

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

- BELIEVE – ACTS 16:31
- REPENT – ACTS 17:30; LUKE 13:3
- CONFESS – ROMANS 10:10; I TIMOTHY 6:12
- BE BAPTIZED – ACTS 2:38; MARK 16:16
- BE FAITHFUL – REVELATION 2:10

PRAYER LIST:

North Ridgeville Church of Christ
36364 Chestnut Ridge Road
North Ridgeville, OH 44039

www.nrcoc.net

Times for Meeting

Lord's Day	9:30 AM	Bible Study (all ages)
	10:30 AM	Worship
Wednesday	7:00 PM	Bible Study (all ages)

Elders

Bruce Dean
Mark Ullman

Evangelist

Steven Wallace

THE NORTH RIDGEVILLE CHURCH OF CHRIST

“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only,
deceiving your own selves.” James 1:22

January 22, 2023

“The Empty Pew”

[From a Taped Sermon by Tom Oglesby]

I am not speaking, in this lesson, about the pew that is empty due to physical sickness, injury, travel, or unforeseen circumstances. I am speaking of the pew that is empty due to spiritual sickness, lukewarmness, or full-blown apostasy. I am speaking of the pew that is empty due to someone saying, in effect, “I have more important things to do than to assemble with the saints.” I am speaking of the pew that is empty, not because someone’s plans to be sitting in it backfired, but because someone simply did not plan to be sitting in it! The empty pew does not sing; it does not pray; it does not edify; it does not teach or exhort. But the empty pew is not silent! In fact, it screams a great deal about the quality of some of the Lord’s people and some of the Lord’s churches.

The Empty Pew Is a Discouragement to Preachers!

Elijah went through a period of discouragement (Rom. 11:1-4). He felt betrayed by others. This is how a gospel preacher feels when he sees empty pews where there should be members sitting. Gospel preachers have a right to feel a sense of betrayal when those who are supposed to be Christians in the community **intentionally** and **willfully** neglect the service of the Lord and the support of faithful gospel preaching (2 Tim. 4:9-17; esp. v. 16).

The Empty Pew Is a Discouragement to Potential Christians!

It is a serious matter to neglect and reject the gospel of Jesus Christ for oneself (Heb. 2:1-3). It is even more serious to cause others to neglect and reject it (Luke 4:17:1-2). The child of God who **chooses** not to assemble is not only neglecting and rejecting the great salvation that is in Christ Jesus but is also causing others to do so (consider Acts 13:4-12). The empty pew will not and **cannot** have a positive influence on the lost (Matt. 5:16). The empty pew says to the non-Christian, "It is not really all that important to do what the Bible says."

The Empty Pew Is a Discouragement to the Other Members!

It reflects an indifference and lack of concern for spiritual goals (Eph. 4:11-16). Surely our goals in assembling together for the worship of God are the highest. Why do we assemble? Why are you here today? Are you here to edify and to be edified? The empty pew says, "I don't want to edify or to be edified!" Are you here because we want to grow spiritually? The empty pew says, "I don't need to develop myself spiritually!" Are you here out of concern for the body of Christ? The empty pew says, "I am not concerned for the church!" Are you here because you want to prepare yourself to help save the lost? The empty pew says, "I am not concerned about the saving of a soul!" Are you here because you want to go to heaven? The empty pew says, "I don't know for sure that I even want to go to heaven!"

It reflects an unwillingness to sacrifice! There are five basic attitudes toward sacrifice (2 Sam. 24:24). Some will only sacrifice that which they cannot use for anything else (Mal. 1:6-14). We could all be doing other things this morning. Unfortunately, there are some who **are** doing other things. Thus, their pews are empty. "Sorry God, I have something more important to do."

The Empty Pew Is an Encouragement to the Devil!

Satan wants us to be lost (1 Pet. 5:8). The empty pew encourages him in his efforts to keep and/or pull people away from God. Satan and his ministers have many "wiles," "schemes" or "fiery darts" with which they would take advantage of us (2 Cor. 2:11; 11:3,10-15). The person who would be sitting in the empty pew is telling Satan, as it were, "You won't need those with me." God has given to us all the armor we need to stand against Satan (Eph. 6:10-18). The person who would be sitting in the empty pew has either never taken up the armor of God or has long since put it aside. If Satan has a trophy case, I imagine "the empty pew" would be in the most prominent position. Every time your pew is empty when it need not be, it represents a victory of Satan.

The Empty Pew Is a Harbinger of Lost Souls!

The empty pew doesn't make an audible sound; but if it did, that sound would probably be heard as wailing and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 10:28; 8:12; 25:30). Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people (Matt. 25:34). Those who could have filled an empty pew will be lost eternally, not because their pews were empty but because they failed to prepare themselves for heaven.

No one, here, wants you to be lost for any reason, but wouldn't it be sad if you were lost simply because you were disinterested enough in preparing yourself for heaven that your pew is unjustifiably empty much of the time?

(Adapted)

The good exhortation above impressed upon me this thought below:

Does my empty pew insult the Lord's empty tomb?