

How to Kill Persistent Sin — Warnings and Encouragements — Hebrews 3:13-14

FBC Nacogdoches – Sunday, November 17, 2019 – A.M. Message

Message Description

— The Bible talks of strongholds of sin that can exist in the life of a believer. Some Christians have fought against these strongholds for years. Is there any real hope of real change? In this final message in our series, “How to Kill Persistent Sin,” we will learn of one final biblical tool that the Lord promises to use to form the character of Christ in us. The Holy Spirit has not given up on us. There is a way to grow and change, and we will learn about this divine resource in Hebrews 3:13.

Introduction

- Ever heard of the “Seven Deadly Sins?”
 - Not the manga cartoon on Netflix, but the list of the seven temptations and sins that are common to all those who seek to live a godly life.
 - This isn’t a list you find in the Bible per se...
 - Although the Bible has much to say about each of these sins.
 - The list began with a Christian monk who lived in the latter half of the fourth century AD, Evagrius Ponticus (345–399 AD).
 - Evagrius came up with a list of eight sins that he believed described the common struggle for all believers.
 - Two-hundred years later Gregory the Great shrunk the list to seven.
 - Aren’t you glad!
 - You don’t want me to mention the one he left off.
 - It would just make some of you mad and start an unnecessary debate.
 - Just trust your pastor on this one.
 - This list has become so well known that even the evangelist Billy Graham wrote a book on the Seven Deadly Sins...
 - Graham, Billy. *Freedom from the Seven Deadly Sins*. London: Lakeland, 1972.
 - The Seven Deadly Sins...
 - Pride
 - Greed
 - Lust
 - Envy
 - Gluttony
 - Anger (wrath)
 - Sloth
 - Here is what is interesting about that:
 - **The list of persistent sins Christians struggle with hasn’t change in sixteen centuries!**
- When I think through the list and my pastoral counseling or even my own life, I see these reoccurring themes.
 - Even though we as Christians are dead to sin (**Romans 6:11**), we still struggle with persistent sins.
 - **I read this week that between one half and two thirds of men in the church struggle with pornography.**
 - Lust is a major factor in the slow deterioration of so many marriages.
 - Many of us couldn’t deny the sin of gluttony if we tried.
 - Pride and anger are daily battles for many.
 - Greed and envy often drive us to do things we know to be unwise and ungodly.
 - While we have developed clever ways to disguise it, sloth or laziness often keeps us from serving the Lord and others like we could and should.
- I think about that great 18th century hymn: *Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing*... (Robert Robinson)
 - The first verse is about the grace of God that saves us.
 - *Come, Thou Fount of every blessing...*
 - *Streams of mercy, never ceasing...*
 - *Jesus sought me when a stranger...*
 - The second verse is about the wonderful forgiveness of God.
 - *Let that grace, Lord, like a fetter, Bind my wand’ring heart to Thee...*

- Then the third verse...
 - *Prone to wander, Lord I feel it...*
 - *Prone to leave the God I love...*
- We are prone to wander!
 - So, what do we do?
 - How can we rise above the Seven Deadly Sins?
 - How can we live like strangers and exiles in this world of sin and abstain from the sinful desires that wage war against the soul?
 - **1 Peter 2:11** | *Dear friends, I urge you as strangers and exiles to abstain from sinful desires that wage war against the soul. (CSB)*
- In this message series, we have searched the Scriptures for hope.
 - We've learned that the process of sanctification is not simply to...
 - Pray more
 - Promise more
 - Push harder
 - **Those plans are not biblical or effective.**
 - We've learned the life changing truth that we are dead to sin.
 - We've learned the value of God-prescribed, Holy Spirit-empowered habits.
 - And we've learned some practical steps for engaging in the spiritual disciplines (habits) of...
 - Meditation
 - Prayer
 - Fasting
 - Today...
 - I want us to wrap all of this up with a focus on **Hebrews 3:13**.
 - **Hebrews 3:13** | *But encourage each other daily, while it is still called today, so that none of you is hardened by sin's deception. (CSB)*
 - Here we find some warnings and encouragements that provide the final piece of the puzzle of practical sanctification and real change.
 - There are three parts to this verse...
 - **The first two are very simple and well-known.**
 - **The third is often ignored but vital.**

