

WHY WE NEED TO GO TO CHURCH

Hebrews 10: 19- 25; 1 Thessalonians 4: 13- 5: 11; text: Hebrews 10: 25

July 11, 2021

I. Attending Church or Not

- A. Increasingly today, many of us who confess to be Christians are feeling church isn't worth the effort to stay awake or to even attend.
1. People often give the excuse that they're too busy.
 2. But that is kind of an excuse, because all of us somehow manage to find time for what we think is important to us.
- B. Hebrews 10:19- 21 points out that we come to God through Jesus Christ, who is our high priest.
1. In the Old Testament, people came to the temple with their sacrifices for their sins, and they came to meet with God there.
 2. We don't need priests and temples anymore.
 3. 1 Corinthians 6:19 say we are temples of the Holy Spirit.
 4. "Why do we need to go to church?"
- C. Yet, in our text we are told to do so.

Hebrews 10:25 (NIV) Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

1. How did the writer of Hebrews reach this conclusion?
2. Why does God, who inspired this writer, tell us that we must do this?

Questions:

- 1) Have I ever felt tempted to just skip going to church on a Sunday? Why? What persuaded me to come this Sunday?
- 2) Does my job make it difficult for me to attend church? How can I respond to that challenge?
- 3) Did I worship at home during the COVID pandemic? How? Should our church continue to make online worship available? Why or why not? Have I spoken with the pastor and/or other members of the church council about my thoughts on this? Do I think that those who are able to come to church should do so even if the services are online? Why or why not?
- 4) Do I only worship and praise God when I am in church on Sunday? Why or why not? Even if I praise God throughout the week, why is my praise on Sunday something special?
- 5) When our text tells us to not neglect to meet together, is this a command or just a suggestion. Why do I say that?

II. Working to Achieve the Goal of Our Salvation (of Our Being Accepted by God in Christ)

- A. The end of being accepted by God is to have eternal life.

John 3:16 (NIV) "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

1. But as we saw last week, eternal life is not just eternal existence, it's not just avoiding hell, and it is not just eternal existence in a nice place

John 17:3 (NIV) Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

2. Eternal life is to know God and have a relationship with him, through our Savior Jesus Christ.

- B. Like all relationships, this most important relationship takes effort.

1. Once God accepts us as his children, we can't just sit back and assume that we can live any old way.
2. We must strive to with all our effort to live as children of God.
3. And that is what our scripture calls us to do.

- C. And it calls us to so in three ways.

1. First we must work to build a strong faith and trust in God.

Hebrews 10:22 (NIV) 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.

- a. Our struggle against sin is not only a struggle to overcome our sin.
 - b. It is also a struggle to believe that God still loves us and will accept for Jesus sake in spite of our sin.
 - c. In fact that's why, in spite of our failures, we are able to continue to struggle against sin.
2. Because God is faithful, we must hold on to the hope that we will be victorious in our struggle

Hebrews 10:23 (NIV) Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

3. We must strive to be loving people, who love God above all and neighbor as ourselves.
 - a. We must show our love by our good deeds.
 - b. And we must encourage our brothers and sister to do the same.

Hebrews 10:24 (NIV) And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.

Questions:

- 1) Why are those mistaken who believe that God will always accept them if at one time in their lives they said they believed in Jesus and were baptized, despite the fact that their lives have not changed and they are living as they always have?
- 2) Although it is true that Jesus saves us from eternity in hell, why is true salvation much more than avoiding hell? Why is it much more than going heaven when you die? What is true salvation and when does it begin? What does salvation mean to me?
- 3) What can I do to help my relationship with God to grow?
- 4) Why are those who are not growing in faith, hope, and love probably not Christians?
- 5) Is it difficult for me to strength my faith, hold on to my hope, and to truly love God and others? Why or why not?

III. Understanding How the Church Helps Us Do That

A. One important way that God helps us accomplish all this is through the church and our faithful attendance there.

Hebrews 10:25 (NIV) Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

1. In our NIV Bibles this looks like a fourth thing we are called to work on.
2. But in the original Greek this verse is connected to verse 24.
3. The NRSV translation helps us to see this more clearly.

Hebrews 10:24-25 (NRSV) And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

4. If we read those two verses together we find that the way we provoke each other to good deeds is by not neglecting to meet together.
 5. And by implication this also is the way we help strengthen one another's faith and hope.
- B. In 1 Thessalonians 4- 5, we find how we who meet together in church can accomplish this.**
1. In both chapter 4:18 and chapter 5:11, we are called to encourage each other, and in the later verse we are also called to build one another up.
 2. That word "encourage" in the original Greek is *parakaleo*, which literally means "call alongside of."
 3. That is one important reason why we gather together in worship.
 - a. The songs we sing in praise to God are songs that encourage us in faith and hope during the week.
 - b. We also celebrate sacraments to remind us God's grace.
 - c. We hear sermons that call us to faith, hope, and love.
 - d. We fellowship afterwards, and can use that time to speak encouragingly with each other.
 4. The other Greek word that Paul uses in chapter 5:11 is *oikodomeo*, which is rightly translated, "build one another up."
 - a. It's the same word that is used to describe what construction workers and carpenters do.
 - b. In this case we are called to build each other up to be the new people Jesus saved us to be.
 - c. Several ways attending church helps do that are through the preaching of the Word by which are instructed on how we must live, through the sacraments that remind us of our unity in Christ, and through our singing and fellowship by which we practice our love for God and each other.
 5. We are not just called to be encouraged or to be built up, but to encourage one another and to build one another up.
 - a. We do this by showing up for worship and by worshipping with joy and excitement.
 - b. In so doing, we show your brothers and sisters that we care about them, God's church here.
- C. Hebrews 10:25 ends with the words, "and all the more, as you see the Day approaching.**
1. The Day refers to the time when Christ will return to judge the world.
 2. Certainly we need to meet together that we might be ready for Christ's return by our being built up in faith, hope and love.
 3. We also must encourage one another to keep struggling during the difficult days that will come just before he returns.

Matthew 24:10-13 (NIV) At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.

- D. 1 Thessalonians also tells us about the end of our race when Jesus returns.**
1. First, we are reminded that he may return for us at any time, and Paul instructs us in words of hope that we are to repeat to encourage one another when he comes to take loved ones.
 2. And then in chapter 5 we read about how our faith, hope, and love will be tested during this time before he comes back.
 3. And it is in the midst of such challenges that Paul reminds us to encourage and build up each other.

Questions:

- 1) How specifically can attending church help me in my relationship with God?
- 2) How specifically can attending church enable me to help others in their relationship with God?
- 3) How would I respond to someone who told me that while they thought going to church might help others grow in faith, hope, and love, they don't think that it is all that helpful to them, so they really don't need to go?
- 4) Why is it especially challenging today for us to grow in faith, hope, and love? How might going to church help? Why do I think that people who live in areas where they are persecuted for their faith, make extreme efforts to attend worship.
- 5) How can I encourage my brothers and sisters in Christ to attend church?

The same God who set the date for his Son's return has also set the course of our lives. He put us in church together, because he does not intend for us to run alone. So, let us run with perseverance the race set before us. (Hebrews 12: 1b NIV) And let run together as church. For it is in running together that we will all finish the race.