

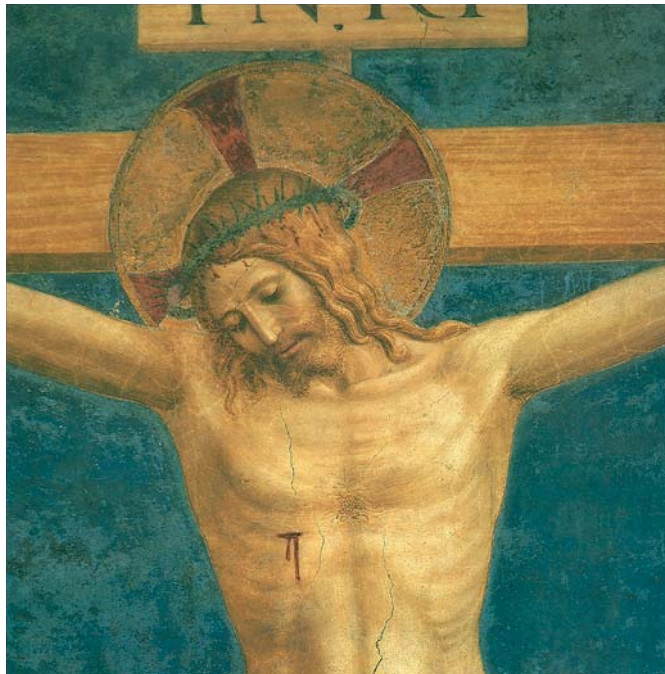
True Belief Should Minister

MONARCH ABDUL-HAMID II, SULTAN OF TURKEY (1876-1909) lived in the Yildiz Palace in Constantinople under heavy guard. The palace was very unusual since it had only one room in which he would allow himself to be interviewed by outsiders. During such a meeting, the visitor had to sit alone in the center of the room and Abdul-Hamid would talk to him from behind a fine grill-work that concealed the balcony. The Sultan was not only invisible, but he would walk back and forth, fearing the visitor might reveal a gun and fire it in the direction of his voice. Abdul-Hamid's private room contained alarm systems, trap doors, and mirrors set at angles, as well as life-sized models of himself - standing at windows, sitting in chairs and reclining on lounges - which he hoped would receive any knives or bullets intended for him. Fear is a terrible, gripping feeling. It causes us to be confused and to react in unusual ways.

SITUATION. The book of Hebrews was written to a group of people who were afraid they had made a mistake by leaving Judaism and turning to Jesus. We will see in the next section of Hebrews that they were being persecuted. They were suffering, and God did not rescue them. The Jews believed that all suffering was due to sin, so it is not surprising that they must have been afraid they had made a mistake. What is worse is that they were not growing as Christians (Heb. 5:11-14). They had stopped meeting together with other Christians. They were not attending church or were only going once in awhile because they had doubts about Jesus. This sounds like fearful people!

So for ten chapters the Holy Spirit has shown them that they did not make a mistake and that Jesus was better than angels, better than Moses, and better than any Levitical priest. The Old Covenant - the Mosaic Law - was only a shadow. The system they loved was disappearing. The prophet Jeremiah had predicted

it was going to disappear. Psalm 40:6-8 had predicted that Jesus would establish a new Covenant; and He did when He died and bled. Psalm 110:4 said that Jesus would be an eternal priest having died a perfect, sinless death to forgive our sins once forever!



How do you think these fearful folks must have reacted by now after reading ten chapters of Hebrews? They must have been afraid to act!

CONFIDENCE. Therefore the Holy Spirit encourages them to be bold, to have confidence and to enter the Holy of Holies.

Since therefore, brethren, we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that

is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God . . . (NASB) Heb. 10:19-21

The Greek word for "Holy Place" in the NASB is "Holies" or "Holy of Holies." For a Jew, the thought of entering the

Holy of Holies was a fearful thing. When the priest took the blood of the sacrifice into the Holy of Holies to obtain our forgiveness, he was fearful of being rejected. If he was rejected, the sacrifice was rejected, and their sins would not be forgiven.

