

## Church Attendance: Why It Is So Important

I am thankful to God for those eight precious and tender souls who responded to the Lord's invitation this past Sunday. Most said they had turned away from the Lord in not faithfully attending the services of the church. To these, and to others who may have privately resolved to be faithful in this matter in the future, I caution you to be steadfast and strong against the strategy of the devil. When the newness of your resolve wears off you will be tempted to return to your old ways. Be prepared for that challenge. God being your helper, you can meet it!

Long ago, the Psalmist expressed the ideal attitude toward the worship of God: "*I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go into the house of the Lord.'*" (Psa.122:1). Why not make this ideal a reality in your life? We should bring our gladness and enthusiasm to the place of worship each time the church comes together. This disposition will help us to be faithful in our attendance.

Why is faithful church attendance so important? First, faithful attendance is important because interest is almost always expressed by physical presence. What is interest but a heightened mental and emotional regard for something? God wants us to be interested in the worship and Bible study programs of His church. When our attendance is sporadic this is a sign that our interest level in the things of God is not as high as it needs to be. Jesus indicated that the failure to be mindful of the things of God is a sure sign that Satan has been at work (Matt.16:23).

Second, faithful attendance is important because it says something about our love for the Lord. We are interested in the things we love, and we are to love God with our whole being (Matt.22:37). Can one's claim to love the Lord be expected to be taken seriously if he rejects the Lord's plan for His church? That plan calls for your involvement in the spiritual activities of the church; one of which pertains to the coming together times of the church.

Third, faithful attendance is important because it is commanded in God's Word. The Lord's expectation in this regard is actually stated negatively: "*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching*" (Heb.10:25). The context of this verse shows that forsaking the assembly was a sign that some were departing from the faith and were failing to encourage others in the faith. It is God's will therefore that we *not* forsake the church assembly. It is not merely a sign of apostasy; it is destructive behavior. This statement carries the force of a command. It is as though the Lord is saying: "Do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together..."

Fourth, faithful attendance is important because it is based on faith. I mean faith in a subjective sense. In other words, if you truly believe Jesus is the Son of God, then there will be certain non-negotiables that attach themselves to your faith. Such as: "Since Jesus is Lord, I will not engage in immorality." Or "My faith demands that I use language that imparts grace to those who are around me." Or, "Due to my belief that the church matters to Jesus (Eph.5:23), then I must demonstrate to God and those around me that the church matters to me." Surely there is some truth in the statement, "An empty tomb proves Christianity; an empty pew denies it."

Fifth, faithful attendance is important because it involves the grace of God. The gatherings of the church are an exercise in celebration of God's great grace! Worship among the saints of God is a privilege afforded only by grace. One preacher observed: "'Amazing Grace' seems almost out of place when attendance is a disgrace." When we faithfully obey God (including God's will that we do not forsake the assembly; Heb.10:25), then we are saved by grace (Eph.2:8).

Sixth, faithful attendance is important because of the positive influence it will have on others. Is our presence at worship and Bible study a good work or a bad work? How could it be anything but a good work? Good works are not just about taking on particular tasks that God authorizes in His Word. Good works often have a residual effect that must be taken into consideration. Jesus said that when others see our good works they will be motivated to glorify God themselves (Matt.5:16).

Faithful attendance is a good work that positively affects others---your children, your neighbors, your friends, etc.

Absenteeism is harmful to the church. It indicates a need for repentance. This past Lord's

day, some of our brethren responded in the right way to this call for a course correction. Perhaps others need to make these corrections as well. Think: How can we ever hope to change the world for Christ if God's agents for change treat the church gatherings in the same manner as the lost and unbelieving?

May God grant us the wisdom and good judgment to treat His kingdom's assemblies in a manner consistent with our claim to love Him.

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