

THE BELLEVILLE MESSENGER

February 8

2009

Bold and Fearless Preaching

The first preaching was in the difficult circumstances of being personally persecuted by the leaders of the dominant religious leaders of the city of Jerusalem. Read over Acts 4:1-32. We can see in this chapter that bold and fearless preaching was uncompromising to God's solid truth, but it was just such preaching that was needed and it resulted in growth of the church (v.1-4), while also resulting in persecution (v.5-21), but the early disciples knew it was worth it, and that persecution was a high honor that identified them with Jesus' rejection and suffering and helped them to love and appreciate Jesus even more than ever. The boldness of Peter and John should be copied by preachers today (v.19-20). We should not be guided by fear of men but the love of God and conviction that truth is worth living and dying for. If your preaching is not worth the price of being rejected, then your preaching is worthless anyway. But, as preaching boldly grows and becomes openly opposed, it is time to remember that bold, soul-loving and truthful preaching must lean heavily on a rich and deep reliance upon the strength of God. So, the next section (4:23-31) was how the apostles were strengthened in prayer. The result was that they "spoke the word with boldness". Good, solid preaching must lean heavily upon God in prayer, but the content must be "in the name of Jesus" and that means it must be authorized by Jesus in His word. Preaching is not solid unless it is accurate and fully biblical, and preached in love for God and the souls of those who hear, and strengthened by a preacher's heart prepared in prayer. Let the principles gained from Acts 4 show us the kind of solid Bible preaching we need today. Let us insist on it, and help it along with diligent prayer for those brave enough to take this task in hand.

✍ Terry W. Benton

WHEN I DECIDE TO MISS SERVICES

Many brethren today have the idea that it is acceptable to miss one or all services of the local church. They may not necessarily be totally forsaking the assembly in that they may decide to attend another congregation, but they miss services of the church to which they have committed themselves. Often, this non-attendance is unnecessary, brought on by a selfish desire to visit a larger congregation or an activity that should have been scheduled better. Let us examine whether this practice of non-attendance is approved by God.

Putting ourselves in situations of "missing"

Some put themselves in situations where they must miss services. They obligate themselves on Sunday afternoons for unnecessary activities such as recreation, sports, visiting family, or extra work, and when these activities go long or require a visit to another congregation, the local church suffers the absence of that member. We need to ask — what are our priorities? In the Old Testament, when God required a sacrifice, He wanted the firstfruits, such as in Exodus 23:19, where He said, "*Bring the best of the firstfruits of your soil to the house of the LORD your God.*" In principle, God has wanted and continues to want our very best. The Lord wants us to be committed to the local church, and we should apply this "firstfruit" principle to our work with the church. If our plans cause us to miss services, then those plans should be changed. Those of us who have committed to this congregation are obligated to attend all the services and all the Bible studies so that the edification of this body is complete.

Can I ever miss?

There are situations where we must miss, either the assembly of the local church, or assembling altogether. Emergencies, family situations, sickness, or travel will cause us to miss sometimes. It is repetitive or purposeful missing that hurts the church.

Does my missing hurt?

Let me first ask the reverse — "Does my attendance encourage?" I answer with a loud YES! Whether we are publicly or privately participating, our attendance encourages and edifies. Therefore, when we miss, even if just visiting elsewhere, our absence discourages the

church. Our absence causes an emptiness in the hearts of others. It makes all wonder why we are disinterested in their spiritual welfare, especially when we indicated our interest by committing to this congregation. Our absence hurts everyone. To purposely miss and put ourselves in a situation where we must miss is an act of selfishness that damages our relationship between one another and with God. It is difficult to claim fellowship with people when no joint participating is going on. The early church held all things as common property (Acts 4:32), but we seem to have trouble sharing a room for three hours one day a week! Paul, in 1 Corinthians 12, wrote about the proper operation of the body. He wrote in verse 14, "Now the body is not made of one part but of many." When one body part is totally gone, that part is sorely missed. Are you the missing limb hobbling what would otherwise be a healthy body?

What are you getting at?

I am pointing out a problem many churches have—a problem of lax attendance. Bible class is obviously of no interest to several. Some have the attitude that Bible class is not required, and therefore they need not attend. To look at anything spiritual with that attitude is to cheat oneself out of many spiritual blessings. We should not say "I must" but rather "I can". Some have the idea that missing is no big deal. Maybe it's not, but all I know is how discouraging it is when some are more interested in other activities or congregations on Sunday and Wednesday other than assembling with the saints. If I'm making a big deal out of nothing, tell me, and then tell me why you care so little for me that you believe I do not need your encouragement. "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing."—1 Thess. 5:11.

Contributed by James Buchanan
on Mooresville Pike church's WEB site



THE LOCAL CHURCH

When we speak of the organization of the church those who understand what the Bible teaches recognize that we are speaking of the local church with its elders and deacons (Philippians 1:1), as the universal church has no earthly organizational structure. When Paul returned to Jerusalem following his conversion Luke tells us that "he

assayed to join himself to the disciples" (Acts 9:26). Even so today, faithful Christians understand that they have a responsibility to join themselves with other disciples to fulfill the responsibility that God has placed upon the church as a collective body.

Sadly, some, after expressing that desire to be joined with the saints in a particular locality fail to realize the commitment they have made and take their responsibility lightly. When I have joined myself with saints in a given locality then they should be able to depend upon me to fulfill that commitment. I will be faithful in my attendance at all assemblies. I will give upon the first day of the week (1 Corinthians 16:1,2) and realize that even if there may be times I must be away that need still exists and the saints to whom I have made a commitment can depend on me.

Some seem to have the idea that as long as they attend somewhere they are faithfully serving the Lord. It is understood that there may be times when traveling we will be away from our home congregation and will be worshipping with saints in another locality. However, this is not the same as those who think they can "visit around," never making any commitment to any particular congregation, or those who have made such a commitment and still feel that they can attend here and there and everything be fine.

What about you? Can the brethren with whom you have joined yourself depend on you?

✍ James Hahn

Belleville church of Christ	
5635 S County Rd 200E - Belleville, IN - (317) 539-5258	
www.bellevillechurch.net	
Schedule of Services	Elders
Sun. Bible Study. 9:30 a.m.	Charles Carpenter. . . (317) 839-3873
Sun. Morning Worship. . . . 10:30 a.m.	James Hahn. (317) 745-1507
Sun. Evening Worship. 5:00 p.m.	
Wed. Bible Study. 7:00 p.m.	
Evangelist	Deacons
James Hahn. (317) 745-1507	Leon Nevins (317) 272-2966
	Don Perry. (765) 676-5825
	Alvin Stanley. (317) 831-3514