

Extending The Lord’s Invitation

by John Isaac Edwards

There was a time when you could attend the services of churches of Christ and expect to hear the gospel plan of salvation given and the Lord’s invitation extended. Where have those days gone? Now, it is becoming too common for folks to visit churches of Christ and leave without knowing what to do to be saved and without opportunity given for them to obey the gospel!

1) An Example Today.

Preaching about ‘A Walk That Pleases God’, a preacher recently closed his sermon this way: “When we get off the path, God doesn’t say well too bad, you’re disqualified, you’re out, but He says why don’t you get back on, why don’t you turn away from the wrong you’ve done. Come to God, confess that before Him. Ask Him for forgiveness and begin walking again. If we can help you to be right with God, we offer you that, the Lord’s invitation, as we’ll stand, we’ll sing the song.” This could be preached in any human denomination! One would get the impression from hearing this sermon that the forgiveness of sins comes through prayer, as the plea of the religious world is to ‘pray the sinner’s prayer.’ If this had been preached to the man of Ethiopia, he never would have asked, “...See, here is water; what

doth hinder me to be baptized?” (Acts 8:36)! Have we forgotten that preaching Christ includes preaching baptism? (Acts 8:5, 12, 35-38). Ananias said unto Saul, “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16).

2) The Pentecost Model.

We have an excellent model of the kind of preaching that we need to be doing and demanding in the record of Peter’s sermon on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:22-40). It was Christ-centered, Scripture-filled, and heart-pricking! Those in the audience cried out, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). Much of the preaching that is done today would not disturb anyone enough to cause them to ask such a question. And they did not leave without knowing they needed to do something, what they needed to do, without it being made clear why they needed to do it, or without opportunity granted for them to do it! “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost....And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they

that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:38-41).

Christ is “...the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” (Heb. 5:9). Let’s give folks opportunity to obey the Lord and be specific in letting them know what they must do to have their sins forgiven. Otherwise, we are doing those in our audience a real disservice! We need the kind of preaching that calls for men and women to make an immediate decision for the Lord. “Who is on the Lord’s side? let him come unto me...” (Exodus 32:26) was the call of Moses. The cry of Joshua was, “...choose you this day whom ye will serve...” (Joshua 24:15). The exhortation and opportunity to obey should always accompany gospel preaching! Even those who teach error give folks occasion to obey error. Why not present folks with the privilege of “...obeying the truth...” (1 Pet. 1:22)? The Lord said, “Come unto me...” (Mt. 11:28). The book of God closes with the invitation, “And the Spirit and bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev. 22:17). Let it be heard today!

No-See-Ems

by John Isaac Edwards

You may be familiar with the tiny insects whose bites may leave large, red itchy bumps that may turn into a rash. They are sometimes called, No-See-Ems. There is another annoyance — members of the church who are spiritual No-See-Ems.

1) **See-Em At Work.** You will see em at work. They wouldn't think about being late or missing a day at work, unless they were so sick they couldn't function or were incapacitated in some way. They wouldn't want to risk losing their job, you see.

2) **See-Em At School.** You will see em on campus attending their classes or in the school room at desk with book in hand. You may even see em at extracurricular school activities.

3) **See-Em At The Ball Park.** You can expect to see em in the gymnasium, at the football stadium, or at the baseball field when they or someone in their family is playing or when following their favorite sports team.

4) **See-Em In The Community.** You may see em

going in and coming out of the bank, the pharmacy, the grocery store, the home improvement store, the restaurant, the garden center, the polling place, the park, the shopping mall, and any number of other places.

5) **No-See-Em At Church.** About the only place you don't see em is when it comes to the Lord's church. When you do see em out and about and express interest and concern for their soul, one thing you may not see em without is an excuse. They will offer excuses for not being seen at church they wouldn't think about offering to their employer at work, the superintendent at school, or the coach of the sports team! Some Scriptures no-see-ems need to see:

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Mt. 6:33).

"And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42).

"...be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of

the Lord..." (1 Cor. 15:58).

"...reconciled...If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel..." (Col. 1:21-23).

"Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith..." (Heb. 10:22).

"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering..." (Heb. 10:23).

"And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works" (Heb. 10:24).

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together..." (Heb. 10:25).

"...be thou faithful unto death" (Rev. 2:10).

Such need to repent of their rebellion against the Lord and His word, lest they hear Him profess unto them, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Mt. 7:23). Other brethren and family members need to quit excusing their rebellion and admonish them to be faithful.

The Terre Haute **SPEAKER** is published weekly by the church of Christ at Terre Haute, Indiana.

Assembling At:

4017 E Margaret DR
Terre Haute, IN 47803
[Exit 11 (I-70) W on HWY 46,
W on Margaret DR approx. 1 mile]

Assembling Times:

Sunday @ 10:00 a.m. & 3:00 p.m.
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