

Text: Heb 10.24-25

The message of Hebrews is that Jesus Christ deserves total submission from every other human who ever existed.

- Jesus is better than angels
- Jesus is better than Moses
- Jesus is better than Aaron
- Jesus is better than Melchizedek
- Jesus is better than the totality of the revealed religion of the whole Old Testament

Consequently, the author of Hebrews urges us by three climactic exhortations:

1. Let us draw near to God
2. Let us hold fast to the confession of hope
3. Let us consider one another

Today's message is about that last exhortation.

We considered this passage during the Covid unpleasantness because some teachers wanted to press the meaning of the text beyond the scope of its meaning.

I don't want to rehearse that today!

Rather, what I want to spend our time on is absorbing exactly what it is the author of Hebrews is urging us to do.

Read Heb 10.19-25, text 24-25

Before we get into the text, I'd like to talk about what it is like to be a member of a large church.

Most of my life, I've been part of small churches. I grew up in a small church in Alberta. I knew everyone, everyone knew me.

When I went to college, I visited various churches, most of them fairly large, and I visited mostly anonymously. No one in those churches knew me.

My third year there, I worked in a small church in Georgia as part of my training. Later, after I got into graduate school, I worked in another small church in North Carolina. Everyone knew me there as well.

After those churches, I met this girl, and she was part of a large church...

So, I joined the large church. I became active in the church, teaching in Sunday school, and involved with various other classes in the church (these were smaller groups within in the church). I got to know the pastor a bit, and later as Debbi and I were married we taught a different Sunday school class together.

In that church, I knew a lot of people and a lot of them knew me, but I didn't know everyone and everyone didn't know me.

That church had around 4,000 members, with average attendance around 2,500 each Sunday.

After that church we came here and started this church. In case you haven't noticed, we aren't a big church!

Now the large church I was part of, the reason anyone knew me at all there was because I got involved. It was totally possible to attend every Sunday, every service, and go home without really getting to know someone.

Today there are so-called "mega-churches" who report attendance and membership in the tens of thousands. How is that even possible? It is very easy to be anonymous in a church like that.

The author of Hebrews probably couldn't imagine life in a church like that, and in some ways, it is hard to imagine such large churches are really what the Lord had in mind when he said, "I will build my church."

So, what did the Lord have in mind? Our passage tells us.

Proposition: The care of other believers is every believer's responsibility.

I. The focus of the exhortation (24a)

A. A matter of triads

1. The triad of Christian graces
 - a. Faith (22)
 - b. Hope (23)
 - c. Love (24)
2. The triad of Christian focus
 - a. Upward – draw near to God (22)
 - b. Inward – hold fast the confession (23)
 - c. Outward – consider one another (24)

B. On the translations

and let us consider how to stimulate one another (NAU)

And let us consider how to stir up one another (ESV)

And let us consider one another to provoke (KJV)

1. No quibble on any of these translations, they are all accurate
2. The KJV follows the Greek word order, in keeping with the original emphasis

C. The purpose of considering one another: to stimulate/provoke

1. The subtle difference in the translations:
 - a. NAU/ESV focus the consideration on stimulating/provoking
 - b. KJV focuses the consideration on “one another”
2. The meaning of stimulate/provoke
 - a. We get our English “paroxysm” from this Gk word

1. *Medicine.* An episode of increased acuteness or severity of a disease, *esp.* one recurring periodically in the course of the disease; a sudden recurrence or attack, e.g. of coughing; a sudden worsening of symptoms.

2. An outburst of violent controversy; an open quarrel or schism. Now *rare*.

3. a. A violent attack or outburst of emotion or activity. Frequently with *of*. **b.** The extreme stage of an action or episode; a high point, a climax.¹

- b. The English paroxysm is mostly a negative word (a paroxysm isn't a good thing)
- c. The Greek word likewise has a mostly negative connotation (as does the English “provoke” of the KJV)

The author chose this word deliberately

¹ Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. “paroxysm (n.), senses 1-3,” June 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/1099839527>.

3. If the focus of our consideration is on provoking one another, is that good or bad? (I know it is qualified by the following words)

In some churches, people are focused on provoking one another, but that isn't a good thing.

D. The focus on one another

1. The word “consider” means thoughtful, careful, deep consideration

“3. to think about carefully, *envisage, think about, notice*”²

“to consider attentively, fix one's eyes or mind upon”³

“The verb ‘let us consider’ conveys the concept of careful consideration, thoughtful attention and deep concern.”⁴

2. The object of our consideration (or focus) — one another

“it is our duty also to consider what others are. The well-being of each believer is bound up with the well-being of the whole body.”⁵

Believers in a large church can accomplish this, especially if the large church has small groupings of some kind, but this is the particular strength of small churches.