Warnings and Encouragements

I. Sin is a big dangerous deal.

- **Hebrews 3:13b** | *... hardened by sin's deception. (CSB)*
- Why do we need to spend so much time and energy focused on overcoming persistent sins?
 - Reasons we cite when we ignore persistent sins...
 - Many of these sins seem so small and insignificant...
 - Many of these sins seem so common and accepted in our culture...
 - We are saved and forgiven anyway!
- **This verse provides two reminders of the danger of persistent sin...**
 - A. Sin deceives.**
 - **Hebrews 3:13c** | *... sin's deception. (CSB)*
 - Sin is tricky.
 - It seldom appears as it really is.
 - **When we look at sin in our lives and try to evaluate its danger, we get our evaluation wrong EVERY time!**
 - As Adrian Rogers famously said...
 - Sin will take you farther than you want to go.
 - Sin will keep you longer than you want to stay.
 - Sin will cost you more than you want to pay.
 - Joseph Exell writes...
 - Sin is deceitful...
 - In its appearances.
 - In its promises.
 - In its influences.
 - **Romans 6** says we are dead to sin. It doesn't say that we gained mastery over sin.
 - Your sin (and my sin) is deceptive.

- We are not smart enough or strong enough to manage sin.
- Every sin is a **foothold** of the devil in our lives and given enough time, he will use his **foothold** to gain more and more ground.
- How many conversations have I had with men and women who that began with...
 - *I never meant...*
 - *I never thought...*
 - *I never wanted...*

B. Every day matters.

- **Hebrews 3:13a** | *Encourage each other daily, while it is still called today, so that none of you is hardened...* (CSB)
- There is an urgency to this...
 - **Daily** means we should deal with sin habitually.
 - This should be a constant battle we fight.
 - **1 Timothy 4:7b** | *... train yourself in godliness.* (CSB)
 - Training is a daily endeavor.
 - “**While it is still called today**” adds urgency.
 - Time is pressing...
 - We don’t have an infinite amount of time to do this...
 - Why? Three reasons...
 1. The honor of the Lord deserves our urgency.
 - **And sin detracts from how our lives can bring honor to the Lord.**
 2. The gospel of the Lord should be heralded.
 - **And sin impedes the progress of the gospel.**
 3. Sin hardens us.
 - **Our hearts can become as calloused as our hands...**
 - **The hardening of sin is often not an easy process to undo.**
 - Sins that used to horrify us, after a short time don’t seem to bother us at all.
 - That is the process of hardening.
 - And when a person becomes spiritually hardened, he is rarely aware of it.
 - That is the tragedy and the danger.
 - **It’s like the old fable about boiling a frog...**
 - **The premise is that if a frog is put suddenly into boiling water, it will jump out, but if the frog is put in tepid water which is then brought to a boil slowly, it will not perceive the danger and will be cooked to death.**¹

C. Perseverance confirms.

- **Hebrews 3:14** | *For we have become participants in Christ if we hold firmly until the end the reality that we had at the start.* (CSB)
- We must not be casual toward sin!
 - We must have the attitude of the apostle Paul...
 - **1 Corinthians 9:27** | *Instead, I discipline my body and bring it under strict control, so that after preaching to others, I myself will not be disqualified.* (CSB)
 - We must embrace the clear and urgent commands of Scripture...
 - **Romans 6:12a** | *... Do not let sin reign in your mortal body...* (CSB)
 - **Romans 8:13b** | *... Put to death the deeds of the body...* (CSB)
 - **1 Timothy 4:7b** | *... Train yourself in godliness.* (CSB)
 - **2 Corinthians 7:1b** | *... Let us cleanse ourselves from every impurity of the flesh and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.* (CSB)

- In fact, a contrary attitude would call into question the very authenticity of our faith.
 - **Romans 8:13** | ... *If you live according to the flesh, you are going to die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.* (CSB)

