

1/21/24

Good morning Cornerstone! It is good to be with you this morning. Thank you for joining us this morning. If this is your first time worshipping with us, I want to invite you to fill out our connection card. It just lets us get to know you a little more and be able to connect with you more. If Cornerstone is home for you, you can use our app to check in and let us know you are here. There you can also fill out a prayer request so we can be praying for you throughout the week.

We are going to be continuing our sermon series on Spiritual Habits. Where we have been studying the habits that we incorporate into our everyday life in order to grow in deeper connection to God and grow in maturity in our Christian walk.

Today our scripture is going to be found in Hebrews 10:19-39. If you have your bibles go ahead and turn there, if you would like to follow along with us. If you do not have a paper bible and would like one, we have some available for you in the back. You can also follow along with us today on the app with the scripture and our sermon notes available to you there.

But before we dive in the teaching today, lets read a part of our passage this morning together which comes from the book of Hebrews 10:23-25. So let us stand as you are able, out of reverence for God's word as we proclaim the truth in God's word.

SCRIPTURE Hebrews 10:23-25

"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."¹

This is the Word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

INTRO

Before we dive into this passage specifically we have to look at the context of this passage. This way we can know who the passage was written to and understand what was actually being said and to who so that we can know how to apply what is being said to our life. This is exegesis like we talked about 2 weeks ago.

Context

This was a letter to encourage the Hebrews that were living among the Jewish culture but were following the teachings of Christ and living in a Christ centered community.

These believers that this letter was written to were living in times of hardship. They were living in a predominantly Jewish culture, because of their beliefs, they would have been treated as outcasts. Those that sold goods would often lose customers because of their beliefs. They would have lost friends and family members because they believed Jesus was the Messiah.

This would have caused rifts in the community and would have caused doubt in their beliefs because of the hardship. It would have been easier if they left their beliefs to return to a right standing in the world around them. They probably began to think could have easily transitioned into the way things were and returned to their previous status in the community, avoiding the added hardship.

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Heb 10:23–25.

The author, which is unknown, would have been writing this as an encouragement to them. He was encouraging them to remain strong and confident in their beliefs as well as for them to remain faithful to the community of believers. Throughout the letter the author charges them to remain confident in what they believe. He spends the first 9 chapters just talking about all of the things that Christ accomplished. This would have been a way to solidify the things they believed and gave them more evidence and reasons to continue on in their faith in Christ.

In chapter 10 we see the author talking about the insufficiency of the sacrificial system. Where in the old testament, God established a system for the Jews to offer sacrifices for their sins. Not that the blood of the animals was able to redeem their sins but stood as a reminder for the sins that they committed and the cost associated with the sins.

This would have kept it fresh in the minds of the Jewish people when they participated in these sacrifices every year. They would be reminded they are a sinful people, fallen short of God's standard, and are in need of salvation that is only found in God.

Christ came to make the sacrificial system obsolete. The sacrifice of Jesus' life was the only thing sufficient to cover and atone for sin. By offering sacrifices of animals was a reminder for the individual household, Christ was the sacrifice for the atonement of the sins of the world. His sacrifice was universal. Meaning it is sufficient for all of the sins of those who believe. We also know that scripture tells us that even though it is sufficient to save all it is only applied to some based on faith in Christ.

Jesus' death was the sacrifice one time for the sin to sufficiently atone for all sin. Something that cannot and will not be done through the sacrifice of animals. When we arrive in verse 19, the author is going to dive into the realities of the community that exists among all of those who believe in the sacrifice of Christ and the work of God through Jesus. All of those that believe live together unified under the truth of the gospel.

BODY

Hebrews 10:19-22

"Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² 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."

The community that he is describing is a community of those that believe in Jesus. Those that have placed their faith in him and those that believe Jesus is the Messiah that came for the salvation of the world. The people that exist in this community have obligations that come with it. All of those that hold their confidence in the blood of Jesus are obligated to function as the body of Christ. Through the work of the Holy Spirit and through these obligations we grow closer to our savior.

Because of this belief, Christians follow a new way of living. This way of living is because we have been forgiven and redeemed through the death and resurrection of Christ. In that redemption all those within this community, Christ is working as the great high priest over the individual and over the community as a whole.

Because of this common ground among the people, we are to draw closer together fully confident in our faith and full assurance in our redemption of our sin. Through Christ we are cleansed by the shedding of His blood.

