

Why Attend Church Services?

Some are failing to assemble regularly each sabbath with the brethren. Read here the stern warning from Jesus Christ — the Head of this Church!

A FEW brethren have fallen into dire spiritual negligence. It appears that when local congregations are established, some brethren think they do not need to attend *regularly*.

Could this include *you*?

The Sabbath a Commanded Assembly!

The Sabbath was ordained to be a day of rest from secular work. But it is *more* than a day of rest. It is also a HOLY CONVOCATION.

The weekly sabbath is so designated in Leviticus 23:3. "Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day is the sabbath of rest, an HOLY CONVOCATION."

Those are the words of the LORD to Moses. The LORD who spoke to Moses is Jesus Christ! So those are the very words of Christ—the Head of the Church of God today. Are you living by His words?

But what is a "holy convocation"? It means a divinely commanded assembly, a summoned assembly where your presence is ordered!

That is why Jesus Christ made it his *custom* to assemble on every sabbath. It was Paul's custom—long after the rituals of Moses passed away—and it is the custom of the Church of God today!

God does not leave you free to decide whether you want to attend local church services. If you live within traveling distance He **COMMANDS** your *regular* presence, each sabbath! And the same is true of every annual Holy Day.

Some brethren, it seems, want to make excuses to Christ. They begin to reason why Christ or the local congregation doesn't need *their* regular attendance. But that is not the question. **YOU** need the presence of Christ and the other brethren!

Did you know that your spiritual attitude is plainly indicated by the excuses you make for not regularly attending church services?

One most often repeated excuse some make is that they don't feel at home with the brethren. "*Others* don't show me love," is the rebuttal.

Is that the only reason for which you go to church?—just to absorb *other's* interest, personality and love? What about showing others a bit of *your* love?

We have never failed to notice that those who complained of lack of love on the part of brethren were themselves the *most lacking* in love. These individuals,

whether or not they realize it, are self-centered. They are carnal—thinking only of what they can *get*, not of what they can give to others. Love is not getting, it is giving. When anyone complains of not receiving enough love that person is on the getting end. Have you ever thought that a little giving on your part will prompt more love and interest on the part of others? Don't wait for others to please you. Learn to help them first! Enrich them by *your* experiences, *your* warmth of personality!

Again, I know of others who become careless about sabbath services because they *think* they already know all that is said from the pulpit. They *assume* they have no more need of preaching, no more need of hearing God's word expounded. is being said. Not being imbued with the Spirit of God he just does not grasp what is being preached. That person needs to be renewed in the spirit of repentance. Of such Christ thunders: "... thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing: and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Rev. 3:17). This Laodicean attitude needs to be repented of!—lest Christ spue you out!

In rare instances a few brethren have missed annual Holy Days because they didn't find anyone to take care of their pets. This excuse rings of idolatry! Are the needs of an animal—a dog—or chickens—more important than the words of Christ to you? Are you going to let an animal decide what you are to do, instead of letting Christ—your God and High Priest—lead you? Don't any of you ever let this happen again!

Sometimes families think it is more important to visit relatives in distant places than attend church on the sabbath. Granted, there may be genuine emergencies when you have to *be* with relatives in case of death. What I am referring to is *not* an emergency, but a needless social occasion! Visit your relatives during the week, or on Sunday. The sabbath is not the time to be visiting the unconverted and worldly relatives. If your relatives cannot be visited during the week, and if they live too far to be visited on Sunday after attending sabbath services, *then don't go*. Instead, call them up by telephone on Sunday. It will usually be much cheaper than paying for a lengthy trip!

Why, brethren, do a few of you put your fleshly relatives before your spiritual brethren? Is it because you are *lacking* the Spirit of God and no longer feel comfortable with the brethren? Christ forbids you to put family before Him. It is idolatry—serving another master in place of the true God.

Too Tired to Attend Church?

Yet another excuse is that some are "too tired" to drive to church.

Christ could have reasoned the same way at the time of the crucifixion—**BUT HE DID NOT!** Notice the example of Jesus that some are overlooking! On the mount of Olives Jesus told the disciples, shortly before His capture: "Pray that ye enter not into temptation." Then Jesus withdrew "from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed... And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, *he found them sleeping*"—they were tired!

