

Hebrews 10:22-24 "Encourage One Another And Build Each Other Up In Christ"

HEB 10:19-24 "Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds."

Last week we saw how our writer made the comparison between the Most Holy Place, as it referred to the tent of Meeting in Israel, as they wandered the desert with God in their midst, and the Most Holy Place, as it referred to the very presence of God in heaven.

The earthly being a copy or shadow of the heavenly. We saw how the shed blood of Christ gave us a confidence or boldness to enter into the presence of God. This is not a boldness which is presumptuous or demanding, but a boldness which knows that God actually encourages us to come to Him. And so when Jesus says, 'Come', we can and should go.

And so this confidence in Christ's atoning work for our salvation should motivate us to approach Him in a way whereby we not only come as to a King, but also to know that we have access which allows us to enjoy fellowship with Him as a friend and a son or daughter.

As we consider these next few verses we are going to see the practicality of Christ being our High Priest and what He desires for us to do. Verse 23 "Let us draw near with a sincere heart..." Verse 24 "let us hold fast the confession of our hope..." Verse 25 "Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds."

Since we have such a great High Priest who has secured such a relationship for us, "let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water." (HEB 10:22)

If there's one thing we should be doing constantly it is being totally dependent on our Lord and Savior to the degree that we are drawing near to Him instead of drawing near to the world and its ways.

The idea of drawing near is to approach Him in an attitude of worship and reliance. There's the tendency to only draw near to Him when we're in trouble or we need something. We most certainly should draw near in those times but drawing near goes back to that relationship that God wants with us.

If you husbands drew near to your wives only when you wanted dinner, the house cleaned up or the kids put to bed, one would have to wonder what kind of relationship that was, or if it could even be considered a loving relationship.

And yet we do that with God so often in our lives. He wants us to draw near to Him continually. He loves our fellowship and we need to love His. But unless we are approaching Him in an attitude of worship, thanks, praise, as well as desiring to have our needs met, we relegate Him to someone like the person at the drive-up window at McDonald's.

We may drive through that window 4 or 5 times in a week to get something. But that doesn't constitute a relationship with that person. God wants a closeness, an intimate union, a love relationship where He is our all in all as we delight in His presence.

But we need to draw near to Him with a sincere heart. The word for sincere here in our text could also be translated true or truthful heart. And by that it means a right heart, a heart moved by the truth of the One who says, 'I am the way, the truth and the life'. It is Christ's life which enables us to come into the presence of God in this sincere or true way.

Vincent in his word studies of the N.T. say's, "Sincerity is included, but with it all that enters into a right attitude toward God as revealed in our Great High Priest, -- gladness, freedom, enthusiasm, bold appropriation of the privileges of sonship."

We can do this as believers in Christ precisely because our hearts have been sprinkled clean from the filth of sin which only brings death. He washes and renew our lives. That washing with His blood gives us full assurance to draw near to Him.

David also knew this assurance and the fellowship of God because of God's willingness to wash us from the pollution of sin which separates us from Himself.

PSA 51:2,7 "Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. 7 Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow."

Psalm 51 was written after the prophet Nathan rebuked David for committing adultery with Bathsheba and murdering her husband. David knew he was guilty, but he knew only God could absolve him of such guilt and reestablish the relationship based on a true washing; not a washing of the flesh, but of the heart and the spirit that only God can initiate and accomplish.

No mere man or animal sacrifice could give that kind of washing. Only a righteous and loving God. And Paul reminds the Corinthian church that they too should rejoice in this washing because they too, like all of us, were going to reap the penalty of sin outside of this washing.

1CO 6:9-11 "Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders 10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."

This is the hope we are given in Christ. This is what Paul told Titus in TIT 3:4-7 "But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life."

This is the hope we cling to in Christ. This hope is found not in the things of the world, it is found in a person.

HEB 10:23 "Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful."

You and I are given a hope. A hope is not something we entirely possess. A hope is something we may see from afar and yet what

makes hope hopeful is the one who gives that hope in promises He's made.

And so to hold unwaveringly, or as the NAS puts it, "to hold fast the confession of our hope", carries with it the idea of faith in a hope. That's the nature of faith. It won't let go, because it knows what it holds, even if it's only a hope of the reality to come. In fact that's what our writer speaks of in HEB 11:1 "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see."

But the hope is not promises alone that we hold on to by faith. Anybody can make promises. All of us here have been promised things by other people in this life. And all of us have been disappointed when they reneged on their promises in one form or another.

A mate promises to have and to hold until death do we part. A parent promises a special vacation with his children and it never materializes. A friend promises to always stand with you and then leaves when friendship costs them something in the way of commitment.

Promises are made all the time. But God does not give promises He doesn't keep. He promised Adam and Eve that He would send a Savior into the world to save us from our sins. He promised Abraham that through his seed this Savior would come. He promised and He came through as He always does, for it is impossible for God to lie, as we're told in Heb.6:18.

