

Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

“... Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body.” - Ephesians 5:23

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I AM NOT ASHAMED

by Marvin L. Weir

People who love God should be ashamed of certain things. All right thinking people should be ashamed of all the ungodly and evil forces at work in our society. The murder of innocent babies (abortion) occurs daily primarily because of sin and selfishness. God will always hate the shedding of “innocent blood” (Deuteronomy 19:10; Proverbs 6:17), and all people who are not immoral should abhor and be ashamed of the butchering of unborn babies.

Homosexuality is another abomination (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13) that our society should be ashamed of. It is foolishness and not wisdom that flouts the Creator’s laws (Rom. 1:22). The apostle Paul specifically mentions those who were determined to commit “vile passions” in saying, “for their women changed the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working unseemliness, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was due” (Romans 1:26-27). Nothing is more **unnatural** than the sin of sodomy!

What is sad today is that so many people are ashamed of that which they should love, and they are tolerant of or advocate that of which they should be ashamed. The “anti-God,” “anti-gospel” movement in

America is a case in point. The apostle Paul boldly declares what should be the sentiments of every person in saying, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Romans 1:16). The gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is good news with the power to save the soul and yet millions detest and reject this godly message.

One who is ashamed of the gospel either does not believe or has forgotten the words of Christ who said: “For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of man also shall be ashamed of him, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels” (Mark 8:38). We should strive to be like Paul who:

- Was not ashamed to **believe** the gospel! One who truly surrenders himself to the Lord will always listen to the Word of God which tells him what to do to be saved (Acts 9:6). One who **believes** the gospel will also **act** upon his belief and do what the gospel says for one to do.

- Was not ashamed to **confess** the gospel! Paul was never embarrassed by the gospel and made such clear in saying, “For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2).

- Was not ashamed to **suffer** for the gospel! Some of the sufferings of Paul are detailed in 2 Corinthians 11:23-28. He was willing to pay the price, whatever the cost, to be a faithful child of God. This world is not the Christian’s home, and thus we should never forget that “*all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*” (2 Timothy 3:12).

Another thing we note is that Paul was not ashamed of the gospel because “*it is the power of God*” (Romans 1:16). The same God who “*created the heavens and the earth*” (Gen. 1:1) works today through the powerful medium of His Word. The gospel is thus:

- The power of God unto salvation! The same power that spoke this great universe into existence now speaks to lost humanity through His Word. Jeremiah describes the Word of God as like a fire and a hammer in saying, “*Is not my word like fire? saith Jehovah; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?*” (Jer. 23:29). The Word of God can “**melt**” the most hardened heart and “**break**” the most stubborn will. The Word of God is truly God’s “**dynamite**” to save lost sinners. There is **no** other power to save the soul of man than the gospel (Galatians 1:6).
- The power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth! Bible belief encompasses **doing** what true faith demands. Two illustrations will suffice. In John’s gospel account we read, “*Nevertheless even of the rulers many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess it, lest they should be*

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put out of the synagogue” (12:42). Will one argue that these rulers were saved simply because they believed that Christ was the Messiah? In James 2:23 we read, “*And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness; and he was called the friend of God*” (2:23). How do we know that “belief only” was not sufficient for Abraham to be counted as righteous? The divine commentary also states, “*Was not Abraham our father justified by works, in that he offered up Isaac his son upon the altar?*” (James 2:21, emph. MLW).

The good news for all people (Jew or Greek) is that the gospel will save all who believe and obey it. May we never be ashamed of that which is God’s power unto salvation!

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“NOT FORSAKING THE ASSEMBLING OF OURSELVES TOGETHER”

PART TWO

by Lee Moses

The Value of Church Attendance (Continued)

It was noted in last month’s issue that Hebrews 10:25 is given primarily in a context of a Christian’s responsibility to his fellow-saints. However, the personal value and necessity of a Christian’s regular church attendance can scarcely be overstated.