So the Holy Spirit explains that because of Jesus, we should not fear that our sins will not be forgiven. When Jesus died, His death was something brand new and life giving. It was His blood that provided our ultimate and final forgiveness. He was the divine, holy, perfect sacrifice. Another reason we should not fear is that Jesus is our mediator - our great priest - the one Who obtains our forgiveness. Jesus was the perfect sacrifice. He is our Savior and our High Priest.

LET US DRAW NEAR. Therefore the Holy Spirit called them to do three things.

... 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. (NASB) Heb. 10:22

First, they should draw near rather than pull away, but they need to draw near with a true heart. The Greek word for “sincere” is the opposite of “deception or lying.” It has the idea of being authentic or real. Can I ask you if you really believe in Jesus? Oh, I do not mean do you believe that Jesus existed? History has plenty of proof He really did walk this earth. No, I mean do you really believe Jesus! 1 Cor. 15:2 tells us that it is possible for us to believe but yet not REALLY believe.

... by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. (NASB) 1 Cor. 15:2

Is your faith vain? Do you believe but yet not really believe? Are you going to heaven or hell? Some of these Jews

believed in Jesus, yet were in danger of going to hell because they did not really believe Jesus, just like people today. They knew Jesus existed. He had died only about twenty to thirty years previously. But not all of them believed that Jesus could forgive their sins. That is the difference between living with God and living in hell The Holy Spirit is calling them to honestly, truthfully believe. They can do this because their sins have been washed away.

LET US HOLD FAST. Next He calls them to hold fast to what they believe without wavering.

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; (NASB) Heb. 10:23

A true heart says I believe, and means it and holds on. A wavering heart is a doubting heart. It is a heart that is not convinced that Jesus is its hope. A mark of a mature Christian is stability.

LET US CONSIDER. Finally, the Holy Spirit encourages them to reach out to others.

... and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, 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. (NASB) Heb. 10:24-25



The Greek word for “stimulate” is the same Greek word for “sharp disagreement” in Acts 15:39. Paul and Barnabas had a disagreement about whom they should take with them on a trip. Barnabas wanted to take John Mark and Paul disagreed. They had a strong disagreement. The Bible says it was “sharp disagreement.”

And Barnabas was desirous of taking John, called Mark, along with them also. But Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. And there

arose such a SHARP DISAGREEMENT that they separated from one another, and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. (NASB) Acts 15:37-39

This is our word for “stimulate” in Hebrews 10:24. We are to “stimulate” one another. The sense of the word means “to stir to anger, to incite, and to irritate.” The meaning is not that we should make someone angry. That would not result in love and good deeds. We are to strongly, aggressively seek ways to motivate others to love and good deeds. This is not a passive word. It implies strong action.

We cannot do this being absent from church. Our absence affects ourselves and others. So the Holy Spirit calls us to attend church. Apparently, some of these folks were not regularly attending church. Some pastors have used this passage to teach that we should be at church “every time the church doors are open.” That is not the message of the passage. The Hebrews were not spiritually growing. They did know their Bibles. They were in the habit of not attending. They were not just missing church one Sunday a month, or every Wednesday night. They were missing almost all of the meetings. They were habitually not attending. There was

reason to doubt that they were real Christians. Christians with a sincere heart, whose sins have been washed away, hold on to their hope and minister to others and not themselves!

CONCLUSION. How can we strongly, aggressively encourage others to love and good deeds? Here are some biblical ways to do this. First share your money with other (1 Tim. 6:17-19). Second, use your spiritual gift because the Holy Spirit gave us spiritual gifts for that purpose (1 Cor. 12:4-30). Next we should minister to the orphans, widows, strangers and prisoners (Heb. 13:2-3; James 1:27). Finally, we should practice church discipline of members and leaders (Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Tim. 5:19-20). The goal of church discipline is restoration to holiness and not punishment.

God calls us to draw near if we really believe. Then we are to hold on because there is real hope in Jesus. Finally, by ministering to others it benefits them and ourselves. Did you notice the Holy Spirit did not call us to attend church so that we could be encouraged? He calls to attend church so that we can encourage others. Then we are encouraged too! He does not ask us to be passive. He calls us to minister to others.