

HEBREWS VERSE BY VERSE - The New and Living Way - Part forty-one

Sunday, January 28th, 2018 - 10:00 a.m. - Teaching #2025

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DOES GOD CARE HOW OFTEN WE GO TO CHURCH?

Hebrews 10:23-27 - "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. [24] And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, [25] 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. [26] For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, [27] but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries."

We looked at **verse 23** in last week's study but I'm repeating it here because it gives us a running start into today's text. What does our writer mean by "**the confession of our hope**" (23)? And what is involved in "**holding fast**" to it "**without wavering**?"

Then there's the strange way our writer connects his thoughts in these verses. Particularly difficult is abrupt change in tone when we come to **verses 26-27** - "For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, [27] but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries."

Where does all of this talk of sin and judgment come from in this text? **Verses 24-25** are all about loving and encouraging one another and going faithfully to church. And it's not just that our writer decides to change the subject in **26-27**. It's clearly **not** a brand new topic in our writer's mind. That little word "**For....**" at the beginning of **verse 26** indicates there is some kind of link in the Holy Spirit's mind between what was just said in **verses 24-25** and what he is cautioning in **verses 26-27**.

But these last two "**sin and judgment**" verses don't seem a very good fit with those first two "**going to church**" verses. It would make perfect sense if in **verse 25** our writer had said, "**Do not continue to blaspheme the name of the Lord,**" or, "**Don't continue in adultery or same-sex intercourse,**" and then went on with **verse 26** - "For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins...."

I think we could all feel the logical progression of sentences if that were the case. But as they're written, the flow of the sentences seems odd and out of place - **Hebrews 10:25-26** - "....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. [26] For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins...."

I believe **verses 24 and 25** tell us how to do what **verse 23** commands. **Verses 24 and 25** tell us how to "**hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering**" (23). And both the command to "**hold fast**" and the threat of "**wavering**" imply there may be more to holding on to "**the confession of our hope**" than is immediately recognized. We will need a disciplined plan to do this. Just **hoping** we'll do it isn't enough and just **dreaming** about it won't get the job done.

With all of that in mind, let's pick up today's text in **verse 24**.

1) WITH ALL THE THINGS COMPETING FOR MY TIME, MY ENERGY, AND MY WEALTH, THE GREATEST CONCERN OF MY HEART MUST BE LOVE AND GOOD WORKS THAT GLORIFY GOD

Hebrews 10:24 - "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works...."

There are different ways of describing a **group** of people. Our writer uses that frequently repeated designation, "**one another**." It's different from the collective term we so often use - "**us**." In fact the verse doesn't even read properly if you exchange "**us**" for "**one another**" - "And let us consider how to stir us up to love and good works...."

"**Us**" is more **inward** looking. It has more of "**me**" in it. "**One another**" is more **outward** looking. It's more **relational**. "**Us**" is a label. "**One another**" is an activity. And our writer says this needs **fresh consideration** each time we gather in Christ's name - "And let us consider how to stir up one another...."

That word "**consider**" is the same verb meaning "**to inspect**." It means to **examine** very closely - to **zoom in** on this idea. This is our writer's way of telling us how fearfully easy it is to have **lazy** thoughts about the

body of Christ. He's telling us how easy it is to have no specific **"one another" intentions** when we come to Cedarview Community Church.

Then our writer tells us the kind of **intensity** this **one another consideration** is to run in my mind - **Hebrews 10:24** - **"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works..."**

Some of you still have the old **King James Version** where it actually says we're to **"provoke"** one another to love and good deeds. And whenever we hear that word **provoke** we hear it in its **negative** sense - like **provoking someone to anger**. My mother used to tell the four Horban boys we were **"provoking her to death!"** I know that hardly seems possible when you folk see me today.

Truthfully, that's usually the way that word is used in the Biblical text as well. It's almost always used negatively - the way fathers are not to **"provoke their children to wrath,"** or the way Israel was repeatedly said to **"provoke the Lord."**

But the word isn't always used that negative way. The Greek word is **"par-ox-oos-mos."** The **NIV** translates the same word as **"spur on one another."** The **ESV** and **NASB** both use **"stir up one another."**

The idea in all of these is to **press for some kind of positive action**. It's a term that implies **motivating** something in each other - **firing something up** that too easily will quickly cool and dissipate otherwise. This is a humbling self-understanding. It's not a simple thing for Pastor Don to admit that left alone I don't have the inner resources to do very well spiritually.

In other words our writer is stressing **urgency** in this corporate ministry to one another. This **matters** more than whatever else I may feel pressing in on my time and resources. **Nothing deserves deep consideration like this deserves deep consideration.**

It's not just that **I** want to be encouraged and challenged and transformed when **I** go to church. It's that I can't go home happy unless **you** were encouraged and challenged and transformed when **you** went to church.

Again, the important point in our text is we are to go to church **"considering"** all of this. We're to come into this sanctuary **already thinking** about the kind of struggles people face. We should **know** some of these simply by remembering the kind of struggles **we** face. Only when we **"consider"** these struggles properly will we understand God **allowed** these struggles so we can better **"consider"** the struggles of others.

