

The Priority and Purpose of God's House (Hebrews 10:21-25)

It's a great joy again to stand before you in this house of God and to worship as our entire church family assembles, and I want us to continue our worship this morning in God's Word in Hebrews 10. Hebrews 10:21-25 is about the "house of God" and our worship in it as God's household or family, and why it's important for us all to assemble together. Last week was our inauguration service, our first service ever in this house of worship, and on next Sunday will be our dedication of this house. This morning I want to stimulate our thinking towards the priority and purpose of the house of God.

Hebrews 10:21 says "*since we have a great priest over the house of God,*²² *let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean 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;*²⁴ *and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,*²⁵ *not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.*

TITLE: THE PRIORITY AND PURPOSE OF GOD'S HOUSE

(why we assemble together in God's house for corporate worship)

1. Our Priest Over Corporate Worship (v. 21)
2. Our Preparation For Corporate Worship (v. 22)
3. Our Purpose In Corporate Worship (v. 23-25)

1. Our Priest Over Corporate Worship (v. 21)

²¹ *since we have a great priest over the house of God ...*

It's not only Catholics who have a priest over a house of worship. We don't use the word "priest" all the time as Protestants, but this word "priest" is used more than 30x just in Hebrews. We need to understand the context first to understand who and what v. 21 is about: Christ. A major theme of Hebrews is the greatness of Christ and His supremacy and superiority over everything, which in this text is as our Priest. The "*house of God*" for Christ-followers is the local church when it gathers in a house of worship, ex: 1 Tim 3:15 "*so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church...*" (NKJV). In OT times, God's house where His people assembled for worship together and came for sacrifice was the temple, with priests, and a high priest over it.

As the context mentions in v. 19, Israel had a "holy place" or a "sanctuary" in some translations. People didn't just waltz into the "sanctuary" in Israel, there has always been a way man conducts himself in the house of God, as Paul told Timothy how to conduct himself in the house of God, which is the church. In the OT house of God, the proper conduct was a worshipful bringing of sacrifices to the priest as mediator, and only the priest entered the holy place. Only the *high* priest could go into the sanctuary, or *most holy* place

Verse 21 says Christians have a greater high priest over the house of God, a greater mediator of a better covenant than OT Israel had, Jesus. Go back to chapter 8 in context for the flow of this argument

8:1 *Now the main point in what has been said is this: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,* ² *a minister in the sanctuary ... [same term as 10:21, "holy place" or "sanctuary" in God's house] ...* ⁶ *But now He [Jesus] has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises... [ex: in v. 11, all in this covenant know Christ in a relational way, unlike old covenant under Moses, and v. 12 says all in this covenant truly have all their sins forgiven]*

Jesus is the minister in the sanctuary and the mediator of the better "new covenant" as v. 13 calls it that has made the old one obsolete and human priests and the sacrificial system with it, because Jesus is the final sacrifice and He is our great High priest who is over the house of God today, the church. He is our Mediator for worship. Our priest is 'over God's house,' as Hebrews 10:21 says, in exalted resurrected ruling position at the right hand position of authority in heaven, and as Priest and King He still cares very much about how people worship God (read what Jesus says in the NT gospels). He is the "minister in the sanctuary/holy place" (v. 2 says) and the NT calls us to be holy as He is holy as we worship as a church as well.

9:1 *Now even the first covenant had **regulations of divine worship and the earthly sanctuary.*** ² *For there was a tabernacle prepared, the outer one, in which were the lampstand and the table and the sacred bread; this is called **the holy place.*** [so "sanctuary" is just another way to say "holy place"] ³ *Behind the second veil there was a tabernacle which is called the **Holy of Holies...*** ⁷ *but into the second, only the high priest enters once a year, not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the sins of the people ...*

But notice what Christ did as high priest, v. 12: *"not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, **He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.**"*

End of v. 22 *"...without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness"*

...²⁴ *For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but **into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;***²⁵ *nor was it that He would offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood that is not his own.*²⁶ *Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.*²⁷ *And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment,*²⁸ *so Christ also, having been offered **once to bear the sins of many,** will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him. ["once for all" earlier means "once for all time" here, not that all are redeemed. It says in v. 28 Jesus died "to bear the sins of many," who the end of the verse describes as those who are looking to Him in faith, longing to see their Redeemer return].*