One needful benefit of assembling is Biblical instruction. When faithful saints come together in the Divinely-instituted assembly, a primary focus is to be upon Biblical preaching and study. As Paul instructed the Ephesus evangelist Timothy, “*Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine*” (1 Timothy 4:13). The early church at Jerusalem “*continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine,*” or “*teaching*” (ASV); as well as in the other authorized acts of worship (Acts 2:42). The church at Troas was likewise attentive to, and steadfast in, Biblical instruction in their assemblies: “*And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight*” (Acts 20:7). Every Christian should crave such Biblical instruction: “*As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby*” (1 Peter 2:2; compare with Matthew 5:6). Not only should every Christian **crave** Biblical instruction, every Christian **needs** Biblical instruction—it is the means of spiritual growth (“*that ye may grow thereby*”). New converts quickly need to adopt a habit of regular attendance, because their maturation depends upon the rich study into which they will enter with more mature Christians. However, spiritual growth is a lifelong process (2 Thessalonians 1:3; 2 Peter 3:18). If

one ceases to mature spiritually, he stagnates and declines. Potential crises of faith require the word of God, if one’s faith is to be strengthened through such times (Romans 10:17). All Christians need continually to be “put in remembrance” of fundamental spiritual truths (2 Peter 1:12-13; 3:1-2). And God does not desire that our Bible study be restricted to private study alone. Private Bible study certainly plays an integral role in Christian growth, but the one should complement the other. As this writer’s bride has said, “You’ve got to **go to grow!**”

In the assemblies, other Scriptural acts of worship are offered in addition to Biblical reading, exposition, and admonition; and **all** are of inestimable value to one’s mind, spirit, and soul. Christians teach and admonish one another through singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Colossians 3:16). Through sacrificial giving, one can prosper as never before (2 Corinthians 8:1-2). During the Lord’s Supper, each Christian shares a special communion with his fellow-saints and with his Savior (Matthew 26:29; 1 Corinthians 10:16). As private prayer is the Christian’s spiritual lifeblood, public prayer is a very important part of Christian life. One reads of the early New Testament church repeatedly offering prayers together. When the apostle Peter was imprisoned, “*Prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him*” (Acts 12:5); and indeed, it was efficacious prayer, as Peter was delivered from his imprisonment. The apostle Paul had been delivered from near death; and he knew where, along with God’s providence, his help lay: “*Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf*” (2 Corinthians 1: 11). Paul commands male-led public prayers (1 Timothy 2:8). How can we obey this commandment if we do not participate in public worship? The Christian who regularly assembles can be the “true worshipper” that God seeks (John 4:23), in addition to deriving personal benefit from his worship. Of course, the Christian’s purpose in worship is not to get, but rather to give to His

God. Nonetheless, the faithful Christian who gives Himself to the worship of the LORD God will find such tremendously rewarding, even as he lays up treasure for himself in heaven.

Attendance in the worship and Bible classes is of great value to parents bringing up their children. Parents have the responsibility to “bring [their children] up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). While this Christian nurture begins with what parents do with their children at home, faithful attendance with a faithful congregation instills into children the love of God, Biblical teachings, and an understanding of and appreciation for Scriptural worship. No one who places a premium upon rearing children to become Christians will neglect bringing his or her children to worship and Bible class. How sad it is to consider the many children on their way to a faithful Christian upbringing, whose parents then undid all that good by breaking their pattern of regular attendance!

One who misses any assembly of the saints misses a valuable opportunity. Such opportunities are not guaranteed to continue, and we will be judged based in large part upon how we have used the opportunities we have been given (compare with Matthew 25:14-30; Luke 12:16-21; James 4:13-15).

How Often Should One Attend?

Faithful churches of Christ meet at least once each Sunday. But they will usually meet more than once that same day, and usually at least once more during the week. One might ask, “Which of these assemblies must I attend, and how regularly?” For one asking such a question, we might refer you to the above benefits of regular attendance. One who appreciates the value of regular church attendance will not ask which assemblies he **must** attend. Yet Biblical principles teach that the Christian’s presence and participation in the assembly is required.

The Bible specifically designates the first day of every week as a time when each church is to assemble. “And upon the first day of the week,

when the disciples came together to break bread . . .” (Acts 20:7). It was the disciples’ practice to “break bread”; that is, eat the Lord’s Supper, on the first day of the week, and it was **obligatory** to do so upon the first day of the week. This is seen in Paul’s tarrying at Troas seven days (verse 6) for the first day of the week assembly, although “*he hastened, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost*” (verse 16). Paul would forsake other plans he had for his travels, but he would not forsake this occasion of assembling. If they could have partaken of the Lord’s Supper on any other day of the week, the brethren at Troas certainly would have done so to accommodate Paul’s full travel itinerary. But even for a man hastening to carry out the work of the Lord, the “breaking of bread” had to wait until the first day of the week. And as the church is to continue to “*shew the Lord’s death till he come*” in partaking of the Lord’s Supper (1 Corinthians 11:26), Christians are to do such upon the first day of the week until the Lord does come.

