

I Will Build My Church

The Purpose and Characteristics of Christ's Church

13 The Power and Splendor of the Church Assembled, Part 2

April 26, 2020

Hebrews 10:19-25

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.

To the Glory of God

When you get up in the morning to face the new day, what do you say to yourself about your Hope for that day? When you look from the beginning of the day to the end- what do you pray happens- because you have *lived into* that particular day? What difference do you want your life to make in the world and in the lives of other people?

Now if you say, "*Brother Blair, I really don't think like that. I just get up and do what I've got to do.*", then, please hear me when I tell you that you are cutting yourself off from a very important "means of Grace"; and a Source of Guidance, Strength, Fruitfulness, and Joy.

When you read the Bible- it becomes crystal clear that God's Will *for all of us*- is that we are to *consciously* aim at something *significant* and *meaningful* during our time on this earth. There is *nothing* in any Book of

the Bible that would encourage anyone to ever wander aimlessly through our time here on the earth. Because you can't have it both ways. If Life is precious- then wasting a single day in meaningless dribble- is Sin. And if we are okay to waste, even a single day of life, in things that have no serious consequence- then those who assign no value to Life- are correct.

But if Life is precious- then not only how we *live*- but how we *die*- matters. I have no problem with *anyone* risking *everything*- including their lives- in the pursuit of Holiness; and in making Jesus known throughout the world. I rejoice in God and I celebrate lives that are taken- that were dedicated like that. They died- sometimes horribly- in living their lives to the Glory of God. How could that *ever* be wrong? How could that *ever* be a waste? But if my thoughts are correct about this- then it is Sin for people to risk their lives in amusement parks- on rides that were created to simply give a thrill. So, if Life is precious- then we should live our lives like we really believe that.

So, not only is this an expositional Sermon on **Hebrews 10:19-25**; not only is this the 13th Message in a series on "The Church"; but this is also a plea that we live- *purposefully*; that when we get up in the morning, we don't drift aimlessly through the day-allowing circumstances; and the pagan world to dictate what we do; and how we think; and what is important.

Dear friends, we must come to the place where we understand that "Aimlessness" is the same thing as "Lifelessness". Dead leaves in the back yard may move around more than anything else- more than the dog; and more than the children. The wind blows *this* way, and they go *this* way. The wind blows *that* way, and they go *that* way. They tumble; they bounce; they skip; and they press against a fence- but dead leaves have no purpose- whatsoever. They are full of motion- but they are entirely empty of life.

Our great God, Who created a Universe; and Who saved our souls; and Who- all by Himself allowed a global pandemic to shut down the entire world in fear- did not create humans in His Image so we would be aimless, like lifeless leaves blown around in the backyard of Life. He created us to be *purposeful*- for our lives to matter; and to have a focus and a goal for our time on this earth. And that is not being *oppressive*. And it's not *slavery*. And it's not *depleting*. To find what we were made for; and then to give ourselves totally into that Purpose- with all the might that God will give (**Colossians 1:29**), is *freeing* (**Galatians 5:13**) and *energizing*. In **John 4:34**- Jesus said,

My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His Work

... notice that this was not His *Job*- but His *Food*! So, Jesus said that struggling day by day to do what you were *created* to do- is like eating: it gives Life and Energy, rather than taking it away.

Now your time here on this earth will eventually end- if you spend your days in doing what you were created to do. And you may be young; or you may be old when that time comes. That is God's Choice- not yours. But when you die doing what you were created to do- you die "well"; and you die "full". And *that* is what the writer says to us today in this Passage.

In this Passage- the writer gives us two statements (three verses) that begin with the word, "**Since**" and three that begin with the phrase, "**Let Us**". And so, I am suggesting that the three verses that begin with "**Let Us**" are "sitting atop" the two statements that begin with "**Since**". In other words- the verses that begin with "**Let Us**" are things we should believe and do- precisely because of what the verses that begin with "**Since**" say. Another way of understanding this is- that because the two statements that begin with "**Since**" are true- then THEREFORE- we are to *respond* to the Truth of those two verses by "believing" and by "doing" what the three verses that begin with "**Let Us**" say.

