

The Principle of Gathering

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

“He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad” (Matthew 12:30).

Every Christian has so much to learn and to know. It is natural to exalt oneself, always being concerned with our latest accomplishments, yet increasingly becoming insensitive to the needs of others. Comparing ourselves with each other, we develop attitudes that will eventually scatter and divide.

Jesus Christ, however, lived a life of gathering. He went through the highways and byways, compelling the lost, the lame, and the losers to come unto Him. That is the life God desires for us, that we would express Christ in a way that draws and gathers people to Him.

Nothing about Satan gathers. Not a thing about Satan stands with God's people. It is a great privilege to go through a trial and to have people stand with you through that trial with-

out questioning. They gather with you, overcoming the one who scatters, overcoming the accuser of the brethren.

In this booklet, we examine the principle of gathering. It was most powerfully demonstrated when God Almighty left the perfection of heaven to gather a body of believers for Himself. He shed His blood and died on the Cross for us. For that, we will praise Him forever.

Chapter One

THE HUMAN EMOTIONS
OF JESUS

“Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?

“For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.

“He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

“Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

“But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

“He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

“He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

“And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

“Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

“He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

“Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto

death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors” (Isaiah 53:1-12).

And We Esteemed Him Not

The Lord Jesus Christ was praised continually in eternity past. The angels praised Him, exalted Him, and adored Him; He was praised consistently in every realm before time began. But then, He put on a human body and came to earth.

The Lord wanted to be praised upon the earth. Psalm 22:3 says that He inhabits the praises of His people. This means He sups with those who praise Him. God loves to be praised.

“I will praise thee, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will show forth all thy marvellous works.

“I will be glad and rejoice in thee: I will sing praise to thy name, O thou Most High” (Psalm 9:1-2).

“Then believed they his words; they sang his praise” (Psalm 106:12).

Jesus Christ loves to be praised. That is not approbation lust, such as the desire of sinful men is. We are talking about praise that reveals a heart response of thankfulness—real commu-

nion between God and man.

“Be thou exalted, LORD, in thine own strength: so will we sing and praise thy power” (Psalm 21:13).

“...For I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance” (Psalm 42:5*b*).

Praise is an amazing thing. People need to learn the secret of praising God* and encouraging each other in a godly way, not to win the praises of men because of approbation lust. The stars praise God with their music (Job 38:7). The wind praises God, and the trees clap their hands in the symbolic language of creation (Isaiah 55:12; Psalm 47:1, 5).

Yet, when the Lord came to earth, He was despised and rejected. We hid our faces from Him. He was esteemed as one who was stricken, smitten of God and afflicted (see Isaiah 53). The One who had been praised for all of eternity past from the beginning was now a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. This One was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, yet by *His* stripes we are healed.

Still, all we like sheep have gone astray and every one turned to his own way. The iniquity of us all was laid upon Him. He was oppressed,

afflicted, and yet He opened not His mouth. Isaiah 53 is a picture of our Creator and the Savior of the world.

No Beauty in Him

Consider the emotions of Jesus, the heart of Jesus. There was no beauty in Him that anyone would desire Him. He didn't come as a handsome man. He deliberately refused to be a handsome man. There was no beauty in Him—not just on the Cross, but from His birth.

Think of Jesus Christ and what He went through. He was born in a place of poverty. The Creator of the universe, the Creator of mankind, the One who has all knowledge selected a poor and unattractive city for His place of birth. The people He created and whom He would eventually die for did not know Him though He lived among them.

The Jewish people who formed the custodian nation in the plan of God received Him not. At the Cross, all of His disciples forsook Him—all of them (Matthew 26:56). His half-brothers and half-sisters born after Him did not believe that He told the truth (John 7:5). Representing the whole world, the crowd before Pilate cried out against Jesus, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him,

and give us Barabbas” (see Luke 23:18-21).

Think of the emotions of Jesus Christ, this Man of sorrows, acquainted with grief, despised and rejected. People didn’t want to be around Him. They said everything bad that they could say about Him, though all that He did was to be a gatherer.

**We encourage you to read Praise Him in This Place, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1997.*

Chapter Two

UNITING HEARTS IN MERCY

“The LORD doth build up Jerusalem: he gathereth together the outcasts of Israel.

“He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds” (Psalm 147:2-3). He gathers the saints (see Psalm 50:5), and with great mercies, He gathers His people (Isaiah 54:7).

He has always been a gatherer. He has always said, “Whosoever will may come.” Never a respecter of persons, Jesus died for the sins of the whole world.

Often after a message has been preached from the Word of God, people want to talk about what they are doing instead of what God is saying to them. They are occupied with their problems rather than God’s provision for them. But Jesus was not occupied with Himself—He was a gatherer.

The Lord Jesus Christ created men to praise Him. He created angels to praise Him. He wants

to be praised. Why? And why does He need to be praised? He wants to be exalted and praised according to His righteousness and His power. In other words, He wants to be praised according to the integrity of His nature.

When was the last time you praised someone according to the integrity of what he has done? Have you ever thought of going up to your dad and just saying, “You have done a wonderful job as a parent. I just want to thank you because you have worked so hard as a dad”? How about going to your mother and saying, “Mom, you have done everything for us—I am so grateful to have you as a mom”?

