

Hebrews 10:19-25

A Three-fold Exhortation

Let us draw near...Let us hold fast...Let us consider one another – vv. 22-24

When we eventually get to the end of this epistle to the Hebrews you'll see in 13:22 that the author of the epistle identifies his epistle as *a word of exhortation*. An exhortation is a call to action. These calls are varied throughout this epistle and there are many of them – no less than a dozen. They are readily identifiable by the phrase *let us*. We've seen that phrase 5 times already.

- Heb 4:1 *Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left [us] of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.*
- Heb 4:11 *Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.*
- Heb 4:14 *Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast [our] profession.*
- Heb 4:16 *Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*
- Heb 6:1 *Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God.*

This epistle, just like any doctrinal epistle in the New Testament demonstrates to us the close connection between sound doctrine and right living. In each of the verses I've just cited you find the word *therefore* in all but one of them and in that one you find the phrase *seeing then*.

In most instances these “therefores” point us to the previous verses and those previous verses set forth the doctrinal truths that lead to the calls for action. 4:14 may be cited as a good example because in that verse the argument leading to the exhortation is contained in the same verse. Notice what it says – *Seeing then that we have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God* – Do you see the truth that the author wants the reader to perceive? *Seeing then* – or because you perceive this truth about Christ – because you understand and acknowledge and believe that he's our great high priest and that he's passed into heaven and that he is Jesus, the Son of God – because you see these things I hereby exhort you and exhort myself as well – *let us hold fast our profession*.

This formula of doctrine leading to exhortation certainly demolishes the notion that a right understanding of doctrine isn't all that useful or necessary. The notion has been too widespread for too long in many evangelical circles that doctrine is not what's needed but practical Christianity is the order of the day. We don't need doctrinal preachers, we're told, we need practical preachers.

And because of this rationale there is often times an emphasis on relationships and the practical aspects of Christian duty to the exclusion of what is supposed to fuel our

motivation for duty. And where such an imbalance prevails duty becomes a form of forced compliance which leads to the Christian life becoming a heavy burden or else the Christian ends up deceiving himself and basks in self-righteousness. The relationship between sound doctrine and right practice must be mastered so that right thinking will lead to right living.

Now in the portion we've read just now from Hebrews 10 we find this formula of doctrine leading to exhortation occurring again. You could say that we have in vv. 22 – 24 a threefold exhortation. And this is what I want to draw your attention to today – this threefold exhortation –

Let us draw near – Let us hold fast – and Let us consider one another

Consider with me first of all:

I. The Substance of This Three Fold Exhortation

Let's consider here, simply, what we're called to do. We're called upon in v. 22 to *draw near*. And the meaning is quite simply that we're to draw near to God. Paul has given this same exhortation in a different fashion back in Heb 4:16 *Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*

The fact that this exhortation would be repeated certainly indicates to us, doesn't it, that it's a very important matter to draw near to God. This is our privilege as Christians. This is what enables us to know spiritual vitality in our religion.

And if you have any appreciation for the character of God and the nature of fallen man then you'll recognize at once what a gracious privilege it is to draw near to God and to have God draw near to you. In our Scripture reading this morning from Isa. 57 we read a verse that is very rich in its theological teaching about God.

Listen carefully to the words of Isa. 57:15 and notice in particular the statements about God: Isa 57:15 *For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name [is] Holy; I dwell in the high and holy [place], with him also [that is] of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.*

The first half of this verse emphasizes the truth of the transcendence of God. The transcendence of God refers to God being above and beyond us. He is the high and lofty One. He inhabits eternity. He is, in other words, from everlasting to everlasting. And he is Holy in his character which speaks to us of his purity. He is personally holy and the place where he dwells is the high and holy place.

When viewed this way we can't help but conclude that God is unapproachable. There is no drawing near to him especially by creatures that are tainted with sin. Listen to the way Paul speaks of Christ in 1Ti 6:16 *Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom [be] honour and power everlasting. Amen.*

But now back in that verse in Isaiah 57 the second half of the verse stands in stark contrast to the first half of the verse. Let me read the whole verse again and note the contrast between the two parts of the verse: Isa 57:15 *For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name [is] Holy; I dwell in the high and holy [place], with him also [that is] of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.*

The One who inhabits eternity who dwells in the high and holy place will also dwell with the one who is of a contrite and humble spirit. We can draw near to him and he will draw near to us. This is our privilege and to the degree that we heed such an exhortation to draw near to God to that same degree our religion is lifted out of the realm of abstract theory and brought into the realm of our everyday living.

The problem with the Hebrew Christians is that the severe circumstances of life were so pressing them that their religion became lacking in vitality. Their religion became just so much theory and they were tempted to believe that they were following the wrong theory about the Messiah. It certainly is a sad and ironic phenomenon that the very circumstances that should drive the Christian more to Christ instead drive him away from Christ. We fail to draw near as we ought. So we have this aspect of the three fold exhortation. We're to draw near to God.