II. The object of the exhortation (24b)

A. To provoke to love

B. To provoke to good deeds

We don't need to go to much detail on this object. All the imperatives of the New Testament point us to these outcomes.

- In a properly functioning church, we think about the needs of each other

² Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

³ Joseph Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (International Bible Translators (IBT), Inc., 1889).

⁴ David Allen, *Hebrews*, The New American Commentary 35 (Nashville, Tenn: B & H Publ. Group, 2010), 517.

⁵ Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 3rd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1903), 326.

In a church that obeys these verses, the people develop a ministry mindset.

- Regardless of social class, background, accomplishments, education, or any other feature you can think of
- The leadership should be especially attuned to the needs of the “one another,” but this is the duty of all in the church
- When one member of the church is hurting, the others gather around to help – that almost goes without saying
- But even better, if we care for one another spiritually, we should be praying for one another, encouraging one another, pushing one another closer to God — whether we are in leadership or not

“This will never happen, however, if they keep one another at a distance.”⁶

III. The means of the exhortation (25)

A. There are two ways “considering one another” is qualified

1. Not forsaking our own assembling together
2. Encouraging one another

B. Not forsaking our own assembling together

1. The meaning of “assembling”
 - a. Lit. “the *epi-synagoguing* of one another”
 - b. The word isn’t the normal NT word for “assembly” or “church” (*i.e. ekklesia*)
 - c. Compound word, synagogue with a preposition attached
2. The word is very, very rare
 - a. Found here
 - b. Found in 2 Thess 2.1

⁶ Bruce, *Hebrews*, 1990, 257.

2Th 2.1 ¶ Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him,

- c. Also found in 2 Maccabees (apocrypha)
- d. Besides that, found on an inscription on the Island of Symi, near Rhodes, approximately 100 miles southwest of Patmos

Consequently, it is difficult to work out a distinct meaning for the word.

3. The most clear understanding

- a. “synagoguing” by itself is “gathering together”
- b. The little preposition attached must give some distinction

Westcott’s clue: “in 2 Thess. 2:1, ... the force of the ἐπί [preposition] is seen, as marking a definite centre to which the gathering is directed, that is, Christ.”⁷

- 1) Thus, the gathering in 2 Thess 2.1 is “upon Christ”
- 2) Here, the gathering in Heb 10.25 seems to be “upon one another”

The center of our obligation in this life is to one another in the local church.

4. The meaning of not forsaking

- a. Same word used when Jesus cried on the cross, “My God, my God, why hast thou *forsaken* me?” (Mt. 27:46)
- b. Paul uses it when he says, “Demas has deserted me” (2 Tim 4.10)

5. The habit of some

- a. We’ve noted that there were likely some Hebrew Christians who had gone back on Christ, and the Hebrews were wrestling with it
- b. The word “habit” means “ethos, custom, practice”

⁷ Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 327.

“The opposite of good works is the ‘forsaking the assembling’ together. ‘Forsaking’ implies much more than carelessness or irregularity in church attendance. The idea is more nearly ‘abandoning.’ ... The exact cause is not given. The reason cannot be a good one, because the gathering together for worship is classified as good works. Therefore, any reason which causes one to abandon worship with other Christians is a bad reason.”⁸

“‘At first and indeed always,’ says Harnack, ‘there were naturally some people who imagined that one could secure the holy contents and blessings of Christianity as one did those of Isis and the Magna Mater, and then withdraw. Or, in cases where people were not so short-sighted, levity, laziness, or weariness were often enough to detach a person from the society. A vainglorious sense of superiority, and of being able to dispense with the spiritual aid of the society, was also the means of inducing many to withdraw from fellowship and from the common worship. Many, too, were actuated by fear of the authorities; they shunned attendance at public worship, to avoid being recognized as Christians.’”

C. Encouraging one another, especially as you see the Day approaching

I must give short shrift to this point...

1. “Encouraging” is *parakalew* — the verb form of the noun we get when the Holy Spirit is called our “paraclete” — our Comforter
 - a. Comfort
 - b. Assistance
 - c. Advocacy

Really, the same idea as considering one another to provoke to love and good deeds

2. Especially with the Day approaching

- a. The writer could be referring to the coming destruction of Jerusalem

⁸ Milton Crowson, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Clear Study Series (Nashville: Randall House Publications, 2000), 121.

b. But more likely is referring to the day of the Lord, the second coming

The closer we get to the Second Coming, the less we should be concerned with our own things, the more we should be concerned with one another.

Conclusion:

Proposition: The care of other believers is every believer's responsibility.

This is what makes the church a beautiful thing, when its people live this way.

What do you live for?

Are you trying to just build your bank account as large as you can?

Are you living for pleasure, or fame, or any other worldly pursuit?

Your object, because of the superiority of Christ, ought to be to be a blessing to your brethren.