

## Assembling • Hebrews 10:24-25

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. *Provoked*

1. Because of the attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>, our nation has been *provoked*.
2. While the outrage of the American people was instantaneous, our official reaction has been careful and calculated.
3. Like never before in our history, law enforcement and intelligence groups went to work to uncover the perpetrators.
4. The military mobilized and began to deploy
5. And now, we've begun the first phase of a long and concentrated effort to rid the world of the threat of further terrorism.
6. I think the architects of the Sept. 11<sup>th</sup> attacks badly miscalculated what our reaction would be.
7. They did not believe we would be so *provoked*.

#### B. *Today*

1. Whereas our nation has been provoked to *war* – today's passage in Hebrews 10 provokes us to *peace*.
2. In some of the strongest words of the entire Bible, the writer issues us a stirring challenge.
3. What he says is indeed *provocative* . . .

### II. TEXT

#### A. *Context*

1. It's vs. 24 & 25 that I want to focus on this morning, but we need to set the context by starting with v. 19.

#### **19 Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest**

- a. meaning the Presence of God.
- b. and how can we enter the Presence of God? -

**by the blood of Jesus,**

**20 by a new and living way which He consecrated for us,**

**through the veil, that is, His flesh,**

**21 and *having* a High Priest over the house of God,**

2. Let's pause right there.
3. For the last several chapters, the writer has been arguing *forcefully* for the superiority of Jesus Christ.
4. Remember that this was written to Jewish Christians who were in danger of drifting away from their faith in Christ and reverting to the Judaism of their past.
5. So the writer makes a masterful argument for the *supremacy* of Christ and shows how He fulfills and completes all that the ritual law pointed toward.
6. He's shown how Jesus is our Great High Priest who supercedes the Jewish high priest and how now that Jesus' work is *complete* and *perfect*, the way to God has been opened wide to all who will come by faith in Him.
7. So the writer now presses on to apply that truth: If the way to God has been opened wide, he writes -

**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.**

**23 Let us hold fast the confession of *our* hope without wavering, for He who promised *is* faithful.**

8. Here are the first 2 of 3 exhortations he gives
  - a. let us draw near to God &
  - b. let us hold fast to our faith in Christ.
9. As he writes this, he's drawing on his original readers understanding of the work of the high priest – and saying that they *all* now have the same kind of access he had just once a year, but they can come *any* time.
10. In order for us to grasp the significance of what we find here, let's think about the experience of the Jewish high priest on that special day he entered the Holy of holies.
  - a. Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement was highest and holiest day of the year
  - b. it was our Christmas, Easter, and Thanksgiving all rolled into one

- c. when the high priest rose that morning, it was extreme excitement – he was going to SEE God that day!
  - d. so he got up, entered the temple grounds and put on the special clothes marked for that day.
  - e. he carefully went through the ritual of washing, offered a goat in sacrifice and then entered into the Holy of holies.
  - f. can you imagine what it must have been like for him the *very first time* he entered and saw the glory cloud that represented God’s presence?
  - g. all his life he had grown up knowing he was going to be the high priest one day
  - h. all his training, all his life had been aimed at this moment, and now, here he was, face to face with the manifest presence of God.
  - i. it’s one thing to *hear* about God – it’s one thing to be taught about Him and to hear the stories of others about how good and holy He is.
  - j. but it’s an altogether different thing to see Him yourself and come face to face with His majesty.
  - k. in that instant, the high priest’s faith moved to a new level – it became *experience*; and an experience that forever altered his perception of reality.
11. In v. 22 the writers tells *us* to draw near, to come in to the presence of God.
- a. Jesus Christ has opened the way for *us*.
  - b. the veil that separated us from God has been removed
  - c. our faith in God is not to remain some second-hand retelling of the stories of others
  - d. we are not to be like those ancient Jews who crowded the temple grounds on the Day of Atonement and merely *watched* from the sidelines as the high priest entered in
  - e. no! – *we* can draw NEAR to God – all the way in to His manifest presence.
  - f. and as we do, as our faith moves into the experience of God, our perception of reality is changed, just as the High Priest’s was.
12. Then he writes in v. 23, “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope.”

- a. as the high priest finished his service in the Holy of holies, do you think he prepared to depart with a renewed conviction about his faith and his role as high priest?
  - b. you know he did!
  - c. if he had had any doubts about his faith before entering, they were now long gone!
13. You see, there's a progression to the three exhortations the writer gives here.
- a. first, we draw near to God and our attention is dominated by His glory and holiness.
    - 1) all of earth fades away and recedes into the background.
    - 2) the light of the glory of Christ drives away all darkness.
  - b. then with all things put into their proper perspective, the Lord sends us back into life and we determine that this new revelation of God, this renewed sense of His worthiness will forever alter the way we live.
  - c. finally, like the high priest, as we re-emerge from the holy place of encountering God, we come forth with a re-commitment to share with others what we now know and have been reminded of.
14. That's what we find in the 3<sup>rd</sup> exhortation . . .