Our heart being sprinkled clean from an evil conscious is pointing to the internal change that comes from the salvation in Christ. When we are saved, we are indwelt with the Holy Spirit². It is a sign of salvation that the helper is to come³ to all who believe and obey the commands and teachings of Christ. Mankind was not able to resist the flesh before Christ.

Enmity was created between us and God as a result of the disobedience of Adam and Eve. It is Christ who was able to create the enmity between us and the enemy⁴. Because of Christ and because of his atonement for sins, we can now resist the flesh as a new creation. When we believe in the salvation through Christ we are no longer born into sin but redeemed into the new life in Christ.

This is the author pointing back to the sprinkling of blood as a ritual of purity⁵. This sprinkling of blood would purify the flesh, but the concern for the people of Israel was not that of the flesh but the eternal nature of their soul. The soul was in need of saving which required a change of heart to love and seek after God. This is why the sacrifice of Christ is necessary and important, the shedding of the blood of Christ cleanses the hearts and consciousness of people.

Our bodies being washed with pure water is addressing the sign of baptism. As Christians we know that baptism is important. We believe that it is a sign of our being united in death with Christ. It is also a part of our process of our sanctification.

The author brings it up to point to the ceremonial cleansing of the Old Testament and the cleansing that happens in our new covenant with Christ.

The 2 components that qualify these dynamics in this community. The community is to be of those that are unified in Christ and are unified in Christ death and resurrection. They have died to their old self and are a new creation.

The following is the dynamics that are to exist in the community of believers. **Hold Fast – Stir up – Continue Meeting**

Hebrews 10:23 “Hold fast”

“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.”

This idea or concept of ‘hold fast’ to the confession and hope without wavering is not saying never have doubts. Those come up naturally. Taking into account that the purpose of the author writing this letter to settle doubts and potential unbelief.

This is describing an unwavering disposition. We are to have a belief or a system of belief that is immovable. We do not falter in our belief in Christ.

² Acts 5:32

³ John 15:26-27

⁴ Genesis 3:15

⁵ Heb 9:18-22; Ex 24:8

This is a picture of a brick wall. Even though we are weathered down beaten and sometimes broken. We are repaired strengthened and strong because of the firm foundation in Christ. The belief that we hold to is completely well rounded therefore making it immovable.

The belief in Christ about the work that has been done in the past, the work that is currently being done in the present and the work that is going to be done in the future. We are fortified by our daily experiences and our reassurance in God's work of the things being done in the life of the believer, and the future glory that is to come. Christ created in us this immovable disposition. We hold fast and stand firm with confidence.

We remain unwavering in this disposition to the promises of God, not because of us, our faith or our understanding, we remain unwavering because Christ is faithful. Which is why it says, 'for he who promised is faithful'. Because He is faithful, he will fulfill these promises.

We are to first Hold fast to this unwavering disposition, but we are also to stir up others on in that disposition and righteousness

Hebrews 10:24 - "Stir up"

"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,"

In this community we are to stir up one another to the goal of love and complete good works.

Let's take a look at this word 'stir'. Some translations will translate it as 'spur' others 'stir'. It comes from the word paroxusmos (pair-o-zuchs-mos). The root word is oxys which means 'sour wine'. In this usage it means to provoke or urge on. Another variation of this word is used in Acts 15:39 to talk about the disagreement between Paul and John Mark.

This understanding is uncommon. It points to the fact that this stirring or provoking is probably not fun and can probably be like drinking sour wine. Before he explains what this stirring is supposed to do he explains this setting where the stirring and provoking is to take place.

Hebrews 10:25 – "Continue Meeting"

"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."

We are to provoke each other on when we are meeting together. In the modern age this is our Sunday church services, however, this is not exclusive to the Sunday morning service.

In the early church there was a set meeting of the entire congregation. The author of Hebrews doesn't refer to 'the meeting' but any and all meetings in this community. They are not to give up on meeting with each other for the purpose of the community.

There were definitely times that they met together for teaching and reading of scripture and there were leaders that would teach and preach the word of God to a congregation. However, this is more of a western idea. This idea of church only happening once a week and the rest of the week is spent doing other things. In the early church they would have lived in proximity and with deep social connections to each other.