In addition to the Lord’s Supper, the contribution is to be offered as an act of worship when the church is assembled upon the first day of the week. Paul wrote the church at Corinth, “*Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come*” (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). This is literally the first day of **every** week,¹ and is clearly coordinated to occur in the assembly in which the Lord’s Supper is eaten. This is what was to be done in the churches of Galatia, in the church at Corinth, and “*every where in every church*” (4:17).

Christians must assemble the first day of the week if they are to participate in these two acts of worship essential to Christian life. Clearly, the first day of the week has special significance. This is the day the apostle John called “*the Lord’s day*” (Revelation 1:10), the day of the week in which our Lord rose from the dead (Mark 16:9). It is the day of the week

on which the church, the Lord’s kingdom, was established (Acts 2:1, 33, 41, 47). How disgraceful it is when assembly forsakers say, “Sunday is **my** day to relax and to do what I want.” No, it is not **your** day—it is the **Lord’s** day!

It was on consecutive first days of the week that the resurrected Lord made His first two appearances to the assembled apostles (John 20:19, 26). Thomas was not present for the first assembly; and consider all that he missed! He missed enjoying the Lord’s presence. He missed seeing proof of Christ’s identity and resurrection. Thus, while the other apostles went about the rest of their week with faith, joy, peace, and assurance; Thomas remained in doubt and denial (verses 24-25). Likewise, those who forsake the assembly today are often characterized by doubt and denial; while those who make it a priority to assemble with a faithful congregation are filled with faith, joy, peace, and assurance.

But what about attending Bible class, or a second assembly on the Lord’s day? What about attending a Gospel meeting? What about attending a midweek service? Among other factors, the responsibility and authority of elders come into play.

The elders of each church will have to give account for the souls put under their charge (Hebrews 13:17). As such, the elders have the responsibility to “*feed the flock of God which is among you*”; to “*feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood*” (1 Peter 5:2; Acts 20:28). Wise elders will appreciate that assembling once a week does not provide nearly enough opportunity to “feed the flock.” The flock needs to be taught, and they need to be taught often. It is difficult for elders to know every spiritual difficulty the flock is facing, but the more the flock is brought together for Biblical instruction, the more likely their specific difficulties will be addressed, and the more opportunity they will have to seek answers to their questions. Congregations that cut assemblies and classes inevitably die. Members become weak in doctrine and in faith; and shortly fall into compromise, denominationalism, and the ways of

the world. Elders need to do all they can to ensure that this does not happen.

While the Bible does not mandate when and how many assemblies should take place within the week, the Bible does commend such assemblies. The early church met on days other than the first day of the week (Acts 2:46; 12:12). An assembly that includes the Lord's Supper and the contribution must indeed be upon the first day of the week and is not to be divided (1 Corinthians 11:20). However, the elders have the authority to call together additional assemblies and times for the flock to study in separate classes, if they deem it important to their work of feeding the flock (Acts 2:6; Titus 2:3-4). And as elders have the authority to call such assemblies, every member has the responsibility to be present whenever the elders call an assembly. The **Holy Spirit** has made the elders overseers over the church (Acts 20:28); and any member who fails to submit to an eldership meeting the qualifications given by the Holy Spirit (1 Timothy 3:2-7; Titus 1:6-9) fails to submit to God Himself. He commands, *"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you"* (Hebrews 13:17). This commanded obedience to the eldership certainly applies to whatever Scriptural assemblies they may call. It is unprofitable and unchristian for a child of God to fail to attend assemblies one is able to attend.

Sadly, many brethren feel that by attending each Sunday morning, they have "punched their ticket" for the week. However, an understanding Christian would never be content with such a pathetic showing, as he never becomes complacent with his Christian service. *"So likewise ye, when ye shall 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). One might attend every Lord's day morning, but if he misses every other service for no good reason certainly forsakes the assembling of

ourselves together. If not otherwise prevented from doing so, a faithful Christian will be present for every assembly that his eldership calls.

[To be continued next month]

¹ The Greek *kata* is used **distributively**, which is not expressed in the King James Version and other translations. It should be translated "every," as in the English Standard Version and New American Standard Bible. See *kata*, in Bauer, Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 512.

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GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2, 3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

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