If you don't trust in Jesus as your High Priest and only Mediator and only hope for you an unholy sinner to ever enter God's holy place in heaven, you are not redeemed or forgiven. Judgment is coming after you die, eternal judgment, and you can't claim Christ paid for your sins so you're ok. All who reject Christ as Lord have to pay for their own sins in hell. No second chances once you die, and you don't know when it's appointed for you to die, but God does. The good news is Christ died "to bear the sins of *many*" and you can know you are among the many whose sins He bore, if you look to Jesus in repentant faith as your sacrifice, substitute, Savior.

To repent isn't doing penance for your sins, it's realizing you can't pay for your sins, but by grace you turn from them and trust Jesus as your Priest relying on His payment for you that God accepts for believers. If you need help in that, please talk with us afterwards. If you already trust in Jesus as your Priest and King and know Him relationally as Lord, you know real forgiveness "once for all *time*."

Look at 10:12 *'He having offered one sacrifice for sins for all **time**, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD,*¹³ *waiting from that time onward UNTIL HIS ENEMIES BE MADE A FOOTSTOOL FOR HIS FEET.*

¹⁴ For by one offering He has perfected for **all time** those who are sanctified. [means "set apart" or "made holy," word for Christians]

That's why the RCC mass perpetual offering idea is so dead wrong. This is the context leading to our text: ¹⁹ *Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place [or "sanctuary"] by the blood of Jesus,* ²⁰ *by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh,* ²¹ **and since we have a great priest over the house of God,** ²² **let us draw near ...**

Which takes us from Our Priest Over Corporate Worship (v. 21) to

2. Our Preparation For Corporate Worship (v. 22)

²² *let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.*

Again this language has a context in the OT house of God and the priests who needed their heart to be right as they approached the sanctuary in their days, and there was sprinkling of blood for the covering of sin, and their bodies had to be washed with pure water. Is this saying before we come to God's house today, first we take a bath to wash our body? Well, maybe some of you need to, but I'm not sure physical hygiene is the main point here! We don't want to ignore the physical, and there is value in being refreshed, dressed appropriately when we come to the house of God, not dirty, sweaty or stinky. Some of your moms may have told you "cleanliness is next to godliness" (not a Bible verse, and not the main point here).

Cleaning up can be a good thing, though James 2:2 says in church, we're not to discriminate a person in dirty clothes, give preference to the rich or richly dressed; all are welcome, regardless of apparel or appearance. But I don't think the writer is exclusively or even primarily thinking of a shower. I think v. 22b includes the spiritual, which the literal water of baptism on our outer body is a symbol of

John Calvin writes: "it seems to me more probable that the Apostle alludes to the ancient ceremonies of the [Hebrews in the] Law; and so by water he designates the Spirit of God, according to what is said by Ezekiel, *"I will sprinkle clean water upon you"* (Ezek. 36:25). The meaning [of Hebrews 10:22 is] ... sanctified in body and soul; and yet that ... not what consists in ... ceremonies, but that it is from faith, pure conscience, and that cleanness of soul and body which flows from, and is effected by, the Spirit of God.¹

We actually know from the context of chapter 9, using the same words for conscience and washing, that physical washing isn't the key. Look at 9:9, talking about the OT "house of God" and all its ceremony. **Hebrews 9:9:** *which is a symbol for the present time. Accordingly both gifts and sacrifices are offered **which cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience,** ¹⁰ since they relate only to food and drink and **various washings, regulations for the body imposed until a time of reformation.** ¹¹ **But when Christ appeared***

...

The point: till Christ came no washing cleansed guilty consciences. Ceremonial washings of OT priests (which is the context of 10:22) were all symbolic of spiritual washing, cleansing we need by the Spirit of God, inside and out. Titus 3:5 calls it the "*washing ... and renewing by the Holy Spirit.*" So when 10:22 says our hearts need to be sprinkled and our bodies need to be washed, I think the point is our entire person is to be sanctified, spirit, soul, body, and flesh.

