

WHAT DOES HEBREWS 10:25 TEACH US?

When people first become members of the Lord's church they often are concerned about the number of times the church meets and if they "have" to be there all the time. Even some who have been members of the church like to think that if you just appear at the building once a week or so that is enough. Why would anyone want to "go to church" more than that? The question of attendance at the assemblies of the church is not a new one. The problem has been around since the first church started meeting. The Hebrew writer dealt with the problem of attendance in Hebrews 10:25, "not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near" NASU. So it is our purpose to look at what this verse is telling us.

First, note that the writer approaches the Hebrew Christians in this passage from the thought that there is an assembly to forsake. See these brethren were assembling so the author here was dealing not with the church as a whole but with those individuals who were not attending. These brethren were just doing what the brethren in Troas were doing. "We sailed from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and came to them at Troas within five days; and there we stayed seven days. On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight." Acts 20:6-7 NASU. Brethren have been coming together to "break bread" through the centuries since the church was first formed in Acts 2. It is simply what Christians do.

Secondly, the problem was "forsaking" the assembly. This was not just the idea of missing one assembly. The Greek word used here is "*egkataleipo*." Thayer's Lexicon says this word means "to abandon, desert, to leave in straits, leave helpless." Our English word "forsake" has a similar meaning. "1) To give up (something formerly held dear); 2) To leave altogether; abandon." (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language: Fourth Edition.) It is not hard for us to see that what we are talking about is giving up on the assembling with the saints.

What about Sunday evening services and Wednesday Bible classes? One of the interesting things about Hebrews 10:25 is it does not talk about a certain assembly, just when the saints assembled there were those who were "forsaking" those assemblies. There is no argument over "having" to assemble on the first day of the week to "break bread." The only argument arises when the local congregation decides to have other assemblies such as Sunday and Wednesday evening or even the dreaded "Gospel Meeting" when we come together every day for six days straight. Just remember the passage only says "not forsaking our own assembling together" not when those assemblies were taking place. I have often wondered what we would have done in the days of Joshua, when he stood up in front of the people of Israel and read "all the words of the Law." "Then afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessing and the curse, according to all that is written in the book of the law. 35 There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded which Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel with the women and the little ones and the strangers who were living among them" Joshua 8:34-35 NASU. Could we have stood there with our little ones while Joshua just read from the Law? Also, the Jews only had to assemble three times a year in Jerusalem, but they had to come from all over the earth to do it. "For I will drive out nations before you and enlarge your borders, and no man shall covet your land when you go up three times a year to appear before the LORD your God" Exodus 34:24 NASU. "Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven" Acts 2:5 NASU. And they didn't even have airplanes or cars to get them there. This "forsaking" had become a "habit" for some, it is common knowledge, the more we do something, good or bad, the easier it becomes. So it is just as easy to make it a habit to be at each service of the church as it is to make it a habit of missing. The last thing I want to mention from our text is the aspect of "encouraging one another." As we serve and obey God by assembling with the saints we also "encourage one another." The same author earlier wrote and said, "But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called 'Today,' so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin" Hebrews 3:13 NASU. We each need the encouragement we get and give by assembling with each other that we will not be "hardened" by the "deceitfulness of sin." Sin is lurking

around every corner. We need the Lord and His church to overcome sin. "Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing" 1 Thessalonians 5:11 NASU. Think of the poor Bible class teacher who prepares a class and nobody shows up. Or the preacher who works hard to prepare his sermon and no one is there to hear him deliver it. If you think that no one misses you when you are not here, know this that God, His Son and the elders miss you each and every time you are not here. I know also that others also miss you so please come assemble with the saints in Pinole each and every time they assemble to serve God and His Son.

ES