

January 29th, 2012

Fellowship and Falling Away

Hebrews 10:19-39

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Sovereign Lord precious Lord, we come before You humbled by Your mighty hand. We recognize and see you as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the One who has revealed Himself to the world and demonstrated His power. And You have sent Your Son, our Lord, our King and have given assurance to all men everywhere that He has ascended and He will one day return to judge the living and the dead. You have given us all this assurance by raising Him from the dead Lord, and we see that the tomb is still empty. Lord as we look forward to that day, help us walk in a way that is pleasing to You. May we submit to Your Word, may we avail our-self of Your Word, as we know it is Your means to guide us, to lead us, to wound and to heal us. And today Lord as we peer into the inspired Book of Hebrews, help us understand, help us be humbled Father, and help us heed the things we read there-in. We love You so much and help us love You not in mere words, but in deed and in truth. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Warning signs, we see them every single day. We see them on the road, we see them in the work place, we see them on our computers. “Stop”, “Warning”, “Beware”, “Are you sure you wish to continue”, and such. Now some of these warning signs are benign. They are there are to watch out for us, but other ones are there for a matter indeed of life and death. Now most warning sign are there for our good, they are to warn us of things which will indeed harm us. Well the truth is God’s word is full of warning signs. Now some of them are very severe, and today we are going to look at one of the most severe and sobering warnings that we find in all of Scriptures and indeed in all the world. This is an inspired warning given to us by God Himself. Now today we are back in the beautiful Book of Hebrews and we are going read this morning, we are also going to see the calling to gather together as a means of avoiding this severe warning that we have been granted in the Scriptures.

Now before we read the text itself, let us remember the context of the Book of Hebrews. Now as we have seen throughout this book, the Book of Hebrews declares Jesus as “supreme”. Jesus of Nazareth is God’s Son, true God and true man and He has spoken. We see that from the out-set in the Book of Hebrews, He has definitively spoken through His Son and this Son is greater than all that was held dear under the Old Covenant. Remember the function of Hebrews was to warn the people from going back to the temple, to the matters of the Old Covenant, because that to which is greater, has come. So we see the author of Hebrews systematically demonstrate that Jesus is supreme. He is greater than the angels. He is greater than Moses. He is greater than all of humanity.

And over the last many messages, we have been in this lengthy section that declares that Jesus is the greatest priest. He is this great High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. Now this really was started in Hebrews 5 and if you recall we had a really severe warning in Hebrews 6. And that launches into the systematic and lengthy explanation regarding the dynamics of this great High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. And if you are understanding these passages, which I hope after these many sessions you have become more acquainted to them, these are some of the most beautiful, and heart-warming, and anchoring passages in all of Scripture, because they describe this great salvation that was given to us through the person and work of Jesus Christ. And we have been give this unshakeable assurance because He is the perfect priest, with the perfect sacrifice, and He always lives to intercede for us.

Thus we see this in Hebrews 7:25 this assurance, “Consequently, He is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.” (Hebrews 7:25 ESV) So we see this unshakable assurance being granted from the pen of the author of the Book Hebrews. But as we approach now the end of this section, there is going to be another severe warning. So it’s well documented and I think we should well recognize that this section which is full with some of the most wondrous truths of Christianity is book-ended by severe warnings. So we are going to read this warning and understand its place in Hebrews and its place in our very lives.

So if you have you Bibles, please turn with me to Hebrews 10. Hebrews 10, let’s begin by reading chapters 19 through 22, again recalling that this is building upon really the previous 5 chapters, “Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Holy places by the blood

of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.” (Hebrews 10:19-22 ESV)

Now I want to remind you of what the function of Hebrews was again. The function of Hebrews was to warn the people not to go back to the physical standing temple in Jerusalem, where the sacrifices were being made over and over and over again. The reason why he is exhorting them not to do that is because it is turning their back on the perfect sacrifice and the perfect King. It's a demonstration of an act demonstrating that Jesus is not sufficient enough for them so they are going back to the elements of the Old Covenant. So we see here that the author of Hebrews here telling us we have this confidence to enter the Holy places by the blood of Jesus. Now if you recall, he demonstrated earlier (Hebrews 10:1) that the earthly temple and tabernacle were just shadows of the Heavenly reality. So this is speaking of entering the Heavenly realities with Jesus as our fore-runner. So we see that therefore brothers and sisters, we have confidence to enter the Holy places by the blood of Jesus, that's speaking of the Heavenly tabernacle where God Himself dwells.

