

Hebrews 10:19 – 11:40, Holding onto the Greater Than, Part 1

Hebrews 10:19-25

- 1) Introduction/Review
  - a) We now come to the beginning of the largely exhortation part of the book
    - i) The previous section was not without its admonitions and exhortations, but it was largely exposition on the superiority of Christ who is the greater than
      - (1) Greater than all prior revelations (thus the greater prophet)
      - (2) Greater than Angels
      - (3) Greater than Moses
      - (4) Greater than the Priesthood
      - (5) Greater than all the sacrifices that could possibly be offered
    - ii) We now turn our attention to the “so what.” We see the implications of these truths fleshed out in the form of exhortations.
    - iii) This first section has everything to do with holding onto Christ, by faith, from 10:19-11:40. From 12:1, we see the principle of enduring and persevering in the one who is the greater than and in all of Christian duty.
  - b) We have a summary in vv. 19-22 of what we have learned in the form of a “therefore”
    - i) Vv. 19-21: A summary of what has come before as the basis for the following exhortations
    - ii) v. 22: The call to draw
    - iii) v. 23: The call to hold on tightly
    - iv) v. 24: The call to consider one another in exhorting and encouraging each other to continue in love and good works flowing from drawing near and holding onto Christ
    - v) v. 25: The necessary context for fulfilling these exhortations: assembling ourselves together
- 2) First we have the basis for the following exhortations through a summary of what we’ve learned
  - a) Since we have two absolute and unshakeable realities laid before us
    - i) First we have confidence/boldness to enter into the holy places, that is into God’s presence on account of the blood of Jesus. That is, we have one, who on account of His superior person, His superior Priesthood, and His superior sacrifice who has granted us access. We saw this in 4:14-16
      - (1) Since the we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.
      - (2) That access is through a new and living way, not in accordance with the law which ministers death and condemnation, but rather in accordance with the new and living way which has torn down the curtain—that way is the flesh, the body, of Jesus put up on the cross. God incarnate in the person of Jesus for whom a body was prepared (10:5)
    - ii) The second reality is we have such a great priest who sits over and intercedes for the whole household of God

- (1) Review of what a priest is
- (2) He intercedes on our behalf
- (3) He, through His priestly work, ushered in a new covenant and was heard, on our behalf, on account of His own reverence
- (4) A priest whose ministry is not beset with weakness and whose priesthood is of a superior order
- (5) A priest whose sacrifice was himself and was offered once and for all time!
- b) Thus, we truly have a strong foundation upon which we stand.
  - i) We have no other footing on which we can stand
  - ii) We've learned, that to turn to another footing, is not to turn to something else, it is to turn to no footing at all (Wile E. Coyote over a cliff illustration)
- 3) The first Exhortation: Let us draw near
  - a) Draw near is the idea of approaching God, that is, since we have such a great entrance, let us enter. Let us look to God and call out to Him. We see that in drawing near to God, from James, the devil flees.
  - b) We draw near
    - i) With a true heart
      - (1) Sincerity?
      - (2) Or a heart made new by the truth
      - (3) It is a heart that does not presume upon God by means of thinking oneself as worthy of His ear. Rather we draw near through Jesus Christ. We draw near with humility knowing ourselves to be those who, apart from His grace, are worthy of but eternal condemnation in Hell
    - ii) In full assurance of faith
      - (1) From whence comes our assurance?
      - (2) But by looking to the one who is the greater than, by faith
      - (3) The first of the three postures of the Christian: faith, hope, and love
    - iii) Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience
      - (1) Again, our consciences have been made clean and we have been perfected
    - iv) And our bodies washed with pure water
      - (1) Ritual washings as an illustration?
      - (2) Water baptism?
        - (a) Paul, being received by Ananias after being struck blind and turning to Jesus was told: "Rise, and be baptized and wash you sins away, calling on His name."
        - (b) Inasmuch as our bodies have been washed with water, so our sins have been washed away. We learn that the washing with water does not itself wash away our sins, only the blood of Jesus does that. We do learn this: just as water removes dirt from the body, so the blood of Christ and the Holy Spirit take away our sins. In our baptisms, we received and sign and pledge from God of this: that we are as truly washed of our sins spiritually as our bodies are washed with pure water.
      - (3) So, we remember our baptism as a sign and pledge from God that our sins have been truly removed and we thus have clean consciences.
    - v) Because all of these things are true, we can, and we must draw near
      - (1) Pray, approach, worship, seek God

