

**“Not Forsaking the Assembling Together of Ourselves”**  
**By Associate General Pastor Hubert Ulysse**  
**Sunday, June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

You may be seated.

I thank God for allowing me to be here, with you, and I bring greetings. Obviously, you know, Pastor Paine was here not long ago. I bring greetings from everyone. I thank you for opening those doors for me. I thank you for allowing me to share with you. I want to thank Rod for making this happen. I thank you very much. I thank Mike and Norma, the kids, the dog; thank you for opening your home. And, I do want to thank Jim, Rich, and Rod; they decided to come, to make sure I'm back.

What a crazy world we're living in. Do you know there is no better place we could have been this morning? This is the best place. I wasn't falling asleep, yet, I was going over my notes, when the news broke out about the shooting in Orlando. Fifty dead, fifty-three injured. Is that good news? No. Do you know who has the good news? We do. And, if you have the good news, we have to spread it out; you have to spread it out. But, you may be amazed when I tell you, many people in the church don't even know what the good news is. Yet, I'm serious. You see, they say, the Gospel, the Gospel, but many of us in church don't even know what the Gospel is. You see, what is good news for me, may not be good news for you. I think it's worth it, if I tell you that, I need to say something: to me, the good news is exciting, and you might say, "I don't see what's good about it." But, the good news, the Gospel, is about a dying world who get a Savior. Like you, you may go to somebody, you tell them, "Do you know Jesus as your Savior?" and they say, "Who is He, and saved from what?" This is why Paul would go out and preach—talking to the Jews, it was easy for Paul, because they knew the Scriptures. They knew the God that Paul would talk about. But, when he was with the Greek, he would have to go from Genesis. From Genesis, then they would understand, and that's the good news. Before, after the fall, nothing can save you; can the Law save? It could not save. It took Jesus to come. That's the good news. The sacrifices, and all, every year, over and over, could not save, and nobody could save him- or her-self. When Jesus came, He said, "Now, I am the sacrifice. If only you believe in Me, and you accept Me as your sacrifice, you're saved." Isn't that the good news? Trying hard to do, to get something, and then Jesus just make it easy for you.

I would like for you to go with me in Hebrews chapter ten, and the goal, this morning, is to share with you about not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together. But, we need to understand, first, why are we even here? Where are we? Why were we to be where we're at, now?

**Hebrews 10:1** *For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.*

You can give as many goats, as many cows, whatever actually give your body to be burned, it still cannot make us perfect.

**Hebrews 10:2-3** *For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.*

Every time you make a sacrifice, it reminds you of the sin again.

**Hebrews 10:4-21** For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, [forever!] This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God;

And this is our message this morning: verses twenty-two through twenty-five

**Hebrews 10:22-25** Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: [How can we do that? By...] Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner [as the habit] of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

May we pray? Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your Word. Now we are bound to listen to it. We pray that You prepare our hearts. Take away the stony hearts, Lord, and leave us a heart of flesh, God, that may be sensitive to Your Word. And let us not be hearers, only; let us be doers. Bless Your servant, through whom You will speak, to give him all these things, Lord, God, and let him say and speak only the things that You would have him to. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

"...Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works..." You see the background, why we need to provoke, why we need to come together. It says, "Coming to provoke one another to love and good works." Obviously, you know the word, 'provoke,' can sound negative, but this one is the good part. Come to provoke one another. We provoke to love. We provoke to good works. This letter was written to immature, and spiritually persecuted Christians. They were suffering. And, some were avoiding coming to church so they could protect themselves, to avoid persecution. We're not talking about just to watch TV, or being lazy, we're talking about they were being persecuted, so, because of that, they were scared, they were afraid. It's like Peter, who denied Christ, not because he did not love Christ, but he was trying to protect himself. So, they had good reason not to come. But there was a danger there, there was the danger of apostasy. There was the danger that they could take this one thing, and then, never come back. So, Paul was—we don't know if it was Paul, but, whoever it was—he was exhorting the, "Don't do that. Come. Even if that is the risk for your own life, you need to come, because, when you come, you're going to encourage one another. You're going to provoke one another to good works." This is the basis of Christianity, that we encourage one another, because, until the trumpet sounds, we have to hold on, right? We don't come to church for a well-ordered service. When you come,

you already say, "Yeah, that was a great service!" But, you come to edify, right? You come to provoke, right? You come to encourage!

