

## Who Would Miss Us?

If this Sunday was the last time the Loop 287 congregation could meet for worship, who do you think would miss this church the most? Would it be the electric company, the telephone company, or the office supply stores? Would the people in Lufkin miss us? Would they know we no longer meet?

What if the elders decided to stop having evening meetings? Suppose they announced their decision only to those who attend Sunday evening? How many of us would miss being able to meet Sunday night and Wednesday night? What if we decided never to have another gospel meeting? How many members at the Loop would even know or care about it?

Of course, these are not real possibilities. We are not going to disband or stop meeting in the evenings or quit having gospel meetings, but such questions might reveal the attitude and disposition of some of us.

If our community would never know we are no longer meeting, that is a pretty good sign we are not trying to reach them. This church ought to be one of the brightest objects in town — a light to those in darkness. Paul wrote in Philippians 2:14-16, “Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.”

According to Paul, the way a local church like Philippi is a shining light is by holding fast the word of Christ. Now there is a big difference between “holding” and “hoarding.” The Lord’s people need to be the most enthusiastic and zealous people around. We need to be concerned as to how we will be found “in the day of Christ.” Paul was concerned about the church because he had put so much of himself into it and because this was his Master’s work. He had been beaten and unjustly imprisoned, but still he preached. His preaching is what brought the church at Philippi into existence.

We suffer so little for the cause of Christ. We have a nice, comfortable place to meet and the atmosphere among members at the Loop is great. That is the plus side of our work and worship. There is another side, however, that should concern us. All our members have probably realized that the congregation grows a little now and then, but then someone moves away or someone else quits, and we go backwards a bit. It is the old story of two steps forward and three steps backward. We have to reverse the trend. We have to see the congregation moving forward to convert souls and not just slowly drifting along hoping that the number will increase. Too many congregations are no longer aggressively teaching non-Christians the gospel of Jesus. If this does not stop we will “sow the wind and reap the whirlwind” (Hosea 8:7).

And we also must not concentrate on the church growing just so a large number can be posted on the attendance board. The growth of the body that pleases the Lord will

always be the result of the church spreading the gospel of Christ into the world. We are here to save our world, not to be a nice congregation where people get along and love each other. Those two ingredients are certainly important features of congregational life, but there is a higher and more important reason.

Paul's inspired concept of the church of Christ is simple. He wrote in 1 Timothy 3:14-16, "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." Only the Lord's church is equipped to uphold the truth. So let's change what we need to at the Loop 287 congregation and make it so that if this church ceased to exist, this community would know we have been here — and would miss us.

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