So we have this confidence, we know we can enter this new and living way that He opened for us through the curtain. Now again this is imagery that harkens back to what we have seen even in the tabernacle or the temple. There was a curtain that shielded the way into the Holy of Holies, which one person one time of the year could go into the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement, the high priest in Israel would be able to go, one person, once a year. Now we see that this new and living way He has opened for us through the curtain, that is through His flesh, that's speaking of His death on the Cross. He has opened for us through the curtain that is through His flesh, speaking of His atonement, offering His life to pay for our sins, and then proceeding to grant us His righteousness. We have this great High Priest over the house of God. We have this. He is our fore-runner. He has died and He has entered into the Heavenly tabernacle.

Now we see that, “let us draw near”. And just that statement right there is radical. Notice what he is saying “let us draw near into this Holy place!” In ancient Israel there was no “us” going into the Holy place. One person, once a year, so just that term “us” is radical. Let us as His

people purchased by His blood draw near. Now that is a temple term, “drawing near”. One would draw near to Jerusalem, one would draw near to the temple, drawing near with a true heart and full assurance of faith, with a heart sprinkled clean. Now again this is drawing on all these wonderful shadows that we see under the Old Covenant, that the high priest would sprinkle blood as he entered on that Day of Atonement. But now we see that our hearts are sprinkled by the perfect blood of the Son, thus enabling us to enter in, and our hearts are sprinkled clean from an evil conscience knowing that our sins are forgiven.

Remember the power of the New Covenant. The Old Covenant was certainly good but it pointed forward to the need for the new where God would go in and change the very heart. So heart sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. In ancient Israel to ascend to the temple one would need to ritually bathe in order to draw near, so was the high priest. And this was probably a reference to Baptism, our bodies are washed with pure water. Baptism is this sign, this sign that we have repented of our sins, placed our faith in Christ, thus this new life buried with Him and raised into the new life. So note we have this assurance this confidence that is only in Him. Let us draw near. Why? Because we have this great High Priest, that is why we have confidence, we don't have confidence in ourselves. The only confidence we have to draw near to this ultimate Holy place is because what Christ has done.

So to summarize here this is speaking of the Heavenly temple, the Heavenly tabernacle, where God Himself dwells and Jesus has entered as our fore-runner therefore we are able to draw near. We have an open standing invitation. It's not just once a year, this is an open standing invitation to draw near, to draw near. And I will get into more on to how we draw near as we progress here. But we see this being not just once a year, all the time we are invited, we have this standing royal invitation to draw near. And in Hebrews 4 (Hebrews 4:16) that we draw near so that we are able to receive grace to help in our time of need.

Alright let's continue here as we hear of more exhortations, in Hebrews 10:23-25 “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. (Hebrews 10:23-25 ESV)

The people in the context of which the author of Hebrews was writing, were being tested, they were being tempted. They had this history of Israel, God commanded them, all of these matters in regard to the Law of Moses, and they were seen as the outcasts. They were seen as were seen as the ones who were disobeying Moses. But remember what the author of Hebrews declared, “Jesus is greater than Moses” (Hebrews 3:1-16), it is to Him that we must listen. Moses points to Jesus. Moses, in Deuteronomy 18 (Deuteronomy 18:15-22) tells everyone to look forward and listen to the prophet who comes, which is Jesus. So let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering. We are to be rooted and secure in what? The supremacy. And so that extends beyond Moses. If anyone tries to draw you away from that hope you have in Jesus, and Jesus alone, you are called to hold fast. Hold fast your confession without wavering. Why? Because He who was promised is faithful, He is faithful. That is why we know we can hold fast because He is going to keep us and we’ll address that point in a moment.

But then we get this command, the command to gather together, the command for fellowship. “Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together as is the habit of some” (Hebrews 10:24-25) So there were many within that were forsaking fellowship and the command is to avoid that perilous practice. But rather consider how to stir up one another in love and good works. Why? Because the Day is drawing near. Now he is speaking of the Day of the Lord, the day when Jesus of Nazareth returns and everyone is going to be brought before Him. We see that day drawing near and we know that fellowship is a primary tool of the Holy Spirit, to guide, to lead, to correct, to nourish. It is so important that we gather together to stir up for love and good works. So we see the issue of endurance here and that will be re-addressed, and then we see the issue of fellowship. It is so important that we gather together as His people.