You know the word, "forsake," means abandon? Is forsaking hard? The reason why this is important to say, yes, you can come to church, but you're still not in church. You can be here physically, but, in heart, you forsake the church. Yeah. We all know what I'm talking about. You can be anywhere physically, but you're not there, in heart; your mind in somewhere else. Yeah.

I was told a story of a little boy who was in an airplane; he was jumping around, and then he was forced to sit down. "Sit down! Buckle up!" He sat down, he buckled up, but he was all happy. "What's going on? Why are you smiling?" He said, "I'm still jumping! I'm still jumping, inside," you know? He was still jumping, having fun, even though he was in the chair. That's what happened. Yeah.

In Haiti, we have cards, presence—attendance cards. People want to come to church because they want their cards to be perfect in attendance. Yeah. And they take glory in that. They take glory in that, but, you know what? Just because they have perfect attendance, that doesn't mean they were in church. This what we need to avoid.

Now, we are called disciples, right? What is a disciple? A student? A learner. Isn't it kind of bizarre that someone would call himself or herself a disciple, but they have no desire to follow, they have no desire to learn? We can call ourselves disciples of Jesus Christ, but we're not too excited about being where He is, going where He's going, doing what He does, but you say, "Yeah, yeah, I'm Christ's disciple," but you don't learn from Him. Are we called sheep of God's flock? Are we? I don't know how many of you grew up on a farm, but, sheep naturally follow, right? Usually they are at least in formation going, and, by nature, they love being in the flock. By nature. By nature, they love being in the flock. You can find one wandering around, and then the shepherd will take it in, but, because when one goes somewhere, what will happen? The other ones want to follow, because they want to be closer. That's why the shepherd makes sure that everybody goes where they're supposed to be going. And, today, are we observing church? It's just a hard time to get people to church, to get them in the flock, to get them to come to worship. I will not be surprised a bit, if, very soon, the church will become E-church. Electronics. It is beginning already. They have satellites. We have E-church, and everybody else get it online. I wouldn't be surprised a bit. Yeah.

What are some of the reasons why people miss services? Laundry. They stayed up too late the night before. Illness. Controversy in the church. Not interested. Fear. All kind of stuff, but some of them we can understand, but, some of them, "Ahhh, I don't feel like it today." Even, I'm probably the oldest guy here. I see the change, even in my lifetime, because, when it is Sunday, it used to be called, "Lord's Day." That's it. Lord's Day is Lord's Day. You didn't have to be Seventh Day Adventist. Sunday, you don't do much. Sunday is church. Sunday is church. You don't plan travelling on Sunday, if you don't have to. Sunday was pretty much church. Nowadays, if God can get two hours out of us, He should be happy. Seriously, because people, they're busy. They're booked that day. They're booked every day. So, they do make a little space for church, but, the preacher better not go too long. It is a fact. I cannot tell you how many churches I go to, whether they are Haitian, American churches I usually preach in—actually, last year, a church in Boston, they flew me from Norfolk to preach for a special event they were going to have. When the time came, the pastor came and said have fifteen minutes, because they have a heavy agenda. Fifteen minutes. They flew me.

If one's faith cannot bring one to church, do you think it's strong enough to take you all the way up to Heaven? Tell me something, if, right here, we cannot even come to church, by design, or laziness, or whatever—I'm not talking about because you have to work--just, "Nah, I don't feel like it." Then you're telling me this is a faith good enough to take you to Heaven. I would put a big question mark on that. I would put a big question mark on that.

Now, he says, "...Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves," and he says to provoke, and, let us consider: All these are good words, but, how can one forsake an assembly? Now, you are going to tell

me, when they just quit, or whatever. I truly believe we abandon our assemblies when it's not a high priority on our list. Okay, it's just a convenient—is it convenient? “Yeah, yeah. I think I can squeeze church in.” You don't give it a priority if you're planning vacation. You don't give it a priority if you're planning a visit. You don't give it a priority if you're doing, really, anything! You just, if you're in town, and if you're not busy doing anything else, “Yeah, I'm good.” That is forsaking your assembling. That is forsaking your assembling.