And, the two statements that begin with "**Since**" are verses 19-21 that say:

Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God...

Now, last time we saw that, even though there are three different groups of Jews, who make up this small little church, in what is now modern day Turkey, in the last third of the 1st Century (Around 68AD), in *this* Passage- the writer is *only* addressing one group- that he calls, "**brethren**". And that means that *everything* in this Passage (and the *entirety* of Chapter 10) is written to saved people- who make up the Church. So, if you are saved- then this Passage applies to you.

And there are at least two main Truths that the writer is emphasizing in the two statements that begin with "**Since**":

1. **Since** it is true that “brethren” (saved people) **have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh**
2. And **Since** it is true that- saved people **have a great priest over the house of God...**

... since those two things are true- **NOW THEREFORE**- there are two *responses*; three *actions* that saved people in the Church should have to these three Truths:

1. **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.**
2. **Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and**
3. **Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, 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.**

... and the three Actions or Responses that are based on the Truths of verses 19-21 are:

1. Let us “**draw near**” (verse 22)
2. Let us “**hold fast**” (verse 23)
3. Let us “**consider**” (verse 24)

And all of the rest of the words in verse 22- tells us *how* we are to “**draw near**”. Now last time, we saw that we are NOT to merely “**draw near**” to God- but we are to also “**draw near**” to each other as well. And so, we are to “**draw near**” to God and to each other in four ways:

1. **with a sincere heart**
2. **in full assurance of faith**
3. **having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience**
4. **and our bodies washed with pure water.**

... and to grasp what the writer means by these phrases- it is helpful if we

use other terms. So, we are to “**draw near**”:

1. With no hypocrisy (being genuine)
2. With the Assurance that Salvation brings
3. Without condemning ourselves for Sins that have already been forgiven by Jesus
4. Without any obvious or public Sin

Now the term, “**hold fast**” has to do with “*keeping what you already have and not losing anything.*” And this has to do with our ongoing struggle against the lusts of our flesh to be humbly and joyfully submitted to the Authority of Scripture in our daily lives- all to the Glory of God. The root word in the Greek that the writer used in this verse is the same that the Apostle John used in **The Revelation 2:25** that says:

Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come.

... and again in **The Revelation 3:11**:

I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown.

... it is the same word that the Apostle Paul used when he wrote **1Corinthians 15:1&2**:

Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

... and again in **1Thessalonians 5:21&22**:

But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil.

... and even the writer of **Hebrews** used this same phrase three different times *before* Chapter 10, when he said:

Hebrews 3:6

but Christ was faithful as a Son over His house—whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end.

... and in Hebrews 3:14:

For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end,

... and in Hebrews 4:14:

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

... and here in Chapter 10- the writer instructs all of the truly saved people of the Church to “**hold fast**” to something very interesting:

... the “**Confession of our Hope**” ...

Now there are three “Tools” that Christians have been using since the very beginning of the Church to illustrate what we believe. Some would say today, “*I believe the Bible*”. As though saying that is useful. But a statement like that really doesn’t solve the problem. Because a follow-up Question would be, “*Okay, you believe the Bible. Fine. But what does the Bible teach about a particular subject- say, Salvation?*” Then the person might give one or two verses to illustrate what he believes about the subject of Salvation.

The problem with this- is that the Bible speaks a lot more about Salvation than one or two verses. So, *whatever* Answer the person gives is almost assured to be incomplete. And an *incomplete* Answer about a serious subject like Salvation almost always gives others the wrong idea. Confessions, Catechisms, and Creeds were created to solve this problem.

A “**Creed**” is an ancient method of understanding what the Bible teaches about “Essential Truth” in a “summary format”. Creeds were developed so that people could easily memorize them- because the majority of believers in the early Church were illiterate. However, Creeds lost their “practical functionality” over the years- NOT because they’re false (they’re not) but simply because the proliferation of heresies created the need for Creeds to get longer and longer and more and more detailed- until it was

very difficult to memorize them.