II. The Holy Spirit is ready, willing, and able to help you with persistent sin.

- **Hebrews 3:13a** | *But encourage each other daily...* (CSB)
 - We will get to this specific command to encourage one another in a few minutes.
 - But first, I want you to see an interesting word connection in the original language.
 - This isn't obvious to us as we read the English translation of the Scripture, but it would have been obvious to the Christians who heard the words of **Hebrews 3:13** when it was written.
 - The Greek lemma translated encourage in **Hebrews 3:13** is παρακαλέω.
 - The Greek lemma translated counselor and referring to the Holy Spirit in **John 14:16** is παράκλητος.
 - **John 14:16** | *And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever.* (CSB)
 - This is essentially the noun form of the verb found in **Hebrews 3:13**.
 - When the original audience heard the command to encourage in **Hebrews 3:13** they would have not only seen the command to encourage but also the allusion to the work of the Holy Spirit to also keep believers from being "*hardened by sin's deception.*"
- We've talked much about the Holy Spirit in this message series, so let's take this opportunity for a quick review.
 - You will never change by your own strength, determination, and willpower.
 - All the dramatic promises of "I WILL NEVER" will not amount to much in the long run.
 - But that is OK.
 - The Lord never meant for this to be all on you.
 - If you could change yourself, then there would have been no need for Jesus.
 - If you could change yourself, then the praise would go to you and not to the Lord.
 - The Holy Spirit is God's agent to bring real change.
 - **Romans 8:13** | ... *If you live according to the flesh, you are going to die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.* (CSB)
 - "*According to the flesh*" means...
 - "*By the Spirit*" means...
 - So, our part in sanctification is partnering with the Holy Spirit.
 - To get in step with the Holy Spirit...
 - To cooperate with the Holy Spirit...
 - Let me introduce a new verse we've not yet looked at in this study...
 - **Galatians 5:16** | *I say then, walk by the Spirit and you will certainly not carry out the desire of the flesh.* (CSB)
 - First, notice the Holy Spirit's essential role in sanctification.
 - You cannot do this alone.
 - You were not meant to do this alone.
 - Now notice our part in the work of the Holy Spirit...
 - We are to WALK by the Spirit.
 - The Spirit does not operate automatically in a believer's heart.
 - He waits to be depended on.
 - How do we *walk by the Spirit*?
 - God-prescribed, Holy Spirit-empowered habits (spiritual disciplines)
 - **Romans 6:13** | *And do not offer any parts of it to sin as weapons for unrighteousness. But as those who are alive from the dead, offer yourselves to God, and all the parts of yourselves to God as weapons for righteousness.* (CSB)
 - **Romans 6:19** | *I am using a human analogy because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you offered the parts of yourselves as slaves to impurity, and to greater and greater lawlessness, so now offer them as slaves to righteousness, which results in sanctification.* (CSB)
 - So, change is not by...
 - Pray more
 - And passively let God worry about our sanctification apart from our efforts...
 - Promise more

- Push harder
- It is possible because we are dead to sin and because we partner with the Holy Spirit.
- But there is one more resource the Lord has provided us for real change...

III. The other half of the requisite encouragement comes from the church.

- **Hebrews 3:13a** | *But encourage each other daily...* (CSB)
- The Lord could have made faith a private matter.
 - Simply a vertical relationship between us and the Father...
 - And in fact, that is how many (or most) people in America view the Christian faith...
 - But he did not!
- The Christian faith (and every part of the Christian faith) is inescapably bound up in our connections to each other.
 - Hence, the church, the body of Christ...
 - Hence, the dozens of “one-another” commands in the New Testament...
- But let’s look specifically at our struggle with persistent sin...
 - Is this a private matter that you need to work out with the Lord?
 - Or is this something that REQUIRES the help of others?
 - No question.
 - It is the latter.
- Let’s start with the connection we see in **Hebrews 3:13**.
 - **Hebrews 3:13** | *But encourage each other daily, while it is still called today, so that none of you is hardened by sin’s deception.* (CSB)
- Is this just a one-off instruction in the New Testament?
 - No! This is the theme of the New Testament!
 - **1 Thessalonians 5:11** | *Therefore encourage one another and build each other up as you are already doing.* (CSB)
 - **Hebrews 10:24–25** | *And let us watch out for one another to provoke love and good works, not neglecting to gather together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day approaching.* (CSB)
 - **Galatians 6:1–2** | *Brothers and sisters, if someone is overtaken in any wrongdoing, you who are spiritual, restore such a person with a gentle spirit, watching out for yourselves so that you also won’t be tempted. Carry one another’s burdens; in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.* (CSB)
 - **Colossians 3:16** | *Let the word of Christ dwell richly among you, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.* (CSB)
 - **James 5:16** | *Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is very powerful in its effect.* (CSB)
 - Have you ever realized that the promise that the prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective is in the context of praying for a fellow Christian who has confessed his sins to you as you pray for him to overcome those sins?
- What does this mean practically as we struggle to overcome persistent sins? How do we “*encourage each other daily?*”