1 Thess. 5:23 says may God "*sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame ...*"

Just as OT priests needed to be cleansed before they would *draw near* to the temple, we still need cleansing as we draw near through the "*great priest over the house of God*" (v. 21). In 2 Cor. 6 and 7, Paul told the church "*you are the temple of the living God ... be separate [sanctified], says the Lord, Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you*" ... *Therefore, having these promises, **let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit,** perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*" (2 Cor. 6:16-7:1, NKJV)

A Christian's body is to be kept pure physically, sexually, because it is *the temple of the Holy Spirit*, Paul also told the same church in an impure culture (1 Cor 6:18-19). A worship song says it this way

"Holiness, holiness is what I long for, holiness is what I need.
 Holiness, holiness is what you want from me.
 So take my heart and form it, take my mind, transform it.
 Take my will, conform it, to Yours, to Yours, oh Lord."

Hebrews 12:14 says without holiness, "*no one will see the Lord.*" If there's no sanctification, there's no salvation. But the good news for naturally unholy sinners is when God saves us and sets us apart from the world, Jesus is our sanctification (1 Cor. 1:30). In Heb 10, v. 19-20, He is our access, confidence to enter God's holy presence

He is the Holy One who makes us holy so we can obey Heb 10:22
"let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith..."

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine! O what a foretaste of glory divine!
 Heir of salvation, purchase of God, born of his Spirit, washed in his blood.²

That's the washing and sprinkling the 2nd half of v. 22 is talking about, as Hebrews explains later in context (Heb 12:24 speaks of the sprinkled blood *of Jesus*). The blessed assurance of faith I have is "Jesus is mine" as I'm "purchased of God...washed in His blood"

That's the only way a sinner can have access to draw near to God. Since the beginning of the Bible, God didn't let sinful man draw near His holy presence. In the garden of Eden, after Adam and Eve sinned, angels called cherubim kept the sinners from returning to that fellowship with God by their flaming swords. Later in Israel, the most holy place of the tabernacle had a thick veil separating the worshipper from God's holy presence. God told Israel to weave images of cherubim into the fabric. The symbolism was very clear: sinful man cannot draw near God's presence behind the veil, just as cherubim kept sinful man from God's presence back in the garden.

Behind that veil was the ark of the covenant, that man would die if he touched, because of God's holiness (Uzzah did accidentally and died instantly). On the ark itself were cherubim carved in gold also reminding sinful man of God's unapproachable holiness. The veil protected man from God's consuming fire that man can't look upon

Hebrews 10:20 says Jesus opened *a new and living way*, a way we can approach God and still be living, because He *in His flesh is the veil*. Because of what Jesus did in His body/flesh, v. 20, He is the way we can approach God who is a consuming fire and not die like Uzzah did. Jesus is the *veil between us and God's blazing holiness*.

Only one day a year, one man, the high priest, was allowed to go behind the veil in the most holy place, having his conscience clean and body washed with water, taking the blood of a substitute that had been sacrificed to sprinkle on the mercy seat for the atonement of the people. Jesus is our Priest, our Substitute, our Sacrifice, who sprinkles His own blood for the atonement of His people. Not only can we approach God now without dying, amazingly v. 19 says we *"have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus"* [!]. This is the incredible privilege we have in our corporate worship!

Sproul writes: 'We pass through the veil when we come before the King in prayer. A most special time of intimacy comes in the prayerful corporate worship of believers who gather at the Lord's Table. Think back over recent weeks. Have you daily availed yourself of prayer as a means of ... grace? Have you used your opportunities for corporate worship and ... the Lord's Supper?'³

Next week we'll get to celebrate the Lord's Supper in our corporate worship service, a special time of fellowship with the Lord, and that special service will be followed by a meal of fellowship with one another in the other building. Just a reminder that we will have no nursery or ministry for the toddlers and little ones next week as we want everyone to be with us in the dedication service and for a time of communion at the end of the service with our entire church body together in union and unity. For some parents that may take some preparation of your family ahead of time, especially the little ones who maybe haven't witnessed communion before. Little kids need to know when the plate and trays come by not to take from it, but just to watch and be quiet, and to ask dad afterwards about it.