A “**Catechism**” is a written document that illustrates what the Bible teaches about *several* subjects (NOT all)- written in a Question and Answer format. And a “**Confession**” is a written document that takes *everything* the Bible teaches- and puts those Truths in subject order through an Essay format.

So, in a nutshell- a “Confession” is what we believe. And Confessions are to be both written and spoken. For example, in **Romans 10:9**, the Apostle Paul said:

that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;

... so, this particular “Confession” is concerning the full Deity of Jesus Christ. And it had to be *believed*- but it also had to be *spoken*.

So, if we are to obey the Exhortation of **Hebrews 10:23** and “**hold fast to the Confession of our Hope**”- we need to know what a Confession is; and then we need to know what we are to Hope in.

All through this Epistle, the writer carefully gave us a detailed explanation of the Christian Confession of Hope. Hope is NOT the same as “wishful thinking.” In **Romans 8:24&25** Paul gave us a good way to comprehend “Hope” when he wrote:

For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.

... So, biblical Hope is based on a Person. In **Hebrews 11**, we find that all of the Old Testament heroes (Gideon, Barak, Samson, and others) pointed to the *true* Hero- Jesus Christ. He is the *true* Prophet; the *true* Priest; and the *true* King- all at the same time! And so, the Confession of all genuinely saved people; from every walk of Life- has been; is now; and will always be:

We believe that Jesus is “Lord” both in His Person and in His Work. He is our true “Hope” for Salvation, as well as for our Perseverance in the Christian Life. So, our “Confession of Hope”, “*Jesus is Lord*,” shows that we are “holding fast” to a Person- **Jesus, the Christ- the Son of the living God. (Matthew 16:16)**

The great Puritan, John Owen explained that the Command here in **Hebrews 10** to “hold fast” *presupposes* an opposing force; and a great danger- so he said,

“To ‘hold fast’ implies the putting forth of our utmost strength and endeavors in the defense of our profession [confession], and a constant perseverance in so doing.”

So, “holding fast to our Confession of Hope” requires *conditioning*. And that means it is a *purposeful* Act. Nobody “holds fast” without *meaning* to do so. Therefore, this is NOT something we simply recite from memory when times are getting tough. “Holding fast to our Confession of Hope” is a persistent fight to exercise our Faith by actively engaging in the Gospel-revealed in God’s Word- *no matter what our circumstances*.

But one of the main points of this entire Passage is that “Christian Perseverance” is never a battle that we have to fight *alone*. We are to do battle- *together*- as a body of believers- the Church. This Exhortation begins with two important words that can be easily skipped over. The writer *could have* merely said, “*Hold fast to your Confession of Hope*”. But he didn’t. This is a Sermon-Letter addressing an entire Congregation. And so, it begins,

“***LET US*** hold fast to *our* Confession of Hope.”

... and so, we must realize that we “hold fast” to our Confession- *within* the Covenant Community of the Church. So, to *disengage* from the Body; and then to endeavor to obey these Commands and Exhortations apart from one another- not only *violates* the entire thrust of the Passage- but it dooms the individual to fail.

Nowhere in the New Covenant does God send individual believers out alone as Strangers and Pilgrims on this earth. Concepts like that simply cannot be found within the 27 Books of the New Testament. Each believer has the entire Church- as the Body of Christ- genuine sisters and true brothers in the Lord, who accompany each other- at every step. God even set aside the “first day of every week” for gathering together to Worship God and to “**stimulate one another unto Love and to Good Deeds.**” (**Hebrews 10:24**).

And so, the preacher to the Hebrews labors to explain *why* they can

now draw near to God in worship:

Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 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.

Precisely because our great High Priest has opened a “new and living way” for us through the sacrifice of His Own Flesh, we can now

draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith

So, God has promised to bless His people- *as they gather together*- through the “Ordinary Means” of two things:

1. The preached Word (rightly and fully interpreted)
2. The proper Administration of the Sacraments (as Christ intended)

... and with those “Means” Jesus Himself faithfully delivers our “Confession of Hope” within the context of God’s people, “assembling together for Worship.” This is the astounding Benefit of being a part of the Church. Because we help one another to hold fast to our Confession of Hope through ongoing Encouragement and Exhortation. But the \$64,000 dollar Question is:

How can I know this is true for me?

