

“Not Forsaking Our Own Assembling”

“Not forsaking our own assembling together, as the custom of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as ye see the day approaching” (Heb. 10:25).

There is, perhaps, no passage more familiar from Hebrews than this one just quoted. It was evident that the exhortation was needed then, just as it is needed today. The gravity of the problem is seen in the warning which followed: *“For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins but a certain fearful expectation of judgment and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries” (Heb. 10:26f).* How tragic that these words go unheeded by so many today.

Frequently the question is asked, “Do I have to attend every service of the church?” This is a question which produces great sadness to God. To those who love God, who are conscious of His love and care for man; who realize that one’s personal salvation can never come on the basis that one has earned it; to one who is conscious of his own sins and shortcomings; attending service is never a matter of “have to” or “punching my time card for one more week.” Attending services are a privilege and joy. Would to God that all His children would see attendance in that light.

“Not forsaking ... as the custom of some is.” When concern is shown and voiced to perpetual absentees their reply most frequent is, “I haven’t quit the church.” No? Many are hanging on by the “skin of their teeth.” They miss more than they attend. The slightest excuse makes them decide not to “attend today.” Maybe they feel like just staying in bed all day. Or else they’re just not “in the mood.” Or perhaps they stayed up so late the night before watching TV or, worse still (God forbid) hanging out at some club, that they’re just too sleepy to come, and after all, what good will it do to come and sleep through the whole service? When will we wake up to the fact that our excuses are transparent to God? He sees through them and knows the real reasons why we are not present. And He does not regard it a slight offense when we prefer not to assemble with His saints. He knows what the real reason why the absent one is because he has no real commitment to God, nor love to God. For shame!

“As ye see the day approaching.” What day? Different answers are offered. Some say, “the Sunday assembly.” Read the text again: “The assembling of ourselves together.” Yes, it does include the first day assembly (Acts 20:7), but not that exclusively. The assembling of ourselves together is the assem-

bling of ourselves together! When is that? Whenever we assemble ourselves together! The day approaching of Hebrew 10:25 is not "the first day of the week."

Some say, "the judgment day." The judgment day is coming and it ought to provoke concern and care in us all. And the apostle does call up visions of judgment with his words, "*a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries.*" The problem with this explanation is that Jesus gave no signs which would tell us when that day will do. He warned, "*But of that day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only*" (Mt. 24:36). He added, "*Watch therefore: for ye know not on what day your Lord cometh*" (Mt. 24:42).

Some (including myself) think "the day approaching" was the day for the destruction of Jerusalem. Jesus had given signs for that day (Mt. 24:14-15). When this letter was written to the Hebrews the clock was ticking toward the lateness of the hour. Its reception by the Hebrews could not have been much more than seven or eight years before the destruction of Jerusalem. The apostle warned, "*For we have not here an abiding city, but we seek after the city which is to come*" (Heb. 13:14).

Wake up, Christians, wake up to the eternal consequences of what our neglect will bring to our souls. "When Jesus comes to reward his servants, whether it be noon or night. Say will he find us watching, with our lamps all trimmed and bright?"

Jim McDonald