



"Criticism is easy; achievement is more difficult."
—Winston S. Churchill

24-May-19

Each Other (Part One)

The [book of Hebrews](#) was written to a group of people who were well-established in the [faith](#) and doctrines of [Jesus Christ](#). In terms of the subject material and the way it is presented, Hebrews may be the most advanced of the New Testament writings because the author knew his readers would be able to make the connections and grasp his message to them. In this way, it is quite different from some of the epistles, where Paul says things like, "I could not speak to you like spiritual people, but like carnal people—like spiritual babies." These Hebrews were spiritually mature, possessing a great deal of knowledge and understanding.

The book was penned in the AD mid-60s, just a few short years before Roman Emperor Titus besieged Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple. The church had been previously warned to flee, and the members left behind all that they had known except for the eternal things. The book does not concern itself with [sin](#) per se, though the author mentions it. It deals more with reminding the people about what they already knew and exhorting them to use that knowledge to counteract the influence of the surrounding culture. It was written to stir them up to finish their spiritual race strongly and to prepare

them spiritually for the coming God-ordained calamity. Despite their advanced understanding, however, they were drifting spiritually to the point of neglecting the salvation that [God](#) had begun in them ([Hebrews 2:1-4](#)).

Though Hebrews was intended for a mature group of people, it also contains perhaps the New Testament's strongest language. Additionally, even with sin not being a major theme, it gives a stark warning about willful sin:

For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The LORD will judge His people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. ([Hebrews 10:26-31](#))

If these verses do not compel us to pause and check ourselves, we may already be spiritual corpses! This passage deals a fatal blow to the Protestant Doctrine of [Eternal Security](#), showing that a person can [fall away](#) and receive God's wrath after receiving knowledge of the truth and coming under the blood of Christ. It is a powerful warning against unrepentant sinning, not necessarily because the Hebrews were doing that, but because their apathetic trajectory—their lazy drifting—would bring them to the point of willful sin and eternal death if they failed to wake up and change course.

Note that verse 26 begins with "for," which indicates that this admonition ties directly to what precedes it. The passage specifically relates to the instructions given in verses 19-25:

Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, 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. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up [love](#) and good works, 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.

Verses 19-22 admonish the people to draw near to God through the sacrifice of Christ. The way to His throne has been opened, and we have no need of a human priesthood to represent us before the Father.

Then, verse 23 beseeches them to hold fast to the confession (or profession) of their—and our—hope. The author is trying to prevent their letting down, relaxing their standards, and becoming ensnared by [the world](#). In at least four prior places, he had used "hold fast" in various forms, emphasizing that holding fast, not giving in, is a critical point of the epistle ([Hebrews 3:6](#), 14; 4:14; 6:18). He is encouraging them to remember the conviction they once held about their holy calling and the tremendous hope and confidence that stems from it. His message is, "Don't let down. Don't give in. Don't forget what salvation is about. Don't let it slip away."

Verses 24-25 contain the last sentence before the thunderous warning against willful sin:

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

The urgency and gravity of verses 26-31 tie directly to three principles found in verses 19-25: 1) drawing near to God, 2) holding fast to the confession of our hope, and 3) considering one another. In [I Corinthians 13:13](#), Paul summarizes these three elements elsewhere with the terms "faith," "hope," and "love." These three virtues are like a three-fold cord, one not easily broken ([Ecclesiastes 4:12](#)). Being mindful of all three of these spiritual qualities will keep us from sliding into willful sin and losing our eternal life.

These essays will focus on the last principle: considering one another. It is highly relevant to us today because, with all the confusion in the church of God in the last few decades, many have responded by withdrawing from fellowship, implying that they need contact and fellowship only with the Head and not the rest of the Body. While it is true that the church cannot save us, and our individual relationship with God is priority number one, withdrawing from fellowship can be a dangerous move. Withdrawing from fellowship may be appropriate or even necessary at times—such as when leaders are improperly changing doctrines or when [peace](#) is absent—but being able to "consider one another" is so crucial to our spiritual development that we should contemplate separation only in the direst of circumstances.

In Part Two, we will learn why fellowship is so essential to Christian growth.

- David C. Grabbe

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Principled Living \(Part Seven\): Enduring to the End](#)

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

Our Christian lives are similar to running a grueling race. Like a marathoner or a soldier fighting a battle, we are admonished to endure courageously to the end, standing firm, holding our ground, and energetically resisting assaults. Biblically, endurance is far from passive, but vigorously proactive. God takes no pleasure in retreating, backsliding, or losing ground. Our battles, largely taking place in the mind, are reflected in our speech and behavior. God wants us to be absolutely immovable on the principles that really matter, and He will give us many tests to prove, perfect, and qualify us in this. The ubiquitous culture wars currently taking place in our society directly assault our faith, requiring our steadfast resistance. Emulating our Elder Brother, we need to put all our energy into finishing our course.

From the Archives: Featured Article

Be There!

by Mike Ford

We often speak confidently of friends and relatives who will rise in the second or general resurrection to have their opportunity for salvation—but what a shame it would be if we were not there to greet them! Mike Ford, reminiscing about being there for his grandfather, urges us all to make our election sure!

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