[it's not a snack or just something to be taken lightly]

I would encourage you dads in particular to be preparing your kids now for the ordinances of baptism and communion, even though it may be some years before they're ready in maturity. Usually in the history of the church, baptism is the first step of obedience, where a young person professes faith before others as a disciple, follower of the Lord in the waters of baptism. For our kids we want them to do that to be their 1st ordinance. I'm reading a book for parents on preparing children for baptism that is helpful and I could refer you to later as we need to prepare young people for worship ordinances

[good to read even if your kids haven't asked about baptism yet]

Many writers believe the end of v. 22 has baptism in view with the language of body and water, but we need to remember baptism is a symbol of our spiritual cleansing, which I think is the main point.

Turn to 1 John 1. There is also preparation for us adults that should take place before we gather in the house of God, especially before communion, but also every time we prepare to draw near the Lord in worship we need cleansing. 1 John 1 helps us in our preparation:

Seek to live in the light of God's holiness during the week

1 John 1:7 says '*but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin...*' [clean conscience, pure bodies]

Confess your sins regularly and especially before worship

⁹ *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to **cleanse us from all unrighteousness.***

Guard your steps and speech as you draw near God's house

Ecclesiastes 5:1 *"Guard your steps as you go to the house of God and draw near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools; for they do not know they are doing evil. ² Do not be hasty in word or impulsive in thought to bring up a matter in the presence of God. For God is in heaven and you are on the earth; therefore let your words be few ... ⁶ Do not let your speech cause you to sin and do not say in the presence of the messenger of God that it was a mistake ... ⁷ ... in many words there is emptiness. Rather, fear God.*

Prepare for the Lord's Day the night before

To God's people in Bible times, their day of worship began the night before. We can learn from that. To go the house of God and "draw near to listen," as the text says, don't stay up late Saturday so you fall asleep in God's house. Prepare for worship Sat. night.

Our preparation for corporate worship in Hebrews 10:22 can have many applications in other passages, but in our text, verses 23-25 have some specific preparation and mindsets and purposes in view

3. Our Purpose In Corporate Worship (v. 23-25)

²³ *Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; ²⁴ and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, ²⁵ not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.*

Our primary purpose is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever, and corporate worship is a primary means of grace God gives us to that end. Our primary purpose is upward (looking to Jesus who is "over the house of God" in v. 21, our great Priest high and lifted up), but in v. 23-25 there is an outward purpose as well, toward each other.

We glorify and enjoy God by enjoying gathering with His people in worship. Rom 15 says our rejoicing in worship glorifies God (v. 9) *with His people* (v. 10) and receiving them glorifies Him (v. 7).

Our primary purpose in other passages that talk about worship in songs and hymns is upward or God-ward, as one hymn says: "We gather together to ask the Lord's blessing..." But one purpose of gathering together corporately also has an outward application in love to one another and encouraging others to greater love. We're not to ultimately separate the greatest commandment ("love the Lord God") from the second ("love your neighbor as yourself"), and these verses emphasize the second part in corporate worship. Notice the repeated corporate plural phrase "let us" in v. 22-25:

- v. 22 "*let us draw near...*"
- v. 23 "*let us hold fast ...*"
- v. 24 "*let us consider ...*"

This is not "me, myself and I religion," it's "let us, let us, let us." A clever sermon title I heard for this text was "3 heads of 'lettuce' (let us)" - lettuce draw near, lettuce hold fast, and lettuce consider. But as clever as that might be, we're not just to think of a bunch of heads getting together for no purpose, v. 24 says we're to put our heads together, or to "consider how to stimulate each other to love"

- 1st one -> the heart (v. 22 '*let us draw near with a sincere heart*')
- 2nd one -> the mouth (v. 23 "*let us hold fast our confession*")
- 3rd one -> the mind (v. 24 "*and let us consider one another*")

1st "let us" deals with God and our conscience before Him
 2nd "let us" deals with the world and our confession before them
 3rd "let us" deals with the church and our consideration of them

Flip forward to chapter 13 to see where the writer is going:

13:1 *Let love of the brethren continue. ² Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers ...* [great opportunity to apply right after the service to those you don't know. Look at v. 15, context of worship] *Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. ¹⁶ And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. ¹⁷ Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account ...*

Those verses not only assume you're in fellowship and corporate worship, they assume church membership, or a way you submit to church leadership and are accountable to them (we do it here by verbal statements before the church when people join). How they obeyed v. 17 exactly in NT times we don't know all the details of, but it's clear it wasn't just some casual informal loose connection.