How can believers be rock solid and secure that we will indeed persevere and be made perfect in our Glorification? **Hebrews 10:23** tells us the Answer:

for [Because] He who promised is faithful;

So, the entire weight of our Expectation lies on the Promise that we find stated repeatedly and clearly throughout the Bible:

1. God is trustworthy
2. God CANNOT lie

Now the language of “Covenants” and “Treaties” is not common today. So, we usually talk more in terms of “Promises” and “Contracts.” And, sadly, we see far too many Promises and Contracts broken- in everything from Marriages to Sports Contracts.

But the Security of a Promise is dependent on the one who is *making* the Promise- NOT the one who receives it. And this is where the Beauty and Strength of the New Covenant shines the best. The Confession of Hope that we are to hold fast to- is NOT a Record of our own Works. Neither is it the Resources of our own Strength to persevere.

Our Confession of Hope reveals that we are “holding fast” to a Person- Jesus Christ- the only Son of God. He is our Righteousness; He paid our Sin Debt; and we have new Life in Him- as He is now seated at the Right Hand of the Majesty on High- faithfully interceding on our behalf! And that means that we persevere ONLY because our faithful God is preserving us in Christ through His Holy Spirit. To Him be all the Glory!

Now the next two words of verse 23- tells us just *how* saved people are to “**hold fast to our Confession of Hope**”:

... without wavering ...

So, we are to “hold fast to our Confession of Hope” without *fluctuating*; without *compromising*; without *vacillating or waffling*. And this has to do with *consistency*; and holding fast with purpose. But, once again, this has to do with saved people doing this- TOGETHER!

And so, while the “name of the game” in American entrepreneurship is “rugged *individualism*”- the entire focus of the Church in the New Covenant- is “humble and joyful *conformity*” to the Image and Likeness of Jesus, the Christ- by the Power of the Holy Spirit- to the Glory of God- together with other believers!

But that seems like an impossible task. We are beset by temptations and trials and persecutions and doubts of every sort. How in the world can we draw near to God? The writer tells us:

... with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith ...

But how do I know if I have the kind of heart that is full of assurance that true Faith gives? Again, the writer tells us:

... having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

Now, perhaps the single most common struggle among saved people is the Issue of Assurance. Sooner or later, most every believer comes to the realization that, as serious and he may be; as sincere as he may be; and as hard as he may be trying- he is a sinner. And as a sinner- he periodically fails to live up to the perfect Standard of Righteousness that God expects. And the Question that comes to his mind- goes something like this:

How can you say you're saved when you do what you do?

And many genuinely saved people go into total despair over their lack of being able to live perfectly before God. And then there is the phenomenon of understanding your Sin better; and seeing it more clearly and more often- the closer you come to Jesus. So, what do we do when this happens?

The writer of **Hebrews** tells us to renew the Gospel in our minds. This man infallibly teaches that the way to have the full Assurance of Faith- is to review what happened when you were first born again. Remember when you first heard the sound of Amazing Grace and you had your heart...

... sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

What did you do to open your own blind eyes? NOTHING! What did you do to unstop your own deaf ears? NOTHING! What did you do to take out your own stony heart and receive a heart that could believe? NOTHING!

God did all of that for you! *That* is the glorious *superiority* of the New Covenant! It isn't that you did something first and then God responded to what you did and saved you. NO! God did something marvelous in you- FIRST! SOVERIGNLY! ALL BY HIMSELF! And after that- you *responded* by turning away from sin and trusting in Jesus and in His finished Work! That is the very CORE of the biblical Gospel. You didn't earn it; you don't

deserve it; you didn't labor for it; you didn't pray for it; you didn't seek for it- and didn't even want it. God chose you. God called you out. God called you into. And God was NOT obligated to do this- but He WANTED to do this!