It's amazing, when it snows in Virginia, everything is closed, because they aren't equipped like you guys here. Okay? Or, if they are just making an announcement that there will be a storm. Or whatever it is, it seems like we just need just an excuse to call, “No church today. Church closed.” It bothers me. And, as we close the church, the club on the other side, they're partying and the neighborhood comes forth. It's the same thing. This is forsaking the assembling. You can tell them, “Okay, the kids don't want to go to school.” They'll find any excuse; this is the same thing. And, by the way, this is not acting like men, you know? I do remember, and I'm not saying it to go to the past, but I remember when we used to have services Sunday morning and Sunday evening, and I do remember when church was a daily thing for us, because it was not a question of, ‘day.’ Pretty much, we worship any time. That doesn't mean you had to be there, but, if it's two, three four, five, it's good enough. Nowadays, I don't know how we would start, make the announcement, “Service on Sunday evening.” Isn't that cray to you? It is to me. And, shorten the services. Satan is playing with that. That is the way we start the abandoning. Pretty much what Paul is saying here, “Come to church where you belong.” That's what he is saying. “Come to church where you belong.” Absence tends to lead to unbelief. Absence tends to lead to—get you in all kinds of trouble.

You know, it amazes me when you read how Jesus went to pray, and He told His disciples to watch with Him for one hour—one hour—and He came back, what did He find? They were sleeping. Is sleep a bad thing? No, sleep is not a bad thing. But He told them, “Pray, that you fall not into temptation, because the spirit is willing,” (Matthew 26:36-41) right? But in your mind, I guarantee you, Jim probably feel fifteen, twenty years old in his spirit right now. I cannot believe it, when I tried to make a move, because I feel, in my spirit, I am still that young Hubert, fifty years ago. The spirit is willing, but the flesh... You cannot be led by the flesh. You've got to push; let the spirit lead. In absence you lose a lot. Do you remember Thomas? He left. I don't know; that doesn't mean he went to do anything wrong, but he wasn't there when Jesus was there, and that led to unbelief.

I don't know if you've ever heard the term, “decapitated savior.” Have you heard this? The decapitated savior? These are people who claim Jesus as their savior, but they only like His head. We know Jesus is the head of the church, the church is the body of Christ. They don't like the body of Christ; they like the head of Christ. How can you say you like Jesus, but you don't like church? Actually, not even want to come to church. Forsaking it doesn't sound right, because Jesus is the head, and the church is the body. We cannot take one without the other.

There are some really good reasons why we should be in church. First of all, we are accountable to one another. Doesn't the Bible say we are members one to another? (1 Corinthians 12:25) So, my right foot can decide, “Oh, I don't really like church.” Or, my eyes could say, “You know what? All the rest of you can go, but, today, I'm not going.” No, it's the whole thing; it's a package. Saints minister to saints. What does the Bible say? Iron sharpeneth iron? (Proverbs 27:17) That's how we get strong. That's how we get to be encouraged. We assemble to edify one another. That's why we assemble. We have service, we sing, we praise, we do everything, but church is a place you come to uplift your soul.

David, if you remember, in Second Samuel, chapter twelve, you know the whole story. He sinned, and God promised that he would pay for it; the child would die. He prayed, he fasted, he prayed, he humiliated himself.

**2 Samuel 12:19-20** *But when David saw that his servants whispered, David perceived that the child was dead: therefore David said unto his servants, Is the child dead? And they said, He is dead. Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the LORD, and worshipped: [and worshipped!] then he came to his own house; and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat.*

David loved the house of the Lord. Wasn't it David who said, "I was glad?" "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD." (Psalms 122:1) "I was glad..." This man loved God's house.

