

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

17 July 2020

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This is my last Thought for the Day.

The first was written for circulation on Wednesday 25th March, nearly four months ago. The aim was to provide daily encouragement to the saints during our enforced absence from the assembly. But now that we are permitted to gather again the purpose of these daily missives has ceased. Ernie will write the last Thought for the Day on Lord's Day.

I thought I would end by raising two matters.

First, what have we learnt from our time of isolation? As the following examples show, isolation can be a positive thing.

Elijah was isolated during a time of famine in the Land. He was sustained by God at the brook called Cherith (1 Kings 17:5). Later he stood on Mount Carmel before an audience of

hundreds (1 Kings 18:20). The faith God had fostered in solitude at the brook enabled him to face the prophets of Baal. What he learnt out of the public eye equipped him to stand in the public eye.

Israel was isolated during their exile from the Land. They sat by “the rivers of Babylon” and wept when they “remembered Zion” (Ps. 137:1). In exile they had time to reflect on their disobedience. They learnt that God’s patience has its limits. But the God that exiled them was the God that brought them home again. They returned to the Land a chastened people cured forever of their fascination for idolatry.

What have we learnt?

Second, has our thinking about the assembly altered in any way? I would suggest that one side effect of the separation should be a renewed appetite for the gatherings. If we have not felt diminished by our inability to gather, then something is wrong. Self-sufficiency may be a worldly value, but it is not a spiritual value. In the O.T. the house of God was closed and the house of God fell into disrepair (2 Chron 29:3). It was a day of rejoicing when the doors were re-opened, and the temple began to function again (2 Chron. 29:16).

Today’s text, “gather my saints together into Me”, refers to the saints being called before Jehovah. The gathering the Psalmist Asaph has in mind may be Jehovah’s heavenly court or it may be the Feasts of Jehovah in Jerusalem. Whichever is in view, the text reminds us that the gatherings are not “all about us”. They are about Him. God is the One who commands the gathering. The gathering is focussed on Him. Although we are expected to benefit from church gatherings, that is not their primary purpose. The assembly is primarily about Christ. If we only go to “get” we will end up frustrated. We should go to “give”.

Thought for the Day – we are thankful for God’s preservation and thankful for the lessons we have learnt. Let us come back to the assembly as better Christians with a renewed appreciation for assembly fellowship.

Alan Summers