



WHAT IS A LOCAL CHURCH?

*"...and let us
not hold aloof
from our
church
meetings as
some do. Let
us do all we
can to help one
another's faith
and this the
more earnestly
as we see the
final day
drawing ever
near'
(Hebrews
10:25 by
J.B.Philips).*

We have around us a history of religious system. It is interesting to note that this religious church system sprang up from that which the Lord had raised up in the first place. However, it has turned out to be, and has become something weak, chaotic and shameful. This is the reason why all the gatherings that we see in Christendom cannot be considered to be a 'gathering unto the Lord'. Much of the Christian gatherings we see today are born out of a historical tradition, a false perspective and a worldly religious system. The letter of Hebrews was written at a time when the Jewish believers had begun to turn away from true worship. Worshippers converted from Judaism began to turn the virgin Christian faith into a 'system'. Gradually, their gatherings became feeble, unstable, chaotic and a disgrace unto the Lord.

There is no doubt that in these days, there needs to be a re-gathering of the saints unto the Lord. But this gathering unto the Lord is not an organized movement, a sect, a society or a fraternity.

When we speak of a 'gathering' we do not even faintly advocate or have in mind an organized system, a form of things or an order. Beloved, the Church of the New Testament never began as an organized movement. It was purely spiritual from the very beginning. It began as a work of the Spirit of God. There was no thought of having an organized affiliation of believers at various places. When the Church was birthed, it was something purely spiritual that sprung up spontaneously at different places because of the infusion of divine life, united only by the Holy Spirit, in mutual love and solicitude. An abiding and important fact that we see in the Book of Acts is that the Church was a 'Body' that was brought into being by the Spirit. Beloved, we must always bear in mind that the gathering of saints everywhere, even today, must always be an expression of the Body of Christ.

If a 'society' or an 'association' is divided, they still remain a society and an association in character. Their nature and makeup remains unaffected by any division. However, one cannot divide a body without destroying it. So it is with the Body of Christ, the Church. If the Body of Christ is divided, it will lose its basic, essential, quality and character because it is an organic entity. Division will rob it of its basic character of oneness. To this contribute all the letters of Paul. It has to find an expression upon the earth.

My prayer is that as you read this, you may apprehend the true meaning of 'the gathering of the saints'. We have seen who the participants of these 'gatherings' unto the Lord are, but now we need to see that the 'gatherings' must also be an expression of the Body of Christ. Today, the Lord desires to find such gatherings in different localities, all over the world.

Many Christians live without having any real working fellowship with other believers. Beloved, this Christian life is not merely a matter of individuals attaining maturity. It is true that we received the Lord as individuals and that as individuals we were baptized, but the Lord is looking for something more than so many independent individuals. He is looking for a corporate expression of His work in the earth, a corporate company of people who are living and working in harmony and relationship to one another. This is what the Spirit is working out in these days. The real emphasis here is for a 'working relationship', or as the amplified Bible puts it, 'for admonishing, for warning, for encouraging one another'.

The present world scenario and the recent turn of global events have fueled many wild speculations about the end times. Preachers are emphasizing the wrong things through their teachings and scriptural interpretations. I feel that their teachings, Biblical interpretations have

insulated God's people from feeling the need for a true 'gathering unto the Lord', for gathering as a Body and for the establishment of a living relationship with one another. This kind of working fellowship is much more than the fellowship which some talk of, such as, 'letter-fellowship', 'breakfast-fellowship', etc. It is the physical gathering of the saints with a deep spiritual relationship with one another. It is the assembling of the saints. The true remnant of God is becoming more and more conscious of their absolute need for such true fellowship and gathering.

God's remnant in this hour is becoming increasingly cognizant of the need to have and maintain the right quality of true gatherings unto the Lord. This is something that will increase as we near the end of this age. Every member of the remnant company of saints, will surely become increasingly aware of the need to gather together with saints in the local church. At the same time, the enemy will make many sinister efforts to keep them from the gathering together, by exerting pressure from many different directions – pressures from the job, pressures from the family and pressures from the confused church world. The enemy's efforts will be aimed at preventing you and your family, from gathering together.

It is not unusual to hear a

young believers say, “Just when I was about to leave the office, for the gathering of the saints, my boss called me to deal with some urgent matter” or “a client met me just as I was about to leave.” Problems do not end there. Even if one is able to make it to the gatherings of saints in time, one will find that many other things interfere and affect ones concentration. Umpteen thoughts cloud the mind, thus keeping one in bondage.

O, have you not experienced the manner in which the remembrance of a thousand and one things flood your mind, at the precise time you gather together to worship the Lord? Thoughts, which had not bothered you all day, suddenly seem to arise and confound or confuse the mind! Do you truly realize what you are up against when you want to be in a place where the saints gather together?

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