

WHY GO TO CHURCH?

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." Hebrews 10:25.

Sometimes it is good for us to ask ourselves a direct question. It helps us to understand what we are doing and why we are doing it. Today one frequently asks, "Why go to church?" Multitudes do not ask themselves this question because they have ceased to attend church services, thus indicating that they do not consider it worth while to do so.

Church attendance is a vital subject, and one that never goes out of date or becomes untimely. It is one which needs to be faced frankly and frequently. Consideration of it always results in good to those who do it. Why should we go to church?

I. To Worship God.

Worship is needful. Any person who is not dominated by selfishness or blinded by vanity will admit the necessity of worship. We need to acknowledge the fact of God's greatness and goodness and worthiness of worship. In and through worship we give God His rightful place in our lives.

"O magnify the Lord with me.
And let us exalt His name together;
For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised."

Perhaps the conception of going to church which is the most common today is that of being entertained by the singing or by the sermon. This sort of thing is always disappointing and unrewarding, for entertainment is not the purpose of either the singing or the preaching. Going to church for entertainment is an utter perversion of the true nature and function of worship. Worship is the prostration of the soul in the presence of God in loving homage and intimate fellowship. By public worship is meant the reverent honor and homage paid to God by the individual soul in public assembly. Occasionally somebody says he can worship God just as well elsewhere as he can in the house of God. This statement is not true, and besides he does not do it. It is possible to worship God in your home at the church hours on Sunday, but you don't. You can worship God in various places, but you don't. The best place in which to worship God is in the building which has been set apart for public worship. The worship pattern contains three elements: adoration of God, communion with God and dedication to God. The worship of God is the primary intention and chief object of attendance upon the services of the sanctuary.

It is a glorious privilege to go to the Lord's house and express our sense of the "worthship" of God, reverence Him, praise Him, and have fellowship with Him in faith and obedience. It is always stimulating to come in contact with God at His appointed place of worship. Those who do not find satisfaction, enrichment and joy in the worship of God in the company of His people on earth could scarcely hope to be happy in heaven, even if they could get there. Any life that is yielded to God will be characterized by faithful attendance upon the services at the Lord's house in which they will give Him the adoration, honor, thanksgiving and love to which He is rightfully entitled.

II. To Follow The Example Of Christ.

When He was a child Joseph and Mary took Christ Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem and formally presented Him to God, at which time He received the blessing of the aged Simeon and the prophetess Anna. The next recorded appearance of Christ in the sacred temple was when He was twelve years of age, when Joseph and Mary went to Jerusalem to attend the Feast of the Passover. Many parents would have fewer problems with their children today if they would take them to the Lord's house regularly in their childhood. When the feast was over Joseph and Mary started home in company with their

relatives and friends. During the first day of their journey they did not see Christ Jesus. Alas, people frequently take far too much for granted. This is especially true of many parents today with reference to the whereabouts and the conduct of their children.

When they found Christ He was in the temple listening to the wise teachers, asking them questions and surprising them by His marvelous understanding. These eminent teachers were amazed that He should manifest such a great interest in the deep things of God. When His mother inquired, "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us?", He replied very tenderly, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" It was as if He had said, "Where should I be, except in God's house?"

After His baptism and temptation and a very brief ministry in Judea, Christ visited His home town in Galilee. Of that visit we have this record: "And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read" (Luke 4:16). At least fifteen references in the Gospels indicate that Christ was a regular attendant upon the services of the synagogue and the temple. He went to the house of worship on the Sabbath as regularly and faithfully as He went to the toil of the carpenter's bench during the other six days of the week. He regarded public worship as a sacred duty and a helpful privilege. He did not allow the inconsistencies of any fellow-worshiper to keep Him away from the services. It is noteworthy that the Sinless One was in the midst of a sinful people and devoutly joined with them in public worship.