But so was Jesus!

Then Jesus aroused them and warned: "Why sleep ye? rise and pray, *lest ye enter into temptation*" (Luke 22:39-46).

Here is Christ's example—His warning—to those making excuses that they are too tired.

Of course man needs physical rest each sabbath to restore physical vigor and determination. But man *also* needs to have spiritual vigor and zeal restored! That is why church attendance is vital! It is not enough to rest physically each sabbath. You need the spiritual stimulation that comes with personal contact with other brethren. You need the presence of Christ and His words that come in every sabbath service. If God thought all you needed was physical rest He would not have made the sabbath any more than a rest day. But He did make it more than a rest day. He made it a HOLY CONVOCATION. He *commands* your presence

"Neglect Not the Assembling of Yourselves Together"

Now we come to a vital chapter of the Bible partly devoted to church attendance. Most of us are familiar with Hebrews 10:25—"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." But how many remember

what the other verses of this same chapter say.

Notice the subject is our access to the Father in Heaven. Under the Old Covenant, there was only a constant reminder of sin enacted by the priests in their daily rituals. But under the New Covenant, we have access through Christ to the Father. We are to draw near to Him "with a true heart in full assurance of faith" (verse 22), and to "hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering" (verse 23), and to "consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works" (verse 24). How are you going to provoke others to increased love and good works if you never see them in church?

Verse 25 has the answer! We are not to neglect assembling ourselves together, as the custom of some is! That is how! We simply cannot exhort and encourage others when we are not in church regularly. And notice that we are to assemble "so much the more, as we see the day approaching"!

But this is not all that Paul wrote. "For if we sin wilfully," he continues, "after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries" (Heb. 10:26-27).

Consider what this means!

Neglect of attending church each sabbath—*does* lead to *wilful sin*! Paul had just commanded the brethren in verse 25 to assemble regularly wherever possible. Then he warns of sinning wilfully. The connection is obvious! Neglect of sabbath attendance, carelessness about being regular, *separates* us from God on the very day He wants us to be in His presence the most! This is the road to sin and eternal death!

Now turn in your Bibles to verse 29. What happens to those who become careless, who fail to observe the Passover with the brethren when they can do so, who do not value Christ's blood which opened the way to true spiritual worship every sabbath with brethren?

Here is Paul's answer: "Of how much sorer punishment—than under Moses—shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God"—who despises Christ's express command to MEET IN HIS PRESENCE EACH SABBATH—"and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing"—by neglect of assembling for passover services when available.

Paul concludes in verse 31: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God"!

Don't say it doesn't matter— That is the same excuse the world uses for pretending to worship God on Sunday instead of the Sabbath.

Brethren, what are some of you going to do now?

It Takes Faith and Patience

Heed Paul's words! "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of *patience*, that, *after ye have done the will of God*, ye might receive the promise" (verses 35-36). Some are not doing the will of God! Some lack the faith and patience it takes to be consistent in their regular sabbath attendance.

Now consider the importance of regular church attendance.

It is good for you—and good for the other brethren! They have as much need of your presence as you have of theirs—and you all have need of the presence of Jesus Christ and His messages through His ministry!

He **DOES** hold *you* responsible when you have a service to attend! He warns you not to withdraw from His fellowship—not to spiritually shrivel up in your little world. "But if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him," concluded Paul (verse 38). Are you drawing back to your old friends and acquaintances, to the little world you have been living in? Or are you living *by faith*—faithfully attending each sabbath service?

"We are not of them who draw back unto perdition"—who begin to neglect the words of Christ, become self-centered, preferring fellowship only with their family and acquaintances. We are "of them that believe to the saving of the soul" (verse 39). Do you *believe* Christ's words? Do you act on them? He *commands* you to worship in His presence

Next sabbath, and each sabbath thereafter, *attend church*. Be regular. Get acquainted with other people. Learn to get rid of your feelings of inferiority by becoming interested in others. Get to know their problems. Help them. Several months from now you will be amazed at the change that has taken place in your life. You and others will see what a totally new life you are now leading!