The family unit is so crucial. Yet, Jesus Christ did not have a family unit to fall back on while he was on earth. They stood outside while Jesus was ministering to the people, desiring to speak with Him right away. But when someone told Jesus this, He said, “My mother and brothers are those who hear the Word of God and keep it. These are the ones who form my family” (see Luke 8:19-21). His own family did not understand it.

Overcoming the Scatterers

One of the amazing things to watch in this world is the battle between gatherers and scatterers. When a person has been through many trials, he is able to understand people and have some sensitivity, perception, and discernment toward others. During a trial, it is interesting to discover who the gatherers are. Who will stand by your side, never flinch, and go all the way with you? Those are the gatherers.

To “gather” means to unite hearts with reverence to God, in mercy and grace (Psalm 86:11). To gather means to stand side by side—children standing with their parents, parents standing with their children, friends standing with friends. They gather.

Peter forsook Jesus Christ (Matthew 26:72-74), and he was a scatterer, but He got right. Judas Iscariot was a scatterer who felt bad about what he did, but he never repented. A person who understands grace will not forsake loved ones in the midst of a trial. He will not listen to a negative word, but he is ready to fight for those who have stood with him in the good times and the hard times. He doesn’t side with enemies. He doesn’t agree with enemies. The moment he

does, he is a scatterer.

Jesus said, "He that gathereth not with Me is against Me."

The hardest thing in the world is to go through a trial and know that certain people have not gathered with you. They do not want to face precise doctrine in the Scriptures. Ultimately, they are against Christ (Philippians 3:18).

Gathering in the Family

Of course there are times where we may have bonafide disagreements. And when you have disagreements with leadership in a ministry, a school, or in the work place, you can go alone and have a hearing. But when you attack them, you are against Christ because you begin to be a scatterer.

A husband who is not a gatherer in his marriage is against Christ. A wife who isn't a gatherer is against Christ. Children who aren't gatherers are against Christ. Parents must be careful about the language they use around their children about others. Children will repeat your thoughts as their own. It is vital that we teach our young people to be gatherers.

If you have a problem with incompatibility in your marriage, don't set yourself up against

Christ's grace, Christ's love, and Christ's mercy. Instead, say to Jesus, "I am going to be a gatherer for this marriage. We are going to make this marriage the most beautiful marriage in the world. I am going to be a gatherer—I am not ever going to be a scatterer in this institution of marriage."

In Isaiah 56:8 and Psalm 147:2, Jesus Christ gathered the outcasts, about whom the world spoke evil. I have a canned answer for anyone who attacks a ministry that is of God, that is preaching the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Christ. I say, "I heard that you were a prostitute. Is that true? By repeating your opinion, which is probably based on hearsay, you have just called that ministry a prostitute too. You are a scatterer." They will think twice about spreading an evil report the next time.

Chapter Three
COME UNTO JESUS

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

“Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

“For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30).

The greatest thing for a pastor is to have many gatherers around him. Thank God, the gatherers are the ones who will be gathered with the Great Gatherer, Jesus Christ. Jesus says, “I will feed my flock like a shepherd, and I will gather the lambs in my arms. I will carry them in my bosom, and I will gently lead those that are with young” (see Isaiah 40:11).

Jesus gathers the lambs in His arms. He gently leads those who are with young. In His ministry on the earth, Jesus Christ always went after the lost sheep. He was always seeking after

those who needed Him (Luke 19:10).

Today, Jesus Christ is after the alcoholic that no one else cares about. He says to the alcoholic, "I love you so much that I took your sin of alcoholism in My own body. I paid for your sin. Come to Me."

To the drug addict, Jesus Christ says, "Come unto Me. I know you are in bondage to drugs. I understand it more than your own family understands it. Come unto Me with your addiction. I will carry you in My arms. I will gently lead you. I will feed you as a shepherd feeds his flock. The only thing that I ask of you is to come."

The Lord says to the homosexual, "Somehow you have become deceived, perverted, and completely off. Come unto Me. I will take away that terrible perversion. I will make you proud to get up every morning. I paid for your sin of homosexuality. I will make you a brand-new person in a moment of time. Come unto Me and be yoked up with Me. My burden is light. Come to me."

To people living in promiscuity, God says, "I don't think you really want to live that way. There is a certain privilege in not having sex until after marriage. There is something sacred

about the marriage relationship, because I ordained it. But I will forgive you and make you clean, as if you had never done it before. Come, and don't do it again until you are married. Please come unto Me."

"Just come unto Me" are the words Jesus often uses to draw people.

A gatherer doesn't demand that the church has to do anything for him. Rather, he is ready to share, even out of his own poverty (2 Corinthians 8:1-2). When was the last time you got on the phone and thanked someone? When was the last time you encouraged someone? When was the last time you spent a whole week edifying people as one of God's gatherers?

Jesus said, "He who doesn't gather with Me is against Me." And those who don't gather, scatter and divide abroad.