A. You need to be in worship, Sunday School, and have a place of service.

- This is the space, and these are the connections the Lord will bless and use for your sanctification.
 - For your profit...
 - For the benefit of others...

B. You need to have partners in your Christian walk.

- Discussing your Bible reading and Bible study...
- Sharing prayer burdens...
- Confession...

C. You need to be investing in the lives of a few people.

- Our church is filled with seasoned Christians.
 - You have a role, an important role!
- Find some way to invest in others.

- You and I will not know the fullness of what the Lord wants to do to change, mature, and sanctify us as long as we are treating our faith like a solo sport.

Conclusion

- The apostle Paul talked about *strongholds* of sin that can exist in our lives (**2 Corinthians 10:4**).
 - That doesn’t have to be true of us.

- Jesus has destroyed the authority of sin.
 - God has made a way for us to make real progress in overcoming the presence of sin and the existence of strongholds of sin.
 - Paul said of the some of the Christians in Corinth that they were carnal and spiritual babies.
 - **1 Corinthians 3:1** | *And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. (NKJV)*
 - **1 Corinthians 3:1** | *For my part, brothers and sisters, I was not able to speak to you as spiritual people but as people of the flesh, as babes in Christ. (CSB)*
 - Let's see the character of Christ formed in us (**Galatians 4:19**)!
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Discussion Guide

Connect

- What persistent sins do you think form the most common struggles among Christians today? How is this different from one age group to another?

Discover

- Which statement or experience stood out to you from the worship service?
- Read 1 Peter 2:11 and Hebrews 3:13.
 - What are the two or three reasons these verses give that we should be urgent in our battle against persistent sins?
 - How is sin deceptive?
 - What does it mean that sin can harden a person? How does sin harden a person? Why is it hard for a Christian to tell whether he has been hardened by sin?
- Read Romans 8:13 and Galatians 5:16.
 - According to these verses, what is the role of the Holy Spirit with respect to overcoming persistent sins?
 - Galatians 5:16 commands Christians to “walk by the Spirit.” What does this mean? How do we do this?
 - What is the promise in Galatians 5:16?
 - How does Romans 8:13 connect our attitude toward sin with the assurance of the genuineness of our faith?
- Read Galatians 6:1-2, Colossians 3:16, and Hebrews 10:24-25.
 - What do the Galatians and Colossians passages say our responsibility is toward our fellow believers?
 - What important element does the Hebrews passage add to how we encourage other believers?
- Read James 5:16.
 - Why does James encourage Christians to confess sins to other people and not just to the Lord?
 - How can this confession happen from a practical standpoint?

Respond

- Why do Christians so often view their faith and walk with the Lord as a private matter? According to Scripture, what are Christians missing out on when they fail to foster close spiritual connections with other believers?
- What are some practical ways believers can connect with other believers and live the Christian life together? What are the most common obstacles we face? How can we overcome those obstacles?

Bonus for Thinkers

- What hints does the Bible give for why the Father established our faith such that we need the assistance of other believers to experience the fullness of the Christian life and of the sanctifying work of the Spirit?

Message Outline Ideas

- #1
 - Sin is a big dangerous deal.
 - It is hardening and deceiving...
 - It must be dealt with daily and today (continually and urgently) ...
 - It is a sign of the genuineness of your faith...
 - The Holy Spirit is ready, willing, and able to help you with persistent sin.