- 4) The Second Exhortation: Let us hold tightly to the confession of our hope
  - a) Without wavering
    - i) Steady
    - ii) Securely
    - iii) Tightly
    - iv) Not looking to the left or the right
    - v) Lot's wife looking back
  - b) Because the one making the promise is faithful
    - i) Hope does not disappoint
  - c) The confession: of our hope
    - i) What is our hope: that in Jesus God has fulfilled promise for us and has brought us into a new Covenant in Himself through Christ
    - ii) So, we hold onto that good confession of the gospel of Jesus Christ
    - iii) Here we also see the second of three postures of the Christian: hope
  - d) Also maintaining sound doctrine
    - i) We don't have a doctrineless confession or profession. The very confession, Jesus is Lord, is pregnant with doctrinal background and implications.
    - ii) Who we confess and what we confess go hand in hand. If we confess Jesus, but that Jesus is a different one from the "faith once delivered," then well, we're not confessing Jesus.
  - e) This is a fruit of our union with Christ
    - i) 2 John 9, Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.
    - ii) We see that right before that, "many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist.
      - (1) These are people who are confessing someone names Jesus. But the Jesus they confess did not come in the flesh (like an apparition, or that Christ was not truly human). Such people are confessing something, but they are not confessing Jesus.
  - f) The Third Exhortation
    - i) Consider one another
      - (1) Notice that the thrust here is not on considering how I might stir myself up. Rather it is about my brother and sister in Christ. I need you, and you need me, and we all need each other to be considering how to stir one another up to love and good to works
    - ii) To good works
      - (1) To works that God has laid out for us having gone before us. How to spur one another one in encouragement, exhortation, and admonishment
      - (2) To think of one another in our thoughts and lives
    - iii) To love
      - (1) That third posture of the Christians: love
      - (2) To loving one another in word and deed. To seeking the good of one another. To seeking the good of our neighbor.
- 5) The necessary context: the assembling of ourselves together

- a) The three exhortation are enveloped by these supporting ideas on either side, we dealt with the first earlier: the basis
- b) We now come to an exhortation, an admonishing one, that serves as the necessary context and a means by which we continue to draw near, by which we hold onto our hope, and in which we stir on another onto good works and love
- c) The assembling of ourselves together
- d) It is, I would posit, typically impossible, for us to continue to persevere in drawing near, for one to endure in the faith, to maintain sound doctrine, and to stir other believers on to good works and love (in the way spoken of here) apart from being united to and assembling with a local church.
- e) F. F. Bruce: “Paul had urged the Roman Christians to welcome one another for God’s glory, as Christ had welcomed them. But towards the end of the apostolic age we are made aware of a tendency in some quarters to withdraw from the Christian fellowship.
- f) Context: believers, understandably fearing persecution, were doing the sinful thing and playing with fire by neglecting to assemble together.
- g) *Επισυναγωγην*.
  - i) Root word of synagogue, the meeting of the Jews
  - ii) It is a marked out meeting
  - iii) Assembling, or gathering, is at the heart of the word behind “church.” *Εκκλησια*.
    - (1) It is an assembly or gathering that has been called
    - (2) The Roman senate was an assembly
  - iv) A little word: there are those who do to providential hindrance (e.g. deployment, illness, etc.) are hindered for assembling. There are those who are homebound and cannot assemble. We must rather go to them!
    - (1) Also those who are recovering from being wounded and hurt, in an extraordinary way, by church leadership. With such people patience and gentleness is absolutely necessary.
- h) Why is this important
  - i) Because we need each other: There is one body with many members. No member can say to another, I don’t need you. What is a hand without a body? Just a dead piece of flesh
    - (1) The text says we need to, rather than withdrawing from the assembly, to encourage/exhort/admonish one another. We need to admonish one another to come to assembly. We need to encourage one another in our pursuit of Christ and in faith. We need to exhort one another onto love and good works.
  - ii) Because God has ordained that we are not our own elders and undershepherds
    - (1) From Hebrews 13:17: “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.”
    - (2) From 1 Peter 5:5 we see that God has appointed elders to shepherd (lead, guide are for) the flock of God. They are to do so willingly and not as domineering overlords.
  - iii) We need the preaching of the word
    - (1) But I listen to you name it on the radio

