

Battling Unbelief

We were not built by God to live our lives like an island, alone and on our own.

Yet, with the threat of the Covid Virus continuing, we all are spending less time with our brothers and sisters, our spiritual family while concentrating on safety measures that help prevent the spread of illness, as this will be necessary for a while.

This truth is one of the reasons why this period in our lives has been so difficult.

It is so important that we take advantage of creative ways of staying connected.

Whether it be by phone, internet with zoom, telephone, etc.

I survive and thrive in the ministry because God has surrounded me with people who pray for me and exhort me to press on in the fight of faith.

If you don't feel supported like this in your faith and walk, we want to change that.

The Bible teaches that surviving and thriving in a life of faith and love depends, in part, on Christians intentionally building each other up in faith and stirring each other up to love.

You may be wondering what all that has to do with battling unbelief.

I have recently been reminded in the Bible that not only are we to depend on God for our refuge, but He has also provided to us, each other to build one another up in our battle against unbelief.



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Without intentional faith-building togetherness,

- we can lose our zeal,
- we can drift from God,
- we can become hardened in the deceitfulness of sin.

If someone doesn't snatch us we make shipwreck of our so-called faith and perish in unbelief.

*James 5: 19-20 My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back,
20 let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.*

Jude 23 save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.

That's what we want to look at today.

Understand the importance of this truth, all the promises of God were purchased for believers by an act that happened in the past, namely, by the death and resurrection of Jesus.

But God-glorifying *belief* doesn't merely stare at those acts; it stands on them, and then looks forward to all the promises Jesus bought for us, and banks its hope on the promises, and moves out in a life of faith.

It is heartfelt hope in the promises of God.

“The root of all love and goodness is belief in the promises of God.”

Why?



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Galatians 5: 6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.

Because the root of all love and goodness is belief in the promises of God.

And then we can see the flip side of this truth: that *unbelief* is the root of all sin.

At the end of his life, Paul looks back over several decades of being a Christian and says in ***II Timothy 4: 7, I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.***

The Role of Other Believers in your Fight of Faith is paramount.

One of the ways he had fought it was to surround himself with believers who would pray for him and exhort him.

Did you know that Paul always traveled in a team?

He was not a loner.

There was Barnabas and Silas and Timothy and Luke and Aristarchus and Mark and Epaphras and others.

The one time he was forced to go off by himself to Athens his spirit was almost broken by the overwhelming evil there and he sent immediately for Timothy to join him.

You might get the idea that Paul's faith (and the faith of other ministers) was never in need of human reinforcement.

But listen to ***II Corinthians 7: 5-7 For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted at every turn—fighting without and fear within.***

6 But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, 7 and not only by his coming but also by the comfort with which he was comforted by you, as he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced still more.



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Paul needed the partnership of close friends who could strengthen his faith when fear was beginning to get the upper hand in his life.

We need that same partnership.

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

Five Points on Hebrews 10:24–25

1. Meeting Together

We are commanded to meet together.

The kind of meeting in view seems to be one that allows for some kind of mutual encouragement and stirring up of one another.

It is not talking about merely sneaking into a big church service and sneaking out again.

It's talking about the kind of meeting where you say something to someone that will help them be more loving and where someone can say something to you that will help you be more loving, and help you have the strength to more good deeds.

“God means for us to face each other so that we can exhort and encourage each other to press on.”

This is an advantage when you attend a smaller church, and a small church mentality must be developed and maintained in a growing church so that these biblical principles are not abandoned.

There is this **“one another”** principle that requires personal interaction with people at a pretty significant level.

Coming to worship on Sunday morning — as important as that is — is not enough.

God means for us to face each other so that we can exhort and encourage each other to press on.

2. Avoiding the Habit of Not Meeting

The second point is *don't get into the habit of not meeting*.

This is almost the same as the first point, but verse 25 seems to give it a special stress.

So, I want to too.

It says, “Not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some.”

The warning here is that not meeting with other Christians in this way can become habitual.

