

The life of every believer should be centered in communion with the other redeemed in the church, and afterwards in heaven. Heaven is to live together with God and the rest of the redeemed. God had his purposes in saving us, and the main purpose is to form us into part of His work (extending the kingdom of God) for His glory. We should shine our best for God before the world.

Why God saved us

1Pet 2:9 *But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:*

The purpose of God is to save men for His own glory. Those that are saved should dedicate themselves to God, to His work, and glorify Him. We should live a very different life from the world, by glorifying God through our words, teachings, and works of justice.

“I want to go to heaven and no more”

Many “Christians” want to go to heaven when they die, but until that time, they don't want that salvation to “bother” their lifestyle, because they want to live their lives “their own way”. **Mat 13:45-46** *“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.”* What this passage teaches is that the right attitude of a true Christian is that he will give up or do anything in exchange for truly being saved. This thought is repeated several times throughout Scripture. Salvation (for the truly saved) is something that he will seek with passion, but is also something difficult for him to actually obtain. Paul says in **Acts 14:22** *Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.* The idea, that the way to heaven for a Christian is very difficult, full of many tribulations, persecutions, and sufferings, is a thought that is

not happy, but it is definitely what the Bible teaches. There is a decision mixed in with salvation. If one really wants God, if he wants to form part of the redeemed that live with God forever, then he will give up anything (especially idols and precious treasures) to achieve it.

Only this way, will God really save a person.

Mark 8:35-38 *For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.*

But the person who doesn't love God, if he doesn't love Truth, if he does make all this part of his life, then he is not really saved. He is just deceiving himself.

Matt 7:21-22 *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Matt 7:22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?*

There are people very committed to “God's work” who are not even saved, because their love is for their own glory, or for their “ministries”. They put these things before their love for God.

The Marks of a True Christian

Unfortunately for these people, the matter is not a simple prayer, and forget the things of God until death. We are saved by our personal relationship with Jesus, and because of that relationship, we love him with all our heart. Paul instructed the believers to hold as abomination and reject whomever doesn't love Christ. **1Cor 16:22** *If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha.*

“*Anathema*” means cursed, something cursed by God, that will not have access to heaven. We should show this love for Christ, but not alone. We form a group with the rest of the Christians in the body of Christ, the redeemed. This community is very important.

In **Matthew 25:29-46**, Jesus describes this spiritual reality with a parable. His point was that the true Christian has a relationship with Jesus, and that you will see his love for Christ by his relationship with the rest of the redeemed. That relationship with Christ is reflected in his relationship with the brethren, thus, showing true and saving faith in their life, or on the contrary, the absence of this blessing in our lives disproves our salvation. How we treat our brethren in the faith is thus how we would treat God if he were physically here with us. If we don't seek them, if we don't relate to them, if we don't set aside time every week to fellowship with them, then we are despising them, and God (**Heb 10:29**). This relationship with true brethren (that later on in the NT is established to be the local church, the place where we congregate), shows the reality of our salvation. That is to say, you see the true faith of a person by the joy he or she has in having fellowship with his brethren in the faith in the setting of the local church, where all gather in the will of God to do the work of God. This is our duty towards God. If we dedicate ourselves to this, then most other things will fall into place. **1John 3:23** *And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.* Keeping these two things, attending church and loving the brethren, you will dominate the majority of the Christian faith.

Without Love, one cannot be saved

The person that lacks this love for God, he is not yet saved. This sounds strong, but this is how God establishes the idea. **1John 4:8** *He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.* God defines Himself with the simple concept of “love”. “*God is*

love” **1Jn 4:7** Love is to esteem somebody else so much that you would personally sacrifice for the good of the other person. The principle example of love is the love that God has for humanity, which is embodied in Jesus, dying on the cross to provide us with salvation. If God's love is not shining through you, you are not saved. One is saved because he understands and comprehends (although at a basic level) this love, and makes it part of himself. But by only knowing the facts of it (Jesus' death) one is not saved.

It is only when we become a mirror of that love, taking love into our being, being that love manifested towards others that we are truly saved. **1John 4:11** *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.* **1John 3:14** *We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.* The Christian faith is a response of the soul when the person accepts the love of God, making it part of themselves. It is not only intellectual recognition, but is something that enters the heart, dominates it, saturates the whole person, and is manifested through that person's life afterwards.

1John 5:1-3 *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.* After being saved, if the person doesn't carry out a love relationship with his brethren in the local church, then it is doubtful that he is saved (1Jn 3:14 at the end of the verse).

Heb 10:24-25 *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.* Our relationship with our brethren is to weekly get together to encourage one another, to spiritually

build up one another through exhortation (includes principally preaching). **2Tim 2:22** *Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.* It is very important to consider “with whom” we gather spiritually. They should be good Christians who seek the holiness and piety of God.

1Pet 2:2 *As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:* Part of our relationship with the church is to learn by exposition of the Scriptures (explanations). We should highly desire this.

Gal 6:2 *Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.* Also we should carry the burdens of one another. These are the important problems of our brethren. Thus we show the love of Christ.

Ezek 34:6-10 *My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them. 8 As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock... 9 Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD; 10.. I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand....*

We should note that the work of pastor of your church is to unite the lost sheep in the local church. God has given him the authority for taking care of the flock of God (**Hebrews 13:17**).

There are many excuses why people do not attend church, but NONE of them are valid before God. One can change his chores to some other day that isn't Sunday. Every life is arranged according to what that person sees as his priorities. What are yours? What place does God, his church, and your brethren take in those priorities? Is love the motivating factor of your church attendance?

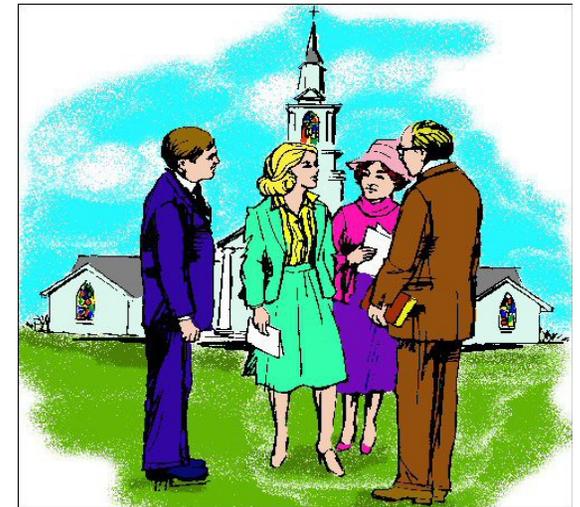
Congregating because we love

By David Cox

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Psa 122:1 *I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD.*



Psa. 50:5 *Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.*

Salvation is often misunderstood. When God saved us, He made us part of the redeemed and the body of Christ. Salvation unites us with the community of the redeemed, the community of faith, with the saved by Jesus Christ. Believers get together the day God chose (Sunday) for the purposes He chose. Salvation is not something isolated from the present until after death, but is something that is active, dynamic, and fills our life from the moment of salvation until our death and for all eternity.