We're also exhorted in v. 23 *to hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.* Don't let go of the One who would never let go of you – that's what Paul was saying to them. Though you may be tempted to think that God has let go of you and that you, in turn, should let go of him – that temptation can only hold sway when you walk by sight rather than faith. And as we move through chp. 10 and into chp. 11 of this epistle we're going to see the importance of faith. Look at what v. 38 tells us *Now the just shall live by faith.*

Faith must accompany our drawing near to God. We're to *draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.* I think you could say that there's a definite purpose behind the order of these exhortations. If we'll draw near with a true heart in the full assurance of faith then we will also hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.

And in order to see both of these matters through, the third exhortation enters the picture. Notice what it says in v. 24 *And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.* We need each other. We're to serve each other. I believe the way this exhortation is to be practiced, quite simply, is to take one another to heart.

This, of course, requires us to assemble the way we do on the Lord's day and the way we do in prayer meeting and the way we do through social fellowship between ourselves. Christians cannot advance or persevere in isolation from each other. We need to exhort each other to draw near to God and we need to exhort each other to persevere in the faith and we need to encourage each other by being able to share among ourselves how precious and how real we find Christ to be. This is how God has designed the body of Christ to

function. So we have this three-fold exhortation in its substance – we’re to draw near and we’re to hold fast and we’re to consider one another to provoke unto love and good works.

Would you think with me next on:

II. The Basis for This Three Fold Exhortation

We don’t find in any of these exhortations the formula that I described in my introduction. The word *therefore* does not appear in any of the verses that contain these exhortations. The formula, however, is readily found by noting the connection between vv. 19-21 with vv. 22-24.

Notice v. 19 *Having therefore* – here is our *therefore*, and I think the meaning here is simply this – because you have something you should do something. And the something we have is revealed in the rest of v. 19. Indeed if you read vv. 19-21 you discover that the Apostle is referencing two things that we have. The first thing we have is *boldness*. *Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.*

The word is the same here as the word we read back in 4:16 *Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace*. And the word means confidence or freedom. We’re not now thinking of self-confidence – that’s not the meaning of boldness, but we’re thinking of the confidence that we gain *by the blood of Jesus – having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus*. His blood is the basis of our confidence. And the fact that we’re approaching a throne of grace is the basis for our confidence.

And it is this confidence in the blood of Jesus that provides for us the freedom to approach God. True freedom, you see, is a spiritual concept. We do well to keep this in mind when we hear that term bandied about in political discussions. There are Christians today who live under oppressive regimes who nevertheless enjoy freedom from sin’s guilt and sin’s dominion even though they may not enjoy political freedom. And there are many inhabitants of our own country – the land of the free – who are nevertheless slaves to sin and slaves to guilt and slaves to their vices in spite of their political freedom.

Our freedom from sin’s guilt and sin’s dominion cannot be taken from us by some form of change in the kind of government that rules over us. *If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed* (Jn. 8:36). And so it is this freedom based on the blood of Christ that opens the way for us to gain access to the holiest into the very presence of God. We are confident because we know what the blood of Christ has accomplished. We gain our confidence in knowing that our sins are washed away. We gain our confidence in knowing that Christ is the propitiation for our sins. We gain our confidence in knowing that we have been redeemed by the blood of the lamb.

This is the first thing we have, then – boldness, or confidence, or freedom. The second thing we have is revealed to us in v. 21. Note the words *And having an high priest over the house of God*. The word *having* you’ll notice is in italics but it’s an appropriate supplied word by the translators of the AV because it is referring to the first term *having* back in v. 19. We have boldness and we have an high priest over the house of God.

The priesthood of Christ, of course, has been the focal point of the last number of chapters in Hebrews. We have a priest that is superior to the Aaronic priesthood. We have a priest that is after the order of the priesthood of Melchizedek. We have a priest who offered a superior sacrifice because he offered himself once for all for our sins. We have an high priest that has sat down at the right hand of God. Earthly priests never sit because their work required perpetual standing because their work could never come to completion but Christ's priestly work of offering himself can and did come to completion and so we have an high priest that is seated in the heavens.

It is these two things, then – boldness and an high priest over the house of God that we possess. We have boldness and we have an high priest. On the basis of what we possess we are to draw near and hold fast and consider one another. And to the degree that we are aware of what we possess we will heed the exhortation. If we have faith in Christ then we will be convinced, based on his atoning death, that we do have boldness or confidence because we have Christ as our high priest.

And so once again you see a connection between doctrine and exhortation. Our boldness springs from our understanding of the doctrine of salvation. And our understanding of salvation comes in large measure from our understanding of Christ's priestly ministry. The thing the believer needs to be most convinced of, then, is not merely that it is his duty to draw near and hold fast and consider one another. He needs to be deeply convinced in the depth of his soul that his sins are washed away and that he's free from sin's guilt and sin's power and that Christ is his high priest over the house of God. If he's convinced of what he possesses then he'll give heed to what he's supposed to do.

