
The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ

...God has spoken to us in His Son...(Hebrews 1:2)

A Call To Action

Hebrews 10:19-25 (Part 4)

19 Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; 24 and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, 25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

Over the past several weeks we have been camped out in these verses noting from them four characteristics of those who have come to accept, appreciate and adore the superiority of Christ. Those who have so genuinely come to see Christ are those who –

- I. Have Confidence in God (10:19-21)
- II. Have Communion with God (10:22)
- III. Have a Confession of God (10:23)
- IV. Have a Consideration of One Another (10:24-25)

My purpose has been to both explain and excite these realities in your hearts – that you might examine yourself in light of these characteristics and plead with God all the more that the reality of a full confidence in Christ, of drawing near to God, of holding fast the confession of hope and of properly expressing a consideration toward one another might be expressed in your life. To put it another way, do you have such a confidence in God, in His Son and in the salvation He has provided that you are excited toward drawing near to Him in increasing intimacy; of growing in your common and public confession of Him and developing a great ability to both see and meet the needs of those in the Church?

Last week I closed with a statement by William Temple, a statement that reminded us that this call to action, this effort to live our lives in light of the superiority of Christ is a pride-crushing exercise in humility:

“Humility does not mean thinking less of yourself than of other people, nor does it mean having a low opinion of your own gifts. It means freedom from thinking about yourself one way or the other at all.”

I submit to you, that as we practice the things prescribed in Hebrews 10:19-25, we reveal the true essence of what it means to be a Christian – eyes off of self and totally fixed on Christ. In that tone then, I wish to finish up this final call to action – consideration of one another as seen in Hebrews 10:24-25. These are familiar verses, but let us remember their point, the consideration of others, in their context – in light of the confidence we have in Christ, *let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own*

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assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

This is our duty, this is our privilege, this is our call. As we examined the first of these two verses, I called your attention to its meaning and application in the form of questions; two questions for verse 24;

1. How perceptive are you? In other words, are you noticing carefully and looking intently at the needs of your brothers and sisters in Christ?
2. How provocative are you? That is, rather than inciting someone to anger or discouragement, are you seeking to stimulate, provoke, move a person to love and good deeds in Christ?

This brings us to verse 25, which like I have done in verse 24, I seek to explain by means of two questions: In light of the superiority of Christ, in light of the confidence a follower in Christ has with God (v. 19) I ask you this –

3. How persistent are you? (10:25a)

“... not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some.”

Before we consider any application, let us consider what was taking place among the first readers of this letter. Evidently, because there was persecution from the Romans for holding to Christ as the only God in their polytheistic culture, or persecution from the Jews for not keeping the practices of the Old Testament sacrifices - with their view of Christ as weak, some antagonists, some factious people in the congregation had resorted to irritating and provoking those who were genuinely following Christ and, in time, these discontents began to move themselves out of the fellowship, further and further away from the church, to the point that they had made it their habit not to attend at all.

This was no small matter to our author, and it should be no small matter to us. Following Christ is no small commitment. It requires determination, energy and, as our question implies the utmost in persistence. Are you persistent in following Christ? How does this persistence reveal itself? It reveals itself, as we have seen, in considering the needs of others above and before your own; it is also revealed, and [this is important] in placing yourself in those circumstances where the needs of others may be considered – that is in the midst of other believers. Conversion to Christ does not magically erase the hearts tendency to pursue its own desires. Is this not what Jesus challenged us with in Luke 9:23 (please turn) saying:

If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself [not pursue his own desires, but rather the desires and will of Christ], and take up his cross daily [die to self] and follow Me [look unto Jesus].