This is the reason we hold fast the confession of our hope. Because it's God who made the promise. And as we see at the end of verse 23... "for He who promised is faithful."

Once we begin to live in that reality that our hope in Christ is sure it lifts the burden of always wondering or doubting that maybe this is a hope similar to the one's received from people in this world, which don't seem to always come through.

No, we can "draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our body washed with pure water." NAS

We are now freed up from that burden of sin so that we can concentrate on the life we've been given in Christ. We are now freed up to walk in that hope and to go forward to be used by God to give this hope to the world.

We're called by God to be ambassadors for Christ in this world. An ambassador doesn't spend his time sitting in his own country or his own church as the case may be. No, he goes out into the highways and byways of a foreign country, or the world at large in our case, and faithfully represents the One who called us, who is Christ.

But to be able to do that work we need to understand something of our relationship with one another. Jesus Christ gives life eternal to individuals as each person personally accepts Him as not only Savior, but must accept Him as Lord, because that's who He is.

But our Lord places individuals in fellowship with one another. This is called the church. It is Jesus Christ who instituted the church, not men. Now it's true that men have in many cases tried to build Christ's church on their own wisdom, but simply because men may mess something up doesn't mean the institution is not of God.

But this institution is not like a worldly institution. You don't hear of the employees of IBM being called the Body of IBM. You don't hear of the employees of General Motors being called the Body of GM.

And yet we know that Jesus Christ Himself calls you and me, who are part of His church, the Body of Christ. We are a living organism, not a group of share-holders in an organization which only promises worldly dividends. I know as we look at different segments of the church at large it's hard to see those distinctions, but that doesn't mean we abandon the true Body of Christ made up of people who want to love and serve the Lord in a local church.

I've got a comic strip which was given to me a couple of years ago and it's placed strategically next to my computer where I can always see it. It's a Doonesbury comic strip and the setting involves two guys standing in front of a little sign which says, "Little Church of Walden".

The question is asked of one of these guys, who is the Pastor of this church, "So, how'd your new church get started Rev.? He answers, "Aerobics"!

"Aerobics?"

"I needed something to attract folks from the community. The focus group suggested an aerobics class." "It worked, so I added yoga and bingo. And then a few 12 step programs, and then we

opened a soup kitchen, which led to cooking lessons." "Before I knew it I had my own denomination."

The pastor's friend then responds, "Wow... so that's how religion spreads."

And this seems to be the trend in our world today. Give them what they want and call it religion, instead of give them the truth in love and don't be men pleasers, but God pleasers.

But as the Body of Christ we need to understand that we are not individual islands which can float here and there and then expect to be able to encourage one another and edify one another. Again, General Motors might have something to say if you decide', I'll work half of my week with Ford.

The unity is broken down, the vision is blurred and the objective is not reached. It's true that all of us in Christ are united to one another through a common faith and that in Christ there can be unity of the Spirit. But, I wasn't called by Christ to Pastor a church in Korea, Atlanta, or Punta Gorda. I am part of the Body at large which rejoices with them all, but it's in a local setting that the work gets done in a local area.

If a local Body of believers is trying to reach that community for Christ it would be very difficult to get the work done if everyone in that Body were disjointed and going off here and there and not being connected to one church. That doesn't mean we don't get involved with other churches or works, but it does mean that even in those instances unless there's a commitment to one body you can never really be effective trying to serve everywhere. And we'll see why in a minute.

But it's interesting that when Paul wrote his letters to the church, in most instances, he directed it to local churches. As Paul ended his letter to the church in Rome he said, ROM 16:3,5 "Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus. 5 Greet also the church that meets at their house."

Obviously, not all of the Christians in Rome met at their house. But Paul identifies a local body of believers as the church who met in their house. Those people chose to identify themselves with that particular church and chose to work in that church.

When writing to the church in Collosae Paul says in COL 4:15 "Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house."

Evidently, this woman opened her house for the Body of Christ, which was identified with her house, to meet and do the work in that community, as well as reaching out to other communities as God gave the opportunity.

But when people went out from the church, which previously met in the house of Nympha, to start another church somewhere else, the leaders in the home church were not obliged to lead the new church, unless they had no leaders.

Our writer of Hebrews says in HEB 13:17 "Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you."

That simply cannot apply except on some sort of local level. The people of Calvary Chapel in Tampa are not obliged to obey me as their leader or to submit to the authority I have here in Port Charlotte. And I am certainly not held accountable before Christ for them as one who watches over them as a shepherd.

Now the reason I even mention this aspect of the local body, and its responsibilities to that local body, is what our writer says in HEB 10:24 "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds."

This is part of what it is to "hold fast the confession of our hope" in the previous verse. To hold fast our confession before God is to also be responsible before God in edifying that local body in which He's placed us.

Again, we're not saved to be an island or act as though the Body of Christ at large is our personal smorgasbord where we can go here and there, take this or that, and create an eclectic approach to the Body of Christ on a local level.