- Reference “encourage” with **John 14:16...**
- The other half of the requisite encouragement comes from the church.

Message Title Ideas

- Warnings & Encouragements

Ideas

- The importance of the church in sanctification...
 - The body of Christ...
- Past sermons to review...
 - Moving On Up - Why Be A Part of Church - **Hebrews 10:24-25** - August 28, 2016
 - Why Connect? - **Hebrews 10:24-25** - September 7, 2008
 - Church Works: How To Do Church - **Hebrews 10:24-25** - March 19, 2006
- History of the word and contemporary idea of church as a place...
 - For 250 years, Christian worship was relatively informal.
 - Home gatherings
 - Love feasts
 - Occasionally building or room, but it was just a regular building not a “religious building.”
 - Persecution kept the meeting places small and temporary
 - You couldn’t build a facility like this; it would have been illegal in much of the Roman empire.
 - Then in AD 313 Constantine, soon to be emperor of Rome, legalized Christianity.
 - Christian worship began to take on some of the formalism, pageantry, ceremony of pagan worship.
 - Before Constantine believers would the (usually isolated and obscure) burial places of martyrs once a year and have an informal time of worship.
 - But now people started building meeting places around these tombs.
 - Believers would come to these special places to worship in ever more formal settings.
 - The Roman word for these buildings was ‘basilica.’
- **St. Peter’s Basilica**
 - **Height (outside): 45 stories**
 - **Height (inside): 15 stories**
 - **Internal area 163K square feet**
 - **From front entrance to the choir loft: 1/8 mile**
 - **In current format since 1626**
 - **First built in the early 4th century**
 - **Cost: \$64 million (in 1500 & 1600’s money)**
 - **Today more than 100 times that**
 - **\$6.5 billion**
- **Toto, we’re not in Kansas anymore...**
- So gradually, the *ekklesia* began to be less a group of people with a common distinction and began to be a location.
 - Language
 - The Romans called these locations “Basilica.”
 - The Gothic (East Germanic language that is extinct but the source of many of our English words) word for Basilica is *kirika*.
 - Became *Kirche* in modern German.
 - In English: Church.
 - So the word ‘church’ or ‘basilica’ meaning ‘building’ was used to refer to this group of people for the next 1,500 years.
 - So why do they use ‘church’ instead of ‘gathering’ or ‘assembly’ in our English Bibles?
 - In 1522, William Tyndale determined to translate the Bible into English from the Greek.
 - This was illegal.
 - People were forbidden to have their own Bibles.
 - In churches, Bibles were chained to the pulpits.
 - Tyndale was chased all over Europe, but he finally succeeded and began secretly smuggling Bibles to England.
 - The church arrested him. He was executed by strangulation.
 - Why did they kill him?
 - The church felt like they would lose control if people could read the Scriptures for themselves.
 - Tyndale translated with word *ekklesia* as *congregation*.

- Tyndale’s efforts started a movement that changed Christianity to be much more of what it was in the beginning.
- But unfortunately, the word *church* had already stuck.
- You can have full confidence in your English Bibles, but just know that the word *church* does not refer to a location.
- There are ways you can only connect with the Lord through the church.
 - **Setting a hot coal to the side...**