Peter told us that the Lord Jesus left us an example that we should follow in His steps. If He needed to be present in the public worship services at the time of the reading and the exposition of the Scriptures, and join with others in the worship of God, how much more should we attend to this duty and this means of grace! Having accepted Christ as my personal Saviour, and having adopted His way of life as my ideal to follow, I should follow in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus. Wouldn't you like to follow His example? A song begins with the words: "I walked today where Jesus walked." If we really want to walk where Jesus walked, our steps will lead to the house of God on the Lord's day. Any professing Christian who does not go to the Lord's house on the Lord's day for the purpose of worshiping God is certainly not following the example of Christ.

Christ always went to the house of God for the right purpose. He did not go there out of curiosity, or to while away the time, or to "see and be seen." He went to the house of God to worship. Christ would have us withdraw from the world, hold communion with God, and develop the spiritual side of our natures. The best place to attend to such important matters is in the building which has been set apart for public worship. Christ was not a chronic grumbler or fault-finder. He never spent His time in criticising and finding fault with the services. Even though He saw some things in the public worship services that were not to His liking, He did not raise objections or offer criticism. Rather He found satisfaction and profit from the services. Let us follow the example of our Lord in this regard also!

III. To Prove Our Love For Christ. (To please Christ).

Christ said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). Those who love the Lord will want to be in His house on His day. Their love for Him will cause them to assemble there. Indifference to the desires of another is never a manifestation of love. Love is concerned about pleasing. A disregard of the desires and requests of another is evidence of the lack of love. If a person does not go to the Lord's house on His day and worship Him, he proves that he does not love Christ. Our love for and loyalty to Christ are measured by our loyalty to His church. It is impossible to be loyal to Christ and indifferent and unfaithful to His church. One cannot love Christ without being willing to do what He wants him to do. Certainly He wants His followers to join in the public worship of God with His people.

"I love Thy kingdom, Lord,
The house of Thine abode,
The Church our blest Redeemer saved
With His own precious blood."

IV. To Set A Good Example.

Attend church services faithfully and by doing so set a good example for those who are watching you. Never encourage the desertion of the house of God by your example. Oh, the tremendous power of example! Set a good example for your children and for others over whom you wield an influence. Every parent owes his child the right example in this matter of church-going. Parents can render their children a priceless service by taking them to church. It is a certainty that parents who go to church irregularly and reluctantly themselves cannot rear a family of children to go to church regularly and cheerfully. A little boy was heard to say, "Mother, why do I have to go to church? Daddy doesn't have to go." One mother said to a preacher, "No, we don't go to church. Why should we? No one else in our block goes."

We are making impressions upon our loved ones, friends, acquaintances and strangers by our attendance or our non-attendance of the church services. What an opportunity for doing good to others is afforded us in regular church attendance! Let us attend faithfully the services in the house of the Lord in order to allow our influence to count for God and for good! If our relationship to God does not mean enough to take us to His house for worship, instruction and fellowship, we need not expect anybody to be impressed favorably by our profession of salvation.

Regular attendance at public worship is a public witness. A churchgoer clearly distinguishes himself from the unsaved person. The most worthy and useful people in any community attend church services. The very act of going to church enables one to exert a good religious influence. We stimulate and encourage others to go by our example. Bear a good testimony for Christ by your attendance.

There is something that the individual worshiper can take to the service that no one else can take for him. There is a thought which only he can think, a prayer which only he can pray, a word which only he can speak, and a blessing which only he can give. The stewardship of influence is a serious obligation. For the use of that influence you must give an account to God. Let us see to it that our influence leads others to His house!

An aged lady, whose ears had long been closed to the sounds of earth, but who possessed the peace of God which passeth understanding, was wont to take her place in the sanctuary of the Lord every Sunday. She read the words of the hymns while others sang them, read the Word of God to which the others listened, bowed reverently in prayer with the rest, and for whom the loving hand of another pointed out the text when the preacher began his sermon. When it was suggested to her that because of her age and her deafness she might be excused from church attendance, she replied, "Well, perhaps somebody may be encouraged by my going to go also." All of those who knew her knew that she went to church because she loved the Lord and wanted to join with His people in the worship of Him Who had saved her.

It is vitally important to realize:

"My life shall touch a dozen lives before this day is done,
Leave countless marks for good or ill ere sets the evening sun.
This is the wish I always wish, the prayer I always pray:
Lord, may my life help other lives it touches by the way."