

COMMITTED: Convictional Decisions for the New Year: Part 1
Hebrews 10:19-26

“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith...”

Introduction: Commitment is something that we all think is important, know the value of, but is still difficult to achieve. Every employer wants their employees to commit to working hard and giving a full effort regardless of pay. Every team desires some form of “Commitment to Excellence” (a mantra, ironically, or the Las Vegas Raiders...insert your own joke here). Every accomplishment that requires discipline and self-sacrifice comes out of a commitment to something greater, be it an instrument, piece of art, or construction project. It’s why stories like *“The Boys in the Boat”* are so inspirational, since it explains how 9 of the most inexperienced and unlikely young men went from obscurity to national attention and Olympic gold, by committing to each other and working beyond normal thresholds to overcome seemingly insurmountable odds. When commitment is high, achievement is sure to follow. When commitment is low, there is no assurance that anything of value will be accomplished.

As we look ahead to 2024 together, we are reminded of this fact within the church. We have been tasked with a glorious and clear purpose and mission: **to MAKE & MATURE disciples**. This comes out of the explicit call by Jesus in the Great Commission in **Matt. 28:19-20**, *“Go therefore and **make disciples** of all nations, **baptizing them** in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20 teaching them to observe** all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”* This was reinforced by Paul in **Colossians 1:28-29**, *“Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, **that we may present everyone mature in Christ.** 29 For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.”* Making disciples requires calling people to the truth of the gospel, to recognize sin against a holy God, asking for forgiveness through Jesus Christ, turning from sin to pursue a fully assured relationship with God. Maturing is playing out the realities of ALL of Scripture through the gospel in a committed life. In a family context, both **birth and maturity are** celebrated, and both are valuable. We rejoice when we meet newborns in the hospital and at graduations, since both mark incredibly important facets of life. The church functions like a family in this way, as we celebrate a new disciple when they yield to Jesus AND invest and rejoice in their growth along the way. Making and maturing provides a perpetuating model for all churches for all time.

Being a part of a church is certainly more than attending a Sunday morning corporate gathering, but it is definitely not less. When we become committed followers of Jesus we are immediately included and made part of His Body, united with all believers everywhere in Christ. This is called the Universal church. But the Universal church ALWAYS manifests itself in the LOCAL church, an embodied gathering of born again believers who decidedly come together for fellowship, worship, teaching, and training with the goal to scatter to share the good news outside. The local church is much more than merely a **building**, although we are thankful for the use of this one! It is a place where we can **be known and belong**. There should not be **anonymity** in the church, since this is a family. This is a place where others can know your sin, your shortcomings, your struggles and walk with you IN them in love. It is a place where we can truly deal with our sin with people who have committed to us, where restoration is possible and reconciliation is the norm. It’s a place that we can display the goodness of the gospel to a desperate world in need of hope, the hope that comes only through a **transformative work** of a Savior who is Lord, who died IN our place to give us His righteousness. It’s a place where we know who we are, why we are here, and where we are going. This is how the church is supposed to be, the way God intended it, and the way it can be. But it is not very many who actually believe, understand, or taste the church the way

the Bible describes. In fact, far too many people have a **nominal view** of the church and that leaves them with a pithy experience and a monumental lack of commitment.

Some will say they are committed to Christ, but not His church. That's like saying I'm committed to my wife but not my bride! It actually makes no sense. But the Malphurs group¹ put together several reasons people who claim to be believers say they have a hard time attending, let alone committing to, the church. See if any of these resonate:

- **I can get better preaching from a podcast**
- **I can worship and study ON MY OWN**
- **I have Christian friends that are my "church"**
- **I have to work or have family obligations on the weekends**
- **I feel like church is boring**
- **My child or teenager does not like it**
- **I don't feel like it makes a difference in my life.**
- **I'm offended by the churches positions on social issues**
- **I've been hurt by church members**
- **I don't trust church leadership**

