

DRAW NEAR TO ONE ANOTHER

C. Stephen David | *Ekklesia Evangelical Fellowship* | May 28, 2023

Introduction: From chapters 5 through 10:18, the author of Hebrews shows how Christ is superior to OT priests and OT covenant. From 10:19 to the end of the book, he brings practical applications based on doctrinal truths.

Three exhortations [believers bought by the blood of Christ]:

1) Hebrews 10:21-22, 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.

2) Hebrews 10:23, **Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering**, for he who promised is faithful. **[DRAW NEAR TO GOD]**

3) Hebrews 10:24-25, **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. **[DRAW NEAR TO ONE ANOTHER]**

Hebrews 3:13; 10:24-25: “One another” in Hebrews. [more than 40 times in NT]

- ▶ The Christian life is a one-another life. It is a life lived in the context of God’s community. It is a community life, not an individualistic life.

John Wesley: “There is nothing more unchristian than a solitary Christian.”

1. MEET

Hebrews 10:24-25, **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.

Neglect: It literally means to leave behind

The opposite word is devoted: The early believers were devoted to church fellowship (Acts 2:42).

Meet or assemble together: Grk “episynagōgē” – “the physical gathering of believers at a particular location”

In his comprehensive book, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church*, Gregg Allison cites: The visible coming together of visible people in a special place to do something particular stands at the centre of the church. Without the actual, visible procedure of meeting together there is no church. That is why everything in the church is concentrated on this procedure.

Sadness: We were at a house of a believing family on our visit to the US. They testified how still many people attend online church meetings in their church after the pandemic.

Quote from Covenanting with Christ's Church: A family cannot function by restricting its interactions solely through an online medium. Similarly, the life of the church is stunted when the church restricts itself to online meetings. Physical presence and face-to-face interactions are critical to build meaningful relationships. Technology should only be used as a complimentary tool. It should never bulldoze and substitute the physical life of the church. The very reason that God created us as physical beings declares the fact that interpersonal relationships are firmly built in the physical presence of one another.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer: The physical presence of other Christians is a source of incomparable joy and strength to the believer.

As is the habit of some: Some in the church have cultivated the habit of neglecting church fellowship. **Not occasionally missing but habitual negligence.**

Point: Not leaving the community but failing to attend the gatherings.

Caution: To neglect meeting together might end in apostasy at last [either going away from faith or remaining cold in faith]

Ignatius says, "When ye frequently, and in numbers meet together, the powers of Satan are overthrown, and his mischief is neutralized by your likemindedness in the faith."

Illustration of parents' influence on children related by C H Spurgeon: Josef Gabor grew up in Czechoslovakia when it was dominated by communism, and religion was despised as weakness. His father taught communist doctrine classes. But Josef's mother, who believed in Jesus Christ, took Josef and his brother with her to church. They got up early each Sunday morning and took a 3-hour train ride to Prague. Then they walked to the church and sat through a 2 1/2-hour service. After eating lunch in a nearby park, they returned to church for another 2 1/2-hour meeting. Then they took the 3-hour ride home. Today Josef Gabor is a missionary to his own people in Czechoslovakia. **When he tells about going to church as a child, his eyes fill with tears of gratitude for a mother who cared enough about his spiritual welfare to help him come to know and serve Christ.**

Frances Ridley Havergal (1836 –1879) was an English religious poet and hymnwriter, who eight reasons [cited 6 from 8] for attending church—especially on rainy days. **Her famous hymn— "Take My Life and Let It Be"**

1. God has blessed the Lord's Day, making no exceptions for stormy days.

3. I might lose out on the prayers and the sermon that would have done me great good.
4. For important business, rain doesn't keep me home; and church is, in God's sight, very important.
5. Bad weather will prove how much I love Christ. True love rarely fails to keep an appointment.
6. Those who stay home from church because it's rainy frequently miss on fair Sundays, too. I mustn't take one step in that direction.
8. I don't know how many more Sundays God may give me. It would be poor preparation for my first Sunday in heaven to have slighted my last one on earth.

2. MOTIVATE

Why should we meet together? How different are our gatherings from the gatherings of the world and social clubs? What is the essence of gathering?