The early church was a community. In an article written by Tim Keller on gospel coalition's website, he points out the 'social project' that was the Christian community. They were counterculture in many ways and were often rejected the ideas in the cultures that surrounded them. To some that saw these practices they would have turned their nose up at it. To others it created a draw on people curiosities to experience this community for themselves⁶.

They would have defined themselves morally in things they were willing to engage in and not engage in. Like the practice of maintaining reverence and exclusivity in a marriage. They would have been counter cultural in their forgiveness of enemies and generosity with their resources. This practice was not exclusive to just other believers or their particular racial associations.

This would have sparked curiosity in the people that observed this community and why many historians believe that the building of the church in the first century was so successful despite the severe oppression and persecution that they faced. For a community to create such a great impact it took more than just a once-a-week meeting, it was the community that made the impact.

They met in each others homes for the purpose of studying scripture on top of their regular meetings as a full congregation. These frequent meetings would have been intention and often for the purpose of increasing the knowledge of their belief system as well as strengthening their bond as a community.

It would have been necessary to forge this bond with the people that were a part of this community because their unity would not have been natural. In a book by Beverly Daniel Tatum, called "Why are all the black kids sitting together in the cafeteria". She studied this natural draw that we have to build relationships predominantly with people that are similar to we are. In the secular world people often congregate together based upon similarities and common interest. Factors like, race, social-economic statuses and common interest would be a driving force in their circles. If two individuals have nothing in common the relationship struggles to exist and often does not flourish.

In the body of Christ, often they are united solely by their common belief in the salvation found in Christ. The early church was multi-ethnic which was extremely uncommon in the 1st century. They would have had people apart of their community from all walks of life, upbringings, social-economic statuses, and cultures. Their meeting together regularly and often would have been strengthening a bond that does not come naturally and required investment in that common belief in order to forge the bond in the community.

In this connected community they did everything for each other and with each other. Their lives were intertwined. Not only did they study scripture together, but they did life together. They served together. They shared meals together. They were connected because all they had was each other because the world outside of their community rejected and opposed them.

Acts 4:34 says that there were no needy among them because nothing belonged to them as individuals, it all belonged to the community. Their kids were always cared for, their ministry to the community was always fully staffed, they gave meals to those who couldn't afford it or were injured and couldn't make it. They were connected deeply. They were unified as brother and sister in deep relationships, unified as the single body.

⁶ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/what-we-need-to-learn-from-early-church/>

The author of Hebrews is saying that we are not to give up meeting together because we are to provoke, stir, disagree and face hardship, drinking the sour wine and with each other because we are bonded beyond the convenience of our social structure.

Because this type of relationship where we depend on each other, live in deep community and this dynamic of stirring is going to be difficult.

Hebrews 10:26-31 – Stir to avoid sin

“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.²⁸ Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses.²⁹ 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?³⁰ For we know him who said, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay.” And again, “The Lord will judge his people.”³¹ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

This encouragement and stirring or provocation is about having relationships with others to avoid and helping others to avoid sin by calling each other out on it. The author is painting this picture of what happens when believers continue on in sin even after they have the saving knowledge of Jesus. Saying that if someone who receives the knowledge or truth of the gospel, if they go on sinning deliberately, they in turn nullify the sacrifice of Christ for the sins in their life. They should not expect salvation but judgement from God, because they are like his adversaries, which scripture tells us he will conquer and judge with fire.

He paints the picture using the punishment of the Old Testament where someone was put to death for deliberate sin. If that is the punishment that is permitted by God for men to carry out, imagine the greater punishment that is available to God. A judgement that completely decimates his enemies, stepping on them in victory.

There are great consequences to those who go on sinning and defile the blood of Jesus, the blood of the new covenant, that saves. This defilement of that salvation enrages the Holy Spirit. It should hold fear in the hearts of sinner to be in a position to be judged by a Holy and Living God.

Just to be clear this is not talking about wrestling with sin. Sin is a struggle we must fight against it. Paul talked about in Romans 6-7 about this wrestling that he goes through. Even how in this struggle with sin, he is not always victorious.

The author of Hebrews is talking about deliberate and intentional sin. Someone who sees and knows that something is wrong, and does not wrestle with the sin but permits, excuses or pleads ignorance to their engagement in it. As believers, we know what is in store for those who are lost and do not believe in God. Even more so we can grasp and speculate what is in store for those that know the truth yet reject, trample, and ignore it. This is why we work out our salvation with fear and trembling⁷.