The commitment and submission indicated in v. 17 goes against our culture's anti-commitment anti-authority consumer mentality that wants the privileges of relationship but not its responsibilities.

As I've explained before, the leaders here ask members to affirm a covenant, a confession of faith, and express their commitment to one another publically, usually at the start of a service, and we ask our members to re-affirm those commitments at the same time of what the Bible calls us to do and be for one another. It's a public way to obey v. 17, to say to others 'these are my leaders and I need to be accountable to shepherds who keep watch over my soul, and you, this congregation, are my church family I want to commit to and serve, and this is where I want to fulfill biblical one anothers.'

Back to Hebrews 10:23, the idea is we need each other to *hold fast to our confession without wavering.*' We're in spiritual tug-of-war and need others to hold fast together. I'm prone to waver, prone to wander, I feel it, so v. 22 '**let us hold fast to our confession without wavering.**' The kids sing on Thursday nights 'our Savior following with steps unflinching, and love unflinching,' but our steps/love can. Ps 73 says of sinners around him "*my steps nearly slipped ... until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I understood ...*" (v. 2, 17)

We need to come to the sanctuary of God and hear the Word, and then as Jesus said "*hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance*" (Luke 8:15). The perseverance of the saints requires perspiration in holding fast. We need to be in a church where elders are "*holding fast the faithful word ... to exhort in sound doctrine ...*" (Titus 1:9). 'Hold fast' is a strong term, used of crowds trying to hold Jesus, no letting go. 1 Cor 15:2 '*by this gospel you are saved if you hold fast.*' Earlier in Hebrews 6:18-19 it says: **hold fast to the hope set before us. We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul...**(ESV)

To hold fast, I see 2 applications or considerations in verses 24-25:

- Considering the spiritual needs of others in the assembly (v. 24)
- Committing to encourage in and after the assembly (v. 25)

First, considering the spiritual needs of the assembly (v. 24)

The literal word order of v. 24 is "*let us consider one another...*" As we seek to be faithful in holding fast, remember the end of v. 23, "*He who promised is faithful,*" a love that will not let me go, and that should move me to consider others to stimulate to love.

Hebrews 3:1 uses the same word "*consider* Christ" (i.e., set your mind on, "*fix your thoughts on*" NIV) and here it says "*consider the body of Christ,*" (that's the "one another" in the context of the assembly in v. 25), set your mind on how you can stir up the love of Christ in the body of Christ. Fix your thoughts on one another, and how you might stir up in one another good works in their life.

Christ said '*consider the ravens...consider the lilies*' and how much more the Lord cares for us (Luke 12:24, 27) how much more we should care for those He cares for and want to see His love in them

As you think about others in this assembly think of these words. In other places the Grk word is translated "contemplate" (Rom 4:19), "notice/pay attention" (Luke 6:41 NAS/NIV) "look more closely/observe" (Acts 7:31 NAS/NKJV), "detect/perceive" (Luke 20:23 NAS/NKJV). Scripture calls us to that for one another's spiritual needs in the body of Christ, to not come to church to see what I get out of it today, but to see what I can give to others in this room. If you go away from church saying "well, I don't know if I got a lot out of it today," I would say in the words of another pastor, 'well, what did you put into it?' Are you considering yourself or others?

Your purpose in coming to God's house is first to worship God and in v. 24 to consider *others*, to notice them, to pay attention to those around you, look closely, observe, detect, perceive spiritual needs of one another and fix your eyes, strategize how you can stimulate your brothers and sisters to love and good deeds. You can't obey this verse very well if you bolt out the door right after service and don't fellowship, and leave every Sunday with no conversation or consideration of others. Let today be a day of application, and as I say these things, I'm trying to provoke you to love and good deeds.

The word "stimulate" or "stir up" in v. 24 is the Greek word we get the word "paroxysm," to be physically shaken up, rattled, bothered to sudden action. The idea is "provoke," in a good sense here. If my preaching gives you a paroxysm or you feel provoked or it shakes, rattles or stirs you up, I'm just trying to apply v. 24. We all need to be admonished, provoked out of comfort zones to love and action, as we consider the spiritual needs of others in the assembly.

