

## WORSHIPPING GOD BY THE CLOCK

Several years ago I read an article with the above title. I have adapted many of the thoughts that were in that article, as I believe they contain a very important message. The author of the article wrote about receiving an invitation to a social event. The time that was given for this event was "8 p.m.—who knows when?" What about our worship services, our Bible classes, our Gospel Meetings? Would it not be great if brethren were so hungry for the Word of God, so eager for Christian fellowship, and so desirous of worshipping God that a time of commencement could be announced with the time of its conclusion indicated as "who knows when"?

The author made the following statement:

Apparently, this attitude was present at the gathering of the church for worship and study at Troas (Acts 20:6–12). Most of the time when reference is made to Paul's prolonging his speech until midnight, it is done to take a dig at someone who has preached a little longer than 30 minutes. However, not only did Paul speak until midnight, but even after raising Eutychus from the dead, the people continued in fellowship and stayed until the break of day.

However, that is not the situation today. It has virtually been set in stone that a sermon should be preached in such a way that it is no longer than twenty to thirty minutes and that the worship service should take no longer than an hour. Why? Have we come to the point where we worship God by the clock? Someone wrote an article a number of years ago relating that one individual stated that he was pleased that they had completed the Lord's Supper in a large congregation in eleven minutes, thus showing how efficient the congregation was!

Sadly, too many do not have time for God or for Jesus Christ in their thoughts or their activities. Many are so busily engaged in materialistic lives that imbibe all of the pleasure they can. They remove Christianity to a remote place in their lives, except for when emergencies arise. The basic problem is that so many are not seeking "first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness" (Mat. 6:33). Some joke about being able to beat others to the restaurant after the closing prayer, but in reality, many times, such things as eating, recreation, business, and so many other things have higher priority in their lives than worshipping God. We are not "hungering and thirsting after righteousness" as we ought (5:6). If we were doing so, we could not spend enough time studying God's Word and hearing it preached and taught.

It is said that in the early years of Restoration history in our nation, John Smith rode on horseback for many miles to hear Alexander Campbell preach. As he was returning with a companion, Smith complained, "That was a long ride to hear a man preach only 30 minutes." His friend replied, "You have misread your watch. Brother Campbell preached three hours." Earlier in my life I had the opportunity to hear, on different occasions, two of the greatest preachers of the twentieth century: Foy E. Wallace, Jr., and Gus Nichols. Both preached for over two and a half hours, but it sure did not seem like it! How many of us today would listen to a three-hour sermon, even from the world's greatest orator? We can go to football games that can last three hours or more, but are unhappy when a worship assembly takes longer than an hour.

"Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). If we reduce our hearing of God's Word, we reduce our faith. As we reduce our faith, we reduce our service to God. All of these work together to weaken the church and to prevent the church from working and growing as it should. Let us therefore "hunger and thirst after righteousness" (Mat. 5:6) and "seek... first the kingdom of God" (6:33). When we do so, we will not be clock-watchers when we assemble for worship.

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