

Constantly Affirm!

by Stan Cox

Consider the following words by Paul, *“This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men”* (Titus 3:8).

We will leave aside for a moment whether a failure to *“maintain good works”* will have an impact upon the salvation of the negligent Christian. My question is this... If Paul wanted Titus to *“affirm constantly that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works”* why do men today speak evil of those who do just that?

Men trumpet the joy and release they feel when they stop worrying about obedience, and just trust in the “finished work of Jesus.” They disparage their “destructive” upbringing, among a group of legalists who constantly emphasized, “OBEY, OBEY, OBEY!” They call such “patternists” destructive and evil.

It seems the American version of “Christianity” will not put up with men like Titus, especially as they diligently follow Paul’s instructions.

Nevertheless, Paul contends that such constant calls to faithfully obey God are *“good and profitable to men.”* As such, the diligent evangelist will endeavor to remind men *“to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called”* (Ephesians 4:1).

Remember Paul’s words, *“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **for good works**, which God prepared beforehand **that we should walk in them**”* (Ephesians 2:10).

The Importance of Assembling

by Stan Cox

When God created man, he made him to be a social being. Throughout history, men have typically gathered together in communities. In fact, the institution of marriage was established by God as He determined *“It is not good that man should be alone.”* So, God said, *“I will make him a helper comparable to him”* (Genesis 2:28).

It is not surprising that God would create a means for men to commune together spiritually as well. For example, He called for the nation of Israel first to build a tabernacle, then a temple as a place to collectively worship Him. As Christians, the actual location is of little significance. Jesus told the Samaritan woman of this, in describing His coming kingdom. *“Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father”* (John 4:21). In Christ, the location doesn’t matter, it is the community that is important.

In Ephesians 4, Paul explained that the local church is the organization designed by God *“for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ”* (12). As we each do our part, we cause *“growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love”* (16).

It is important to be a member of a local church of Christ. Such brings opportunities to work together, worship together, and rejoice together. It brings one under the discipline of the group,

and the oversight of men qualified to “*watch out for your souls, as those who must give account*” (Hebrews 13:17). As such, we follow Paul’s example, “*And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples*” (Acts 9:26). There are obligations to God, brethren and mankind that simply cannot be accomplished without the joint cooperation of God’s people.

The Hebrew writer wrote of the benefits of gathering together with the saints, in Hebrews 10:24-25:

“And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”

His words are novel in that they approach the topic of communal worship on the basis of responsibility rather than personal benefit. In other words, I am to gather with the saints that I may help them, not that they may help me. Consider the wisdom in this.

The typical attitude can be summarized as a “what can you do for me” approach to church attendance. People will choose which church they are a part of based upon what that church offers them or their family. Churches become retailers of spiritual wares, and the individual shops at the institution that best fits. This is a take, take, take mentality, with the emphasis on getting what I can from “them.”

God’s view is completely different. The way He looks at it, I am to gather with His people to find out what I can do for them! I choose which church I am a part of based upon the question, “Where can I do the most good for the Lord?” My view of the church is organic rather than institutional. The church doesn’t exist to serve me. Rather, I, as a member of the church, exist to serve others. This is a give, give, give mentality, with the emphasis on serving my brethren in any way I can.

God’s way works! A group of dedicated Christians, each one concerned only with how he can help others, results in great growth and edification. I supply the help I can, and in return I get the combined help of all my brothers and sisters in Christ. What wisdom is seen in God’s plan!

When I come to worship with my brethren, I have the opportunity to:

- **Raise my voice with theirs in praise to Him.** As we sing, by our words we teach and admonish, “*one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs*” (Colossians 3:16).
- **Sit and hear God’s word proclaimed.** These messages serve to equip me “*for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ*” (Ephesians 4:12).
- **Commune with them around the table of my Lord,** remembering His death, and proclaiming “*the Lord’s death till He comes*” (1 Corinthians 11:26).
- **Lay by in store** (cf. 1 Corinthians 16:1-2), allowing me to support and participate materially in the important works of edification, evangelism and benevolence.
- **Pray together with my brethren.** We offer up supplications and petitions on behalf of one another, and communicate our common needs and desires to the Father in heaven (cf. James 5:14-18; Revelation 5:8).

Christians come to worship together because we love God, and love each other. These assemblies serve to stir us up to “*love and good works*” as we exhort one another.

Assembling with the saints gains importance when we face difficult circumstances. All of us have burdens to bear, and tribulations. Fortunately, we have one another to lean upon, and as we gather together we have opportunities to laugh together, weep together, and encourage one another in our walk with Christ. This is God's way!