the Church of Christ faithfully for over sixty years.

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