

DID THEY DO RIGHTLY?

The bulletin of another congregation announced that two members of the church had responded to the invitation on a Sunday morning. They publicly repented of forsaking the assembly of the saints. Did they do what was right? It is obvious that they had become convinced that forsaking the assembly of the Lord's people is a sin. Were they correct in this conviction, or were they overly conscientious?

Is it a sin to forsake (abandon, intentionally keep oneself from) the public meetings of the church? Hebrews 10:25 bears directly on this question:

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.

If ignoring and disobeying a direct prohibition of inspired Scripture is sin, then it is a sin to forsake the assemblies of the church. (Note: Merely being **absent** is not necessarily the same as forsaking. One's **absence** may be due to illness or other things beyond the **absentee's** control; the one who **forsakes** has the ability to be present, but he **chooses** not to be.) Many principles, besides the foregoing prohibition in Hebrews 10:25, argue that it is a sin to behave thus (e.g., Mat. 6:33; Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:25; 2 Pet. 3:18; et al.).

Of course, forsaking the assembly is actually only the symptom of deeper spiritual problems. Those who choose to be elsewhere than with one's brethren when they come together need to ask themselves some questions:

- Do I really love God and His Son?
- Do I really love the Word of God?

- Do I really love the church?
- Do I really love my brethren?
- Do I really love lost souls?

One cannot answer “yes” to these questions, continue to forsake the assemblies of the church, and still be honest!

It is terribly sad to see the stubbornness with which some saints seem determined to continue in this sin. Some of these are not about to come except one hour on Sunday morning. (I have never understood the logic of parading such before the congregation as prayer-leaders and servers of the Lord’s supper as if they were spiritually sound. What message does this send to the forsaker? What object lesson does this teach our young people?) Some who are generally present every time the church meets will let circumstances (e.g., weather conditions, being “tired,” unexpected visitors, et al.) keep them home from such meetings that do not keep them from going to work, going to school, going shopping, or engaging in other activities.

What will such brethren say to the Christ who died for the church when they meet Him at The Judgment? What will He say to them? The couple described in the bulletin article did exactly what the Scriptures teach us to do when we sin publicly—repent and ask forgiveness publicly (Acts 8:22). Would to God that brethren everywhere who are guilty of this sin would follow their noble example.

—Dub McClish

Denton, TX