And *everything* you did since that moment- like read your Bible; pray; turn from sin; endeavor to live holy; testify to others; preach the Gospel; *everything* you did since God sovereignly and graciously gave you new spiritual Life- is merely a weak and frail and flawed human response to what He alone did in you!

THEREFORE- your labors; and your efforts; and your struggles; your desire- DOESN'T HAVE TO BE PERFECT! God is honored by weak and frail- but sincere- responses to His Grace- even if you think you're not accomplishing anything. So, LET US do this- together!

2) LET US hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful;

Christianity is the only religion in the history of the world that teaches that unworthy rebels are saved by what they *believe in*; and what they *confess*; and what they *trust in*- and NOT by what they do. But as life goes on- we are tempted to forget what we confess; and what we believe. And so, this writer tells us to "Hold Fast"- Don't forget; keep it ever before your mind and heart and eyes- the "Confession of our Hope". And to hold that Confession "Fast"- without any wavering; without any departure; without any straying; without any deviating.

So, we should constantly- individually as believers and collectively as a Church- rehearse the Biblical Gospel- in our minds- quietly and out loud- together:

1Corinthians 15:3-6

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep;

...and ...

Romans 14:7-9

For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

... and a whole host of other Scriptures. Or we could confess this:

I believe in one God,
the Father Almighty,
Maker of Heaven and earth,
and of all things visible and invisible;

And in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
begotten of His Father before all worlds,
God of God, Light of Light,
very God of very God,
begotten, not made,
being of one Substance with the Father;
by Whom all things were made;
Who for us men and for our Salvation
came down from Heaven,
and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary,
and was made Man;
and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate;
He suffered and was buried;
and the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures,
and ascended into Heaven,
and sitteth on the Right Hand of the Father;
and He shall come again, with Glory,
to judge both the quick and the dead;
Whose Kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost the Lord, the Giver of Life,
Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son;
Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped

and glorified;
Who spake by the Prophets.
And I believe One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church;
I acknowledge one Baptism for the Remission of Sins;
and I look for the Resurrection of the dead,
and the Life of the world to come. Amen.

... which is a 1700 year- old Summary Statement of what the Bible teaches about the Biblical Gospel.

But what will give us the Power to *maintain* our Confession? The writer tells us:

... for [because] He who promised is faithful;

Because God CANNOT lie and because He has proved Himself to be trustworthy- that is why we can maintain our Confession. So, LET US- do this- together!

3) LET US consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, 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.

Now, what is it that will help us to hold fast to our Confession of Hope? What is it that will give us the courage and strength to face the trials and tests of this life? What is it that will empower us to keep on-keeping on? EACH OTHER!

This final “LET US” is one of the most *important*, and yet one of the most *neglected* parts of the entire Bible in our day. Here, the writer teaches that the people, who make up the Christian Church, are to “Consider”. We are to think; to ponder; to imagine; to meditate; to mull it over in our minds. Well, what exactly are we supposed to “Consider”?

... how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds

Now there is a whole lot I could say about this. But one thing I want you to notice is that this is NOT a “defensive” position. This is offensive. This is action; this is going forth; and this is doing something. This has nothing to do with circling the wagons and trying to hold on until Jesus

comes back to rescue us from the dirty and evil world. No, this is something we are commanded by God the Holy Spirit- speaking through this unknown writer- to do- as we leave the comfort and safety of our own manufactured worlds and we risk everything in pursuit of obeying Jesus and of helping each other. This is what I meant at the beginning of my Sermon when I talked about living- purposefully; and living with meaning; and making our lives matter.

So, this is also NOT merely something we are to believe in and nod our heads in agreement to. No, this is something we are to experience and do. And who is to do this? The Pastor? Yes. The Elders? You bet. The Deacons? Yup. But this is for “**brethren**”. So, if you are saved- this applies to you.

So, according to the Holy Bible- every single member of the Church is to spend time considering just how we can...