Lastly, committing to encourage in and after the assembly (v. 25)
"not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some but encouraging one another..." [can be in, and after church]

It's talking about worship in "*the house of God*" (v. 21 context), and this term for *assembling* is the sense of meeting together as an assembly corporately in a church. The Greek word for *church* is an assembly that God has called out in a local body of believers under leaders (13:17) in family relationship (10:19, "*brothers/brethren*").

Our church family needs to be a priority over our own family and our sports and other extracurricular things we want for our family. This text warns us against whatever takes away from the assembly. Some of you may need provoking to the priority of God's house.

There are privileges of a family and there are also responsibilities. If we're not in church, in an assembling together of a church family regularly, faithfully attending the corporate worship service, we are disobeying Scripture and we will be discouraging others instead of encouraging them, which is a purpose of corporate worship here.

IN THE ASSEMBLY, we encourage by our presence. When I see someone who I know has a hard time physically coming to church, for example, just seeing them here encourages me. When you sing, it's an encouragement to others. When you don't sing (and some of you I notice don't), it can have the opposite effect, and your facial expressions in worship or during the message that seem to indicate disinterest, it can be quite discouraging. Speakers are encouraged by you *in the assembly*, but even more so if you pay attention, and smile occasionally. Some of you can learn to smile to encourage! Some of you need to encourage by greeting others before service.

Some of you could consider others and encourage them by coming on Sunday evening. I know some of the brothers who preach at the evening service, maybe he stayed up late and sacrificed 20 hours or so to prepare a message from God's Word, and when only 20 or so adults come back, as has happened in the past, that can discourage a brother. I'm thankful that the evening crowd is a little bigger now but there's a lot more room for a lot more of you to consider others

Not just in a service, v. 25 also implies AFTER THE ASSEMBLY. In a few moments we'll have an opportunity to encourage others by obeying the verse at the end of chapter 13, "*greet ... all the saints.*" It also says "be hospitable." Talk to strangers. Invite a family over. There are people here who long for fellowship. And if that's you, I would seek to stir you up by saying focus on encouraging others so the focus is not what you're getting at church to what you're giving.

v. 25b “...and all the more as you see the day drawing near.”

What day? Maybe the last day Jesus spoke of in Matthew 24:12, His chilling words “the love of many will grow cold.” Even that great church in Ephesus, where Paul ministered 3 years, and wrote the book of Ephesians to that we just finished studying, the church where Priscilla and Aquila and Apollos and Timothy ministered at when Paul wrote him 2 other NT letters, 1 and 2 Timothy, a church the apostle John later ministered at, that same church of Ephesus in Revelation 2 at the end of the first century had already lost its love. If that could happen to the Ephesian church, it can happen to us, so we must continue in fellowship, consider how we can stir up love. Others are prone to discouragement and need your encouragement.

We need to draw near in fellowship (Heb 10:22) because a day is drawing near when the love of many will grow cold, so it’s urgent for the church to be the church, stimulating love in others (v. 24) and all the more as we see the day draw near (v. 24). The way to keep from losing love of it going cold is by the fire of fellowship.

Spurgeon once visited someone who had stopped going to church and Spurgeon went to his fireplace and took out one of the coals with tongs and set it on the bricks and it didn’t take long before it had gone cold and died. Spurgeon didn’t say a word, but that man who’d been away from church said “I see your point, I’ll be back!”

Even the fiery Martin Luther who stood alone against the RCC, he confessed “At home in my own house there is no warmth or vigor in me, but in the church when the multitude is gathered together, a fire is kindled in my heart and it breaks its way through.”

Even Paul himself did not do as well when he was alone. There’s many ways we can apply this last point, but let me leave the rest to the Holy Spirit to apply in each of our lives in various ways as we consider how to apply this in the lives of others after this service.

¹ *Calvin's Commentaries*, Volume XXII (Baker), p. 237.

² Fanny Crosby, "Blessed Assurance."

³ R.C. Sproul, *Before the Face of God: Book 4: A Daily Guide for Living from Ephesians, Hebrews, and James*, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House; Ligonier Ministries, 1994), 290-91.