

Making Progress?

By Wayne Goff

As churches of Christ continue to **eliminate** services from their weekly repertoire, I cannot help but *sarcastically* say that we are really making progress! And if we *continue* to make such progress, then we will be down to one service per week! I have yet to hear a logical, reasonable reason for cutting back on our public assemblies, but I have heard a few excuses.

One might suggest that modern man is just too busy to be expected to attend four hours per week in public assemblies, but the same modern man spends that much time watching one football game! I finally have come to the *uncomfortable* conclusion that **some brethren**, not all, **do not want to hear** any more sermons than they can get away with and be considered “sound.” Others are just looking for *convenience* and are not aware of the danger involved.

The problem has been going on for decades and is really nothing new. But consider the downward trend with me for a moment. In 1922, when N.B. Hardeman conducted the *Hardeman Tabernacle Sermons* in Nashville, Tennessee, the crowds numbered 6,000-8,000 with 2,000-3,000 being turned away for lack of seating. And the meeting went on for 14 days (Oct. 16-31)! Nobody can imagine that kind of attendance and dedication today, but churches of Christ grew steadily during this time. I often heard my father tell of the 14-day meetings when he was a child, but I hardly believed it.

In my father’s generation, when I was a child, we had 7-day gospel meetings (Monday—Sunday). But as apathy grew and few began to attend on Saturday evening, the brethren decided that was “the Devil’s night,” and they changed it to Sunday—Friday night meetings.

Now in my generation it is not unusual to see the same Sunday—Friday night gospel meetings, but many churches are going to a Sunday—Wednesday night “mini-meeting.” And not that many brethren outside the local church even attend that!

So the problem is **not** that we are too busy but that we are *too apathetic* to spiritual things. I’m afraid too many churches today are like Laodicea: “*I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked*” (**Rev. 3:15–17**). Everyone has an abundance of physical blessings in America, but **our heart** is just not in our worship and service to the Lord.

I do not know what is the solution. Elders cannot schedule a 14-day meeting when the brethren will not attend. Elders cannot schedule a 7-day or 6-day meeting if brethren will not attend. But I do know one thing: we are **not** making progress!

Brethren will “**enjoy**” rather than “**endure**” gospel sermons when the love of God and His Word get into their hearts. Yes, we must start with the “*milk*” of the Word (**1 Pet. 2:2**), but we must advance toward *meatier* subjects and learn to “*grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ...*” (**2 Pet. 3:18**). True growth may never happen again in this country, only God knows. But we must all be concerned about the problem if we hope to save the Lord’s church in this country. As J.D. Tant used to say: “**Brethren, we are drifting.**”

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