And we've seen so far the substance of the exhortations – draw near, hold fast, and consider one another. And we've seen that the basis for the three fold exhortation is found in what we have – we have boldness and we have a high priest over the house of God. Would you consider with me finally:

III. The Motivation to Heed the Three Fold Exhortation

Now in a sense we've covered this point already because the basis for the exhortation provides motivation to heed the exhortation. Do you not find an internal compelling force within your heart that says to you *I must draw near to God because I have the freedom and the confidence to do so. I must hold fast my profession because I have a high priest in heaven. I must consider others to provoke them to love and good works because of the confidence I have that Christ is mine and I am his.*

The basis for the three fold exhortation should light a fire in your heart that compels you to heed the exhortation. There are, however, some other reasons that closely tie in to what we've considered that I would like to leave with you in closing.

There is the motivation that arises from our cleansing. Note again the words of v. 22 *Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.* Sin, you know, is what keeps

us from drawing near to God. Sin is what made us unable and unwilling to draw near to God. *But your iniquities have separated between you and your God*, Isaiah writes in Isa. 59:2 *and your sins have hid [his] face from you, that he will not hear*. But through our cleansing in the blood of Christ the barrier of sin has been removed. 1Jn. 1:7 *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin*.

Apart from such cleansing we would never dream of drawing near to God. We would cry, instead, to have the rocks and mountains fall on us if they might somehow hide us from God and from the wrath of God that our sins call for. Our sins motivate us to hide from God the way Adam and Eve sought to hide from him but our cleansing motivates us in the other direction. I am compelled to draw near to God, now, because I can draw near to him – he desires us to draw near to him and we’re exhorted to draw near to him and so we can and must draw near to him for he’s the one that’s provided for our cleansing.

Full assurance of faith is another motivating factor revealed in v. 22 *Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith*. The fact that the matter of our salvation can be free from doubt becomes a compelling force of motivation to draw near to God. *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life* (1Jn. 5:13).

I can remember years ago getting into an argument with a professing Christian over the issue of eternal security. This man didn’t believe in it. He thought surely it must be possible for a Christian to lose his salvation. And I remember saying to him *wouldn’t you like to believe such a thing as eternal security if you thought you could?* And replied that it would indeed be desirable to believe in such a truth.

Thank God this morning we can gain full assurance of faith and we can gain it because we understand what Christ has accomplished as our high priest. We understand that in looking to ourselves we could never gain such security but in looking to Christ alone we can’t help but believe that his atoning blood must and will prevail for the salvation of all who believe in him.

So our cleansing motivates us to draw near to God and our full assurance of faith motivates us to draw near to God. Notice with me the motivation to hold fast our profession which is given to us in v. 23 *Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering*; and now comes the motivation force for doing just that *for he is faithful that promised*.

God is true to his word. The promises of God are yea and amen. This is something that we at times find difficult to grasp because we live in a culture where lying is so common that it practically has become acceptable. Experience teaches us in this sinful world to be suspicious of everything. And for this reason God sees fit make it a point of emphasis that he is not like us in this regard. 1Sa 15:29 *And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he [is] not a man, that he should repent*. And as Paul writes to Titus in the opening words of that epistle:

Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness; In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began (Titus 1:1,2).

In contrast to sinners that know all too well how to lie our text tells us that *he is faithful that promised*. And what this means is that his invitations are true because he is faithful. When he invites us to come and promises to save those who do come through Christ we can be sure that the issue of our salvation becomes settled.

God's faithfulness to his promises must be the thing that sustains us when the circumstances around us tempt us to doubt that faithfulness. It is only when we walk by sight rather than faith that we make the mistake of doubting God and harbor the notion that something actually could come between us and love of God.

Where we are certain that God is true and faithful to his word then we'll affirm with Paul that *neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 8:38,39).*

And then notice with me finally from v. 25 that there is the motivational factor of a coming day. *We are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

Some commentators view this coming day as referring to the destruction of Jerusalem – others view it as referring to the day when Christ returns. The two interpretations have something in common – they both refer to periods of judgment. And so I take the approaching day to be judgment day.

Here is the motivation for considering one another to provoke unto love and good works – there's a judgment day coming. The dread of that day can be a motivation force but the anticipation of that day in accordance with the gospel can be a motivation force also. That will be the day, you see, in which believers will be openly acknowledged and acquitted before God's judgment bar and the saints will be made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God forever.

While there are dreadful aspects to that day, to be sure, there are also blessed aspects to it and both aspects of the approaching day should prompt us and compel us to take one another to heart. I would hate to see anyone here lose out on such a day because of a failure to draw near to God or the failure to hold fast and endure or the failure to consider one another. And so we find this threefold exhortation – let us draw near, let us hold fast and let us consider one another. There is a good basis for heeding these exhortations. We have gained boldness and have a high priest over the church of God. May the Spirit of God Himself compel us to heed these exhortations by stamping on our hearts all that we are and all that we have in Christ.