

Dear Friend,

**Hebrews 10:25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.**

In order to fully understand this verse, it must be left in the historical context. These Hebrew Christians were experiencing very harsh persecution from the religious Jews, and the persecution from Rome was increasing also. Some scholars have speculated that the reference to seeing "the day approaching" as referring to the Roman destruction of the Temple and the dispersion of the Jews in AD 70. We are given a few details of the kind of persecution they had been suffering in the following verses:

**Hebrews 10:32-35 But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; (33) Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. (34) For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. (35) Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward.**

The purpose of the persecution from the Jewish brethren was to get them to forsake Jesus as their Savior, and turn back to trusting in their ability to keep the law of Moses to save them. Such apostasy would stop the persecution, but the end result would be an eternity separated from God. Public profession of their faith in Jesus was very important in these foundational years of Christianity. Jesus had said,

**Matthew 10:32-33 Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. (33) But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.**

It was not acceptable to be a Christian "in secret." Jesus knew full well that professing Him publicly would bring persecution against His followers, and perhaps even death. Let's leave the above passage in its full context:

**Matthew 10:22-33 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. (23) But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come. (24) The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. (25) It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household? (26) Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known. (27) What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the**

**housetops. (28) And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. (29) Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. (30) But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. (31) Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows. (32) Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. (33) But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.**

They were to preach the truth of the gospel "from the housetops." That meant publicly, no matter the threats of persecution against them. Remember that Saul of Tarsus, before his conversion to Christianity, was one of the primary persons "breathing out slaughter" against Christians. He would arrest them and bring them to trial. No doubt many of them had their businesses shut down and their personal property confiscated, and some of them were even put to death, like Stephen, the first Christian martyr. No wonder Jesus had to warn them to not fear "them which kill the body, and after that have no more they can do." [Luke 12:4]

Publicly confessing Christ meant certain persecution. That was why the writer of this letter to the Hebrews placed extreme importance on them continuing to assemble together, not only to display to the world their allegiance to Christ, but also so they could encourage one another, and exhort one another to continue in the faith and not apostatize by returning back to the law of Moses. It is not easy to face severe persecution, but it was in that context that Jesus warned them not to deny Him. If they denied Christ and returned back to Judaism by trusting in the law of Moses, Jesus would deny them before the Father. "Those that endure to the end will be saved" means, "Those who do not apostatize by rejecting Jesus as their Savior will be saved."

To them at that time, the simple act of "going to church" was a life threatening decision. How lightly most Christians take our freedoms for granted in modern times. "It's raining today, so I think I will skip going to church." Or, "I stayed up too late watching television last night, so I think I'll skip going to church." I wonder if those Christians from the first century would slap our face (in love) because of our lukewarm attitudes. Worse, I wonder if Jesus might spit us out of His mouth.

**Revelation 3:15-16 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. (16) So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.**

On the other hand, there are many more opportunities and pitfalls for Christians in today's society regarding assembling together. One advantage is because of the world-wide internet, it is possible for Christians today to attend many services on any given Sunday, or Wednesday, or any day of the week.

For example, I often attend three different church services online every Sunday. All three of them are in different states in the USA. That would be impossible without the internet. In addition, there are certain Christian teachers that I frequently listen to also. That is possible because at this moment in America, we are not yet under severe persecution for being Christians.

However, that is changing rapidly. It is entirely possible that the next regime to take the reins of government in America may vastly increase the level of persecution against Christians. They may remove all Christian programs from the internet. That would change things drastically. In that case I would no doubt be attending, in person, a local assembly again.

One of the pitfalls of the modern age is that we are living in the full manifestation of the warning the apostle Paul gave to Timothy in the first century.

**2 Timothy 4:1-4 I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; (2) Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. (3) For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; (4) And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.**

There are so many churches today that teach false doctrine in order to please the "itching ears" of their congregations. They teach things that are abominable in the sight of God. Right here in my home city, I could take you to churches that says fornication is okay, same sex marriage is okay, and so forth. The New Testament declares in multiple places that those which do such things will have no inheritance ... NO INHERITANCE ... in the kingdom of God. It is a great danger for a newly born Christian to begin "assembling together" in a church that teaches such things.

The most important thing is this ... we are Christians ... we are bold Christians who are not ashamed of our Savior, Jesus Christ. We are not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God to salvation.

**Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.**

It is needful that we assemble ourselves together to be encouraged, strengthened, and to provoke each other to do good works. As persecution increases, our need to assemble together to publicly proclaim and worship Jesus Christ will increase also.

Your fellow servant for Christ,

*GARY*