What kind of effort; what kind of energy are you investing into the lives of those with whom you assemble yourself? Our author uses the strongest of words to speak against the attitude of those who might, speaking it mildly, neglect the gathering of the saints. He says in effect, if you say you have confidence in the work of Christ in saving you and making you a

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part of His body, then do not, in attitude or action, forsake the assembling of the body of which He made you part. In other words, the one who has come to Christ will come to Church. The one who follows Christ, fellowships with the congregation. The one who has recognized his need of the Savior, recognizes his need for participating with the saints. The one who does not persist in such things is one who forsakes not only the beloved bride of Christ – the church, but also Christ Himself.

As I said, the verb **“forsaking”** is the strongest of actions. It literally means “to desert” much like a soldier might leave his comrades in battle or a father might walk out on his children. It means “to utterly abandon or leave destitute.” How strong, how intense is this word? This is the word used by our Savior while on the cross as recorded in Matthew 27:46 – saying, **“My God, My God why have you forsaken Me?”** as Jesus was left by the Father in the full destitution of sin.

It is the same word used by the apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 4:10 - **for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted [forsaken] me** and then down in 4:16 saying, **At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted [forsaken] me...** In the context of asking the question, how persistent are you, from Hebrews 10:25, the idea of forsaking implies a lack of desire to sit under the sound teaching of the Word of God and an abandonment of confidence in the person and work of Christ and a disregard for the people who God loves and has saved. Such attitudes and actions are reflections of a heart unchanged by the love of God. I have shared the story before of a friend of mine who, as a single Christian man, was pursued by an unbelieving single woman who had one child. She was persistent in her attempts to date this man, who, upon prayer and the counsel of other men, sat down with her and said, “Could you love and be with someone who did not love and want to be with your son?” Her response was, “No,” to which he replied, “this is how I view my relationship to Jesus Christ, if you do not want to be with and love Him, I could not be with and love you.” The one who rejects the bride of Christ is also rejecting the Groom, who is Christ.

But I would have you notice the call to action. We who confess full confidence in Christ are those **“not forsaking”** the assembling (the coming together) of body of Christ, but rather are persistent and consistent in our seeking opportunities to be with the saints. Notice that this is all in the context of verse 24 and our proper consideration of one another. We show our selves to be disciples of Christ when we fully consider one another, stimulating one to love and good deed and one of the means we accomplish this is by our persistent coming together for worship and fellowship.

By way of application, I would say this you all. While it might be safe to say to you that this verse is speaking to those who are already gone, who have already forsaken the assembly who should not have done so; remember the context – consider one another. If anyone in the fellowship is beginning to express the *attitude* of a forsaker, we must consider how to stimulate that one to persistence in love and good deeds – one of the chief of which is being around other saints. Additionally, we might have in mind those who are well on their way or have forsaken the assembling of the saints – this call to action tells us to consider how we might call them back to this persistency in fellowship – for as we will come to see in verse 26 and following, the consequences of falling away from God, and our author defines falling away in part by forsaking the saints, are absolutely devastating. We must pray that such does not

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become the habit of those who are struggling. We must pray that such does not become the attitude of anyone in this place. (Hebrews 3:12-13)

If we are to call others to such a persistence in fellowship, we must be the first ones committed to fellowship, being careful not to allow the tyranny of the urgent to consume the expressly revealed will of God to gather with the saints. We must be careful not to portray to one another, to our children and even to the lost that the gathering of the saints is somehow secondary to all other considerations. I recently read an article that noted how a great majority of believers today, I think the number was 72% believe that “family time” and “church time” are incompatible ideas and will forsake various gatherings of the saints in favor of “family time.” It used to be that “family time” and “church time” were one and the same. But now, various meetings of the church are slowly being replaced with activities of the world, not all bad, but perhaps not all the best. I call you to consider how persistent you are in assembling with the saints.