There is a story in Isaiah thirty-six—you'll have to read it for yourself, but, a king who was troubled, because the king of Assyria, the Assyrian king sent news for him. It's like they're ready for battle, and the other king told Hezekiah, "You have no chance, buddy. No chance. Go in history to see how many gods ever deliver any nation out of my hand when I come around, so, don't think your God will be able to do anything." He really punched him hard. In chapter thirty-seven, verse one:

**Isaiah 37:1** *And it came to pass, when king Hezekiah heard it, that he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD.*

When we come to church, it's should be, a person comes to the Lord and says, "I'm going to be revived! I'm going to be refreshed! And guess where I'm going to get this refreshing? From my brothers, from my sisters. They will bring encouragement. They will uplift my soul. They will provoke me unto love, and unto good works." We are not in church just for ourselves. No, we're not. Every time you come into church, don't take it as it's for you. You're coming for other people, too. How do you think it would feel this morning, if we came to church, and half of these chairs were empty? How would you feel? Who cares? Who cares? Would you say, "Yes, hallelujah! Chairs are empty!" Is that what you want it to be? And, if, for some reason, somebody say, "Yeah, so-and-so decided not to come to church." Would you be uplifted by this? But, what if you come, you see everybody; people you did not expect to come, not only did they come, but their friends are with them? When you walk in, do you feel anything different? Wouldn't that encourage you? Every time we don't come to service for any silly reason—you bring a little bit of encouragement, and more people who will do it, it will continue like that—this will not be to encourage one another, and it would be very disappointing to us. Amen? Doesn't the Bible say two are better than one? (Ecclesiastes 4:9)

Now, today, we can argue we don't have persecution anymore. We are not going to be chased by the government, to kill us for worshipping. So, we don't need much encouragement, anymore. But Satan uses other tricks. Other tricks. We still get discouraged by many, many, many other things. The only way I feel like I can explain this to you: It's like, nowadays, Satan doesn't chase you, kill you, whatever; he finds a smarter way to do it: He keeps you in church. He keeps you in church. But, what he does, it's like, you see this clock here? When it gets to twelve, it's not twelve o'clock until the last second. It's not twelve yet. So, what Satan's goal is to keep you as far away as possible from twelve. As far away. Some of us, we say, "Well, if I come to church once a month, that's good for me, and I know my Bible. I listen to messages online. And I pray." So, Satan keep them in that one, because that thing is going clockwise, so that person is good in one. He's good in one; that's far away from twelve. And, if you find some who is more religious, more active, Satan lets you go, even unto the—some people are even on the fifty-nine! That makes you feel good to do that. Doesn't the Bible say there are some that bear thirty, forty, fifty? (Mark 4:8) IF you were designed to bear forty, you can be at thirty-nine point nine nine nine—you're still not there yet. Satan tries to keep you as close as possible, but still away from where you should be. And we need to come, and encourage one another. Say, "Let's come. We can do it. We can do it."

We find excuses not to go to church: “You don’t have to go to church to be saved. Church doesn’t save me. Actually, there is so much going on in church, church can actually cause me to go to Hell.” That’s Satan. That’s Satan. You know the illustration of charcoal: If you have charcoal together, and fire, but you take one out, what happens? Slowly but surely, it will die faster. It will die faster. In corporate worship, we encourage each other that’s why it’s important for you to be in church. When you come to church, we come to church, let’s purposely—purposely, not by accident—find somebody to talk to and encourage. Have somebody in mind, or, if you know somebody who made need some encouragement. Leave your house with that in mind, “I am here to encourage somebody.” Don’t be selfish think of others, also.

**Philippians 2:1-4** *If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.*

Don’t come to church thinking it’s for yourself. Come to church for somebody else, too. Don’t come to be blessed and leave; talk to someone. Know someone; fellowship with someone. The amount of years I’ve been pastoring, there is one thing no one can deny—no pastor, at least, will deny that when you see people starting to not come to church, abandoning; maybe a Sunday at a time, maybe a Wednesday at a time; it’s like having a slow leak in your tire. Eventually the tire will get flat. If you discover that slow leak, you cannot say, “Ah, it’s just a slow leak.” It may last one week, two weeks, maybe a month, but the tire will be flat; it’s a leak. As the manner, as the habit, of some is. Some have the habit of that slow leak. Every one of us should pay attention to that. Know who is not here; get the plug and plug it. “Oh, you know, if you don’t see me here, I listen to the messages.” Actually, we have CFCMI messages online; I listen to all the messages from Norfolk on our site. Nothing online can compensate, can replace the fellowship we’re supposed to have here. Nothing. Church is where we come to be involved in the lives of fellow believers. We are here to get involved in somebody else’s life. You don’t do that staying home.