Let me say a few things about this list. First, they are all true to some degree or another. In fact, I would argue that if the church were on par with any social club or activity group, it would be a pretty mediocre one at that. Second, churches have a few options when they read a list like this: change to accommodate these reasons, giving people what they want, doing nothing, or what we will try to do in the next few weeks. Third, notice that the subject of all of these has the source in "I" or "me". When the church is viewed through a consumeristic lens, one will base their commitment level on what THEY get out of it, rather than a place to serve, sacrifice, and love. As long as the church measures up to a personal grid of value, they will stay. If not, we will look for other churches, or a combination, to fulfill our felt needs. This path will never work in any real relationship, and in a church context, will never satisfy, lead to maturity, and will lack the joy that comes through true commitment.

The easy thing to do in a message like this is to use number, percentages, stories, or a passionate plea to elicit some sort of commitment FROM you this year. But we will not do that, because this is NOT my church or yours. What we want to do is compel you, from Scripture through the working of the Spirit, to make **convictional, truthful, honest, fully informed, Spirit driven, Christ magnifying, God glorifying** commitments based on your belief in the gospel of Jesus Christ. That is how we move forward in joy, fruitfulness, and effectiveness together. So for the next few weeks we want to see a progression of thought in a passage in **Hebrews 10**, and draw some conclusions and implications from it. May we all evaluate our own hearts and minds through the lens of Scripture with the goal to glorify our God through Jesus Christ.

Commitments of the Godhead in the Gospel

Forgiveness is one of the sweetest, unexpected, and counterintuitive realities that is offered by God to mankind. We are naturally bent to **pay back, make up, or work off** debt or wrong done. We are predisposed to think in terms of "forgive but DON'T FORGET", and most often when we wrong each

¹ <https://malphursgroup.com/15-reasons-why-committed-christians-do-not-attend-church/>

other, our impulse is to say “sorry” rather than ask for forgiveness. This not only comes out of a misunderstanding of our rank sinfulness, but we also have a tough time with the whole concept of forgiveness. It’s like when a lawyer in a courtroom declares something in front of the jury, then say’s “strike it from the record”. The jury already heard it, damage has been done, and there is no going back. But that is not how God defines forgiveness.

In the book of Hebrews, the argument builds and is laid out that **Jesus is better**: better than Moses, a better High Priest who offers a better sacrifice and a better promise and redemption. Chapter 10 unfolds the **New Covenant**, which was prophesied in Ezekiel and Jeremiah and enacted through the life and death of Jesus Christ. Sacrifices were demanded in the Old Testament, but they were limited. They could cover up sin, but never pay for them completely. They had to repeated, over and over, and even after all the blood was spilt, it still left the people separate from God, needing a priest over them to represent them to God. But Jesus changed all of that.

Jesus Christ ***“offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins...sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.”*** (Heb. 10:12-13) His sacrifice, once for all, was sufficient, accepted by the Father, to *pay for* the sins of those who believe. His sacrifice made His own both already *“sanctified”* positionally (v. 10) and practically (*“being sanctified”*). How did He do that? He gave new hearts to those who believe – *“I will put my law on their hearts and write them on their hands”* – which was exactly what Jer. 31:33 said and Ezekiel 36:26 prophesied about moving us from a heart of stone to a heart of flesh. But then he goes further: ***I will remember their sins and their lawlessness no more”***. *Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin”*

This forgiveness: 1) **Is complete** – Christ has died for all our sin, past, present, and future, and sacrifices no longer have to be made for each sin committed since Christ’s singular one paid for them all 2) **Is REMEMBERED no more** – God cannot forget, just like we cannot, but “remembering no more” is proactive, a choice and decision to do away with it, as far as the east is from the west (Ps. 103:12). Practically, this means we do not and cannot pay for our own sins but rest completely on the work of Jesus alone, and gives us the means by which we can forgive one another, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave us (Eph. 4:32). This sets the table for the text we’ll consider:

Commitments of Christ as Messiah and Priest

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, 20 by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God
Hebrews 10:19-21

