

## Attitudes Toward Assembling

---

by Bill Crews

**T**he Bible has much to say about **attitude, disposition, motive, intent**. We must do God's will, as opposed to doing that which is not God's will (**Matthew 15:9**), and as opposed to failing to do God's will (**Luke 6:46**). But we must do God's will from our hearts — *fervently, sincerely, willingly, cheerfully*. God considers attitude, as well as action.

Because He was also looking on the heart, not just on the outward appearance or the countenance, God rejected Eliab and chose David to succeed Saul as king of Israel (**1 Samuel 16:7**). Isaiah charged God's people with drawing nigh unto God with their mouths and honoring Him with their lips, while they had removed their hearts far from Him (**Isaiah 29:13**). Jesus used the same passage to rebuke the hypocrisy He encountered (**Matthew 15:8**). We must worship God in spirit as well as in truth (**John 4:24**). What avails in Christ is faith working through love (**Galatians 5:6**). Our giving must be done *willingly and cheerfully*, not **grudgingly** or of **necessity** (**2 Corinthians 9:7**). There must be a *readiness* on our part (**2 Corinthians 8:12**). Even beneficence and martyrdom must not be without love (**1 Corinthians 13:3**).

Every Christian should strive to be a **faithful** Christian, a **growing** Christian. As such he should be an active, functioning member of a congregation. Part of his responsibility is regular, diligent assembling with fellow Christians to worship God in song and prayer, to learn more of God's word, to give of his prosperity, to eat the supper of the Lord, to exhort and be exhorted, to edify and be edified (**Acts 2:42; Hebrews 10:25**; et. al.).

Among members of the Lord's church I have seen two prevailing attitudes toward the assemblies of the saints. On the one hand, there are brethren who regard these assemblies as being both an obligation and a blessing. They take them very seriously and look forward to them as an honor and a privilege. When they became Christians, they committed themselves to be faithful to these assemblies as long as they live. They will not miss them except for very serious reasons. They are concerned about their example and influence. They believe God wants them to be present. They want to be present. They believe the assemblies give them spiritual strength and help them to grow spiritually. They believe the assemblies will provide them with needed help to overcome temptations, to solve problems, to bear burdens, to endure trials, to use opportunities, and to meet responsibilities.

On the other hand, there are brethren who regard the assemblies of the saints, either all of them or most of them, as being purely optional. They do not believe that a Christian should be regular and diligent in attending them. They made no such commitment when they became Christians, and they are constantly faced with decisions as to whether or not they will attend. Even one assembly on the Lord's day is regarded as a chore or duty that must be performed, and they don't want to do any more than "enough to get by on." Most of the assemblies are to them an inconvenience, a burden or an intrusion. They are continuously allowing trivial excuses to keep them from attending — out-of-town company, a week-end outing, one member sick, and the whole family stays home, work around the house to do, Sunday work that they requested for the extra money. Even when they attend, they do not really receive much benefit from the songs, the prayers, the lessons — no preparation for a Bible class or an assembly of worship, and no attempt to receive benefit. The saddest thing of all is that such an attitude and lack of effort will nullify any benefit or blessing that one could receive from attending an assembly.

Many years ago I learned of this attitude on the part of a man who professed to be a Catholic. He freely

**concluded on page 353903**

353902