

Not Forsaking the Assembling of Ourselves Together

Charles H. Welch (1888-1967)

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).

The usual interpretation of this passage associates it with attendance at a Christian place of worship.

The word “assembling” (*episunagoge*), and its cognate (*episunago*), are never used of an “assembling” in the sense of attending service at church ... The only other place where *episunagoge* occurs is II Thessalonians 2:1.

*The coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our **gathering together** unto Him.*

The apostle, by the use of the word “forsaking” evidently glances back to such passages as II Chronicles 24:18, where the “forsaking” of the house of the Lord meant *apostasy*, and was visited with wrath, and also to Nehemiah 10:39 and 13:11, where adherence to the house of God indicated loyalty. The “*gathering together of ourselves*” has value only as it foreshadows the hope of “*our gathering together unto Him.*” At the present time faithfulness to truth and to the blessed hope sometimes cuts us off from Christian assemblies, and this passage must never be used to justify compromise. The present Dispensation knows no “place of worship” except where “*Christ sitteth at the right hand of God,*” for God “*dwelleth not in temples made with hands*” ...

The added words, “*so much the more, as ye see the day approaching,*” confirms the thought that the hope and its gathering together is all the while in view.

A further confirmation of this higher and fuller meaning is found in the argument that immediately follows. The forsaking of the assembly is called a “*willful sin after the reception of the truth,*” and for such “*there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.*”

Under the law sins were placed under two heads:

- (1) Sins of omission, ignorance and inadvertence (Leviticus 4:2, etc.).
- (2) Sins of presumption, high hand, malice aforethought (Numbers 15:30-31).

Apostasy from the profession of the hope had the character of presumptuous sin, for which the law made no provision. That David (as in Psalm 51), for example, could be forgiven, shows that a fuller Sacrifice is found under the gospel than under the law, but the apostle does not bring this forward, neither does he mitigate the severity of the judgment that is pronounced against such.

“*Fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries,*” “*died without mercy,*” “*of how much sorer punishment,*” “*vengeance is Mine,*” “*it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*” – all stress the extreme severity of the penalty. “*Trodden under foot the Son of God,*” “*counting the blood of the Covenant unholy,*” “*doing despite to the Spirit of grace*” – these terms reveal the enormity of the sin of turning back to Judaism.

In this light, Hebrews 6:1-8 is to be read, to which the word “*illuminated*” of 10:32 evidently refers. These are the only occurrences of *photizo* in Hebrews.

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