

THE MESSENGER



“... How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!” Romans 10:15

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Are You Hearing Too Much Preaching?

by *Connie Adams*

For several years, there has been a trend in denominational churches to discontinue Sunday evening services. They have decided that such meetings interfere with family plans or social interests. A recent article in the *Grand Rapids Press*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, “Churches Find Empty Pews at Sunday Evening Services,” reported on this decline in some local churches.

This trend has also been noted among some churches of Christ. A few places have added a short service on Sunday morning and have no evening service at all. In some places this has been done because of members having to travel many miles to attend. Some places have decided to offer Bible classes in the evening and have no preaching. There are a number of congregations now which hear one gospel sermon a week and it is often of the shorter variety. What do you make of this trend? Have churches been having too much gospel preaching for their own good?

A Survey from the New Testament

Did Christians in New Testament days only congregate to observe the Lord’s Supper and give on the first day of the week? We know they did that from Acts 20:7 and I Corinthians 16:1-2. But they also gathered on other occasions for a variety of scriptural purposes.

1. They gathered “*daily with one accord in the temple*” (Acts 2:46). Why, they had a protracted meeting to hear the apostles’ doctrine (Acts 2:42).
2. They had a prayer meeting when Peter had been imprisoned and after James had been executed. “*Many were gathered together praying*” (Acts 12:12).
3. The church at Antioch had a gathering to hear an evangelistic report when Paul and Barnabas returned from their first preaching journey. “*They rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how He had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles*” (Acts 14:27).
4. In Acts 15, the apostles and elders and the whole church met to hear divine revelation on the issue of receiving the Gentiles apart from the demands of the law of Moses. They heard from Peter, Paul and Barnabas, and James.

5. In I Corinthians 5:4, Paul gave instruction as to how to deal with an immoral brother *“when ye are gathered together.”* Nothing is said about when that gathering was to take place.
6. I Corinthians 14:23 speaks of when *“the whole church be come together in one place.”* In verse 26 he again said *“when ye come together.”* While Paul addressed the use of spiritual gifts in chapters 12, 13, and 14, he spoke of singing, praying and teaching in these gatherings so that all might be edified (vv. 15, 9, 12, 26). No reference is made to the time when the whole church comes together in one place. While we do not have these spiritual gifts now, we still can come together to preach, pray and sing. That is exactly what we do on Sunday night, Wednesday night and during gospel meetings.
7. Elders are to *“admonish”* those under their charge. Are there limits on when they may do this? They are also to *“labor among”* the saints (I Thess. 5:12-13). They are to *“exhort and convict gainsayers”* (Titus 1:9). There are some who *“labor in the word and doctrine”* (I Timothy 5:17). They are charged to *“feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof”* (I Peter 5:2). Christians are instructed to *“obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account. . .”* (Hebrews 13:17).

Surely the discharge of these sacred obligations on their part involves plans to bring the whole church together in one place, whether Sunday night, Wednesday night, or some other appointed time, or during protracted meetings to hear the gospel preached that we may be edified and that strangers among us may hear the word and be led to obey the Lord. A regular meeting on Sunday evening (which is still part of the Lord’s day) well serves any of these scriptural activities. Why any faithful Christian would not want to be a part of such a gathering has always been a mystery to me.

Perhaps preachers bear a good part of the blame for not studying and preparing material from the word of God which is interesting, well presented, and which is timely. We have the good fortune of being members of a congregation (Hebron Lane) where there is seldom much difference in attendance at all weekly scheduled gatherings. Sometimes we have more on Sunday night than in the morning and sometimes on Wednesday night. Our elders have planned these meetings for the purpose of strengthening the church and reaching the lost who visit from time to time. When members begin to miss, they view that with concern and find out if there is a problem. While this is not the case in every place, it is at that place.

Are you hearing too much gospel preaching, or studying the Bible too much? Or, like the denominational churches, have social interests and lack of spiritual appetite dampened our enthusiasm for an extra meeting on what is still part of the Lord’s day? Just thought I’d ask.

NOTES & NEWS:

Remember to check the prayer list for those with ongoing spiritual weaknesses and physical illnesses.

“...Pray for one another...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” James 5:16