

THE PRIORITY OF GOD'S HOUSE

The “assembling of ourselves together” in *Hebrews 10:25* is clearly a reference to the New Testament church of which every believer is to be a faithful member. This is the example that is given throughout the book of Acts, beginning with *Acts 2:41-42*. The church is the pillar and ground of the truth (*1 Tim. 3:15*) and has been commissioned to fulfill the Great Commission (*Mat. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8*). The Commission was given to the apostles, who were the representatives of the churches.

Such a great and glorious work requires faithful workers, and those who neglect the church are neglecting their spiritual duty. No human institution can be successful apart from committed and faithful members. This is true for a business, a football team, or a government agency. And it is equally true for the church. *Moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful... (1 Cor. 4:2). As spiritual declension sets in, one of the first things to fade is faithfulness to the assembly of the local church. Observe that even then, wavering Christians were sporadic in attendance to their local churches.* (David Sorenson)

Why the believer needs to be faithful to the church:

1. FAITHFULNESS TO CHURCH IS NECESSARY IN ORDER TO REMAINS STRONG IN THE FAITH

Hebrews 10:23

The believer has powerful enemies that fight against his faith. There is the world, the flesh, and the devil. Many have become shipwrecked because they were careless about their relationship to the church and attendance of the meetings. A man who helped disciple me as a young Christian was named Wally. I spent a lot of time at his house, and he and his wife helped me to become established in the faith. After I went off to Bible school, Wally and his wife started skipping church services to have walks together. They excused this in their minds because they were strengthening their marriage, or so they thought. Wally started picking up a cold beer on his way home from work, “just to refresh himself.” Soon he was missing church most of the time and then stopped attending altogether. After some time he and wife were divorced. One year when I visited my hometown I looked him up and talked with him, and he told me that he didn’t even believe in God anymore.

2. FAITHFULNESS TO CHURCH IS NECESSARY FOR FELLOWSHIP

Hebrews 10:24-25

The believer needs the fellowship and example and exhortation of other believers, and this is one of the chief purposes of the church. It is the house of God (*1 Tim. 3:15*). It is a spiritual family. We are to consider one another and help one another and teach one another and warn one another. The believer should not attend the assembly merely to be a

spectator or even merely to learn; he should attend to contribute something. He should be there to exhort his brothers and sisters in Christ, to encourage them, to challenge them, to speak a word of warning as needed. The word “exhort” is from the Greek “parakaleo” and means to “to call near, i.e. invite, invoke (by imploration, exhortation or consolation” (Strong). This Greek word is also translated “intreat” (*Lk. 15:25*), “desire” (*Acts 8:31*), “beseech” (*Acts 13:42*), “comfort” (*Acts 16:40*), “call for” (*Acts 28:20*), and “pray” (*Acts 16:9*).

3. FAITHFULNESS TO CHURCH IS A RESPONSIBILITY

Hebrews 10:25

The believer has a responsibility before God to be faithful to the church. He has commanded us to be faithful. We have the example of the first church at Jerusalem. The believers *...continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers...* (*Acts 2:42*).

4. FAITHFULNESS TO CHURCH IS NECESSARY FOR INSTRUCTION

...exhorting one another, Hebrews 10:25

The believer needs the preaching and teaching ministry of the leaders (*Ephesians 4:11-14*). He needs the teaching ministry of the singing (*Colossians 3:16*). He also needs the exhortation of the brethren.

5. FAITHFULNESS TO CHURCH IS NECESSARY FOR SPIRITUAL SAFETY

...and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching, Hebrews 10:25b

To neglect the assembly is spiritually dangerous. As the church needs every believer, every believer needs the church. It is a matter of spiritual wisdom and safety. Just as a child needs his parents, a believer needs pastors and fellow believers. The church is the local manifestation of the family of God, and it is where the child of God finds shelter and assistance in a dangerous world.

