
Words of Truth

So Much The More, As You See The Day Approaching

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The first congregation that was established on earth was in Jerusalem (Acts 2). That congregation faced many carnal challenges right from the start. First off, the congregation was established by people that were from Jerusalem as well as people who had come from every nation under heaven (Acts 2:5-11). That meant, many people had to stay in Jerusalem without homes, employment, etc. So, those whom obeyed the Gospel that were from Jerusalem had to share their homes and possessions (Acts 2:44 and Acts 4:32). Many had chosen to sell their possessions and share those funds among the saints (Acts 4:34-37).

While they were struggling to make ends meet financially, these babes in Christ were also facing persecution. The Jewish leaders, that chose to remain true to some of the Law of Moses with a mixture of their own human traditions and customs, were opposing these new saints. That opposition included threats, physical harm, and imprisonment (Acts 4:1-31; 5:12-42). The preaching of the Gospel and worshipping the Lord could mean you would even be killed (Acts 6:8-8:3). When Paul spoke of his sinful past he said: *“I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities”* (Acts 26:9-11).

In addition to these challenges, saints in Jerusalem also faced a great famine. Notice: *“And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul”* (Acts 11:27-30).

Can you imagine trying to focus on spiritual things if you were facing all of the above? That would be tough. Yet, the saints in Jerusalem did continue to follow the Lord. They did not stop assembling together because times were tough. In fact, their tough times were going to get worse. Even in face of that, they were expected to continue to assemble.

As Jerusalem Was Going To Be Destroyed, They Were Told To Keep Assembling

Jesus foretold of a time, in the first century, when judgment was going to come upon the city of Jerusalem. He spoke of signs to indicate when it was coming. He said it would be in their generation. It was a coming of the Lord, as in a judgment day such as we've seen several times in the Old Testament (Isaiah 13:1-14:23, Isaiah 34:1-8, and Jeremiah 46:1-10), that was observable (cf. I Peter 4:7). At that time, even the temple was going to be destroyed (Matthew 23:37-24:34 and Mark 13:1-30). In Luke's account we read: *"And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled"* (Luke 21:20-24).

So, as Jewish saints could see this day approaching, what were they told to do? Were they told to stop assembling as saints to avoid detection? Were they told to stop practicing the faith until times got better? Were they told to protect their physical bodies by neglecting their spiritual lives? Here is what they were told to do: *"Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: 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 10:22-25).

Sadly, I have seen so-called Christians cancel the assembling of the saints for many carnal reasons. I have seen assemblies cease because of snow, cold temperatures, and other weather related events. We have all recently seen so-called Christians cease assembling for fear of serious illness. Some used government regulation for their excuse. Well, the Scriptures teach we show our faith by our works (James 2:14-26) and we are known by our fruit (Matthew 7:15-20). Their actions spoke loudly in those times!

Conclusion

In the most difficult of times, saints should never cease assembling. In fact, it is in the worst of times that we need to be together even more. Aside from the Scriptures, the Lord has provided us with each other as the source for edification and comfort (I Thessalonians 4:13-5:14). Brethren, let's stay strong even in the worst times we face!