

ROCKY MOUNT CHURCH NEWSLETTER

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Worship and Learn As a Family

One of the failures of the modern church has been the attempt to reach the youth through segregated worship and a whole litany of youth activities. The result has been an entertainment environment, not an environment conducive to spiritual growth of the family. When the youth outgrow the entertainment, many of them are left with no idea what it means to worship or how to study God's Word. The church fails the entire family when it tries to take on the responsibility that God has given to the parents. Why should we wonder about the result since our methods are not in keeping with God's word? Throughout Scripture, Old and New Testament alike, God instructs parents to teach their children, to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The failure in the other ditch is to pay no attention to the youth at all. We have suffered the effects of that failed method as well. Join us in our attempt to avoid both ditches, while we seek to worship and to learn according to God's prescribed method as a family.

Matt Jordan, pastor

Remember to check out the audio sermons on our website.

A couple of different series are developing and being added to regularly.

One is more doctrinal in nature and the other deals with the family.

You can request any of these audio sermons on CD or simply download them from the website.

God is Faithful - I Cor. 1:9

John Gill once wrote that if God is not faithful, "there would be no firm foundation for trust and confidence in him." The Apostle Paul writes by divine inspiration that God is faithful. That means that God is reliable and trustworthy. He is true to His word. Everything that God has said He would do, He is faithful to do just that.

God has given ample evidence already that He is faithful, just in the things of nature. We have not seen another worldwide flood. The sun and moon and stars continue to hold their course and do exactly what God intended for them to do. God has been faithful to give us seedtime and harvest, the winter and summer, and for Israel He gave them the former and latter rains. He does so because He is faithful; He is God. Faithfulness is essential to Him. To be otherwise, would mean that He is not God. God abides faithful, He cannot deny Himself (2 Tim. 2: 13). God is not man that he should lie nor the son of man that He should repent. He says "My covenant will not I break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips." (Ps. 89:34). James writes that with the Father "is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (Jas 1: 17).

When we look at the promises of God and then look at His rate of accomplishment of those things He has promised He would do, we must conclude without hesitancy that He will do what He has promised. There is not one thing that God has failed to do. That should be a great encouragement to us today.

God has said "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt 6:33). In Phil 4:6-7 Paul writes "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." God has promised that the things that we need He will supply to us, if we seek first His kingdom. He says don't worry and fret over these things, He knows that we have need of them.

Our only focus should be to honor and glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. We do so by keeping His commandments, going to Him in prayer, attending the worship services, reading and studying His word, and believing and trusting His word. Note the promise in Phil 4:7, "And the peace of God will keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." God promises peace in your hearts and minds, when you commit to His care those things that cause you anxiety. God is faithful and performs all that He has promised to do. Do you experience the peace of God that passeth all understanding? If not, could it be that you are not seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness?

In His love and mercy, Elder Shannon Whipp

“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

Our text is the last segment of a sentence that begins with verse 23, “Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering...” Before diving into our text, let’s think about some terms in this verse. Faith is commonly thought of as fruit of the Spirit; fruit that we exercise in believing and trusting God. Faith is also often used in reference to the doctrine, or body of beliefs we understand God’s word to teach. Other passages convey a similar meaning, such as Jude 3, Acts 2:42, 1Timothy 3:15, and 4:14 of this same Epistle. In a larger sense, these two meanings of faith go hand in hand and, ideally, to be found faithful in one is to be faithful in the other. What about the phrase “hold fast”? It simply means to ‘hold on intensely’ or to ‘maintain possession’. Many times throughout Scripture, we are exhorted to hold fast, to stand fast, to be steadfast. So how do we hold fast our trust and confidence in the Lord and maintain possession of the doctrine or body of beliefs we have been blessed to receive?

