

## DAILY READING

### WEEK 11 THE GOD-ORDAINED WAY AND BEING REVIVED EVERY MORNING

#### WEEK 11 — DAY 2

#### Scripture Reading

1 Cor. 16:19 The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Prisca greet you much in the Lord, with the church, which is in their house.

1 Cor. 14:26 Whenever you come together, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up.

Everything must begin at the beginning. When a church is founded, the believers from the very outset must learn to meet by themselves, either in their own homes or in some other building which they are able to secure. Of course, not every church is a church in a house, but a church in a house should be encouraged rather than considered as a drawback. If the number of believers is great and the sphere of the locality wide, they might need to meet, as the saints in Jerusalem did, in different houses (which may mean homes, halls, or any other building) instead of in one house. There was only one church in Jerusalem, but its members assembled in different houses. The principle of houses still applies today. This does not mean that the whole church will always meet separately; in fact, it is important, and of great profit, for all the believers to gather together quite regularly in one place (1 Cor. 14:23). To make such meetings possible, they could either borrow or rent a public place for the occasion, or, if they have sufficient means, they could acquire a hall permanently for the purpose. But the meeting place for the believers could generally be in a private home. If this is not available, and not suitable, of course other buildings could be acquired. But we should try to encourage meetings in the homes of the Christians.

The grand edifices of today, with their lofty spires, speak of the world and the flesh rather than of the Spirit, and in many ways they are not nearly as well suited to the purpose of Christian assembly as the private homes of God's people. In the first place, people feel much freer to speak of spiritual things in the unconventional atmosphere of a home than in a spacious church building where everything is conducted in a formal manner; besides, there is not the same possibility for mutual intercourse there. Somehow, as soon as people enter those special buildings, they involuntarily settle down to passivity, and wait to be preached to. A family atmosphere should pervade all gatherings of the children of God, so that the brothers even feel free to ask questions (1 Cor. 14:35). Everything should be under the control of the Spirit, but there should be the liberty of the Spirit too. Further, if the churches are in the private homes of the brethren, they naturally feel that all the interests of the church are their interests. There is a sense of closeness of relationship between themselves and the church. Many Christians feel that church affairs are something quite beyond them. They have no intimate concern in them, because in the first place they have their "minister" who is specially responsible for all such affairs, and then they have a great church building which seems so remote from their homes, and where matters are conducted so systematically and with such precision that one feels overpowered and bound in spirit.

Still further, the meetings in believers' homes can be a fruitful testimony to the neighbors around, and they provide an opportunity for witness and gospel preaching. Many who are not

willing to go to a “church” will be glad to go to a private house. And the influence is most helpful for the families of the Christians. From early days the children will be surrounded by a spiritual atmosphere, and will have constant opportunity to see the reality of eternal things. Again, if meetings are in the homes of the Christians, the Church is saved much material loss. One of the reasons the Christians survived the Roman persecutions during the first three centuries of Church history, was that they had no special buildings for worship, but met in cellars and caves and other inconspicuous places. Such meeting places were not readily discovered by their persecutors; but the large and costly edifices of today would be easily located and destroyed, and the churches would be speedily wiped out. The imposing structures of our modern times convey an impression of the world rather than of the Christ whose name they bear. (The halls and other buildings required for the work are quite another matter; we are speaking here only of the churches.)

So the scriptural method of church organization is simple in the extreme. As soon as there are a few believers in a place, they begin to meet in one of their homes. If numbers increase so that it becomes impracticable to meet in one house, then they can meet in several different houses, but the entire company of believers can meet together once in a while in some public place. A hall for such purposes could either be borrowed, rented, or built, according to the financial condition of the church; but we must remember that the ideal meeting places of the saints are their own private homes.

Meetings connected with the work are arranged along totally different lines, and are entirely under the auspices of the workers. They are on the principle of Paul’s own rented house in Rome. As we have seen, when Paul reached Rome a church was already in existence there, and the believers already had their regular gatherings. Paul did not use the meeting place of the church for his work, but rented a separate place, as he stayed for a prolonged period in Rome. In Troas he only stayed for a week, so he did not rent a place there, but simply accepted the hospitality of the church. When he went away, the special meetings he had been conducting there ceased, but the brethren in Troas still continued their own meetings. If a worker intends to remain for a considerable period in any place, then he must obtain a separate center for his work and not make use of the church’s meeting place. Frequently such a center will require more extensive accommodation than the meeting place of the church. If the Lord calls some of His servants to maintain a permanent testimony in a given place, then the call for a special building in connection with the work may be much greater than the need of premises is in connection with the church. It is almost essential to have a hall if the work is to be carried on in any place, whereas the homes of the brethren will nearly always meet the needs of the church meetings.—Normal Christian Church Life, chapter 9.