Scripture References

- General
 - **Galatians 5:16** | *I say then, walk by the Spirit and you will certainly not carry out the desire of the flesh.* (CSB)
 - **Romans 14:19** | *So then, let us pursue what promotes peace and what builds up one another.* (CSB)
 - **1 Corinthians 12:26–27** | *So if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and individual members of it.* (CSB)
 - **Acts 2:46** | *Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple, and broke bread from house to house. They ate their food with joyful and sincere hearts,* (CSB)
- Sanctification
 - **1 Thessalonians 5:11** | *Therefore encourage one another and build each other up as you are already doing.* (CSB)
 - **Hebrews 10:24–25** | *And let us watch out for one another to provoke love and good works, not neglecting to gather together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day approaching.* (CSB)
 - **James 5:16** | *Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is very powerful in its effect.* (CSB)
 - **Colossians 3:16** | *Let the word of Christ dwell richly among you, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.* (CSB)
 - **Hebrews 3:13** | *But encourage each other daily, while it is still called today, so that none of you is hardened by sin’s deception.* (CSB)
 - **Galatians 6:1–2** | *Brothers and sisters, if someone is overtaken in any wrongdoing, you who are spiritual, restore such a person with a gentle spirit, watching out for yourselves so that you also won’t be tempted. Carry one another’s burdens; in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.* (CSB)
- Worship as a church...
 - **Psalms 34:3** | *Proclaim the LORD’s greatness with me; let us exalt his name together.* (CSB)
 - **Hebrews 2:12** | *saying: I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters; I will sing hymns to you in the congregation.* (CSB)
 - **Psalms 22:22** | *I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters; I will praise you in the assembly.* (CSB)

General Notes

- **“Prone to wander, Lord I feel it; prone to leave the God I love.”¹**
- Spend Time with God-Saturated People Who Help You See God and Fight the Fight²
- In the battle of putting sin to death, we need the mutual encouragement, challenge, and prayer support of one another. That is why **spiritual synergism** is so often taught in the New Testament. For example, **we are to admonish one another (Colossians 3:16)**, **encourage one another (Hebrews 3:13)**, **confess our sins to one another (James 5:16)**, **bear one another’s burdens (Galatians 6:2)**, and **pray for one another (James 5:16)**.³
- **Without true fellowship, even the Christian who is ardently practicing the Spiritual Disciplines will not develop in a spiritually balanced way.**⁴

Notes on Church

- **If you can miss church and not miss church, then something is absent from your heart** and faith.⁵
- If a child is going to be emotionally healthy, he needs the socialization and encouragement a family can provide. In the same way, every child of God needs the fellowship and encouragement that God intends for him to receive from a church family if he is going to be spiritually healthy.⁶

¹ David L. Allen, *Hebrews*, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2010), 263.

² John Piper, *Desiring God* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2003), 359.

³ Jerry Bridges, *The Discipline of Grace: God’s Role and Our Role in the Pursuit of Holiness* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2006), 202.

⁴ Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1991), 241.

⁵ Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines within the Church: Participating Fully in the Body of Christ* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1996), 18.

⁶ Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines within the Church: Participating Fully in the Body of Christ* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1996), 19.

- Theologian and former editor of *Christianity Today* Kenneth Kantzer has observed that watching church instead of attending “tends not only to breed disloyalty to the church but to foster an isolated, private, and individualistic kind of Christianity; and that is not the kind of Christianity nourished in the Bible.”⁷

Spiritual Discipline of Conferencing

- However, the Puritans discussed and promoted conferencing with the same frequency and vigor as they promoted prayer and meditation.⁸
- Richard Baxter, noted Puritan preacher, used the word *conference* as a verb to describe the practice of meeting with other believers to discuss Scripture and share how God is working in one another’s lives.⁹
- Other biblical passages, Old and New Testament, support conference. **Psalm 66:16** says, “Come and listen, all who fear God, and I will tell what he has done for me.” **Hebrews 10:24-25** urges believers to meet together to encourage and provoke one another toward love and good works. The apostle Paul says Christians are built up by the words of other believers (**Eph 4:15-16, 29**).¹⁰
- Thus, the discipline of conference joined the disciplines of meditation and prayer as the primary path of Christian discipleship for the Puritans.¹¹

Notes on Hebrews 10:24

- Christian perseverance is thus also a community endeavor.¹²
- It is interesting to note that the emphasis here is not on what a believer *gets from* the assembly, but rather on what he can *contribute* to the assembly. Faithfulness in church attendance encourages others and provokes them to love and good works.¹³
- The word rendered “spur” is actually a noun, *paroxysmos*, which usually has a meaning like “irritation” or “exasperation.” It is most unusual to have it used in a good sense, and the choice of the unusual word makes the exhortation more striking.¹⁴