Look in your Bibles and we want to point out a couple of points from the passage. 1) Notice the progression of thought, from **faith** in vv. 19-22, **hope** in verse 23, and **love** in vv. 24-25. The first two directed toward God and the last on each other. This means that we must have clarity about the first two to be able to play out the third, meaning a robust faith and hope in the gospel is the only way to play out a loving reality to others in the church. 2) Notice **two “since’s”** in vv. 19-21, which talk about clear realities, which lead to **three “let us’s”**. The realities lead to action, so understanding the realities SHOULD shape the actions. So let’s start with these realities:

- **Boldness in our newfound access to God**

No Jewish person living during the time of Jesus would have confidence or boldness in entering the holy of holies in the Temple, the place of God's presence. In fact, only once a year would the High Priest enter behind the curtain, but he would do so only after making sure he had made specific sacrifices and atoning for his own sin before seeking to do so for all the people. The curtain that divided the people from the presence of God was both **protective** – since no man could see God and live (Ex. 33:20) – but also **vivid** – it reminded the people that their sin had cut them off from access. A verse like *“Let us then with confidence (boldness) draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace in our time of need”* (Heb. 4:16) would have been foreign and unthinkable to the Jewish mind. So Christ offered something revolutionary, distinct, and glorious.

That way was through His blood. As Jesus gave up His last breath on the cross, the “curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom” (Matt. 27:51), vividly declaring that there was a new way to the Father other than the sacrifices of animals. It says that this was a **new and living way**. The word “new” here is unique, and only used in this passage. It means **fresh**. *“It expresses the incorruptible freshness of the new revelation, so that the abandoned rites and ceremonies seem like dead works in comparison with the service of the living God. The new way no longer leads through the old offerings, i.e. through the veil of the Temple. It is thorough the event of redemption in the person and death of Jesus, through his flesh.”*² One time sacrifice that never gets old and always accomplishes what it set out to do: pay the price of redemption and satisfy the stored up wrath of God. Here the author also points out that the curtain was by comparison Jesus' flesh, so that once Jesus' body was broken, the veil had to be. Jesus had to die to be able to offer forgiveness, which allowed us access to God that we have **confidently and boldly**.

Sometimes we frame the gospel differently than this. We think of it in terms of getting away from sin and punishment, and maybe even the opportunity to be obedient and holy. But that is only part of it. The purpose of salvation was to **reconcile us to the Father in a pure and new relationship with Him**. He gives us access because HE WANTS us there. There is a picture from October, 1963 that captures this idea of access to our Father, and it comes from a time when the US Presidency was held in high regard and the Oval office a place to be revered. A *LOOK* magazine photographer captured a photo of JFK jr. playing under the Resolute desk while his father tried to conduct business. It is a picture of power and intimacy, of political might and family care. This is how we gain access to God as His kids. This is the confidence that only a child would have, to burrow in and enjoy the security of a relationship built on faith.

- **Boldness in our Great Priest**

But notice that is not all. Jesus' death gave us access, but He also is our Great Priest, who *“sympathizes with our weakness, who was tempted in every way yet without sin”* (Heb. 4:15). Jesus as our Priest did not merely **show** us the way to God, or even just **provide** the way to Him, He **takes us with Him to God and ministers for us in heaven**. The one who was raised from the dead and seated at the right hand of God, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and above every name (Eph. 1:20-21), is the one who makes us alive and raised us up with him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places (Eph. 2:5-6). Not only do we have access, but the one who brings us with Him into the presence of God.

We travelled to the White House on Grace Schools HST trip a few years ago, and I got about a 5 iron away from the doors. I'm told that now they are granting access to a few rooms there, but no one can

² TDNT, volume 7, p. 136.

simply traipse into the Oval Office unannounced. It would be like someone coming down to the crowd, grabbing you out, walking you past all security and formality, and walking you in to the chief place of prominence. Jesus brings us to the Father, where He advocates for us (1 John 2:2), intercedes for us (Heb. 7:25), and gives us grace in our time of need (Heb. 4:16).

