

## Church Attendance

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by Wayne Goff

It **grieves** my soul to no end when we must cancel services due to inclement weather, especially when the Lord's Day is involved. We are *prevented* from obeying the Lord's commands to sing, pray, study, give, and partake of the Lord's Supper. Elders must be *extremely cautious* in making this decision, though I understand the heavy responsibility which rests upon them to consider the safety and well-being of the brethren. Nobody here takes these things lightly, I can assure you.

The question each one of us must ask ourselves is whether or not we *missed* worshiping on Sunday. Did we study and pray some during the day at home with our family? We should have. It was still the Lord's Day. Emily and I found a church in Texas that had live-streaming of their worship, and studied with them in their Bible class and morning service. Did we *save* our contribution to be given the next week? Believe it or not, I have known brethren in other places who would *spend* the Lord's money if they could not attend! Did we *truly grieve* the inability to be with our brethren in the fellowship on Sunday? Again, I am not accusing others, but I am telling you what crossed my mind last week.

In answering these questions, each of us can see how *faithful attendance* is a **true barometer** of our spiritual condition. The Jews of Malachi's day so despised God and true worship that they said, "*Oh, what a weariness!*" (Mal. 1:13). And the Lord of hosts said they would "*sneer at it!*" How terribly sad for those people.

**Becoming unfaithful in attendance** is usually a gradual thing. It begins by missing a Wednesday night, perhaps because we were sick, or extra tired from work, or just couldn't make ourselves get up and out the door. After doing that a few times, Sunday night is easily dismissed. After all, we reason that we have been to church all morning already, so why come back again? Haven't we done enough already? I am **not** yet convinced that churches across our land that are eliminating Sunday evening services are not secretly thinking such things. But God is their judge; I may be in error. Still, the **danger** exists that when we begin to miss legitimately because of sickness or bad weather, that we begin to grow accustomed to being absent. We must be vigilant against the temptation to stay home when we could be present with the saints.

### Slipping?

Brethren, you and I must be very careful that we do not fall into error *gradually*. Those Jews in Malachi's day originally returned from captivity out of a great **sense of duty** to rebuild their nation, their temple, and to restore their worship to God. So where did they go wrong?

Hebrews 2:1 (KJV) warns: "*Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.*" Departure from the Lord sometimes slips up on us. It is a matter of the heart. We fall out of love with the Lord, His church, and His brethren. We must examine ourselves to be sure that it is not happening to us (2 Cor. 13:5)!

I am cognizant of the warning from Paul to Timothy found in 2 Timothy 4:3. "*For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine...*" **How** does that happen? **Why** does that happen? **What** can I do as a gospel preacher to help prevent it? That truth has always made me sick to my stomach. But I am aware that it **can** and **does** happen to the best of brethren. We are taught to be "*faithful unto death*" (Rev. 2:10) because there is the danger that we might fall away!

Paul told Timothy that he must "*Preach the Word!*" (2 Tim. 4:2). That is the prevention for such departures. "*Be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry*" (2 Tim. 4:5). It is easy to see why this is taught, isn't it? We are always just one generation away from apostasy. Besides, do you know anybody who ever *intended* to fall away from the Lord on purpose? "*And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart*" (Gal. 6:9).