4. How persuasive are you? (10:25b)

This all leads us to the second and final question I would ask of you. We have asked; how perceptive are you?; how provocative are you?; and how persistent are you? Now let me ask you, “how persuasive are you?” Our text finishes with these words, **“but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day drawing near.”**

In contrast to any inclination to be an island unto yourself, of being a turtle on a poll who thinks you got there by yourself and therefore not needing others, the one who has confidence in the blood of Christ will be devoted to the ministry of encouragement. This action verb **“encouraging”** (*parakaleo*) literally means “to come along side of another” or “calling someone to your side”. It is the verb form of the noun used to describe the Holy Spirit in John 14:16, 26; 15:26 and 16:7 where He is called the Helper, or the Comforter – the *paraklete* in the Greek – the One who calls us to His side to help and aid us (please turn).

John 14:16-17 (The Spirit of Truth)

16 I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; 17 that is the Spirit of truth...

John 14:26 (The Spirit who Teaches)

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

John 15:26 (The Spirit who Testifies)

When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me...

If we are rightly considering one another, we will properly encourage one another; we will be persuasive in our efforts to help and aid other believers and thus depend upon and be like the very Spirit of God imparting God’s truth, teaching others in the way of God and testifying continually of the Savior. These are the efforts of encouragement?

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But just what should these efforts look like? We encourage or persuade other believers to live out the truth and testify of God's Word. How do we do that? Beloved, there are several and a variety of ways. We might advise a brother concerning a course of action in his life; we might plead with another to turn from a sinful habit; we might call others to growth in the grace and knowledge of Christ; we might warn others of the consequences of unrepentant sin; we might strengthen one who is under a trial; we might comfort one who is grieving or suffering. Beloved these are just a few of the responsibilities of the believer and such responsibilities cannot be accomplished when we have a low view, a disregard and a neglect of the gathering of the saints. It has been said that prophecy *proclaims* the Word of God and that preaching *explains* the Word of God, but encouraging exhorts one another to *obey* the Word of God.

So I ask you this morning, how persuasive are you? Do people see your confidence in Christ; and do you encourage others out of this confidence in Jesus as the Savior, not only in His saving you, but also in His preparing and gifting you to persuade, to encourage, to literally come along side of others helping them to obey God? This is our call to action.

And why is this important? I would have you notice the last phrase of Hebrews 10:25, ***“and all the more as you see the day drawing near.”*** Beloved, every day we are one step closer to eternity. Every day we find ourselves one day nearer to the full revelation of the wrath of God against sin. Let us consider 1 Thessalonians 5 as we close (please turn there):

1 Thessalonians 5:1-3

1 Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. 2 For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. 3 While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape.

A day of judgment is drawing near and believers must not live as if this judgment is not coming. For notice the call of the Spirit of God:

1 Thessalonians 5:4-8

4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; 5 for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; 6 so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. 7 For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night. 8 But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation.

In other words, let us be visibly and noticeably different from those who do not see the day approaching, that they might come to the light of the truth. Not only then are we to encourage other believers, but our lives should be those that encourage, seeking to persuade unbelievers to come to the light of Christ. Let us be so persistent and let us be so persuasive. Let me close then with this quote from John Piper who speaks in part to this ministry of persistence and persuasiveness. He wrote:

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[There] is a joy that is meek and merciful and pure and peaceable, but these things alone do not awaken people to the glory of God. In order to waken people to consider God as an explanation for our good works there generally must be an obstacle of suffering that would ordinarily cause them to be angry or despairing, but does not have that effect on us. Rather, they see us “rejoice” in hardship. They see that this hardship does not make us self-centered and self-pitying and mean-spirited. Instead they see our joy and wonder what we are hoping in when ordinary props for hope have been knocked away. The answer, Jesus says, is that we have great reward in heaven (Matthew 5:12). That is, Jesus has become a treasure for us that is more precious than what the world offers. Therefore, when persecution or calamity take natural pleasures away, we still have Jesus, and we still have joy.

May we have such a confidence to be so persistent and persuasive that when persecution or calamity take natural pleasures away, we still have Jesus, we still have His joy and we still long to be with His people and we still long to encourage all with His truth.

Soli Deo Gloria

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