Commitments of Faith in Response

*“Let us **draw near** with a true heart **in full assurance of faith**, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water” (10:22)*

Having FULL ASSURANCE in any relationship requires both faith and faithfulness. The first trusts that when we draw near, we will not be rejected, and the second that the one receiving desires to be pursued. In our relationship with God, both are true. God amazingly calls us to **draw near** to Him, a relationship that was once cut off, and to do so with FULL ASSURANCE, a confidence that is not prideful but highly dependent.

My dad was always my principal in every year of my first 13 years of education. It created an interesting relationship on campus, requiring him to wear multiple hats and switch them throughout the day (dad, principal, teacher, authority, etc.). But what it created for me was a sense of assurance that if needed, I could approach him at any point of the day and he would welcome me as DAD. He would drop whatever else he was doing and focus on whatever I needed (even when in my youth I would take advantage of it at times).

Why is this so important that God calls us to do this as a result of His gift of salvation? Because Jesus came to this earth so that we would enjoy the effects of this access in **John 15:9-11**:

*“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. **Abide in my love**. 10 If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. 11 These things I have spoken to you, **that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full**”*

This was the playing out the promise that Danny preached on a few weeks ago from Psalm 16:11:

*“You make known to me the path of life; **in your presence is the fullness of joy, at your right hand are pleasures forever**”*

When we enter, fully assured, into the presence of God through Christ, we experience the fullness of joy and pleasure, which means we can stop trying to pursue those things elsewhere, outside of Christ, which only lead to misery. When we are satisfied in Him, we can take everything else by His grace and live selflessly, knowing that this relationship will never change. *Far too many professed Christians never experience joy and pleasures in God so are left with a Christianity of nominal obedience, pithy commitments, and half-hearted engagement.* This leaves two final caveats to this **drawing near**:

- 1) It requires the commitment of a genuine heart** – God does not delight in nor want half-hearted anything. In fact, it is a continual indictment of OT Israel, where they refused to return to God with a whole heart, but tried to deceive instead (Jer. 3:10). Since He requires obedience from a full heart (Rom. 6:17), He also promises to give us NEW HEARTS as new creations (2 Cor. 5:17). Since salvation IS a New Birth, what God demands from us is COMMITMENT FROM A GENUINE OR TRUE HEART. Again, is this how you approach your relationship with God in Christ each day, to enjoy entering His presence in prayer guided in the Word by His Spirit because He has invited

us in to know Him? If this is not our desire in salvation, all the other things we'll talk about from fellowship, discipleship, outreach, etc. will not truly matter or be effective.

- 2) **It comes out of a clean and washed conscience** – How do we do that? God has cleaned our hearts from guilt and shame, the effects of an evil conscience, so that we can don't have to approach him like we too often approach each other, holding back the last 10% of who we really are, thinking that if someone knew *that* about us or our past, they would judge us or run away in horror! No, God has cleaned us completely. He also gives us the cleansing of the Word (Eph. 5:26; Titus 3:5) so that we can walk in active obedience, guided and directed from His complete Word that is sharper than any two-edged sword (Heb. 4:12).

Concluding Implications:

- **The call of faith is one of complete commitment, in faith, to draw near with full assurance to God.**
- **The mission of the church is to make and mature disciples**
- **Because we have been cleansed from the inside out, and because our guilt and shame has been dealt with, we can approach each other in love in full, not fearing judgment or rejection.**

Have you tasted salvation this way, or has it been a series of nominal decisions and activities? Today, God has provided salvation to you, by faith, through the finished work of Jesus Christ, who lived perfectly and died completely, so that His blood shed would be counted to us, making full payment for our sin. Today, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, repent or turn from your sin, ask for forgiveness, and draw near with full assurance to the Father. This is the only pathway to the full joy and assurance we crave, and is exactly what God desires for us out of His great love.