Hebrews 10:24-25, 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.

- ❖ And let us consider [**give thought**] The present tense which calls for continuous consideration.
- ▶ **It is intentional** <not automatic, not natural, think of opportunities>
- ▶ **It takes efforts** <not passive, not by default>

Two kinds of Christians: Driven by **default** [by natural inclinations] and driven by **discipline** [make efforts to obey God's Word]

- ❖ how to stir up one another **<stimulate, sharpen others>**

Proverbs 27:17, Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.

KJV: And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.

Observation: Ephesians 6:4, Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger.

- ❖ **v.24**, how to stir up one another **to love and good works, <stimulate, sharpen others, provoke others to love and good works>**
- ❖ **v.25**, but encouraging one another, **<stimulate others, provoke others to love and good works>**
- ❖ **Focus on encouraging one another to become more loving and do more good works.** We must become and help fellow believers become so.

Steve Cole: It is impossible for the pastoral staff and elders of this church to shepherd everyone who comes here. For the body to be healthy, every member needs to take responsibility to encourage their fellow members.

How do you practically do that? Let us pray together, help together, evangelize together, read together, comfort together, correct and restore together, be accountable together in weaknesses, serve together, and reconcile relationships.

Note: Christian gatherings are not gossip centres or fun/entertaining clubs but encouraging communities.

Applications:

- ▶ Observe that it is after drawing near to God (**10:22**) that the Bible encourages us to draw near to one another. We cannot have meaningful fellowship and encouragement if we do not have meaningful fellowship with God. **Our encouragement to others flows out of our encouragement of our own souls from God.**
- ▶ If you want to live a serious Christian life and persevere in your faith till the end, then surround yourself with godly Christian fellowship and actively engage in church gatherings for mutual encouragement.
- ▶ **Spurgeon says** "It is not the work of the minister alone to exhort, but the brothers, and the sisters, too, should exhort one another and seek to stir each other up in the faith and fear of God."
- ▶ Be open and humble to receive encouragement from one another, as you would receive from preachers and pastors.
- ▶ **Legalistic and religious Christians, great tragedy:** Regularly attend the church meetings and hurriedly leave the church without desire and effort to know, and encourage one another to love and do good works.
- ▶ Make efforts to make our Christian gatherings an encouraging fellowship and not look like secular social clubs.
- ▶ **How to test Christian gatherings whether they are biblical?** Are we becoming more loving and doing more good works?
- ▶ Don't expect and become critical of others. Obey what God's Word says.

3. MORE

Hebrews 10:24-25, 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.**

All the more: Meet more often and encourage one another more

- This is done not only on Sundays but on other days as well.

Note: The Scripture doesn't explicitly say to spend time more in the workplace, or spend time more as a family [which is good and necessary], but it does explicitly say that we must spend time more together as a church to encourage one another.

Martin Luther spoke of the stimulatory effect of rubbing shoulders with the brethren: "At home in my own house there is no warmth or vigor in me, but in the church when the multitude is gathered together, a fire is kindled in my heart and it breaks its way through."

Caution: Beware of grumbling when the church meets more to obey God's exhortation.

- ❖ **Hebrews 3:12-13,** Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Every day: David L. Allen in his exegetical commentary of *Hebrews*, notes, "This statement and 10:25 may indicate that the readers met together daily."

Devil's scheme: To make Christians so busy that they don't have time to meet together for mutual encouragement.

Note: This is one great reason why you should be geographically close to the church so that you can meet more for mutual fellowship and encouragement.

- ▶ If people stay close geographically, it is not a guarantee but there is a great possibility for the practice of God's Word.

As you see the Day drawing near: In light of the Lord's imminent return <as the hope is near to fulfillment, time is near to future salvation, the judgment seat, time is less, life is short> **A SENSE OF URGENCY IS INDICATED FOR MUTUAL FELLOWSHIP AND ENCOURAGEMENT.**

Summary: Hebrews 10:24-25, 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.

Church Covenant 2: We will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together as a church for the purpose of worshipping God by learning and obeying God's Word, breaking bread, singing songs, praying together, fellowshiping and encouraging one another in the Lord. (Heb. 10:24-25; Acts 2:42, 46; Eph. 5:19)