

DO I HAVE TO?

Over the years, many is the time that we have heard someone say, "I don't think I have to attend on Sunday night to be faithful". Other similar statements are made about attending Bible classes and gospel meetings. Such a statement tells much about the spiritual condition of the one who utters it. It says that they do not really love God. It says that they are unwilling to sacrifice any more of their time than they "have to". It says that they do not really love the brethren and desire to be with them whenever they can. In short, it describes someone who is only willing to give the very least they think they can get by with.

Now honestly, do any of us think such a spiritual condition is one that will secure a home in heaven for us if we hold to it? Of course not!

The God of heaven sent His only begotten Son to die upon the cross of Calvary for the sins of each and every one of us (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8-9). He sent the comforter upon those our Lord left to carry out the work of the kingdom that they might have all truth to teach to man (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13; I Cor. 2:9-13). He instructed us through that word in when and how we are to worship Him (John 4:23-24; Heb. 10:25). God has provided all that we need in order to have a home in heaven for eternity. However, He requires willing, cheerful, zealous and complete subjection and servitude upon any that will take advantage of what He has provided. It certainly is good that God did not and does not have the "I don't think I have to" mindset of many within the church.

Jesus said that the first and great commandment is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matt. 22:37-38). I think it was brother Andrew Connally that told of a lady that asked, following a lesson on attendance, "Brother Connally, did I understand you to say that if I didn't attend the Sunday night services, I was going to go to hell?" To which he said, "No, I said that if you didn't love God you would go to hell, and if you loved God you would attend on Sunday nights". That pretty much sums it up, doesn't it?

Where else would a child of God desire to be than at any and every worship service and Bible study that they can possibly attend? The answer to that is; no where else! It should not be a matter of "do I have to?", but a matter of "I want to!"

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GOD'S WAY IS NOT HIDDEN FROM US

As Moses approached the end of his life on earth, he told Israel, "For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it" (Deut. 30:11-14). If the children of Israel were to go astray and cease to follow the word of God, it would not be because they did not, nor could not, know what His will was. It was readily available to them. The apostle Paul quoted that passage calling it "the righteousness which is of faith" (Rom. 10:5-8).

As Paul made his defense before king Agrippa, Festus said that much learning had made him mad. Paul then said, "I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner" (Acts 26:24-26). If this information was so readily available for those of Paul's time, how much more so in this world in which we live.

Paul, in his epistle to the Romans said, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. **For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith:** as it is written, The just shall live by faith" (Rom. 1:16-17--emphases mine, RCO). Peter wrote, "But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (I Pet. 1:25). One does not have to go up to heaven to know what God's will is. Neither does one have to go beyond the sea to know it. One must go only to the gospel of Christ.

Paul told Timothy to "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (II Tim. 4:2) and to "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (Tim. 4:16). It is not God's way that is hidden from us, but too many of us hiding from God's way!

Robert