



BUILDING EACH OTHER UP

January 17th 2021.

Scripture: Hebrews 10:19-25. A Call to Persevere in Faith

This is our third sermon in the series called “On Purpose.”

Paul tells us to draw near to God with a sincere heart, full assurance, cleansed body and to spur one another on toward love and good deeds. So part of our responsibility as God’s church is to help each other grow in our relationship with God.

He strategically compares the Old Covenant Mosaic Law and sacrificial system with the New Covenant in Christ.

He uses the imagery of the Temple to illustrate what the death of Christ has accomplished.

The New Covenant established in Christ is superior to the Law which was established through Moses. It is superior because the Son became flesh and blood and sacrificed Himself once and for all and in some ways put an end to the Mosaic law and its requirements, but in other ways He is the fulfillment of the law.

You may have noted that verse 19 begins with “therefore” indicating it is imperative we read the previous section so we know what it relates to.

Summary: Paul tells us what the requirements were for the Old Covenant; sacrifices were brought to God but they did not take away the sin – it just reminded people that they sin again and again – animal sacrifices were powerless to take away sins.

The tribe of Levi were set apart as the priests and once a year on the Day of Atonement, the chosen priest would undergo extensive cleansing to remove his own sin before atoning for the sins of the nation. If he entered with any sin not atoned for it could mean his death. It was a mysterious place and priests approached God with fear.

The Holy of Holies is where the Ark of the Covenant resided representing the glory and presence of God. It was separated by a large thick veil or curtain which divided it from the outer sanctum.

Under the Old Covenant only the priests could enter and be near to God. But Jesus' death removed the curtain - it has been torn apart and all believers may walk into God's presence at any time.

Through Christ, we can go to God without doubting, knowing that He will hear and answer us.

Under the New Covenant our hearts and minds are cleansed completely, not partially or temporarily.

Our clean conscience allows us to enter God's presence with boldness.

Finally, the imagery of our hearts rinsed clean pictures an inward cleansing. Just as baptism is an outward sign that represents the purification that Christ does inside us, so this washing speaks of an internal cleansing from sin. Once cleansed we can approach God.

There was a church in a small town in Tennessee and the sign out the front read: "Left Foot Baptist Church." Makes you laugh and question why it was called that.

Apparently the church were a foot-washing church – they washed one another's feet as an act of worship. But a conflict arose – which foot should you wash first – the right or the left. This conflict simmered until

those in favour of the left-foot first split off and started their own church – hence the name.

While that story is unusual by itself, it is not unusual for churches to allow small and insignificant matters to tear them apart. And when these small things become the focus of the church, then they keep the church from fulfilling God's purpose.

Paul gives us some guidelines in Hebrews as to how we might edify or build each other up.

1. Focus On God

We need to Focus on God. You may think this is easy but it may be the hardest step if you have been walking in the wrong direction and find yourself running away from God.

It may be that you need to sit down and have a serious discussion with God about where your life is headed. To be truly honest with a desire to change and let God cleanse your guilty conscience.

2. Follow the Straight and Narrow.

We must hold strong to the hope we have in Christ. I was driving on the freeway the other day and a car sped past me and then seemed to be swerving a bit – not sure what was going on but the driver was making small adjustments to keep the car within the lanes. Needless to say, I backed right off just in case.

And that is what Paul meant when he used the word – never wavering. We need to fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.

3. Help Others Grow.

Sometimes I use the phrase – God gave me a kick in the seat of my pants. Now I am not recommending we actually physically do that but we are called to spur each other on.

It is interesting that the word spur means to provoke or to irritate.

Have you ever been walking along and you get a stone in your shoe? You don't want to stop to take the time to get it out, so you keep on walking. But eventually you just have to stop and remove it. By that time, it feels like you have a huge boulder in your shoe – but you find it is just a small stone, hard to find. Small as it was however, it sure was irritating.

That is what we need to do – help to equip others by encouragement and empowering and yes, at times, provoke and irritate.

4. Be faithful to the Body of Christ.

We assemble because we are called into being by God Himself. Some people, for reasons only they know, choose to live their Christian faiths in isolation.

When they do, they cut themselves off from the gifts, encouragement and vitality of others. And perhaps, just as tragically, they deprive the church of the grace and life God has invested in them.

People come to church for one of two reasons – they want to be here or they have to be here. When you get involved in the lives of others and understand that you have a purpose to minister, then you will want to be here.

If the only reason you come is because it is your duty, it makes it more difficult.

5. Encourage one another.

Everyone needs to be encouraged at times – I don't care who you are or how strong you are in Christ - it is nice to hear someone say "It's good to see you here today" and really mean it.

It is great when you are hurting or dealing with a sickness and people say – "I will pray for you" and mean it.

The church is more than people meeting together and having a worship service on a Sunday morning.

The more you are involved in other people's lives, the more you will feel part of the church family.

In America there is the giant Redwood Tree – not like our huge Mountain Ash trees in Australia though as the redwood tree has a relatively shallow root system. In fact, if they had to stand alone on their roots, they may not have the support that they need to stand.

But in the giant redwood forests, their enormous weight is supported in part by the interlocking of the tree's roots with the other trees around it. They work together to hold one another up.

That is our responsibility as God's church, to hold each other up, build up one another, to edify each other.

Ephesians 4:16 from Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

I am very thankful for the positive spirit of unity that exists in the church family here. It is something that we need to continually work at as we strive to live out God's purpose for our lives and for this church.

So let's remind ourselves of what our purpose is – to reach out to the lost and bring them to Christ and to help those new believers to grow in their relationship with Christ.

Paul says in 1 Thes 5:11 “therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

How privileged we are to have this new life in Christ. We have personal access to God through Christ and can draw near to Him without an elaborate system. We may grow in faith, overcome doubts and questions and deepen our relationship with God. We may enjoy motivation from one another and worship together.