- (2) That pastor isn't preaching with your spiritual needs in mind. He's preaching to where his own congregation is.
- (3) But I read the word everyday
  - (a) Yeah, and so did the greatest heretics in church history.
  - (b) We need the accountability of the church
- iv) Because we need the sacraments
  - (1) The sacraments gain their means as a means of grace from the word
  - (2) They minister to us Christ as He is present to us by faith.
- v) Because we need the fellowship and accountability of the saints
  - (1) We need accountability
  - (2) We need church governance (church discipline).
- vi) Because we need each other voices, each other songs, each others prayers, each others drawing near and holding on
  - (1) There are times when I am really despondent and have a hard time drawing near and feel like I'm holding on by a thread.
  - (2) I need to be with you all so I can hear and see you all draw near, hold on.
  - (3) Chad Bird, lost child, had a hard time singing. But, was encouraged to hear his fellow saints singing and rejoicing in the Lord. It drew Him near.
- i) How much moreso, when we are not under persecution, are we neglectful if we are neglecting the assembling of ourselves together.
  - i) Oh, we come up with all sorts of excuses, and make much of them.
  - ii) I'm too busy and have too much work. We have six days to do all of that. If we can't spare a couple of hours one day a week, we have messed up priorities.
    - (1) It also speaks much of what we really want. Under ordinary circumstances, we ultimately do what we want.
  - iii) I need time for rest and leisure. What can be more important rest than celebrating our rest in Christ. Again, we have six days in which to find time for leisure. It's an issue of time management and priorities
  - iv) There are too many hypocrites—welcome to the club
  - v) I'm uncomfortable around x person because they are weird
    - (1) And we're not? Secondly, let's get over ourselves
    - (2) On a related note, "I don't like when people other than the pastor try to give me exhortation."
      - (a) Again, get over ourselves
      - (b) Do we not hear the pride in that very statement
      - (c) Besides, we are called upon to exhort each other.
  - vi) Because the pastor won't ride my hobby horse
  - vii) Say one of us moves to another location and can't find a church with the details of the teaching we may want
    - (1) Either find one a good driving distance to which to go, and then find housing closer to it
    - (2) Or, recognize that we need the body and commit to a true church, though maybe not as reformed as we would like
  - viii) Such and such offended me.

- (1) My dear brothers and sisters, that is no excuse to absent ourselves from the assembly—from the means of grace. Rather, we must forgive. Hear our articles of faith on this.
  - (a) 26:13, No church member, upon any offence taken by a fellow member, ought to disturb the order of the church or absent themselves from its assemblies or the administration of its ordinances, on account of such offence, but should wait upon Christ in the further proceedings of the church, having himself performed his duty toward the person.
  - (b) If the offending party won't be reconciled and won't repent, then there's a process of excommunication.
  - (c) If the offending party has committed a grievous crime against us, then we should ensure that we involved God's servant of justice: the state, rather than absenting ourselves. In fact, I say this, if any one of you come to me and tell me that another member, or a leader, in this church has assaulted you or your children (in whatever type of assault there is), my counsel to you is to call upon that minister of justice and then call me. If I find out that one who can't defend themselves is the subject of such, then I'm calling them myself. It's better we do right than try to hide things.
  - (d) The church
- ix) There's not enough people like me (race, age, marital status, children, etc.)
  - (1) Again, let us get over ourselves and remember that every Christian is at. Our place. In. life. We are all fighting the same battle: the battle to hold onto Christ and to fight against our own sin. If it's social life and comraderie we're looking for, there's plenty of social clubs and fraternities. In fact, I encourage Christians to engage in such activities—it gets us out among unbelievers. And yes, we can have cordial relations with unbelievers. If its spiritual growth and accountability, any true church, any church that is true to the word, be they all old or young, black, white, yellow, red, or purple with white polka dots, is what you're looking for.
- x) John Calvin
  - (1) It is an evil which prevails everywhere among mankind, that every one sets himself above others, and especially that those who seem in anything to excel cannot well endure their inferiors to be on an equality with themselves. And then there is so much morosity almost in all, that individuals would gladly make churches for themselves if they could; for they find it so difficult to accommodate themselves to the ways and habits of others. The rich envy one another; and hardly one in a hundred can be found among the rich, who allows to the poor the name and rank of brethren. Unless similarity of habits or some allurements or advantages draw us together, it is very difficult even to maintain a continual concord among ourselves. Extremely needed, therefore, by us all is the admonition to be stimulated to love and not to envy, and not to separate from

those whom God has joined to us, but to embrace with brotherly kindness all those who are united to us in faith.<sup>1</sup>

- j) We are playing with fire, maybe eternally, when we try to go it alone
    - i) Brothers and sisters, the warning that follows this passage is preceded by this exhortation: not neglecting the assembling of ourselves together. We are sabotaging ourselves and risking the shipwreck of our faith if we are neglectful of assembling together.
- 6) Conclusion

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<sup>1</sup> John Calvin and John Owen, [\*Commentary on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews\*](#) (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 240–241.