And now we get to this warning. And this is a severe warning, and it should scare you. Now let’s read it, Hebrews 10:26-29 “For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of

God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? (Hebrews 10:26-29 ESV) Indeed a severe warning.

Now this text, for really understandable reasons, has really shaken up a lot of people. For instance, when we see if we go on sinning deliberately, and some translations has it “sinning willfully”, I think a lot of people read that and go “uh oh”, sinning deliberately, sinning willfully, and we might ask what sin is not a willful act. It’s an act of our will. And I know when I first read this as a young Christian, it shook me, and it’s good that it shakes you. Because we know there is a Holy God and we know that sin is something that offends Him.

But it is so important to in this matter to take this within its context and understand what is going on. This text is not declaring that if you sin once after receiving the knowledge of truth, “that’s it you’re done”. In fact many within the early church, about 200 or 300 years after Christ, saw this as the case. In fact there were people who delayed being baptized, so they thought just at the very end of death, where death was maybe seconds away, so they maybe would not make this final sin. That is not what is being declared here. In fact, recall in 1 John (1 John 1:8) “If we say we have not sinned, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” Scriptures are very clear that we will continue to wrestle with sin until we enter glory. So what is being said here? There is an allusion here, there is an allusion to the Law.

And if you have your Bibles, turn with me to Numbers 15 and this will give us great insight as to what is going in this text. Ok I am going to read 27 to 31 (Numbers 15), now this is given in regards to the law and remember this is spoken to in this very text, “Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses.” (Hebrews 10:28), this is to what he is referring to and let’s read this, in verse 27 (Numbers 15), “If one person sins unintentionally, he shall offer a female goat a year old for a sin offering. And the priest shall make atonement before the LORD for the person who makes a mistake, when he sins unintentionally, to make atonement for him, and he shall be forgiven. You shall have one law for him who does anything unintentionally, for him who is native among the people of Israel and for the stranger who sojourns among them. But the person who does anything with a high hand, whether he is native or a sojourner, reviles the LORD, and that person shall be cut off from among his people. Because he has despised the word of the LORD and has broken his

commandment, that person shall be utterly cut off; his iniquity shall be on him.” (Numbers 15:27-31 ESV)

So this is to what is being referred to, here we have this unintentional and intentional or high handed sin. Now the unintentional is the sins that we go about as the people of God, we stumble, and those that repent, and they would be able to go the temple and offer up sacrifices, and under that there would be an act that would provide atonement for the people, in the midst of the congregation of Israel. But notice what the person who despises the word of the Lord. It isn't speaking of someone who just made a mistake or even sinned willfully in the sense of at time doing something out of pride or out of arrogance or foolishly, there's still room for repentance. This is speaking to someone who shakes his fist at the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and sets aside the Law of Moses and says "I will have nothing to do with that". That is what a "high handed" sin is. It is a blasphemous defiance, and thus that is sinning deliberately. It's knowing you are sinning against the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and doing it deliberately because you loathe Him, you loathe His Word. And thus we see here under the Old Covenant, it was commanded that such a person was to be put to death.

And we have explored Hebrews and we have seen that the New Covenant is greater than the Old Covenant. And that is what is going here, under the Old Covenant, physical death was the prescribed remedy. We are under the New Covenant and there is going to be a worse punishment, one that is eternal for one as we read that would trample underfoot the Son of God, profane the blood of the Covenant by which He was sanctified, and has out-raged the Spirit of Grace. (Hebrews 10:29) This is speaking of apostasy, a fall away, a turning your back on the terms of the Gospel, and doing such in a defiant way. That is what is being spoken of here. That is what "sinning deliberately" is.

They received the knowledge of truth, they know Jesus is real, they know the truth of the Gospel, and they willfully shook their fist at the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, turned their back. That is a person who is going to have worse punishment than the one who set aside the Law of Moses, because they are setting aside the terms of the New Covenant. And look at this, "how much worse punishment", notice these things who will "trampled underfoot the Son of God", this is speaking of figuratively, seeing it as a common un-clean thing. "Profane the blood of the covenant by which He was sanctified" and that is probably speaking there as "He

sanctified”, remember sanctified is “set apart”, I think in this context it means Jesus was the one set apart. The blood of the Covenant set Him apart as the greatest Priest, the greatest King, and the ones who profane are going to be punished, and finally outraged the Spirit of Grace. Do you notice the irony there? The Spirit of grace, of loving kindness, who brings the message of the Gospel to the nations, and when someone defiantly, blasphemously, turns their back and shakes their fist, remember the Spirit is God, true God, that outrages the sovereign Spirit of the Lord.