The point is this **"one another"** commitment needs constant **consideration**. Hurting people **forget** others are going through the same suffering. People who have just lost their job **forget** there are others who are also out of work. Those who have grown tired praying for an unsaved spouse **forget** there are others who feel the same pain of loneliness. Or, even more important, there are some who finally had the kind of answer to prayer others are still longing for. And the answer came long after they had almost lost hope.

And into this situation - into this church gathering - comes our inspired writer of Hebrews, shouting - **"Stir all of this up when you come together! Make something powerful happen! Look around you. Consider.** That's the **verb** in this sentence. That's the **divine command**. **Think about why you're there in the first place! It isn't just about you!"**

2) **THE WAY THIS DOESN'T HAPPEN - THE WAY GOD ISN'T GLORIFIED - ISN'T COMPLICATED**

Hebrews 10:25 - **"....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."**

Immediately you can't help but sense the contrast between those two words - *"consider"* (24), and *"neglect"* (25). We're meant to see the difference between the *mental effort* of considering and the *mental lapse* of neglecting. *Considering* is *refusing* to let something important become *neglected*. And *neglecting* is allowing something important to become *unconsidered*.

And here's the important difference. It's the negative *neglecting* that becomes *habitual*. The aggressive diligence of *considering* never becomes easy or habitual. It takes constant renewed effort and self-denial.

That's the reason our writer says of some people that they were *neglecting to meet regularly together as a matter of unguarded habit* - *"...not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some...."* This habit wasn't formed by *rejection*. It was formed by simple *neglect*.

We all know how this works. You *form* good habits. You *fall into* bad ones. That's what our writer says happened here. If you and your busy household, with your two or three incomes and your classes and your organized sports and your early commute are going to *form the habit* of consistent, time-sacrificing church attendance you will have to *consciously construct a life-style around that commitment*. It's never going to *fall into place*.

3) OUR WRITER TELLS US WHY THIS COMMITMENT IS WORTH WHATEVER SACRIFICE YOU HAVE TO MAKE TO KEEP IT

Hebrews 10:26-27 - "For if we *go on sinning deliberately* after *receiving the knowledge of the truth*, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, [27] but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries."

I don't imagine any of us likes the sound of those verses. They don't seem to fit with what we've just been considering. They're harsh sounding. The threat seems both *disconnected* and *out of proportion* to the crime of sleeping in Sunday morning or barbecuing Sunday night. That's what's wrong with these verses. We need to figure what's going on in this Spirit-inspired text.

That little word *"For,"* at the beginning of verse 26 means our writer *does* intend a connection between these two *sin and judgment verses* (26-27) with the previous *church attendance verse* (25). But what exactly is the *nature* of the connection? What is it we're supposed to see as we *connect the dots of meaning*?

Here's how I link these verses together. Start with good questions. Here's the very first one I ask when I read verse 26 - *What would make a person "...go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth?"* What would make a person - and verse 25 at least hints this person was at one time a church attender - what would make a person like that think his sin wasn't that sinful after all, or think his sin wouldn't be terribly self-destructive, or think God would never be as wrathful against sin as people say? Why would a person's mind go down that track? Why would anyone just *"...go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth?"*

And here's the culturally unacceptable answer. I believe our writer won't let us dodge in this text. For whatever reason, this person's *habit of continuing in sin even while knowing the truth coincided with this persons habit of not regularly attending church*.

And our writer means for me to ask another question. *Is this just a textual coincidence?* And the text tells me, *"No, Don. It's not a coincidence. It's cause and effect."*

Please understand. I'm not saying - and our text isn't teaching - there are *no Christians attending church who don't continue in sin while knowing the truth*. Clearly, there are. And our text isn't saying *attending church regularly is the only thing one must do grow in holiness and live in growing freedom from*

habitual sin. Clearly, there are other things as well.

But here's what our text *is* saying - and it desperately needs ***shouting from the rooftops for our self-loving, consumer oriented, pleasure-loving church. You will never overcome your own areas of blindness to your own habitual sin apart from regular disciplined attending a local church.*** Our text says God has so ordained it.

4) **WE NEED TO HELP EACH OTHER REMEMBER THERE IS A "DAY DRAWING NEAR"**

Hebrews 10:25b - "...and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."

The very first evidence of spiritual decline is when the warnings of the Scriptures don't move us. This first evidence always ***precedes*** the actual fruition of outward sin and neglect. To remain unmoved by warnings is to rapidly increase ***spiritual dementia***.

The second evidence of spiritual decline is when the future hope of that great ***eternal day of the Lord*** no longer motivates us. And that's what our writer encourages here. Rather than ***neglect*** he urges ***focus***. Rather than ***decrease*** he urges ***increase***. The direction needed as the Day draws near isn't ***less*** commitment but ***more*** - "***...and all the more as you see the day approaching.***"

Notice, we're to ***see*** the Day. Picture it now. Imagine it constantly. You will never regret heeding God's Word, whatever the cost is ***now***, if you live your life seeing that ***Day still to come***.