Leading up to this passage, the Apostle has been writing about the perfection of the sacrificial death of Christ and what his death accomplished. In all that we believe, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the foundation. In all that we do or practice, the ultimate focal point is the glory of God and His Son, Jesus Christ. Notice the phrase in parentheses in verse 23, “(for he is faithful that promised)”. Our response to God should be based on His actions toward us and upon us. He is faithful. Great is His faithfulness and He is worthy of our trust! Looking at the entire sentence, verses 23-25, the Apostle first exhorts us to “hold fast the profession of our faith”. He then names three ‘things’ we should be doing. Finally, he describes the intensity with which we are to do these things: “so much the more”. All of this constitutes a vital part of our faithfulness to God. Now, back to our text in verse 25.

“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together...” In the early days of the church, it was said that the disciples “continued steadfastly...” (Acts 2:42) What does that phrase mean? As small of a phrase as it is, its implication is huge – to be earnestly and diligently committed to the object of worship (Christ) and to the place of worship (the assembly). In what things did the disciples steadfastly continue? ... in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in breaking of bread, and in prayers. Notice... in this one verse, we have a framework for the beliefs and practices of the church. In this one verse, we have the core reasons that a church is a church; the core reasons that the church assembles. In other words, whenever and wherever the church assembles, the purpose for each occasion should be found in this framework. Additionally, we have no reason to believe that the framework has changed. This is why we are on safe and sound ground when we commit to following after the original pattern of the church. When we meet on Sunday morning, our focus is typically the apostles’ doctrine. We might meet on other occasions where we enjoy a simple time of fellowship. Still, there are times we meet when the focus is the breaking of bread. And throughout the history of the church, the disciples have assembled for a time of prayer when other elements of worship were not observed. Of course, there might be times when we assemble together and each of these is held in view. Whatever our primary purpose might be on any given occasion, the church assembles; and when the church assembles for the right purpose, God is honored and His people are edified.

Throughout the history of the church, various conditions and circumstances have prevented the church from meeting regularly and even publicly. The inability to meet at times, either locally or in a more widespread manner, has typically been forced upon the church, such as in times of persecution. This has been seen in many

places down through the generations, especially in Europe as the church spread into other parts of the world. Generally speaking, the church has endured some degree of persecution in every place where the Lord has planted it. In the early history of America, there was a measure of persecution as well. But it was not uncommon for congregations to meet less frequently for a number of other reasons besides persecution: the lack of pastors and ministers, the treacherous conditions of the unsettled territories, or the distance and terrain between members of a congregation. No doubt, during these times, survival was a major factor affecting the ability of the church to meet openly or regularly. Unfortunately, the forced practice of meeting infrequently began to become the norm among some churches. Eventually, because this practice became the custom, it allowed people to begin justifying the practice even when conditions improved; 'this is the way we've always done it'. Over time, it seems that the only remaining 'legitimate' reason to continue this practice was the lack of preachers. Let's consider our practice today.

With all the modern inventions and exploding technology of today, our means of communication and modes of travel have allowed people on the other side of the world to become our neighbor. We travel easier and more comfortable than ever but most of us are hindered by the slightest inconveniences. We have greater access to a larger segment of the population than could have ever been imagined a hundred years ago, but in many respects, we have become more isolated and self-centered. Obviously, the physical, geographical challenges of past centuries, which hindered the church from more frequent meetings, are non-existent today, at least in this country and most other places as well. But in many places, the lack of preachers remains an obstacle. While this issue can indeed be an obstacle to the spiritual health of a congregation, is it a legitimate reason for not meeting every Lord's Day? Another way to ask this question is, should the absence of a particular man prevent the congregation from meeting? The 'structure' of the church includes the position of pastor/teacher and that position is vital to the spiritual growth of the church. It can soon become a detriment to a congregation when it must continue for an extended period of time without a pastor. God bless those faithful saints who maintain their commitment to the local congregation during those times. And God bless those faithful deacons and brethren who labor tirelessly to help ensure the pulpit is filled on meeting day. But which situation would be more pleasing to God --- for a church to meet *only* when a preacher is available, or for a church to meet every Lord's Day to worship, to fellowship and to pray together that God would supply their needs? Which situation demonstrates a greater commitment to God and a greater faith in Him and His word?