The fruit of that only brings division and confusion. But, when our writer says, "let us consider one another" it suggests that there is an intimate communion with that "other", not only from a spiritual stand-point but from a geographic stand-point.

You and I are able to consider one another and encourage one another if we happen to live in other cities or states, but not in the same way if we are continually able to see one another in a worship or fellowship setting which happens to be local to one another.

Again, we can use the analogy of a husband and wife. There is no closer union and yet when one of them has to travel out of town for a few days that union cannot be nurtured long distance in quite the same way as when you can see them and hold them and look them in the eye to comfort and encourage them.

And so our text is saying that each person in a local body has a responsibility to every other person in that Body. And part of that responsibility is to consider each other for a specific purpose, which is to stimulate one another to love and good deeds.

How do you do that? Well, you can't do that effectively if you don't have a connection to them in some way. The connection is first and foremost Christ, but it's also in that local setting. In today's society it makes it hard to have that type of connection. But if we're committed to one another in a local setting we will be there for one another.

If you know someone is committed to the church to which you belong your motivation to minister to them is heightened because you know they will also be there for you when you need ministered to.

Of course, it's true you can minister to people who are not part of your church, but here in our text we're talking about being involved in the lives of people up close and personal with the express purpose of helping them grow in that local setting.

I've ministered to people in other churches and cities and I love them dearly. They're not part of this church. But I still pray for them and will try to encourage them as much as possible. But I have an obligation to you, to be there for you in a way I can't be with them.

I choose to spend my time with you, not with other believers in other cities. And because of that I know you appreciate that personal attention and commitment. You trust me because you know me and you know I'll be there for you. But that isn't limited to me. Each one of you in this Body is there for each other because you love each other.

And so, when one member hurts we all hurt. There are Christians all over this world who are hurting and yet you don't reach out to them in most cases because you don't know who they are or where they are. But you know the people sitting next to you because you're committed to them, not just to an organization called the

church. You're committed to them because of your close connection in this living dynamic group which is Calvary Chapel Port Charlotte.

Please don't misunderstand me. We should be praying for people around the world. We should be helping others outside of this church, we must be doing the work which takes us out of these four walls, but it will never get done and be applied in the same way if we're not building each other up so that we can be strong and courageous and bold in the power of the Spirit.

How do we stimulate one another to love and good deeds? The answer is quite simple. You personally be loving and doing good deeds. But above all, be loving God with all your heart, soul, mind and heart. If your love for Him is growing then your love for one another will be growing as well.

But you see the beauty of this lies in the fact that as you build up someone else with the truth of God's word, with the love in action which comes from Christ, then they will be strengthened to consider others, which would include you.

The hard part can be in the considering of one another. The flesh has a problem at times with that. The flesh likes everyone else considering itself, but when asked by God to consider others the flesh, or the old nature, can be very selfish.

The Greek word for consider actually denotes being very attentive of those around you. Again, this is best done when there is some sort of close proximity. Be very attentive and have continuous care for those Christ has placed in your midst. Be there for one another. When one's faith is weak, be strong for them. When one in our midst is grieving be there to comfort them.

When life seems to be confusing for someone in the Body be a rock they can lean on as they trust that you will lead them to the Rock of their salvation. But we must also stimulate one other so that *they* will love and *do the deeds* of God so *they* can be there for others.

There are times in our lives when it seems we can only receive. It's hard to give in those times. It's hard to be there for others. But we're told here that if that's the case then we should be helping those others to climb out of that mode. We're not called into the Kingdom of God to stay crippled all of our lives, not being able to be used to reach out to others.

This message in Hebrews is addressed to all believers be they 5 days in the Lord or 5 decades. All of us are to be considering one another, not just ourselves. Paul brings this out when writing to the Philippians.

PHI 2:1-5 "If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. 4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. 5 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:..."

This is very practical stuff. But it's meant to help us understand that Jesus sees each local body of believers as family. Yes, we belong to the larger family of God in Christ and that's a great joy, especially when God uproots you and plants you somewhere else. His people are everywhere and we can count on God having others for us to lean on.

But as a family we need to be there for each other. What excites me about this Body is the way in which I've personally witnessed how each of you is there for one another. And you may not even realize how you've ministered and stimulated each other to love and good deeds.

A phone call in the middle of the day. Having lunch with someone here in this Body and listening to their needs and being there to point them to their ultimate Comforter in Christ.

Loving each other will usually find its expression in a lot of little acts rather than in one or two big acts. And I think most of us prefer it that way. And that's what God teaches us. If we're willing to be there in the little acts we'll be there in the big ones as well.

Just be sensitive to the leading of the Spirit, be seeking the power of the Spirit, and be willing to walk in the Spirit and His truth and you won't be as willing to carry out the desires of the flesh, which does not put others first.

Thank you for being there for each other. May we build each other up with the gifts God has given us.

1TH 5:8-11 "But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope

of salvation as a helmet. 9 For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. 10 He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. 11 Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing."