

What Better Place to Be?

In July, 2013, while I was serving on a “fill in” basis, I was asked to write the NEWSLETTER articles. I felt at the time I needed to say something to encourage the membership here at Columbus Avenue to be more faithful in attending the worship services. As I sit at my computer this Monday morning, I believe the words I had to say then have even more meaning. Please excuse the reprint—but I believe I said then what I want and need to say now.

“This past Sunday morning, I brought a lesson from the pulpit that I was somewhat hesitant about bringing. But the more I thought about it, I realized that I needed to say the things I had prepared, regardless of the response. When I was a kid, I played hard no matter what the game. But on Sunday afternoons and Wednesday afternoons I would excuse myself from my friends with the simple statement: “I need to go—I HAVE to go to church.” My mother would remind me that I “GET to go to church.” It was a privilege to assemble and worship with those who were in our congregation.

Again, when I was young, I was told that **Hebrews 10:25** amounted to a command to attend each and every time services were held. “Don’t forsake the assembly” became “don’t miss a church service.” As I got older, I realized that the **verse “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”** meant something entirely different. The people of that time met continuously and faced a great deal of persecution because of it. Some were scared enough of the persecution to stop meeting together *entirely* in order to avoid persecution. The Hebrew writer was pleading with the church to remain intact and continue to do what it was supposed to do: convert the world to Christ.

Before anyone thinks I’ve given them a pass in regards to attending church services, I am not. Attendance is a matter of devotion, not command. Being in His church puts us in close association with others who are also in His church. **Romans 12:4-5** says:

“For as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.”

Read Paul’s somewhat comical description of the church in **I Corinthians 12:12-27** to better understand how all of us work together to accomplish our goal here; that of winning souls to Christ. We need all parts of His body here together so the work of His church will be carried on correctly and completely. Everyone has a function in His body.

The first century church met daily, worshipping with each other, encouraging each other, and enjoying fellowship with each other. **(Acts 2:42-47)** They understood that the Lord's church was precious to Him and it became increasingly precious to THEM.

I guess it all boils down to the fact that our love for Christ and our devotion to him should cause us to be here as much as we can. I don't know enough about God not to need the additional instruction I get here. I can't possibly praise God enough not to meet with people of like devotion with whom to praise Him. And meeting with the saints here every time I can gives me the encouragement I need to continue to work hard for Christ. As the Hebrew writer in **Hebrews 10:24** puts it, we are here ***together "to spur one another in toward love and good deeds."***

I need you, you need each other. The Christian life is not an easy one, but it becomes easier when you share the load. **(Galatians 6:2)** We don't HAVE to be in each assembly, but ALL of us are needed and should WANT to be here to do whatever we can to carry out the work of the church. See you next Sunday."

As an addition, let me just have each of you do two things: Examine whatever it is that keeps you from assembling with the saints. Determine whether or not it is something God would consider a legitimate reason for not attending. It may just cause you to have a change of heart.

--Johnny Stephens