Notes on Hebrews 10:25

- It is true that a person does not have to go to church to be a Christian. **He does not have to go home to be married either.** But in both cases if he does not, he will have a very poor relationship.¹⁵
- Martin Luther spoke of this when he confided, “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.”¹⁶
- **The day drawing near** could refer to the imminent destruction of the Temple, which brought all the sacrifices and rituals to a close. The Old Covenant simply could not function without the Temple, which, when the book of Hebrews was written, was about to be destroyed by Titus. But I believe the primary reference is to the coming of the Lord, which makes the passage apply to all of us. The only place where we can remain steadfast until He returns is with His people. We need each other. We need to be in fellowship with each other, as we mutually strengthen each other and encourage each other.¹⁷

Notes on Hebrews 3:12

- **“that falls away from the living God”** This is an AORIST ACTIVE INFINITIVE. This verb is the source of our English word “apostasy.” This is addressing a developing faithlessness (it is the opposite of 3:14).¹⁸

Notes on Hebrews 3:13

- Each Christian brother, therefore, should be most careful to guard against a **sinful, unbelieving heart** which God’s flock in the wilderness displayed, the kind of heart **that turns away from the living God**. One preventative against

⁷ Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines within the Church: Participating Fully in the Body of Christ* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1996), 23.

⁸ Joanne J. Jung, *The Lost Discipline of Conversation: Surprising Lessons in Spiritual Formation Drawn from the English Puritans* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 32.

⁹ Jung, *The Lost Discipline of Conversation*, 39.

¹⁰ Dissertation

¹¹ Dissertation

¹² Crossway Bibles, *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2378.

¹³ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 315.

¹⁴ Leon Morris, “Hebrews,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Hebrews through Revelation*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 12 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 105.

¹⁵ R. Kent Hughes, *Hebrews: An Anchor for the Soul*, vol. 2, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1993), 34.

¹⁶ R. Kent Hughes, *Hebrews: An Anchor for the Soul*, vol. 2, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1993), 35.

¹⁷ John F. MacArthur Jr., *Hebrews*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), 268.

¹⁸ Robert James Utley, *The Superiority of the New Covenant: Hebrews*, vol. Volume 10, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International, 1999), 39.

such a tendency would be a spirit of mutual concern and admonition among the Christian brotherhood. Accordingly they were to **encourage one another daily ... so that none would be hardened by sin's deceitfulness** (v. 13).¹⁹

- **Encourage** is from the Greek *parakaleō*, a form of the word used by Jesus of the Holy Spirit in **John 14:16**. The root meaning has to do with coming alongside to give help. The writer is saying to the believers among those to whom he is writing, "Get along side each other and help each other."²⁰
 - This is the **same root as the word *paraclete***, which means "one called alongside to help" and is used of the Spirit.²¹
 - Encourage in **Hebrews 3:13**...
 - **παρακαλέω^a; παράκλησις^b, εως f**: to ask for something earnestly and with propriety—'to ask for (earnestly), to request, to plead for, to appeal to, earnest request, appeal.'²²
 - Counselor in **John 14:6**...
 - **παράκλητος^a, ου m**: (a title for the Holy Spirit) one who helps, by consoling, encouraging, or mediating on behalf of—"Helper, Encourager, Mediator."²³
- Hardened...
 - **σκληρύνω**: to cause to be stubborn and obstinate, especially with regard to the truth—"to make stubborn, to make obstinate." ὃν δὲ θέλει σκληρύνει 'whom he wishes to, he makes stubborn' **Ro 9:18**.²⁴
- **Deceitfulness** means "trickery" or "stragem." **Sin is tricky; it seldom appears as it really is**. It always masks itself. It lies and deceives (cf. **Rom. 7:11**). **When a person becomes spiritually hardened, he rarely is aware of it**. He can hear the gospel of Jesus Christ time and time again and not respond. My father often used the well-known expression, "**The same sun that melts the wax hardens the clay**." If your heart is not melted in faith, it will be hardened in unbelief.²⁵
- Verse **13** gives one way of preventing the evil of verse **12**.²⁶
 - **Encourage**. The Hebrews are told what to do in this verse. They are to **encourage one another**—to entreat, beseech, comfort, refresh, and bring consolation (see **Luke 2:25; Acts 9:31; 15:31; Romans 15:5; 2 Corinthians 1:3-5**). Sometimes this encouragement is an exhortation (see **Acts 13:15; Romans 12:8; 2 Corinthians 8:4, 17; 1 Timothy 4:13**).²⁷
 - **The principal meaning of the word encourage is to exhort, desire, or call in; and only as a secondary meaning does it denote "to comfort."**²⁸
- **One another**. It is incumbent on all believers mutually to exhort and to bear the word of exhortation.²⁹
- **As long as it is called Today**. That is, "be careful to discharge this duty while the season lasts."³⁰
 - **"Daily" means that encouragement should be habitual. "As long as it is called Today" adds a touch of urgency, for "Today" does not last forever.**³¹
 - In terms of time, "today" stands in relationship with "yesterday" and "tomorrow."³²
- **That none of you may be hardened**. The particular evil warned against is that they should not **be hardened**. So, this verse tells the Hebrews to be on their guard against being hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. The way to gain victory over this is through mutual exhortation.³³
 - Hardness of heart originates in *unbelief*, which produces *contempt* for God, which in turn shows itself in distinct behavioral patterns—namely, *negativism, grumbling, quarreling* and *disobedience*.³⁴
 - **1. Sin is deceitful. (1) In its appearances. (2) In its promises. (3) In its influences. 2. Sin prevails through its deceitfulness.**³⁵