**B. Hebrews 10:24-25**

**24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,**

**25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the manner of some, but exhorting *one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.**

15. You can be sure that when the high priest came out of the holy place, he looked around at the crowd of expectant faces with a renewed commitment to pour his life and heart in to serving them well.
16. Why? Because he knew from personal experience that it was all true!
- a. their faith –the things their religion taught were all true!
  - b. He had just had *proof* of it!
17. If I may, let me use the example of Hawaii once more – I'm

sorry if I use this illustration too much – it’s just such a clear one for me . . .

18. I wasn’t really all that thrilled about going to Hawaii the first time.
  - a. I thought it was little more than a tourist trap, and an expensive one at that.
  - b. but my wife really wanted to go and so when we had the opportunity we went.
  - c. I was utterly blown away by the beauty and peace of Maui.
  - d. though we spent only a week there, I came to realize how up till that trip, I had only taken *time off* – not a *vacation*!
  - e. a ton of stress rolled away and I felt such peace and rest I was amazed.
  - f. by the end of the week, I had come to a whole new perception about my vocation, my marriage; about my life!
  - g. I also made a commitment that when I take a vacation, I need to really *rest* and not just take time off.
  - h. my knowledge of Hawaii was translated into experience – and the experience placed within me a conviction about my need to occasionally withdraw for rest and renewal.
19. But something else happened as well – Now I regularly meet other pastors who are tired and close to burn out.
  - a. the pressures of ministry and the constant challenge of people’s expectations have tied them in knots
  - b. they’re not nearly as effective as they could be because they’re overworked and stressed out
  - c. my council to them is to take a restful vacation – and I don’t hesitate to suggest they go to Hawaii for a week.
  - d. yes it can be a tad expensive – but it’s worth *every* penny!
20. In a sense, that’s what the writer is saying here
  - a. he urges us to enter in to the presence of God
  - b. to renew our grasp of the reality of what we believe
  - c. and then to come forth from The Presence with a commitment to encourage others.

### **C. Consider One Another**

1. In v. 24 he says . . .

**24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love**

**and good works,**

2. This translation doesn't do justice to the words the author picked
  - a. these are strong words
  - b. we could translate it like this . . .

**Let us take careful thought for how we can provoke and bug one another into a lifestyle of selfless love and a habit of doing good.**

3. What a great word! What a wonderful thing to strive for!
4. That as the followers of Christ, we would be devoted to provoking each other to love and good works.
5. What do you suppose would be the reaction of the world if THIS was what we did?
  - a. what do you suppose unbelievers would say about Christians if Christians just did this?
  - b. we know what they DO say – what their criticism usually is – that Christians, by and large, are hypocrites!
6. And all too often that criticism is deserved.
  - a. instead of loving one another -
  - b. instead of urging each other to doing good
  - c. we provoke each other to envy or anger
7. But the writer says – if we've spent time in the presence of God, how can we do anything else but come forth with a renewed conviction that it's all true! And because of that, we owe each other a debt of love and good.
8. As Paul writes in Romans 13 – “Owe no one anything but love.”
9. “Let us take careful thought for one another” he says here in Hebrews 10 –
  - a. do you consider others?
  - b. do you take time to concern yourself with them?
  - c. does the Body of Christ matter to you?
  - d. do these people here today factor into your thinking?
  - e. when you make your plans about how you are going to live, about what you're going to do, do you think about your brothers and sisters in Christ?
10. We ought to consider each other – and what we ought to be thinking about is not how to provoke each other to envy or desire, which is what the world is all into –