So this is a scary passage, this is a warning, a severe warning. And the calling is to cling to the King, cling to His Cross. Cling to the terms of the New Covenant because you are surrounded by a host of seductive influences that want to pull you away from the sufficiency of Jesus of Nazareth. And this is a loving warning because this is telling of the outcome of those who blasphemously shake their fist at Jesus, and His person, and His work. Now we see this fear, outraged the Spirit of the grace, that should cause us to tremble. And we know we are called to fear the living God, “For we know Him who said, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay.” And again, “The Lord will judge his people.” It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” (Hebrews 10:30-31 ESV) Again, the Holy Spirit is God, outraged the Spirit of grace, and He says “vengeance is mine”, He is the one who will repay.

Have you ever heard this quip? “The God of the Old Testament is a God of wrath, the God of the New Testament is a God of mercy and grace”. Have you ever heard that? Whoever states that is very unfamiliar with Hebrews here, very unfamiliar. God wrath is kindled even greater for those who profane the blood of His Son, and He says “vengeance is mine, I will repay, the Lord will judge His people”. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. So we see within the Book of Hebrews we see the Good News, and this is the bad news of the Good News. Is that humanity is now more accountable because God has extended His grace to them. Grace abounds, but the bad news still remains in that humanity is sinful, humanity is fallen, you are dead in trespasses and sin. And God’s Law, what we read of throughout both the Old and New Testaments, reveals the truth is everyone is a sinner. Everyone descended from Adam, saved that was born of a virgin, born in sin. And thus God wrath abides. But even from the beginning, God has had His plan, His plan of grace, and that is to send His Son.

The Good News, the Gospel is that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8) And the Good News is in the fullness of time that God sent forth His son, born of a woman, born under the law to redeem us. (Galatians 4:4-5) He was born, the Word took on flesh, dwelt among us, true God, the Word with God, and the Word was God (John 1:1), fully human, and we see that in Romans 8 (Romans 8:3-4) that He was “in the likeness of sinful flesh”, but without sin. And His goal, His mission, was to preach the Kingdom, to give us the unfolding terms of the New Covenant and to die, to die as this perfect Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. Death couldn’t hold Him, and three days later He burst forth from the tomb and that tomb has been empty ever since, it will always remain empty.

And the Good News has soared to all nations, repent and believe. Repent means to turn from sin. To believe, is to believe in the terms that Jesus has laid forth. If you believe in His person and His work, true God, true man, crucified, died, raised forever more, you will be saved! God takes your sin and has nailed it to the Cross and gives us the righteousness of the King. And these are the glorious things we have seen systematically portrayed in the Book of Hebrews. He is our great High Priest who has taken our sin once and for all, and He is the great High Priest who ever lives to intercede for us, to give us His righteousness. Right now the reason we are being upheld as His children is because He is there standing and interceding for us.

Thus we see the bad news. The Lord indeed is full of grace and mercy but He is also a God of wrath. It’s a fearful thing to fall into the hand of the living God, therefore if you have not believed, the call has reached you to repent and believe and you will become a child of God, not a child of wrath, because grace abounds. And now we see here that the stakes has been risen, there is more accountability and the Lord will indeed judge His people, so we do well to take heed.

Now we get to the proclamation of the need for endurance here in Hebrews 10:32-34, “But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one.” (Hebrews 10:32-34 ESV)

Because of the realm that they were in, the realm of temptation, the author of Hebrews tells them to recall, recall the former days, right after they were enlightened. Because they were believing in Christ they experienced persecution. Sometimes being exposed to reproach, other times standing with those that were treated such, sometimes needing to go to prison to visit those who were thrown in jail because of their testimony of the King. So there will be verbal slander, name calling, false hoods, you're exhorted to recall those things. And the reason why they are exhorted to recall, is because this is evidence of their salvation because they have a more abiding possession, and that is one reserved in Heaven. Why, why did they joyfully accept the plundering of their property? Because they knew that the Lord of Heaven and earth knows, that He watches, and that He will both repay and reward. That is faith. When you see what is seen taken away, and you place your hope in your treasure that is unseen. That is why you can take joy, faith acts in a certain way.