Galatians 5:16

¹⁹ Zane C. Hodges, "Hebrews," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 787.

²⁰ John F. MacArthur Jr., *Hebrews*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), 92-93.

²¹ Robert James Utley, *The Superiority of the New Covenant: Hebrews*, vol. Volume 10, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International, 1999), 40.

²² Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 407.

²³ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 141.

²⁴ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 765.

²⁵ John F. MacArthur Jr., *Hebrews*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), 93.

²⁶ John Owen, *Hebrews*, Crossway Classic Commentaries (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 68.

²⁷ John Owen, *Hebrews*, Crossway Classic Commentaries (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 68.

²⁸ John Owen, *Hebrews*, Crossway Classic Commentaries (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 68.

²⁹ John Owen, *Hebrews*, Crossway Classic Commentaries (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 69.

³⁰ John Owen, *Hebrews*, Crossway Classic Commentaries (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 69.

³¹ Leon Morris, "Hebrews," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Hebrews through Revelation*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 12 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 36.

³² Edgar McKnight and Christopher Church, *Hebrews-James*, ed. P. Keith Gammons and R. Alan Culpepper, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Incorporated, 2004), 100.

³³ John Owen, *Hebrews*, Crossway Classic Commentaries (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 70.

³⁴ R. Kent Hughes, *Hebrews: An Anchor for the Soul*, vol. 1, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1993), 101.

³⁵ Joseph S. Exell, *The Biblical Illustrator: Hebrews*, vol. 1 (London: James Nisbet & Co., n.d.), 263.

- The verb *peripateite* is a present imperative and is literally translated, “keep on walking.” As a believer walks through life he should depend on the indwelling Holy Spirit for guidance and power. But the Spirit does not operate automatically in a believer’s heart. He waits to be depended on.³⁶
- But where does the believer acquire the resources for this kind of victorious Christian living? Modern religious pedagogy offers many answers: a winsome personality, one’s innate abilities, advanced degrees in theological education, special seminars on the higher Christian life, social activism, spiritual psychotherapy, and others. Paul’s answer is the Holy Spirit. Only the Spirit of God who has made us free from sin and given us new life in regeneration can keep us truly free as we experience through walking in him the power of sanctification.³⁷
- In Paul’s vocabulary, to walk in the Spirit or be led by the Spirit means to go where the Spirit is going, to listen to his voice, to discern his will, to follow his guidance.³⁸
- Rather, the Christian life is a life of consistent surrender to the Spirit.³⁹

³⁶ Donald K. Campbell, “Galatians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 607.

³⁷ Timothy George, *Galatians*, vol. 30, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 386.

³⁸ Timothy George, *Galatians*, vol. 30, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 386.

³⁹ Scot McKnight, *Galatians*, *The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 269.

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boiling_frog