11. We ought to be taking careful thought for how we can stir each other up to love.
  - a. how we can provoke each other to doing good.
  - b. the word “stir up” is the word we get the word *paroxysm* from.
  - c. it means a sudden and intense action.
  - d. some time back, someone responded to the regular report we hear in the news of “*random acts of violence*” with a campaign of urging people into “*random acts of kindness*”
    - 1) really, that’s Biblical
    - 2) that’s what the author is calling for here
    - 3) we need to develop a mindset that as we go through our day, we look for ways to provoke others to love, to good works
12. We ought to be in the mode of spreading beauty and joy.
  - a. instead of irritating people and causing a negative reaction because we’re ornery and difficult to live with
  - b. we ought to be pleasant and provoke the best in people
13. We ought to be like the flower girl that proceeds the bride down the aisle.
  - a. she’s so cute, dressed in her little satin dress and white bonnet.
  - b. and the flower petals she drops bear the sweet fragrance of the rose.
14. We ought to be like that flower girl, preparing the way for the Bride of Christ, spreading sweetness and joy all along the aisle of time till the Bride and Groom meet at the altar of Heaven.
15. What do you spread as you walk down the aisle called time?
  - a. what emanates from your life – an odor or a fragrance?
  - b. are people riled or ripened by your presence?
  - c. are you a trouble-maker or a peace-maker?
  - d. ornery or honorable?
16. Do people draw closer to Christ because of you, or are they repelled?
17. History is filled with stories of how a simple word, a seemingly small encouragement, turned a whole life around . . .
18. A banker owner was in the habit of tossing a coin in the cup of a legless beggar who sat on the street outside the bank.
  - a. but, unlike most people, the banker would always insist on getting one of the pencils the man had beside him.
  - b. everyday he said to the beggar. "You’re a *merchant* and I

- always expect to receive good value from merchants I do business with."
- c. one day the legless man was not on the sidewalk and as time passed the banker forgot about him, until he walked into a public building and there in a concession stand sat the former beggar.
  - d. he was obviously the owner of his own small business now.
  - e. the shop owner said to the banker, "I have always hoped you might come by someday. You're largely responsible for me being here. You kept telling me that I was a 'merchant'. I started thinking of myself that way, instead of a beggar receiving gifts. I started selling pencils -- lots of them. You gave me self-respect and caused me to look at myself differently."
19. Einstein was four years old before he could speak and seven before he could read.
- a. Issac Newton did poorly in grade school.
  - b. a newspaper editor fired Walt Disney because he had "no good ideas".
  - c. Leo Tolstoy flunked out of college,
  - d. and Werner von Braun failed ninth grade algebra.
  - e. Haydn despaired of ever making a musician of Beethoven, who seemed a slow and plodding young man with no apparent talent.
  - f. but what turned every one of these special people around was the encouraging word of someone who believed in them.
20. In May 1935, an autograph collector approached Babe Ruth for an autograph.
- a. earlier that day, the great home-run slugger had struck out three times while playing for the Boston Braves against the Pittsburgh Pirates.
  - b. the fans had booed him unmercifully and Ruth was completely demoralized.
  - c. the man approached the sports star in his hotel but Ruth said it was pointless seeking the autograph of a has-been like him.
  - d. he admitted that not only was he disturbed by the boos, but someone had spat on him!
  - e. the autograph seeker tried to console the "sultan of swat" and



- said, "Forget today. Tomorrow's another day. I have enough confidence in you to predict that tomorrow you'll be the hero of the game."
- f. Ruth replied, "Do you really mean that?"
  - g. when he said he did, Ruth not only singed his book but a baseball as well.
  - h. the next day, Ruth hit three home runs, his second being the only ball ever hit over the right field grandstand at Forbes' Field.
  - i. he was the hero once again.
  - j. those 3 homers, #'s 712, 713, & 714 turned out to be the last in Babe Ruth's illustrious career.
  - k. he retired from baseball just 8 days later.
21. Like the fans in the stands at Forbes' Field – this world is merciless and cruel.
    - a. it delights in taunting and belittling us
    - b. it's negative and brutal in its criticism
  22. How desperately we need one another!
    - a. how very careful we ought to be to encourage one another
    - b. may God by His grace develop within us the mindset of being encouragers rather than discouragers
    - c. may we live in the mode of looking for how we can urge others to love and good works.

#### **D. Assembling**

1. The writer then goes on and concludes . . .
- 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.**
2. This is part of v. 24 and what it means to consider one another.
  3. How can we consider one another if we don't know one another?
  4. And how can we provoke each other to love and good works if we don't see each other?
  5. All of this presumes we're *meeting* – that the mystical union of the Spirit is taking actual form in our gathering together.
  6. Let me say it straight away – You need to go to church!
    - a. you need to go to church regularly and often.

- b. you need to be committed to a local church and plugged in in such a way that you are able to do what it says here –
  - c. to take careful thought for how you can encourage others.
7. I'm not saying that just because I'm a pastor – I'm saying it because God said it – RIGHT HERE!
8. You know, flakiness in church attendance is nothing new: Look at what he says here . . .

