

Affirmed Constantly

By Elder David Pyles

This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men. – Titus 3:8-9

One of the first things that must be learned to be a good Christian is that no one ever learns to be a good Christian. This is why Paul told Timothy that it was good and profitable unto men that certain things be constantly affirmed. It is not sufficient to teach them only once or twice, assuming that the lesson will then be forever learned. Principles of morality and character are not the same as principles of algebra. The latter may be learned in a few semesters. The former must be reaffirmed with unending repetition. Every sincere Christian will acknowledge the necessity of this from the testimony of their own experience and conscience.

This is why the scriptures make worship and scriptural teaching to be a weekly matter (Acts 13:42,17:2, 20:7, 1Cor 16:2, Lk 4:16). It is also the reason for the famous passage:

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. – Heb 10:23-25

In order to be unwavering in our profession, and to be persistent in good works and love, it is needful that we assemble together regularly for the purpose of teaching and exhorting each other from the word of God. Any man who denies need of this has deluded himself. *“For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,”* (Phil 3:3).

Oftentimes those who neglect church attendance will justify themselves by complaining of the inadequacies or even hypocrisies of others who attend. While such complaints are potentially valid, the fact is that usually they are not, being no more than convenient excuses. Remember that the scoffer can always find fault if fault is what he wants to find. This is especially true against those who endeavor to teach the high principles of Christ. If a man's life falls short of the principles he teaches, then he can be dismissed as a hypocrite. If he teaches others to live as he does, then he can be

dismissed as an egocentric who makes himself a paragon. If he teaches others to live beneath his own principles, then he can be charged with treating them like cattle. One way or another, churches and men who teach Christian principles can be dismissed by those who are bent on dismissing them. The fact is that most people who attend church would be very ready to confess the faults their critics charge. The true difference between them and their critics is that they acknowledge their faults and have a sincere desire to remedy them. This is why they attend church.

In many years of pastoring churches, my observation has been that the best excuses for not attending could actually be made by those who never make them. The busiest people in a church are generally among those who are best to attend. Also, the ones who love football the most, fishing the most, family the most, etc, are usually the ones who attend the most. God has provided us with many things to enjoy, and He commonly forbears us even when indulging in them more than we should. But be sure He will not indefinitely endure being reduced to a secondary priority. Business, recreation, family, etc. can all be important things, but they cannot be the *most* important thing. As Jesus said:

Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.
– Mt 6:31-34

Obviously, the key word in this passage is “first.” There are things God has commanded to be affirmed constantly, and these should be first among our priorities. When this is done, the Lord has promised that other needs will be providentially fulfilled. The whole of my own experience will corroborate this promise, and I think other readers will acknowledge the same.