

**Hebrews 10:25:
What It Says, What It Doesn't Say**

Franklin Church of Christ Edwin Crozier June 6, 2004 AM Worship
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Introduction:

There are some scripture references most Christians immediately recognize. When someone says, "**Acts 2:38**," most of us think, "Baptism." When someone says, "**John 3:16**," most of us think, "God sent His Son." Another well-known passage is **Hebrews 10:25**. That passage says we are not to forsake the assembly. Despite our knowledge, there is constant confusion about what this passage actually says.

Discussion:

- I. **Hebrews 10:25** says, "not forsaking." It does not say, "not missing."
 - A. I have been asked, "When is it alright to forsake the assembly?" **Hebrews 10:25** we must not forsake our own assembling together. The writer made no exceptions and we are to make none.
 - B. However, the term translated "forsake" ("egkataleipo") does not mean to be absent, but to "desert, abandon" (***The Complete Word Study Dictionary***, Spiros Zodhiates). "Forsaking our own assembling together" means to choose some activity above assembling whether out of neglect, fear or faulty priorities. Missing does not equal forsaking. Paul, while imprisoned, did not assemble with a congregation. Yet, who would claim he forsook the assembling?
 - C. Instead of asking when it is alright to forsake, we ought to ask what constitutes forsaking the assembly. While at times I am certain lines have been crossed, I regrettably cannot draw all the lines on this matter. I can, however, provide Biblical guidance for proper choices from **Matthew 6:33**. We must each ask, "When I miss the assembling for this cause, what am I seeking first, God's kingdom and righteousness or something else?"

- II. **Hebrews 10:25** says, "as is the habit of some." It does not say, "not making a habit of forsaking."
 - A. Some believe they are allowed to forsake some assemblies, Super Bowl Sunday for instance, as long as forsaking does not become their habit. Others say as long as they show up sometimes, they are alright because they have not utterly abandoned assembling.
 - B. A habit is the repetition of a singular action to the point where it has become so natural that you do not even have to think about it. The Hebrew writer teaches that we must not do what has already become a habit for some. That is, we must not do the singular action, forsaking even once, let alone allow forsaking to become a habit for us.

- III. **Hebrews 10:25** says, "not forsaking our own assembling together." It does not say, "not forsaking the Lord's Supper."
 - A. Because of an overemphasis on **Acts 20:7**, many assume that as long as they take the Lord's Supper, they have obeyed **Hebrews 10:25**. When people abandon the assembly after the Supper is served or when people miss the assembly but take some unleavened bread and grape juice with them to salve their consciences, they are making this mistake.
 - B. While the Lord's Supper is something we do when we assemble, it is not the only thing. **Acts 20:7** was not written to explain the only reason congregations ever assemble. Rather, it explains why that particular congregation was having that particular assembly. Any assembly whether it is to take the Lord's Supper, to sing, to pray, to take up the collection, to teach God's word or any combination of these activities is equally commanded in **Hebrews 10:25**.

- IV. **Hebrews 10:25** says, "not forsaking our own assembling together." It does not say, "not forsaking spiritual activity."
 - A. I have no doubt there are times when Christians, who are legitimately unable to attend the assembly, do what they can, studying the Bible, praying and singing on their own or with the Christians available to them. I imagine the imprisoned Paul did as much. However, that is not the assembling of this passage.
 - B. The term translated "assembling" is "episunagoge." It does not refer to just any gathering of Christians or any acts of worshipping, but to the habitual gathering of a local congregation. "Sunago" is a Greek word for "gathering." "Sunagoge" is the word for the place of the gathering and is most often translated "synagogue." By extension this term refers to the group who

regularly assemble at the place of assembly. Thus, in scripture it is used to refer both to the building which was set aside for Jewish Sabbath worship (**Matthew 6:2, 5; Acts 14:1**) and to the members of that group that regularly assembled in that place on the Sabbath (**Luke 12:11; Acts 9:2**). The preposition “epi” at the beginning of the word heightens the point of gathering to a specific place. Here in **Hebrews 10:25**, the writer is emphasizing the assembly of local congregations in their “synagogues” or places of assembling.

- C. Do not forget that this book is addressed to Hebrews, that is, Jewish Christians who well understood the concept of a synagogue building and a regularly meeting synagogue in that building. They clearly understood that this did not refer to simply making sure they spent some time with Christians or doing something spiritual on Sunday. Thus Philip Hughes said, “The term here should be understood as simply the regular gathering together of Christian believers for worship and exhortation in a particular place” (*A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, quoted in *Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, Zondervan Publishing, 1980, p. 703).
- V. **Hebrews 10:25** says, “not forsaking our own assembling together.” It does not say, “not forsaking our Sunday morning assembling together.”
- A. For some, determining when they will assemble is not a matter of drawing near to God (**Hebrews 10:22**), but drawing near to a set of legalistic lines. That is, they determine from scripture that the seeming minimum requirement for churches to assemble is at least once on Sunday in order to participate in the Lord’s Supper and take up a collection (**Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 16:1-2**). If that is the minimum, they claim a local church cannot expect more out of them. Having come to that conclusion they read **Hebrews 10:25** as only referring to the Sunday morning assembly (or the variation that “as long as I make it to at least one service on Sunday”).
 - B. However, look at the context of **Hebrews 10:22-25**. The minimum requirement is not meeting at least once a week to take the Lord’s Supper. The minimum requirement is to assemble as regularly as is needed to help the members of the congregation draw near to God, hold fast the confession of their faith and stimulate one another to love and good deeds. Certainly, the complete collection of the congregation to worship and exhort one another is not the only way to accomplish these goals. We might use other means as well, such as Bible classes, special workshops, home study groups, etc. At some point we may determine that two assemblies on Sunday is not the best way to reach these goals. However, we do know this. We cannot abandon assembling as an outdated or inconvenient option. This passage commands us to assemble. Further, as our leaders believe that multiple assemblies help the congregation in general to reach these goals, then we must assemble at them all.
- VI. **Hebrews 10:25** says, “but encouraging one another.” It does not say, “getting something out of it for yourselves.”
- A. Considering our last point, some might say, “Well, I do not need two assemblies on Sunday or other special assemblies like Gospel meetings to help me draw near to God, hold fast my confession or be encouraged.” Notice, however, the emphasis that the Hebrew writer makes. The importance is not about what you get, but what you give to others.
 - B. **Galatians 6:9-10** applies here. Whenever we have opportunity, we ought to do good to others without growing weary of it. Every time we have an assembly is an opportunity for you to do good to others. Do not be selfish about the assemblies, looking only for your good. Come and encourage others with your presence and your participation.

Conclusion:

I certainly understand that **Hebrews 10:25** does not teach assembling is the only thing a faithful Christian does. Nor is it the most important thing a faithful Christian does. However it is one thing the faithful Christian does. Allow me to encourage you to love and good deeds by encouraging you to consider your brethren and consider your God. Do not forsake our assembling together as is the habit of some, but encourage us by your presence and participation.