... stimulate one another to love and good deeds

Now the word, “*stimulate*” here is first cousin to the word, “*encourage*”. They both have the same root. And the root of this word in the original Greek has to do with “*stabbing someone in the derriere with a sharp stick.*” And that’s why the King James translates this as “*provoke*”.

So, we are to *stimulate*; or *encourage*; we are to *provoke*; or *stab in the “double-wide”*- our brethren in the Church- to a higher and a deeper and a better example of both Love and Good Deeds. But notice that the writer says, we are to do this to “one another”. So, we need to be both the “stabbee” and “stabber”. We are to be the one who encourages others; and we are also to be the one who is being provoked or stimulated by others. And so, my Question is very simple:

How can anybody obey this Passage when we are NOT assembled together?

... and the writer answers this Question when he says:

... 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.

There is only one way to obey the Command to “stimulate one another to Love and Good Deeds”- and that is to “assemble together”; to “gather

together”; or to “come together”. And make no mistake about it- dear friends- this is a Commandment. So, the next time you hear somebody say to you that you don’t have to go to Church to serve God- let them read this Passage.

Those who *refuse* to gather together- are rebels. And those who think they are fulfilling their spiritual duties by sitting at their kitchen table and watching somebody preach on the Internet- are Self-deluded. How? Because they are NOT stimulating other believers to Love and to Good Deeds.

“Yea, but Brother Blair- Sunday is my only day off and I just want to sleep in and relax.” Fine- but just please be honest and don’t call yourself a Christian. And please don’t tell anybody that you believe the Bible is the Word of God. And please don’t try to get anybody to obey some other part of the Bible- until you are willing to obey *this* part.

Look, I didn’t write this Passage, dear friends- but I declare this is in the Bible. And so, when people begin to make all sorts of excuses about how hard it is to sit in Church for a few hours one day a week- please remember that all of those who lived when this was first written had a whole lot harder time than any of us.

Back then- Christianity was an illegal and persecuted religion. And it was almost certain, that if you publicly proclaimed Jesus as “Lord”- you would suffer and perhaps be killed. And yet the collective testimony of History is that they DID herald this glorious Gospel. And they DID gather together. And they DID assemble together. And they DID stimulate one another to love and good deeds.

But evidently, by 68AD- some had grown weary of well-doing. Some had taken their hands off the plow and began to look back. Some began to count the cost of serving Christ- even though they had not paid the price. And so, the writer tells us of a terrible spiritual disease that had infected some of the people of the ancient Church when he said,

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

Some had gotten so used to NOT gathering together- that it had become “normal” to them. The writer says it was a “habit” of some.

Today, in the 21st Century in the United States- the Lord’s Day is just another day. Stores are packed out; the movie theaters are full; sports and politics dominate the landscape- and the Church doors are locked; and the

lights are off; and the people are NOT gathering. But when we don't gather- the Church is NOT functioning; God is NOT being worshipped; the people are NOT being edified; and the stimulation to Love and Good Works is NOT happening. So, what happened? Why is this so different for us than for those who came before us? One word: Worldliness.

Worldliness is the insidious enemy of Christianity. And what makes Worldliness so terrible- is because it is NOT blatantly evil. Worldliness is described in the Bible in three ways:

1. The lust of the flesh
2. The lust of the eyes
3. The boastful pride of life

... now the root word for "lust" is the very same root for other words that are not so obviously wicked- like "desire" or "passion" or even "love". And the word Pride is also categorized as "Self-esteem". So, replace the words, "Lust" and "Pride" with one of these other words and you see a dramatic change:

1. The love of the flesh
2. The passion of the eyes
3. The Self-esteem of this life

Now I want to help you to understand the insidiousness of Worldliness by reading a very obscure verse found in **2Timothy 4:10**. And I have been saved for almost half a Century and I have never heard but one Sermon on this verse. And I'm the one, who preached it. Here is what the Apostle Paul said, as God the Holy Spirit "carried him along":

2Timothy 4:10&11

for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me.