Live in Eternal Values

It is of no value to have a great ministry but to live only for your ministry. I am not living for my ministry. It is God's ministry. I am living for God. I am living for eternal values. I am living for people. People are on my heart day and night. I think of people. I deeply desire to build up people and to help people. As I look at the

faces in the pictures on my prayer altar, I wish that I could be in ten places at once just to help people whom I love so deeply.

Thank God for those who gather. After every service, I get a call from my son, and he says, “Dad, I am so proud of you. How do you do it? That was a beautiful message.” It isn’t flattery. My son is a gatherer.

I thank God that when troubles and problems come, we can start gathering. We gather those who are in need. We gather those who are brokenhearted. We gather. The world did not want Jesus; the Jewish nation, His own people, did not want Jesus. Likewise, those who identify with Him will also be rejected by the world.

The disciples said, “So long! You are a persecuted Man. You are despised and rejected. Why should we hang around You and risk our lives? We are going to hide our faces from You. Apparently, You have been stricken and afflicted by God. You have borne our grief and sorrows, but as far as we go, You are not popular, and we don’t want to be identified with You.”

That is the way it went for Jesus. Finally, His own Father had to turn away from Him while all the sins of the world were placed upon His body as He hung on the Cross. That was nearly

all that Jesus could take, and He cried out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34c).

The Father forsook Him because He could not look upon sin, and all of our sins were upon Him in that hour. Thank God that He was made guilty for us. And thank God that Jesus Christ was resurrected by the Father and the Holy Spirit so we could have eternal life (Romans 1:4). Praise Him for what He has done for us.

Criticism scatters. Withdrawing into your shell and being negative about some little thing scatters. But more than scattering, it goes against the God of love, against the God of grace, against the God of mercy, against the God Who shed His blood for us.

When a couple refuses to be helped and reconciled in their marriage, they go against the doctrine of reconciliation, the doctrine of redemption, the doctrine of restoration, and the nature of Almighty God.

He who receives a prophet—a spokesman of God—in the nature of his office, receives Jesus Christ and receives a prophet’s reward (Matthew 10:41). And whoever gives a drink of cold water only in the name of a disciple shall not lose his reward (Matthew 10:42).

“He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me” (Luke 10:16).

The Lord Stands with Those Who Gather

Don't allow the pressures and demands of your job and the details of life to cause you to withdraw from fellowship. Purpose on definite times to be around others in the Body of Christ and be a gatherer. Be an edifier. Be a motivator. Be a builder-upper, even if all you do is make a telephone call or write a little note. Be someone who is ever waiting to bless God with praise and to bless people with edification. Be a gatherer!

The people who scatter think they are getting away with it, but they are not. Many godly ministries that have been infected by scatterers in the past are going strong today, being blessed beyond measure, as never before. Furthermore, God never even thought of doing anything but blessing them.

In Daniel 3, when the three Hebrew boys were thrown into the furnace, the Fourth Man was there to deliver them—but only three came out. Jesus Christ stayed in the furnace, waiting

for the next person who would be put in there. He didn't come out of the furnace because He knew the things faithful believers would face.

In 2 Timothy 4:16, the apostle Paul wrote that no one visited him in prison and that all of his friends forsook him. But in 2 Timothy 4:17a, Paul wrote, "Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me."

Thank God, there is never a time that God leaves us. Even in your worst backslidden state (and God forbid that you would get to that point), God is still inside of you. He is grieved, but He loves you still, with all of His heart. He is just waiting to be gracious to you (Isaiah 30:18), waiting to forgive you so He can fellowship again after you have confessed and repented to Him, and Him alone.

Our God will never, no never, no never leave or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). He is a gatherer. He would do everything possible in the world to gather the worst of sinners as He already paid for all their sins. God wants to heal, deliver, and give new life, and He brings people together, uniting hearts and minds with His Spirit, making us gatherers too.

CONCLUSION

One day, all of God's people will be gathered up into the clouds to meet Jesus in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). Every born-again believer will be there. I can't even imagine what that will be like—glorified, resurrected bodies walking on the clouds, suspended in the air supernaturally. Pastors of local churches will introduce their people to Jesus by name at the Bema Seat. Then, after rewards have been given out, we will gather on streets of pure gold in the New Jerusalem with the others who have gone on ahead of us.

There we will be, gathered together with God and with all the holy angels, with all the just men made perfect (see Hebrews 12). We will forever be rid of our old sin nature. It will be totally gone. Jesus has overcome sin and death, and He will gather us into a perfect state. There we will be, fulfilling His heart's desire, praising Him as He sits upon His throne of grace. We will

worship Him, singing songs and hymns that have never been sung about the precious Blood of the Lamb.

Oh, how God loves to hear His people praise Him, worship Him with honor, and adore Him. We were created to praise Him. He created us to praise Him in our minds, in our emotions, with our bodies, and with our acts. Let us glorify God in truth because of His loving grace and let us live in the quietness of faith rest. Even at this hour, Jesus loves to be praised. He loves to hear the prayer:

“Thank you, Jesus, for what You are doing in my life. Thank you, God, for my family. Thank you, God, for this marriage. Thank you, God, for my trial. Thank you, God, for my blessings in finances and provisions. Thank You, God, for Your promises. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”