⁷ Philippians 2:12

Because we know this, we as a community are to stir each other on to love and in good works. We as a community are tasked with reminding, provoking, stirring, and spurring on other believers to consciously be aware of the consequence of deliberate sin, but also help each other to move away and wrestle with those temptations.

Again, just to be clear, this is a confrontation of sin, not confrontation about preference. Just because you don't like something, does not mean that it is someone deliberately sinning. We know what sin is because we know what it is not. Sin is anything that falls short of God's standard. Things that Jesus taught and commanded. Things that are outlined as ways that we do not reflect the example of Christ.

You cannot provoke and agitate someone in the name of stirring each other to love and good works because you prefer things a certain way. You cannot confront someone because they wore a bright green shirt to church, and you just think its obnoxious, that's not a sin.

We are to stir each other up in these conversations to confront sin, to promote their ability to love and complete good works. Your opinions don't do that. Romans 2:4 says that it is God's kindness and patience are leads people to repentance.

These conversations are to be about deliberate sin and sin that is defined by the word of God, not by your personal opinions, convictions, or preferences. When we bring it out of the word of God, we are not the authority that calls out sin. It is not based on our understanding, but the sin is provoked and confronted by the authority of God through the believer. That makes a huge difference.

So, this stirring is not about wrestling with sin and temptation, and it not about your personal opinions, convictions or preferences. This confrontation is about engagement of a believer in intentional and deliberate sin accord to the parameters outlined by scripture.

This dynamic in the community among other believers is hard. I think the best way to illustrate this is baking. Some of you know this about crystal but she loves to bake.

A few weeks ago, she was using of those kitchen aid mixers to make whipped cream for the hot chocolate bar we had on Christmas Eve. As I was watching it, all I could think about is from the perspective of the things in the bowl, it was an aggressive process. I certainly would not want to be the heavy cream in there.

The process of turning heavy cream into whipped cream is agitating the liquid. At a molecular level, as the cream is stirred up with a whisk, the fat molecules in the milk start to join together and allow pockets of air into the cream. Which creates the structure of the whipped cream and gives it a completely different structure.

I think this is the picture that is placed in the trust and care of the Christian community. We are to do this with each other when we are living in deliberate sin. We are to stir each other up to completely change the structure of who we are, to be less like ourselves, and more like Christ. This process isn't fun, it can be painful, it can be offensive, and it can be a hard pill to swallow like drinking sour wine.

This kind of relationship can hurt. It can feel aggressive. It can be rigorous in how we labor over having these conversation in the hope that it would change the believer. Help them live into their identity as a new believer and their bond as a people that are cleansed and washed by the blood of Jesus. Even

though it is difficult and sometimes painful, it is necessary. In our church body, we are to stir each other up with the hope and trust that the provoking and agitation allows for Christ to continue to change the heart of the individual so that they continue in their sanctification.

Even when these conversations are hard and sometimes painful, we cannot give up meeting together, as some are accustomed to doing, like the author says. There were probably conversations like this that were happening in this community of believers, and it caused people to give up, walk away and decide that they do not want to be held accountable. But we can't give up. We have to maintain repair and improve on our unwavering disposition, our holding fast to our belief. That means even when we are confronted by others about our sin and we don't like it.

The Christian walk cannot be successful in the life of the individual without the community. It is not something that we can complete on our own. Church is not the mountains or the woods. It is not your sanctuary that you retreat to, to be alone. You cannot grow in our belief without the body of Christ.

American individualism has emphasized a personal relationship with God to the point that many people who call themselves Christians, think church is optional. But intentional Christian community is a nonnegotiable part of being a healthy and effective believer.

"Christianity is not a religion for solitude and solitary. The Bible knows nothing of solitary religion."—John Wesley

Peter when he was writing his first letter, he encourages church leaders to shepherd the flock. They are to shepherd graciously and eagerly being examples to the congregation. He says that church leaders are to...

1 Peter 5:8

"Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."

APPLICATION

Many of you know I love animal, which is why my house is a mini zoo, including the monkeys that are my children. So when I saw this comparison of our enemy and a roaring lion I had to dive into understanding this picture that Peter is using. Why a lion? Why this picture to help church leaders? Why are they to know this in order to help them shepherd their flock?

To the first century church in Asia minor, this would have been an illustration that the people would have understood. So, before I talk about it, I want you all to hear the lions roar. Let's turn down the lights and play this clip so you can hear it for yourselves.