Ask yourself right now: Are you in the habit of only coming to more or less anonymous, bigger meetings of the church where there doesn't have to be much personal interaction or accountability?

Does that pattern of life feel comfortable now?

Because it is now a habit.

It's what you are comfortable with.

In fact, it is so much your normal way of looking at the Christian life that what I am saying right now may feel threatening to you.

You do not want to be told that the Bible insists that you are outside the Lord's will when you do not meet in some kind of small group intentionally designed to stir you up to love and good works.

So, my second point is: *don't get into this habit of not meeting in this way*.



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And if you are in that habit now, resolve to break it.

3. Increasing Frequency and Seriousness

At the end of *verse 25*, it says, ***“and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”***

That’s the Day of Christ’s coming and the end of the age.

The stresses and troubles and dangers are going to increase as history comes to a close.

There will be greater satanic activity, greater evil, greater threats to your faith and love.

Matthew 24: 11-12 And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. 12 And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold.

This is Jesus talking so we better listen.

That’s why we better take this word of ***Hebrews 10: 25*** very seriously in our day.

If your love is going to survive the onslaught of Satan and evil, you must meet with those who can stir you up to love and good works with whatever methods that are available to you.

Woe to the person who thinks they can be a lone wolf Christian as the last Day draws near.

Let’s make our meeting for prayer and exhortation be more frequent and more serious and urgent as we see the gathering storm of tribulation and evil.

4. Empowering to Love

Make your meeting together with believers a meeting specifically for the empowering to love.

Don't be unintentional when you get together.

Don't just say, Christian fellowship is good, so we are going to get together and talk.

It is good.

And talking is wonderful, but the stakes are too high these days to be that casual about your gathering.

Verse 24 says, "Consider one another in order to stir each other up to love and good works" (literal translation).

There is a clear goal.

We are meeting so that when we leave,

we will have more power to love,

more resources to love,

more motivation to love,

more wisdom to love and do good works,

so that people will see our good works, as Jesus said, and give glory to our Father in heaven.

The visible glory of God is at stake.

And not only is there a clear goal, there is a kind of urgent intentionality.



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The word “Consider” suggests that we come on the lookout for how we can specifically help other people get power to love.

We don’t just drift into a meeting thinking about all kinds of worldly things.

We come on a mission.

We come

“considering,”

on the lookout,

watching,

listening.

What do the individuals in this church need today?

What would help him/her be stronger?

Let’s be intentional in your coming together.

Aim at empowering each other to love and good works.

5. Strengthening Faith in the Promises of God

The last point is in answer to the question: *How do you empower another person to love and good works?*

What is the root of love?

What is the root of all righteousness and truly good deeds?

The answer is *belief in the promises of God.*

So, the fifth point is: *Make the main basic goal of every meeting, to strengthen faith in the promises of God.*



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This is implied in **verse 23**: *“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love. . . .”*

These two things are very closely related: *stirring each other up to love, and helping each other hold on to hope in the promises of God.*

“Love grows on the taproot of belief in the promises of God.”

How do you empower someone to love and good deeds despite all the obstacles they will run into at home and work?

Answer: *build their hope in the promises of God.*

Love grows on the taproot of *belief* in the promises of God.

Take-Away; The Target of Our Exhortation

Look finally at **Hebrews 3: 12-13** *Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. 13 But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.*

Expanded Translation / Take care, brethren, lest there be in you an evil unbelieving heart [literally: “an evil heart of unbelief”] leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Notice carefully: The target of our exhorting one another is twofold.

First, in **verse 12** *it is the evil heart of unbelief.*

We should do all we can to help each other battle unbelief in our heart.

It is evil and it can lead us to fall away from the living God.

Second, in verse 13 the target of our exhorting is the deceitfulness of sin: *“that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.”*

The relationship between these two is plain.

A heart of unbelief gives rise to sin.

And sin is the opposite of love.

So, our basic agenda is clear.

We must help each other *battle unbelief*.

We must help each other fight the fight of faith.

None of us is above this need.

I certainly need it.

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