So, here, toward the very end of his Ministry- three men have utterly forsaken Paul. The Call of God was too much for them; and they abandoned their post; and just walked off and left Paul to die alone. Just one man- a Gentile doctor- Luke- stayed. Everyone else left. Why?

Now we don't know much about Crescens. But whoever he was- he, at one time, had the privilege of ministering next to the Apostle Paul. Yet here- he just took off for the pagan areas of Galatia. But what caused a man like Titus, who was the Pastor on the island of Crete; and to whom Paul had written an Epistle. So, what caused him to just walk away from Paul and go to Dalmatia?

Paul gives us insight when he writes here about a man named, Demas. Back in **Galatians 4:4** Paul said:

Luke, the beloved physician, sends you his greetings, and also Demas.

... and over in **Philemon 23&24**- Paul wrote:

Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow workers.

... so, we know that Demas was in the "inner circle" of the Apostle. And yet, here in **2Timothy**- we see Paul saying that Demas had deserted him. Why? Paul said:

... having loved this present world ...

Now there isn't anything overtly sinful about going to Dalmatia; or Galatia; or Thessalonica. But the reason Demas left- was NOT because he was sick; or tired; or just wanted a break from the hectic pace that Paul, no doubt, lived. No, the Bible says that Demas left because *he loved this present world*. And the way this is written tells us that Demas loved this present world MORE than he loved Paul; MORE than he loved being saved; and MORE than he loved Jesus.

Dear friends, *this* is the horror of Worldliness on display. This is what Worldliness *causes*. Loving this present world MORE than Jesus- causes saved people- even Pastors- to just walk off. And the writer of **Hebrews** tells us that Worldliness had become so commonplace at the last third of the 1st Century that some had actually developed a "habit" of NOT gathering together on the Lord's Day:

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

So, God moved upon this unknown writer to give us the solution to this terrible problem. He said,

... but encouraging one another ...

Encourage one another. Stimulate one another. Hold one another accountable. Stick each other in the derriere with a sharp stick. When we see Worldliness beginning to choke the Word of God in a covenant brother or sister- don't wait! Go to them; pray with them; plead with them; encourage them- because the next step is the Word of God will no longer be fruitful in their lives and they will eventually just walk off.

And finally, the writer gives us the urgency of this Issue when he said,

... and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

.. and this Statement is attached to the two pervious Commands:

1. Not forsaking our own assembling together
2. Encouraging one another

So, we are to assemble and encourage each other- ALL THE MORE- as we see the Day Approaching! So, as we see the Day when the Lord will return drawing closer and closer- instead of assembling less and less- we should assemble ALL THE MORE! And as we see the Day when the Lord returns drawing near- instead of drifting apart- we should encourage each other ALL THE MORE!

And this tells us that living our lives with abandon to the Glory of God and to the benefit of other people- is NOT a waste. And it tells us that our lives matter- not only to God- but to our brothers and sisters in Christ. And this also tells us that when we get up in the morning- we must purposefully commit ourselves- all over again- to the great Calling in Christ Jesus- that not only rescued us from Sin and Damnation- but also united us together as members of the invincible Church of Jesus. And as an important and vital part of the Christian Church- we encourage one another to remain faithful, and fruitful, and busy- and we stimulate one another to Love and to Good Deeds- as King Jesus continues to build His Church so that it withstands the very Gates of Hades itself so that when Jesus comes back- He will find Faith on the earth!

Amen. Let's pray.

© 2008- 2018 by The Covenant of Peace Church. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America

The Covenant of Peace Church 13600 John Clark Road Gulfport, Mississippi 39503 228.832.7729

Scripture quotations, except those noted otherwise, are from *The New American Standard Bible* © 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

This is a single transcript in a larger series of teachings taken from a Study on ***“I Will Build My Church; the Purpose and Characteristics of Christ's Church.”*** You are free to reproduce it and distribute it as the Lord leads you- without cost or reimbursement to us with the stipulation that you may not add anything or take anything away from this transcript without the express written permission of The Covenant of Peace Church and that this complete copyright statement be at the end of all copies.

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.