One of the big misunderstandings is that, even some pastors of churches think, Sundays, or whenever the gathering is, is when they use to evangelize. We don’t come to church to be evangelized. That’s not where we evangelize. No. It’s like taking your car to the gas station to use it. That’s not where you use it; you take the car to the gas station to refuel the car, so you can go use it. When we come to church, we come to encourage one another, so we can go out there and live that testimony and tell people about Christ. So, evangelism is not the primary focus of gathering. No, it’s not. Evangelism will automatically come, once you are filled and pumped up, right? If you come out of here, and you are pumped up, and just excited, it’s going to be manifested outside. It’s going to, and that’s how we bring people to church.

Now, let’s say the church is not healthy, the church is pretty much dying. And then, they want to evangelize? The best they can do is produce weak disciples. They will produce weak disciples. If they are strong in evangelism, and they find they get people to come, you’re going to have weak disciples, and you’re even going to have some faulty confession. But, if the church is healthy, they come in provoking one another, and, at the same time, go out and live the testimony and bring people to church, it will be like, whoever comes, that person will come, those people will come, and the fire already in their heart, and just go on.

Now, on the other hand, the primary mission of the church, itself, is to take the Gospel around the world. But, when it comes to a church meeting, the primary reason is to teach and edify the Saints, and to build them up. So, I hope we understand that.

Jesus is our Master, right? And we are His disciples. Did you know Jesus was addicted, when it comes to going to church? The Bible says He had the habit of going to church. We definitely should follow His steps. I get a glimpse of that in:

**Luke 4:16** *And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was [as His custom was], he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day...*

That's the day that they gathered. He had the custom of going. At least, at least, if the custom for us, here, is having a once-a-week service, at least every Saint, every follower of Christ should be here, should be here. Now, it continues to say, "...to exhort one another, and so much more..." the more, "as you see the day approaching." What day is he talking about? Judgment Day.

You know, the Bible says:

**Ecclesiastes 7:1** *A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death [so there is a day of death] than the day of one's birth.*

There is a day of death. There is day you're going to die. That's still not the day he's talking about. In Hebrews it says, it is appointed for a man once to die, then comes the judgment (Hebrews 9:27). There is a day of judgment coming, Saints. It's coming.

**1 Corinthians 3:13** *Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it...*

The day shall declare it, and the day's approaching, Saints. It is approaching. We are convinced it's approaching. Look at us, now, and remember years ago, when we were growing up in church, to see how fast it is approaching. If the trumpet doesn't sound, our trumpet may sound individually. The day is coming.

**1 Corinthians 3:13** *... because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.*

I'll leave with this:

**Psalms 90:10** *The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.*

I am fifty-one. Do you think I truly can convince myself that I am going to get another fifty-one, you think? It's possible. It's possible. But, do you think, at least nowadays, don't you think I am at least halfway on? Sometimes I don't want to believe. I do have a drawer in my house where I count my days. Okay? I have two big things full of marbles, so I count an average of four-score years. And I put them in every day. I don't do it every day, sometimes I forget, or I am not here, but when I am out for so many days, when I come back I count them. Do you know, you can tell where you're going? Yeah. You can tell where you're going. The wife doesn't like it, because she sees one side start coming down; the other side is piling up. It's the reality, Saints, the day is coming. The day is coming. And, every time, it's like when you're taking a test, it's timed, and you look at the clock, there's not much time, you hurry, "I've got to get this thing right." That's how I feel when I look at my marbles coming down. "My goodness; I have work to do!" I sleep less, now, and I do more. Yeah. I sleep less, I do more, and I want to work wiser than before, because I wasted so many years; I was silly, and I did dumb things, and now, before I touch

something, I want to make sure that's the best shot. I don't have time for mistakes anymore. As we see the day approaching.

***Psalms 90:11-12***      *Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath. So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.*

I see some old folks doing some silly things. They think they have long to go. They don't even care about how long they have. They think they have an eternity, too. It's not true. It's not true. Actually, it's so not true, we cannot even count on the next minute coming up. And it said, even if you get to be four-score or more, trouble, pain, all your friends hating, and, I mean, it's just not even sweet. What you can do, the strength you have, now, that's what this is designed for, now. Now, you have to provoke yourself and provoke one another to love and good works. Tomorrow may not be yours; yesterday's gone; today is the day. God bless you.

