

Is Just Going to Church Enough?

Sometime ago a concerned Christian gave me a small sheet of paper on which the question, “Is Just going to church enough,?” was written. The request was made that this question be discussed, either in a bulletin article or a sermon. Through this medium, we herein endeavor to honor that very valid request.

To begin, we stress that it is impossible to over emphasize the importance of “going to church,” or assembling regularly with fellow saints in Bible study and scriptural worship. The church of our Lord began on the day of Pentecost when 3,000 precious souls, having heard the gospel of Christ preached by Peter, “*gladly received his word*” and “*were baptized,*” Acts 2:41,47. And it is more than merely coincidental that the very next verse informs us that these new converts “*continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers,*” Acts 2:42,. From the very beginning “going to church,” or assembling to study the Scriptures and to worship God, became a regular part of life for these “*new creatures*” in Christ, 2 Cor. 5:17. They were sincere in their obedience, earnest in their faith, fervent in spirit, and persistent in their attempts to be together and spend time in worship. In fact, the first converts in the Gospel Age were people who continued “*daily with one according in the temple,*” people who broke bread “*from house to house,*” and who ate their food “*with gladness and singleness of heart,*” Acts 2:46. Being of Jewish nationality, they (and their forefathers) had for many generations regarded the temple as the house of God and the place of prayer. “*From house to house*” they ate their physical food, and for their spiritual nourishment they “*continued daily with one according in the temple.*” Is it any wonder therefore that “*the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved,*” Acts 2:47?

It is through “going to church,” or regularly meeting with the saints to worship God that one is built up in the inner man. Through our worshipping God “*in spirit and in truth*” (John 4:24), God is glorified, “*the eyes of your understanding*” are “*enlightened*” (Eph. 1:18), saints are “*knit together in love*” (Col. 2:2), and are encouraged to “*hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering*” (Heb. 10:23). Gradually, through this process, we behold “*the glory of the Lord*” and are even “*changed...from glory to glory*” (2 Cor. 3:18). In other words, morally and spiritually, we become more like the God we worship! Therefore, we should not be surprised to read the following exhortation made to Hebrew saints who were showing signs of spiritual fatigue: “*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as we see the day approaching*” (Heb. 10:25). Yes, we can cite many reasons as to why Christians should assemble regularly to worship God; yea, why they must in order to go to heaven. However, with all this having been said, we still ask, “Is just going to church enough?”

“Enough” — For What?

Depending, on “what” we are talking about, the answer to this question may be either “yes,” or “no.” Please let me explain.

“Yes,” it is “enough” for one whose religion is limited to “the church building” and to church building activities. “Yes,” it is “enough” for one whose main interest is in keeping his name in the local church directory, but is not greatly interested in his name being “*found written in the book of life*” (Rev. 20:15). “Yes,” it is “enough” for one who simply desires a casual acquaintance with other members of the church, but has no real interest in fulfilling “*the law of Christ*” by helping to bear “*one another’s burdens*” (Gal. 6:2). “Yes,” it is “enough” for one who wants to keep one foot in the church and one foot in the world. “Yes,” it is “enough” for one who has no real sense of priorities and feels no need whatever to “*seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness*” (Matt. 6:33). “Yes,” it is “enough” for one who enjoys (?) having just enough religion to make himself miserable!

“No,” it is not “enough” for one who understands that “*the law of Christ*” is intended to regulate and govern every realm of activity — the home, the work place, social obligations, responsibilities to the civil authorities, and one’s spiritual obligations. “No,” it is not “enough” for those who have enough love for God and for lost souls to “*go...into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature*” (Mark 16:15). “No,” it is not “enough” for one who believes he should “*visit the fatherless and widows in their afflictions, and to keep himself unspotted from the world*” (Jas. 1:27). “No,” it is not “enough” for one who believes he should “*labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth*” (Eph. 4:28). “No,” it is not “enough” for one who believes that private prayers and private devotions (Matt. 6:1-6) must complement that which is done in public worship. “No,” it is not “enough” for one who believes he should “*be given to hospitality*” (Rom. 12:13), and that shining as “*lights in the world*” (Phil. 2:15) involves contact with people who are “*in the world,*” and must often be found in places other than the worship assemblies of the church. “No,” it is not “enough” for one who understands that being a Christian anywhere requires a person to be a Christian **everywhere!** Please pardon the ungrammatical double negatives in every sentence in this paragraph — a paragraph which ends with another double negative statement: “No,” it is not “enough” for a person whose greatest ambition is to go to heaven.

The Religion of Christ is Not a “Just” One Thing Religion!

To be sure, it would be easier for all of us if the Lord had predicated salvation on “Just” one thing — like “just going to church.” Even though many regard regular attendance in worship as drudgery and an extreme display of religious fanaticism, it is really not all that difficult. In fact, as one grows in his love for God and for the people of God, he begins to look forward to regular periods of Bible study and worship. He discovers that it creates contentment and peace within; he develops warm and meaningful friendships; in fact, all things being equal, it even contributes to more happiness in this life, increased health and greater longevity! Hence, viewed from the overall perspective, regularity in worship becomes much more of a blessing than a burden. So, viewed in this light, it should be evident that “just going to church” is not nearly “enough!”

Because of His abounding love and His “amazing grace,” God made the supreme sacrifice in order to make our salvation possible. He “*gave His only begotten Son*” (John 3:16). Moreover, Jesus left the portals of glory, came to this sin-cursed world, and died a most painful and shameful death on the cross so that we, through the shedding of His blood, could have “*the*

remission of sins" (Matt. 26:28). In brief, Jesus voluntarily suffered the punishment we deserve so that **we** could be saved. He gave His all for us, and He demands that we give our all to Him. To be sure, we can never do enough to earn salvation, and we could never be saved apart from His **grace** (Eph. 2:11-12. But to be saved, we must "*take up the cross*" (and all that that expression implies), and follow Him (Matt. 16:24).

Conclusion:

Friend, if your hope is based upon "just" one thing, it is a false hope. If you think you can "just get baptized" and then "just go to church," sit back and go to heaven "like greased lightning," you need to go "back to the drawing board" and learn what being a Christian is all about. The Lord requires commitment, and the only kind of commitment He will accept is *total commitment!*