

What Is the Power of Gathering?

by H.J. Vine

The sermon explores the power of gathering among believers through the unity provided by Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Scripture: Matthew 18:20, 1 Corinthians 12:13, Ephesians 2:14, 2 Thessalonians 2:1, Hebrews 10:25

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Church Unity"

Description

H.J. Vine delves into the significance of the gathering power of the Holy Spirit in forming believers into one body with Christ as the Head, emphasizing the transition from the old state to the new order established by divine grace. Various scriptures are explored to illustrate different aspects of gathering, from the abiding presence of Christ when two or three are gathered in His name to the importance of assembling together for edification, ministry, and encouragement as the day of the Lord's return draws near.

Transcript

Answer to Correspondence--"Two tracts, which I have read, make me in my ignorance send you this question. One tract by the late J.N.D., entitled, 'Grace the Power of Unity and of Gathering,' and the other tract by the late C.H.M., entitled 'The Assembly of God,' where, on page 32, it reads, 'As Jesus is the only centre, so the Holy Ghost is the only gathering power.' I do not suggest that there is any disagreement in these two statements, but would be glad of a little help in Scripture Truth."

The death of our Lord Jesus Christ having closed the door upon the old state in which the believer once was, removing at the same time his sins and the judgment they called for, a new thing has been brought to pass upon the earth by divine grace; for Christ, having ascended to God's right hand, has sent the Spirit to form us into one body, Christ Himself being the glorified Head. This must be grasped to rightly understand the true gathering power today.

The national gathering of God's people, Israel, was brought about by the law system, given after their redemption from Egypt, and was maintained by a mediator, king, high priest, and ordinances. The new order established on the ground of an eternal redemption is not international, but un-national. It is called, The new man. Christ "has broken down the middle wall of enclosure (around Israel), having annulled the enmity in His flesh, the law of commandments in ordinances, that He might form the two in Himself into one new man" (Eph. 2:14, N.Tr.); reconciling "both in one body to God by the cross." It is therefore added, "Through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father." The principle of grace, and not law, has effected this, and the power of the Spirit has formed the unity. "In the power of one Spirit we have all been

baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond men or free, and have all been given to drink of one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13 N.Tr.).

Having spoken of the characteristic truth which has to do with the gathering together of saints today, we will turn now to some well-known scriptures which present various aspects of gathering.

1. Matthew 18:20, "Where two or three are gathered together unto My Name, there am I in the midst of them" (N.Tr.). This states an abiding fact, covering the whole period of Christ's bodily absence. The gathering is to His name, in His interests. That is the object, and He is the centre. Grace has made this provision even for two or three. There is no mention of the Spirit here, though the fuller revelation of which we have spoken would give character to it till the assembly is caught up at Christ's coming again.

2. John 20:19 relates an historic fact. The risen Lord was visibly and bodily present in the midst of His gathered disciples. A "therefore" (N.Tr.) connects the gathering with the message of grace in the verses before brought to them by Mary. That was the immediate cause of this gathering of which Christ was centre, making their hearts "glad when they saw the Lord."

3. Luke 24:49-63; Acts 14:15; 2:1; 4:2 show us the disciples gathered together in various ways. They are seen "praising, blessing God"; waiting upon God in prayer, expecting the baptism of the Holy Spirit as promised; and after He had come, constituting them one vital organism, one body, we are told, "They persevered in the teaching and fellowship of the apostles, in breaking of bread and prayers."

4. 1 Corinthians 11:17 to 14:40 treats of assembling together, as the section begins by stating--"Prescribing to you on this which I now enter on when ye come together in assembly" (N.Tr.). The immediate object is to remember the Lord Jesus (chap. 11); then the truth of the one body is brought in to regulate the local gathering (chap. 12); the "way of more surpassing excellence," divine love, is shown in chapter 13; finally, the order for edifying ministry in chapter 14. The Lord as the object, the Spirit as the power, and God as operating all in all, are distinctly brought before us in these verses. It must, however, be pointed out, that Christ as the Head of the body in glory is not brought in here as in Ephesians; and they are said to be "body of Christ"--the article being omitted; in Romans 12, it is "one body in Christ": nevertheless the truth of one body and one Spirit is clearly taught in these verses.

5. 1 and 2 Timothy. Gathering together is not spoken of in these Epistles. The assembly is viewed as the house of God, rather than the one body. When, however, iniquity has come in, those who name the Lord's Name are instructed to withdraw from it; and, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart, to pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace. This would involve their gathering together in accord with the revealed mind of God.

6. Hebrews 10:25 tells us that gathering together is to mark the real as the Lord's return draws nigh, and that specially in view of encouraging one another, as we read, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the custom is with some; but encouraging one another, and by so much the more as ye see the day drawing near" (N.Tr.). No principle, power or centre is mentioned here. We learn these elsewhere.

7. Jude 20-21. Apostasy and dissoluteness are recognized as abounding in this Epistle. Guidance, however, is clearly given for "the called ones beloved in God the Father and preserved in Jesus Christ." The faith as it was once delivered to the saints is to be before them, as we read, "But ye, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, awaiting the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." Here we have "the faith" which is made

known to us in other scriptures; "the Holy Spirit" of whom we have spoken; "the love of God" which produces the way of more surpassing excellence; and the Lord's return our bright and immediate hope.

In bringing these remarks to a close just one other verse must be referred to. It is 2 THESSALONIANS 2:1. Here we are besought, by "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him," to be steadfast. This will serve to emphasize the truth we have already indicated. When He comes again we shall b

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