



# The Voice of Truth

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## **What Manner Of Persons? (Part 3)**

**By Jimmy Pettigrew**

The third chapter of second Peter is devoted to discussion of the Lord's second coming (**2 Peter 3:9-10**). When the Lord comes, the earth and the works therein shall be burned up (**2 Peter 3:11**). In view of His return "WHAT MANNER OF PERSONS SHOULD WE BE?" We looked at two characteristics describing what manner of persons we should be: HOLY and GODLY. Let us look at another characteristic.

God's people must be "STEADFAST"! "Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness," (**2 Peter 3:17**). The need of steadfastness today becomes evident when one observes: (1) The number of Christians who become unfaithful. (2) The ease with which false teachers can deceive God's people. (3) The number of people who are basically indifferent to the Lord and His church.

Areas of life where steadfastness is required: (1) One must be steadfast in resisting the devil. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour," (**1 Peter 5:8**). (2) One should be steadfast in the doctrine of Christ. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord," (**1 Corinthians 15:58**). "But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine," (**Titus 2:1**). (3) One should be steadfast in the faith. "Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world," (**1 Peter 5:9**). "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong," (**1 Corinthians 16:13**).

Temptation, lust, enticement can lead people into sin (**James 1:12-15**). False doctrine, false prophets, can deceive men and make merchandise of them (**2 Peter 2:1-3**). The realization that the Lord may come today should prompt one to be steadfast!

## **Take Heed Lest Ye Fall**

**By Brian Yeager**

Sometimes Christians get to a point in their faith where they feel secure. When they "let their guards down". The Bible warns us not to be too secure. (**1 Corinthians 10:12**) "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Satan waits for us to give him any opportunity to pull us down. Satan already has the world so his work is in the Church. He is trying to make the saved the unsaved. Again, the Bible warns us to be sober and ready for these things.

(**1 Peter 5:8-9**) "*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.*"

The Bible warns us of many things to watch. It would be impossible to name them all, yet there are some that are overlooked at times and we are going to look at those things.

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Things that Satan frequently uses to pull Christians away. The first is marriage outside of the Church. I am not saying it is a sin, but it is certainly unwise. Let's look at some Biblical examples. (**I Kings 11:1-9**) *"But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites: Of the nations concerning which the Lord said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart. For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. And Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and went not fully after the Lord, as did David his father. Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon. And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods. And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice."* Women were used sometimes by Satan as it seems to pull the faith of a man down. Why, if it were not for Herod's marriage John the Baptist would have kept his head (**Matthew 14:1-12**). Christian men and women need to be selective when choosing mates. You will find that if Christ is the common ground and the center of the home there will be a lot less problems.

Popularity sometimes is a problem (**John 12:42-43**). The love of money can be a divider of faith (**I Timothy 6:10**). Pride can step between God and his children (**Proverbs 16:18**). How about our friends that often times corrupt us? (**I Corinthians 15:33**) *"Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners."* God tells us to come out from the world not stay there. (**II Corinthians 6:17-18**) *"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."* It seems as though Satan is good at using people we like or care about to come between Christians and God. Maybe that is why Christ said that we should love no one above him. (**Matthew 10:34-39**) *"Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."*

Whatever it is that may cause you to feel secure, heed the warnings of God. Do not be over confident in your faith. Be on the defensive at all times. Remember that Satan does not have to "play by the rules". He will use anything against you that you will give him!

## **Forsaking Assemblies – The Un-derlying Cause**

By Jonathan L. Perz

Medical doctors know that there are some diseases that cannot be healed by treating their symptoms. Likewise, there are some spiritual maladies that cannot be overcome by merely treating symptoms. Forsaking the assembling of the saints is one such malady.

Without a doubt, forsaking the assembling of the saints is a sin in and of itself (**Heb. 10:24-25**). However, it often proves to be a symptom of some other sin—one more deeply imbedded within the heart of an individual. When one begins to miss assemblies, loving and caring brethren begin to be concerned. They express their concern by begging and pleading with the erring one to attend services. The preacher might be asked to preach on

forsaking the assembly. Some situations might even be pressed to the point where the withdrawal of fellowship is necessary. Yet, this may prove futile and will not solve the deeper problems unless the cause of one's absence is revealed.

Therefore, to effectively combat this sin, which afflicts many saints in many areas, we must understand some of the UN-derlying problems to this malicious spiritual malady.

### UN-faithfulness

Obviously, a Christian's absence from assembling is in itself a direct manifestation of unfaithfulness. Faith comes by hearing the word of God (**Rom. 10:17**) and God's word commands we "consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some" (read **Heb. 10:23-27** carefully). When one is willfully absent from services, the problem is unfaithfulness.

In its deepest sense, to forsake is an attitude of the heart. It is not a matter of time or frequency. Just prior to giving us the command not to forsake, the Hebrew writer reminds us, "Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful" (**Heb. 10:23**). We need to hold fast our confession and be faithful like our Lord. Regular attendance is one way we do that. On the other hand, immediately following the Hebrew writer's command, he admonishes, "For if we sin willfully..." (**v. 27**). This is how we must understand "forsaking the assembling." It is a willful sin!