**. . .not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some . . .**

- a. even as far back as when this letter was first penned, there was a problem with those who devalued the assembly
  - b. they thought they could maintain a solid, healthy relationship with God apart from participation in the community of Christ.
  - c. but the Spirit is clear – no they can't.
  - d. it's God's plan that being a Christian involves active participation in the Body of Christ.
9. Some people excuse themselves from church and say that they can be a Christian without going to church – and that is certainly true;
10. Just as they can be married without going home – but the relationship is going to suffer badly!
11. You see, Christ is present in the assembling of His people in ways that aren't possible *apart* from the assembly.
- a. 1<sup>st</sup> = Jesus said that when 2 or 3 were gathered in His name, He was there is a special way.
    - 1) in Rev. 1, we read how Christ dwells in the midst of the local churches.
    - 2) those who avoid assembling with other believers for worship are missing out on a dimension of the presence of God that is critical.
  - b. 2<sup>nd</sup> = people that absent themselves from congregational worship miss out on an intensity of adoration that cannot occur in solitude.
    - 1) just as a mob can descend to a deeper level of cruelty than an individual might.
    - 2) in the same way, a large group of music-lovers can experience a more intense appreciation of a symphony than a single listener.

- 3) corporate worship provides the context where our passion for God is *elevated*.
- c. 3<sup>rd</sup> = great truths are best learned corporately!
- 1) Paul put it this way in Eph 3:18 when he said he was praying that they might have ability, together with all the saints, to grasp the knowledge and love of God.
  - 2) the language makes it clear that Paul understood this as something that was apprehended by believers *corporately*!
  - 3) indeed, what good is it to *know* what love is but to not receive or give it?
  - 4) and love is not something we can experience in isolation – it presupposes the presence of others!
12. I love to barbeque and there's one rule you learn early on – the only way to properly start coals is to keep them together in a heap.
- a. if you spread them out across the bottom of the grate with space between them, they will not start
  - b. they need to be heaped together, and the tighter the heap, the quicker they will catch and the hotter the fire.
  - c. if a coal catches but then rolls away from the pile, it will go out
  - d. once they've all caught and are fully lit, then you can spread them out a bit, but again, they all need to stay in touch if they are to keep their heat.
13. And so it is in the Body of Christ – we *need* each other, we *need* to be in touch.
14. We need to be meeting together regularly for corporate worship and instruction in God's Word.
15. But it must not end there. The writer says that we need to *encourage* each other.
16. The very best place to do that is in small groups.
- a. it's in that setting that we can get to know each other better -
  - b. and have greater opportunity to interact with one another.
17. I've been working out now for a couple months.
- a. I've managed to put together a few weights and gear in the garage
  - b. I try to work out 3 times a week
  - c. though I've only been at it for a couple months I can see and feel a difference.
  - d. and while I really enjoy the *benefits* gained, I have to say that

- the *process* of working out is *not* a lot of fun - sometimes it's a huge hassle.
- e. something that's made it a lot easier and far more rewarding is that a couple friends have joined me
  - f. the times when for whatever reason I work out *alone* – it's a drag and I don't have nearly as good a session.
  - g. but when they're there – it can be fun and we push each other on to do better than if we were alone.

### III. CONCLUSION

#### A. *The Day*

1. Take careful note of something the writer says in v. 25 –
2. He says that we should exhort one another – and even more so, as we see The Day approaching.
  - a. the Day he's referring to is Christ's Return
  - b. the reason why he urges greater participation in the local church and more diligence in provoking one another to love and good works is because he knows the last days will be marked by widespread deception and times of persecution and stress.
  - c. when things get harder outside, we need each other more
  - d. those whose commitment to the Body of Christ is shaky will find their commitment to Christ becomes questionable.
3. But there's something else for us to glean from this as well –
  - a. the writer takes it for granted that we will know what the signs of the Lord's coming are
  - b. and that they will be specific enough in their unfolding that we will see them for what they are.
  - c. we ought to be able to see the Day of the Lord's coming approaching.
  - d. of course we won't know which day it is till it comes –
  - e. but the approaching of the Day ought to be evident!
4. All I can say is – Here it comes!
  - a. Israel has been regathered into her land in fulfillment of Ezekiel 37.
  - b. the nations around her have united in their purpose to annihilate her in fulfillment of Ezekiel 38 & 39.

- c. in fulfillment of Zech. 12, the city of Jerusalem has risen to be the single biggest sore spot in global politics
  - d. the emergence of the European Union fulfills Daniel 2 & 9
  - e. and the merging of banking with global telecommunications lays the groundwork for the fulfillment of Rev. 13
  - f. and that's just the tip of the prophetic iceberg . . .
5. The stage is set, the actors are on their marks – all we await is the rise of the curtain on the last act.
  6. The Day Of Christ's return is at hand – so let me urge you to a zealous and diligent pursuit of Christ that involves active participation in His Church.