Faithfulness to the house of God will be increasingly important as the coming of Christ draws near (*Heb. 10:25*). The New Testament warns that apostasy will increase throughout the church age (*2 Tim. 3:5*). Apostasy is likened to tares which the devil sows and which will grow up together with the true seed throughout the age (*Mat. 13:24-30*). Apostasy is likened to leaven which a woman hides in the loaf of the true churches “until the whole was leavened” (*Mat. 13:33*). Paul warned, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (*2 Tim. 4:3-4*). Therefore, it is incumbent upon God’s people to be increasingly cautious as the day of Christ draws near, and a necessary part of spiritual safety is faithfulness to the New Testament church. This reminds us, of course, of how important it is to be in a strong, godly, Bible-based church as opposed to one that is

morally careless, lukewarm, or based on man-made tradition (e.g., sacramentalism, infant baptism, amillennialism, etc.).

6. WE NEED TO BE REMINDED OF CHRIST'S COMING

...as ye see the day approaching... Hebrews 10:25b

It is easy to forget that the Lord is coming; it is easy to get careless. We need to be reminded of this regularly so that we can be ready. This is one of the purposes of the Lord's Supper (*1 Corinthians 11:26*).

7. FAITHFULNESS TO THE CHURCH IS AN EVIDENCE OF SALVATION

Hebrews 10:26-29

Those who neglect the things of God show that they are not saved. The willful sin of *Hebrews 10:26* is defined in the immediate context. The first rule of Bible interpretation is context, context, context, and if we examine the context of this passage carefully, we see that this particular sin is defined in *verse 29: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?* The willful sin in *verse 26*, therefore, refers not to sin in general but to one particular sin, that of *...counting the blood of the covenant an unholy thing and doing despite unto the Spirit of grace*. This is to deny that salvation is by Christ's blood and grace alone. In the immediate context to which the book of Hebrews was addressed, it refers to the Jews who professed confidence in Christ but because of persecution returned to their dead religion and thus gave up confidence in Christ. False religion, both then and now, attempts to replace Christ's grace with a manmade system. Catholicism is an example. It preaches Christ, but it intermingles its own sacraments and priesthood and sainthood with the grace of Christ. This is a false gospel that robs Christ of His glory as the sole Savior and Mediator. If Christ is not the Savior wholly and exclusively, He is not Savior at all. If grace is intermingled in any sense with works, the Gospel is perverted, and there is no salvation in a perverted gospel (*Rom. 11:6; Gal. 1:6-9*).

To *...trode under foot the Son of God and count His blood an unholy thing...* is not an ordinary sin. It is akin to the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit that Christ warned about in *Matthew 12:31* (where the Jewish leaders renounced Jesus in the most final manner by attributing His miracles to the devil). The willful sin of *Hebrews 10* is to reject Christ as Lord and Savior. It is to renounce Him and His atonement. There can be no salvation when one commits such a sin because in doing so one has rejected the only means that God has provided for salvation. No true believer can commit such a sin, for *...the just shall live by faith...* (*Heb. 10:38*). We see in *Hebrews 10:26-29* that the writer is not speaking of true believers when he warns of apostasy, because in *10:39* he concludes the passage with these words: *But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.*

To do *...despite unto the Spirit of grace...* is the same as to *...fall from grace...* (*Gal. 5:4*). The word “despite” means to “insult” (Strong). To do despite unto the Spirit of grace means to turn from salvation by grace and to attempt to be saved by works or by a mixture of grace plus works. It means to reject the Holy Spirit’s testimony about the grace of Christ. “The Holy Spirit delights to magnify Christ and to exalt His work. To refuse His testimony is to do despite unto the Spirit of grace” (Ironside). This was the error of the Judaizers who were trying to corrupt the churches in Galatia. They were attempting to replace the grace alone gospel that Paul had preached with a false one of “grace” intermingled with works. The Jews of that day who had professed Christ and to whom the book of Hebrews is addressed were in danger of returning to the Mosaic system and thus turning their backs to the gospel of the grace of Christ. To do this is to demonstrate that one is not saved, because salvation is to trust oneself wholly to the grace of Christ. Those who turn back to works religion demonstrate that they have never understood nor believed in grace in a saving sense.