And thus we see in Hebrews 10:35-39 the proclamation of the type of faith we have, "Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. For, "Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him." But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and unto the preservation the soul." (Hebrews 10:35-39 ESV)

So don't throw away your confidence, remember we saw at the beginning "draw near" (Hebrews 10:22) with confidence and don't throw away your confidence it has great reward, but you have need of endurance. Continue in the faith, so that when you have done the will of God, doing the will of God is speaking of remaining steadfast under persecution, not throwing off your confidence, clinging to the Cross. Because in a little while, it's short, the older you get the more you realize how short life is. Decades are mere blinks of time and then we go before the Lord to give account. It is just a little while, and the coming One is coming and He will not delay.

Now notice, "but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him." (Hebrews 10:38) Now "shrink back" means to turn your back on the terms of the Gospel. In this context it would be to forsake the community, to forsake your faith, and to

return to the temple and to live as if Jesus never came. We have our own temptations. There is not a temple standing here, we're not tempted with that, but we have our own temptations of going back. And the call is you have need of endurance. So that when done the will of God you will receive that to what was promised. And we see here the Lord declaring "we are not of those who shrink back". (Hebrews 10:39)

Notice the assurance that is given. This is standard in the Scriptures. You have a severe warning, and then you have soothing assurance granted afterward. Recall in Hebrews 6, the severe warning that we read in verses 4 through 6, and then what does the author declare, "for we are convinced of better things in your case—things in your case that accompany salvation" (Hebrews 6:9). In the same way here, we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but are of those who have faith, a genuine faith unto the preservation of the soul. A genuine faith is unto something. Genuine faith means that we are Christ's and His preserving power is sovereign. Thus we have to the preservation of the soul. Thus we know we are not of those who will shrink back.

And we see this, those that have faith unto the preservation of the soul. Now this is going to be a transition now, that faith under the preserving of the soul, launching into Chapter 11. And if you are familiar with Hebrews 11, it is called "A Hall of Faith", where the author of Hebrews is going to give us a beautiful history lesson on what faith acts like. So that is where we will be going next is Hebrews 11 where we are going to see the descriptions and the dynamics of genuine faith.

Now I have three points that I want to consider today as we look at this difficult yet serious and important Scripture. And the first one is we are called as a people of God to receive and heed His warnings. So receive and heed God's warnings. God warns us for our good and later on in the Book of Hebrews we see this exhortation in Hebrews 12:25, there are several warnings though out the book. And the author of Hebrews declares "See that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused Him who warned them on earth, how much less will we escape if we reject Him who warns from Heaven." (Hebrews 12:25 ESV)
Receive and heed God's warnings.

Now there is this a tension here because we see in the very text of Scripture, we see these announcements of unshakable assurance. He is able to save to the uttermost those that draw near to God through Him. (Hebrews 7:25) And this echoed throughout the Scriptures, we see in John 10 that the great Shepherd of His sheep holds His the sheep and no-one is able to snatch them out of His hand. (John 10:1-18) In Romans 8 we read that “nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:39). So something that the church has wrestled with throughout its history, is why these warnings? Why? Well first off we need to know that we need to heed them. Before understanding what’s really going on, we need to make sure we understand, to flee from those things God warns about. But let’s think about this, how can these two things be reconciled? This assurance of salvation that can’t be lost, but warning against doing them. I am convinced that the Lord uses these things as a means to protect His people.

And let me give you an analogy, and I apologize if this has met your years before, but let me stir your minds up by way of remembrance. I want to present an analogy because a lot of people would say “well if you can’t lose your salvation or if you can’t forfeit your salvation, that warning is meaningless then. Why put up a sign when something can’t happen?”

Ok, well let’s interact with that. Let me give you an analogy. Let’s say a parent bring his children to a park. Now about a 100 yards where the park ends, there is a cliff there with no fence. No if you go off that cliff, its 500 feet straight down to jagged rocks with a pond with hungry alligators and great white sharks. Not good if you fall off that cliff, one way or another you’re a goner. So the parent that brings the children there puts up a sign, “if you proceed past this and fall off this cliff, you will die”. That is a means to keep the children away from that cliff. Now the truth of the matter is that the parent is going to be watchful, and if he sees one of his children drawing near that cliff, he will take his mighty arm, swoop it up and place them back where they should be. But does that negate the value of the warning? No! The warning is still valid, thus it is the same way with us. When we read these warnings, God has put them there to cause us to run away from that cliff so to speak.