Around 1801, Elder Wilson Thompson, one of the most respected ministers of his day, wrote these words: "In those days it was common to hold prayer meetings among the Baptists; and in that church a portion of every Sunday and Wednesday was devoted to the prayer meeting, at which we attended to the reading of the Scriptures, giving short exhortations, singing, and reading select sermons and commentaries of some approved authors, and generally someone would propose a text, and those present would give their views on its meaning. I am sorry the Baptists have so generally ceased to sustain this useful practice. I have been as much edified by the exercises of the members as by any sermons I ever heard. And then all the different gifts of the members were brought out; and, being so often together, and religious worship being the object of their social meetings, their confidence and brotherly attachments were cultivated and confirmed. *One great advantage was derived from this constant exercise of the brethren's gifts, and it was this: When anything prevented the preacher from filling his appointment, the assembly did not disperse without a religious service, for the brethren would proceed with the meeting by prayer and exhortation, etc. As it is now, when a minister fails in his engagement, no member can be prevailed upon even to pray, and all assembled disperse without worship.*" Interestingly, from the early days of the church, there have been similar writings, documents and confessions that consistently demonstrate the church's commitment to meeting every Lord's Day. This is in complete agreement with God's word. It should only be out of absolute necessity and only as a very temporary situation that a church does not meet every Lord's Day; not as a voluntary decision and certainly not as a permanent arrangement. A local congregation meeting every Sunday regardless of the obstacles, as trying as the situation might be, gives more glory and honor unto the Lord, while still continuing to strengthen the saints. According to our text, we should be assembling ourselves together and exhorting one another "so much the more"; now, more

than ever before as we see the day approaching, holding fast the profession of our faith. Consider what the Lord has to say concerning these things and the Lord grant us all more wisdom.

Humbly, in Christ, Matt Jordan

The Sabbath

Saturday was the day kept by the Jews in Old Testament times. The Savior and apostles habitually met on the first day of the week. John, in the Isle of Patmos, says, "*I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day.*" I understand this was Sunday. The day of Pentecost was the first day of the week. Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week. The Corinthians were to lay by in store as God had prospered them on the first day of the week. It seems to me that the Jews celebrated the event of creation, and that we celebrate the event of Jesus rising from the dead on the first day of the week. The Savior and his apostles habitually met on the first day of the week; while there is no expressed command for the first day of the week, yet Christ and his apostles exemplified the first day of the week.

"One man esteemeth one day above another; and another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."-Rom. xiv. 15. There was then a difference of opinion among the disciples, but Paul advised them to be persuaded in their own minds. One day is as long as another, and as good as another.

It is one of the Ten Commandments to "*remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.*" As this commandment required one day in seven, it is a moral duty to obey it. We should give one-seventh of our time to rest and devotion; but, so far as it sets aside a special day, it is ceremonial. The Christian Sabbath retains the moral feature of it, but drops the ceremonial by allowing that one day is as good as another. The other nine commandments each expressed a moral duty. Some things are commanded because they are duties; others are duties because they are commanded. Ceremonial commands are duties because they are commanded; but commandments which point out moral obligations are duties, even before they are commanded. Duties in the Ten Commandments had been duties in all previous ages.

The true and real Sabbath is hinted at in Hebrews iv.-"*We which have believed do enter into rest'* He that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his." This is the true and real Sabbath, of which the old Sabbath was a type. It includes all the days from your conversion to death's day. To work for salvation is to break the Sabbath, the real Sabbath. We rest in all this Sabbath. Moses directed them to stone one who had so much as gathered a few sticks on this day; to show that we must not rest in our own days and in death.

Elder J. H. Oliphant, Messenger of Peace – 1919

An Old Lady's Prayer

Dear Lord, I know You're busy--As busy as can be,
But I wonder if this morning You'd come and chat with me.

It gets so very lonely, Just looking at the wall,
Listening for the phone to ring And friends that never call.

My folks are awfully busy With all their jobs to do.
Well then, I guess, Lord, That leaves just me and You.

I thought perhaps we would walk, If You've the time today
To take my hand and listen To what I have to say.

But there'll be someone coming--Now just you wait and see.
Until then, dear Lord, Guess it's just You and me!

Martha J. Nissen