

Togetherness in the Lord

INTRODUCTION:

1. **Togetherness** was very evident among the early Christians.
 - a. Acts describes them as being “together,” of “one accord,” of “one heart and one soul” (2:44, 46; 4:24, 31-32; 5:12; 12:12; 14:27; 15:30; 20:7-8).
 - b. This togetherness, this fellowship with one another, grew out of their fellowship with the Father and the Son (John 17:20-21).
2. This **togetherness** is precisely what we want to talk about in the lesson today (you’ll hear that word used many times), but especially as it relates to attendance, or coming **together** to worship the Lord.
3. But, we need to do some build up to that first.

BODY:

- I. God’s Marvelous Eternal Plan
 - A. Includes this provision: “to gather **together** in one all things in Christ” (Ephesians 1:10).
 1. This includes people “of every tribe and tongue and people and nation” (Revelation 5:10).
 2. It even includes “the spirits of just men made perfect” (Heb. 12:23)—saints who have died in the Lord (think of some N.T. saints we admire so much).
 3. What a wonderful blessing—to be gathered **together** with these saints in ONE spiritual body.
- II. But God’s plan for **togetherness** goes beyond the **togetherness**, or the fellowship, we have in this one body.
 - A. Acts 20:6-8
 1. Here we see saints in a particular area, in a particular local church, actually being together in the same place.
 - B. 1 Corinthians 14:23 (“if the whole church comes together in one place...”)
 1. This certainly does NOT describe the universal church, or the one body—these Christians can’t come together in one physical location.
 2. Clearly, it refers to a local church, in this case the church at Corinth.

- C. Now, there is a sense in which we are **together** even when we're not **together**, i.e., in the same location.
 - 1. Note these phrases: "joined **together** in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10); "joined and knit **together** by what every joint supplies" (Eph. 4:16); "with one mind striving **together** for the faith of the gospel" (Phil. 1:27); "knit **together** in love" (Col. 2:2).
 - 2. Even when not **together** in the same place, we're still **together** in heart, purpose, and conviction.
- D. People who are this **together** should look forward to the times when they can actually **be together**, in the same location.
 - 1. And isn't it great when the "whole church" (every member) comes together?
 - 2. A local church is a **team** of saints who work and worship **together**. But, we need ALL the team members to make this work.
 - a. Imagine someone on an athletic team who tells the coach he plans to practice and play on his own, or maybe with a few others at home. The coach would have every right to tell him that when we're involved in **team** activities, you need to be here **together** with the **team**.
 - b. He might even say that the **team** needs you, and you need the **team**.
- III. The coming together for worship, described in earlier passages, is a **team** activity. And so when the church assembles **together** in one place, I need to be there **together** with them—for several reasons.
 - A. On the first day of the week, we can sing and pray **together**, study **together**, eat the Lord's supper **together**, and give to the Lord while we reflect **together** on how much He has given to us.
 - 1. These are commands we fulfill **together**.
 - 2. What about the Bible classes, the other periods of worship?
 - a. Who has the better argument—one who argues the need to be **together** with brethren on these occasions, too; or one who argues it's okay to miss?
 - b. These Bible classes, especially those on Sunday morning and Wednesday evening, are these not part of our work as a local church? And shouldn't we be working together as a **team**? The goals of this **teamwork**? Peace and unity, developing each member into a worker, helping each other to be grounded, helping each other to attain to the full measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (these are all covered in Ephesians 4:1-16).

3. Consider the special occasion described in Acts 14:27: “Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.”
 - a. Would you have been there **together** with your brethren?
- B. While worship is directed to God, occasions like these actually draw us closer **together**.
 1. Recall what we said earlier about being **together** in heart, purpose, and conviction. That’s the ideal, but are we there yet? Can we be even more together?
 2. The activities in which we engage foster a greater unity. Isn’t that the effect of spiritual fellowship?
 - a. “When we meet in sweet communion where the feast divine is spread, hearts are brought in closer union while partaking of the bread” (*The Lord’s Supper*).
 - b. “May we all in spirit—all with one accord, take this cup of blessing, given by the Lord” (*True Worship*).
- C. It’s a great opportunity to build up our fellow team members.
 1. “And let us 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...” (Heb. 10:24-25).
 - a. Sure this passage doesn’t apply to other assemblies besides the one on the first day of the week? Remember, local churches in the N.T. did on occasion meet at other times.
 2. Consider why Paul so desperately wanted to see his brethren in Rome, why he desired to be **together** with them.
 - a. Romans 1:11-12 (“that I may be encouraged **together** with you by the mutual faith both of you and me”); 15:30, 32 (“that I may come to you with joy by the will of God, and may be refreshed **together** with you”).
- D. Isolation from the team makes one’s love grow cold.
 1. Think about a bed of hot coals. Isolate one from the pile and what happens to it? It loses the warm provided by the other coals and it begins to grow cold. But what about the other coals? Are they not depending on this one coal for warmth, too?

2. “The whole body, joined and knit **together** by what **every** joint supplies...” (Ephesians 4:16).

E. What did I miss when I failed to meet **together** with my **team**?

1. I missed the **togetherness** the Lord longs to see in His people, the spiritual fellowship in activities designed to glorify His name and edify us all.
2. In some cases, I missed a young Christian give his first talk, or perhaps lead singing or wait on the table for the first time. Not only did I miss that, I missed the opportunity to commend him for a job well done.
3. I may have missed a baptism, the enthusiastic singing which followed, and the long line waiting after services to encourage this new Christian. And I missed the opportunity to be in that line.
4. I missed the knowledge and wisdom gained from our studies **together**. I missed learning something someone else knows that I don't.
5. I missed an opportunity to encourage the non-Christians who visited.
6. I missed updates on the work of the church. Imagine being on a team and not knowing what the team is doing.
7. I missed updates on my brethren—needs which I might have been able to fill.
8. I missed seeing some people who came in spite of great difficulty—health difficulties, distance traveled, etc. And I missed the people who put aside some other important activity because they deemed this one more important.

CONCLUSION:

1. There will be one final gathering of the Lord's people: “Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering **together** to Him...” (2 Thess. 2:1).
2. Will we be gathered **together** with the other saints then, if we're not gathering **together** with them now?
3. It's hard to see the value of that **future** fellowship when we don't see the value of our **present** fellowship.