Now we can rest in assurance knowing that the Lord is going to keep us from that but that still does not negate the fact we cannot refuse Him who warns. And if someone does end up falling off that cliff so to speak spiritually, we know the case is what we see it with Judas. “I never

knew you” (Matthew 7:21-23). So I think that it takes into account all of the Scriptural evidence and we see that interacting beautifully, its assurance and warning is there for our good. We walk by assurance and warning is there to keep us from that which will harm us. Thus we are called to pay attention to it.

The second point I want us to consider from this passage, is we are all called to obey the command to gather together. Remember what we read, (Hebrews 10:25), “do not neglect the gathering together as is a habit of some, but on the contrary do it all the more as you see that Day drawing near.” Now in our culture, many people see Church as an option and I even want to confront the notion of just going to Church. This isn’t just about going to Church. This is about fellowship around the Word and around prayer. It’s not about entering a building every Sunday or even twice a week just so you fulfill those commands. It is about obeying the command to gather together around His word and prayer. And remember what was spoken of in that text, so that we may encourage one another to love and good works (Hebrews 10:24). Fellowship, Biblical fellowship, is an essential cog of the Christian life, called to devote ourselves to fellowship, to Biblical fellowship. One devoted to the Word, one devoted to prayer, because this is where the Holy Spirit works powerfully.

Now remember the warning was don’t go back to the earthly temple, even though he doesn’t use these terms, he was exhorting them to make sure you are going to the other temple that is established now, the community of believers. And Paul notes that in 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, speaking of the church, this is about the body of believers because the “you” here is in the plural, “Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is Holy, and you are that temple.” (1 Corinthians 3:16-17 ESV)

So the author of Hebrews is saying “don’t go back to the temple and turn your back”. Now let me clarify that, now that doesn’t mean the disciples were discouraged from ever going to the temple for anything, this is speaking of submitting one-self to the Law of Moses. So don’t go back to the temple in a sense of going back to the Old Covenant. Instead make sure you are devoting yourself to Christian fellowship because God’s Spirit dwells within His people. And I want you think about something, because we often miss how important fellowship is, how important is that God uses other believers to sanctify us, to purify us, to keep us away from

that to which is wicked. I challenge you to think of anything positive, anything beneficial, anything wondrous in your Christian life and to find in some way that God didn't use one of His people in that endeavor. I'll just give you an example, the Scriptures. Even if I am sitting down in my room by myself reading the Scriptures, other people that have been used by God to teach me many things so that I am coming to the Scriptures with a clear mind. Furthermore God used thousands of people to preserve this Word, to translate it, to print it, and to bring it to me. We often think we are an island when the Lord in fact has used a host of people, and we remember that well when thinking of fellowship. It is in within the realm of Christian fellowship, devoting one-self to that where you experience some of the most bountiful work of the Holy Spirit. Because remember in 1 Corinthians (1 Corinthians 12), spiritual gifts. Spiritual gifts are given to one not for their own building up, but to the edification of the church. So brothers and sisters, obey the command.

And another thing we looked at the reward. If you want to store up treasure for yourself in Heaven, plug yourself into a Biblical fellowship and labor. For how can you live in love if you are not with your brothers and sisters in Christ and serving them, that is how we store up treasure in Heaven. There is a rich bounty in obey the command, to gather together, it is not a burdensome command. Yes I know sometimes we can get annoyed with people, but we are called to put up with such and pursue that which is for the great advancement of the Gospel and the glory of the King.

My final point today is we are called to endure in blessed assurance. It's important that we recognize both of those matters. We must endure, endure to the end. But we are called to go forth and endure not wondering whether or not our sin has been taken care of, not wondering or not if Jesus is caring and has to cross the finish line, not wondering if He goes forth and brings that trumpet call and send His angels that you will be one that is transformed and gathered. We are called to know that He has saved us and we are protected by the power of God for that Day.

And in 1 Peter we read many of these same truths expressed in verse 1 through 5, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to His great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in Heaven for you, (now

notice this) who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (1 Peter 1:3-5 ESV) That is a word of hope, of an anchored hope, not one that is wavering. Endure. Indeed you are going to suffer in this life. You are going to experience trials and tribulations. But in the midst of the lows and the highs, know that you are blessed as because you are guarded by God's power through faith, and that's salvation, and that is speaking of ultimate salvation, when we will come before Him and we will see that undefiled, imperishable, and unfading inheritance, we will see it in the presence of the King. Thus we are called to stand in faith. We are guarded through faith, stand in it and endure in blessed assurance. Because He who called you is faithful, He will indeed bring it to pass.

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