Whenever one consciously and willfully chooses to do something other than assemble with the saints, he is forsaking the assemblies. If one rolls over to catch another hour of sleep on the Lord's day, he has willfully chosen to do so. If one decides to watch a football game or play in a baseball game when the saints are gathered, he sins willfully. Beneath each instance of "forsaking the assemblies" lies the sin of UN-faithfulness.

### UN-reliable

In **Matthew 25**, we find the Lord declaring some as "good and faithful" servants (**v. 21**). Can this be said of us when we forsake the assembling of ourselves together? Faithful here means, "faithful, to be trusted, reliable" (Vine's, p. 223). Christians should be reliable in every realm of their life. Would our boss think us reliable if we missed two out of every five days of work? Would our family think us reliable if we stayed away from home for days at a time? What happens when we cannot be relied upon in the church?

Not only do some forsake two out of every three assemblies, when they do attend, they are UN-prepared for Bible study, UN-fit to lead in worship, and UN-able to contribute to the edification process. The Bible says our stewardship depends upon our reliability (**1 Cor. 4:2**). If one is unreliable in the kingdom, as it exists on earth, will God grant him entrance into the kingdom, as it exists in heaven?

### UN-committed

Christianity, these days, seems to be less a matter of commitment and more a matter of convenience. We tend to seek things that are easy and convenient. This might be fine for carnal matters, but it wreaks havoc in our spiritual lives. For many, attending each assembly of the church is inconvenient. They feel strapped by the obligation. Rather than anticipate, they come to dread such sweet fellowship (cf. **Psa. 122:1**). Such horrible words and attitudes should not accompany the assembling of the saints.

When one becomes a Christian, he makes a commitment to God. He is "yoked together" with Him (**Matt. 11:28-30**). When one forsakes the assembling, he is manifesting his unfaithfulness to that commitment. Unlike Felix, who sought what was convenient, but did not commit, many have committed and then call for convenience (cf. **Acts 24:24-25**). It is like the illustration of a young man who was 'desperately in love.' He wrote the pearl of his life and said he would be "willing to endure frigid cold, cross burning sands, climb the highest

of mountains, or swim the ocean just to be in her charming presence.” He then closed that letter saying “And I will see you Wednesday night if it does not rain.”

For the committed Christian, there is never a question about whether they will be found assembled with the saints. It is automatic. If the doors of the meetinghouse are open, they are there. This is commitment!

### UN-grateful

Are we like the nine lepers who were healed, but did not return to give thanks to God (**Luke 17:12-19**)? Or are we like the one Samaritan leper who did?

Beneath every case of forsaking the assembly is an ungrateful heart. There is a soul who has sought out the Lord’s healing, and having obtained it, cannot take time out of their busy life to glorify God. Indeed, such a condition is deplorable, even by the world’s standards.

What if God manifested the same attitude towards us that we do towards His saints? What if God met our needs the way we give Him our lives? What if God took away each blessing we did not manifest true thanksgiving for? Are we grateful for the blessing of our assemblies, His fellowship, and His kingdom?

### UN-fruitfulness

In many places, the word of God is likened unto a seed that is planted in our hearts. God intends for that seed to grow, mature and produce fruit in our lives (**Gal. 5:22-25; 2 Pet. 1:5-11; Matt. 13:18-23**). One underlying problem with forsaking the assembling is like that of the fig tree (**Luke 13:6-9**).

Many become children of God, but never reach maturity in Christ. Brethren, elders, and gospel preachers fertilize and water this tree, yet it produces no fruit. Jesus revealed the fateful doom of such a one, when he said, “Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this tree and find none, Cut it down; why does it use up the ground” (**Luke 13:7**). He also taught, “Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away...By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit...” (**John 15:2,8**). When the Lord seeks fruit in your life, will He find any?

### UN-concerned

If none of the aforementioned applies, perhaps one is simply unconcerned. Many who profess Christianity are unconcerned about spiritual matters: the brethren, the church, the Lord, fulfilling the commands of the Lord, and believe it or not, heaven. One might say he is concerned about these things, but what do his actions say when he forsakes assemblies?

The Bible says Paul had a “deep concern” for the churches (**2 Cor. 11:28**). Titus had an “earnest care” for the saints (**2 Cor. 8:16-17**). Paul tells us of Timothy that he had “no one like-minded, who [would] sincerely care for” the state of the saints in Philippi (**Phil. 2:19-22**). The Lord cares for us (**1 Pet. 5:7**). Are we concerned enough to attend the assembling of the saints at every opportunity?

### Conclusion

Does the church you labor with have a problem with forsaking the assembly? If there are less at Sunday AM worship than there are at Sunday PM worship, then there are problems! If your Sunday AM and mid-week Bible study look like skeleton crews, then there are problems! Let us not throw in the towel and capitulate on forsaking the assembly. Let us continue to fight and focus our efforts where the problem really exists, just beneath the surface of the heart.