

## What You Miss When You Miss

There are certain topics to which some folks think we devote too much time. By and large, this view depends entirely on one's perspective. Take the subject at hand, faithful attendance at the worship times and Bible classes. Christians who attend faithfully never seem to tire of hearing of the importance of faithfully assembling with the saints. The reason is clear. Those who attend faithfully know how much they gain. Those who are irregular in their attendance really don't know what they're missing. If you're not faithful in your attendance, won't you please carefully consider the following? If you are faithful and you know a brother or sister who is not, please pass this along to him or her. It would be tremendous if all Christians realized what they miss when they miss the assembling of the saints.

When you miss, you miss an opportunity to obey God. Hebrews 10:24-25 instructs, *"And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to 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 ye see the day approaching."* Neither this passage itself nor anything in its immediate or remote context suggests that Paul was referring to an isolated period during the first century. *"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together"* is no less a command of God today than the verse preceding that statement and the verse following it. The Lord knew that we would need to assemble together and He demands it now just as he did when Paul wrote these words by Divine inspiration.

When you miss, you miss the fellowship and encouragement that comes from being among men and women of like, precious faith. The next time you read through the New Testament, pay special attention to how much the apostle Paul emphasized fellowship with the saints. He traveled countless miles, not only to preach the Gospel but also to build up and be built up by fellow Christians (Acts chapters 13 and following). He greatly desired to be with the churches in Rome (Romans 1:11f) and Thessalonica (I Thessalonians 3:6). When the first day of a week would arrive, Paul would be assembled with the church (Acts 20:7). The apostle to the Gentiles clearly loved being with fellow Christians and the reason is obvious. With all that he suffered at the hands of ungodly men (II Corinthians 11:23-29), it must have been a genuine joy for him to be gathered together with those who loved him and who shared his love for God and righteous living.

When you miss, you miss an opportunity to be built up in the faith. Since *"faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"* (Romans 10:17) and since the Word of God is preached and taught when the church assembles, missing these assemblies means turning a blind eye to an open door to greater faith. "But I can study God's Word on my own without having to assemble with the church," someone might object. It's true that we can and should be studying diligently on our own (II Timothy 2:15), but in so studying, one learns the value of assembling as seen in the verses cited in the previous two paragraphs. In other words, the more you study on your own, the more you see the need to faithfully assemble with the saints!

Finally, when you miss, you miss being able to set a worthy example before your friends, your family, other Christians and even non-Christians. When Christians who are irregular in attendance are asked why they're not coming faithfully, they offer all kinds of reasons (read, excuses). But what is the real reason for their absenteeism? If they were to look at themselves in the mirror and give the real reason, what would that be? When one's child comes up and asks, "Why aren't we going to worship today?", what reason is given? When a Christian has to explain to a NON-Christian why he or she does not faithfully assemble with the church, what reason does he give that non-Christian for not being there? Unfaithfulness in attendance is harmful enough to one's own soul, but when you consider the stumbling block that it places before others, the danger is enhanced (Luke 17:1-2).

Gathering with the saints is a privilege and a blessing from God. In his day the Psalmist sang, *"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord."* (Psalm 122:1). Such an attitude is worthy of imitating today.