[Lion Roar Clip]

Crystal and I a couple of year ago got to go to a tiger sanctuary, where they had several lions there that were roaring while we were visiting. I also went on a mission's trip to Africa and heard the lions roaring and night when we were going to sleep. Having heard it first hand, I tell you what the clip doesn't do it justice. It can be a terrifying thing to hear it in person.

2 things that I found interesting and apply to what we are talking about and I believe what Peter was illustrating.

First are the hunting tactics of a lion. Lions when they hunt never attack their prey when they are in their herd. It is too dangerous to hunt one among the group because the lions would have to fight, not just the animal they are trying to kill, but the other zebras, wildebeest or buffalo that would be nearby. In the herd mentality as a group they would fight off predators that threaten all of their safety. Lions will coordinate their attacks to draw out an individual from the herd or attack one that is alone and outside of the group. They will only attack the animal once they are alone and away from the protection of the herd.

The second thing is the lions roar is used as a means of communication but the lions in the wild almost exclusively roars at night. It can be used to help locate lions that are separated from the pride but it is predominantly done as an establishment of territory. A pride of lions will hold a territory, on the low end of about 15 square miles⁸. A lion's roar, if the conditions are right, can be heard up to 5 miles away. They will only roar if they are located centrally to their rage. The roar is to signify 'if you can hear me you are in my territory'⁹. It is designed to instill fear in potential rivals wondering into another lion's territory.

Think about these things when it comes to this depiction of the enemy as this roaring lion looking for something to devour. The enemy is attempting to mark his territory. He is roaring attempting to display himself as this formidable foe. He is attempting to strike fear in the heart of those that can hear him. If the lion is the enemy, then we are the herd of zebra.

The enemy cannot and will not attack the us that remain in the church. An individual should have reason to fear, a church does not. It is too dangerous for the enemy to attack one that is actively engaged in the church community, because he would have to contend with all of us. We as Christians, when we dabble in sin, deliberately committing sin by our own free will, we are wondering into the territory of the enemy alone.

As a church, as the body of Christ we are to stir each other up. We are to provoke, agitate and rigorously challenge and hold each other accountable to the truth of the gospel. So that we are stirring each other to love and to good works.

Having these conversations is one zebra to another saying, "don't wonder off, get back into the safety of the herd". Some realize this for what it is. A reality check to the error of their ways and respond in repentance back into the safety of the fold.

Others see this as a challenge and walk away because they don't like the reality. They don't like being confronted in their error. They don't like being told their wrong or being held to the standard of scripture. They don't like the idea of depending on people, or being bonded with people not like them or serving for the benefit of others, so they give up meeting together.

⁸ <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/the-truth-about-lions-11558237/#:~:text=Lion%20territories%20are%20quite%20large,down%20through%20generations%20of%20females.>

⁹ <https://lionrecoveryfund.org/the-complexity-of-lion-roars/>

When there are unmet needs among the community, when we give up meeting together when there are some of us that deliberately engaging in sin, they are signs we are not living up to the obligations of the body of Christ. Here's an unpopular opinion, if those needs are not being met, it's not the pastors or the leaderships fault. They play a part no doubt, they are a part of the body of Christ and should be working to meet those needs, but it should be the community as a whole that is working for that not just a certain group within the body. It is a group effort.

Are we desiring to be the body of Christ? Are we prepared to lean into the hard stuff, admit when we mess up and use it as an opportunity to grow closer together?

If we are, why are you not serving? Why are we not engaging in bible studies or small groups? Why are you not intertwining your live with the people in the body? Why are we building relationships in the common things in the flesh and not the common bond that we have in Christ?

The church is designed with specific dynamics. When we engage in them the way that we are supposed to, we grow as individuals, and we mature as a body of believers. When we engage other believers in the way the church is supposed to we are protected as the dangerous group the enemy cannot and will not attack because we are a unified body.

We all need it. It is not just for some, but it is for all that identify with the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. If you want it and know you need it, dive in. Invite people to your house for a meal. Ask others how you can help in the areas of need in the body. Serve in the things that the church is doing. Build relationships in the small groups as they intertwine their lives and grow closer as brothers and sisters.

Be prepared for everything that comes with that. We are to hold each other accountable as we wrestle with sin. We are to know the truth and stir each other on to live faithfully according to it. Because that is the body of Christ.

PRAYER AND REFLECTION