



<sup>19</sup> *Therefore, brothers,*<sup>3</sup> *since we have confidence to enter*<sup>q</sup> *the holy places by the blood of Jesus,*  
<sup>20</sup> *by*<sup>r</sup> *the new and living way that he opened for us through*<sup>s</sup> *the curtain, that is, through his*  
*flesh,*<sup>21</sup> *and since we have*<sup>t</sup> *a great priest over the house of God,*<sup>22</sup> *let us draw near with a true*  
*heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts*<sup>u</sup> *sprinkled clean*<sup>v</sup> *from an evil conscience and our*  
*bodies*<sup>w</sup> *washed with pure water.*<sup>23</sup> *Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without*  
*wavering, for*<sup>y</sup> *he who promised is faithful.*<sup>24</sup> *And*<sup>z</sup> *let us consider how to stir up one another to*  
*love and good works,*<sup>25</sup> *not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging*  
*one another, and*<sup>b</sup> *all the more as you see*<sup>c</sup> *the Day drawing near.*

Being precedes doing. Let me say that again so you catch it. Being precedes doing. Now you're probably thinking, what is this double speak coming from Rich. "Being precedes doing" sounds a bit like the famous phrase from French philosopher, Rene DesCartes, "I think, therefore, I am." Ergo cogito sum. *Je pense, donc je suis*. Believe it or not, this phrase, being precedes doing, is one of the keys to the Christian life. Now that I've got your attention, let me explain what I mean.

Here is another way of stating this truth: who I am is the foundation of what I do. Or you could phrase it like this: my identity in Christ must always come before my service to Christ. Let me explain why this is so crucial. Are we saved by grace or by good works? By grace! Grace is a free gift. Grace is what is done for us, not what is done by us, right? Every believer who understands the basics of the gospel message would make this distinction clear in their own minds and would no doubt share the gospel in this way. However, when it comes to living out

this saving faith, our tendency is to make good works the basis of our ongoing relationship with the Lord.

Let me show you what I mean by using this morning's text. There are three clear commands and exhortations in this section of chapter ten.

1. Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith
2. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering
3. Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works

Each of these is an imperative—we *must* do these things. God requires us to do them. They are necessary pieces of the Christian life. But why and how I do each of them—as well as every other command in Scripture—is crucial. Let me fill in the rest of my outline to show you what I mean.

1. since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus (*by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh*)
2. since we have a great priest over the house of God

#### What has been done *for* us

1. Since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus
2. Since we have a great priest over the house of God

#### What we must do as a result

1. Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith
2. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering
3. Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works

Both of these are truths that have already been done for us. This is all part of our salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone. As we have seen through our study in Hebrews, the holy places is referring to the Most Holy Place, the abiding presence of God. Remember that the goal and end of our faith is not to be in Heaven but rather to be in God's presence. We have confidence—the word here is a strong form of boldness—to enter the holy places, not because we are special, not because we are so lovely and worthy, but because of the blood of Jesus, and “by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh.”

Also, Jesus is now serving as our Great High Priest, ever living to intercede on our behalf. Jesus continually prays for us—that we would be protected from the evil one; that we would come to complete unity; that we would know his deep, deep love for us. These two truths in my outline are things that have been done for us and are being done for us. We are passive players in the unfolding drama and God is the active player, holding us secure by his powerful word.

The commands that I listed before, then, are things that we must do as a result of what has already been done for us. But we do them in and through the grace and riches that has already been done for us. But far too often we try rely on our own strength to obey the Lord's

commands. We grit our teeth, put our nose the to the grindstone and push our way through to obedience whether we like it or not. I am all for discipline and hard work, but if all we have is discipline and hard work, then we lives our lives outside the grace of God. We wind up like the Galatians—at first we were driven by grace and soon we are driven by doing good works.

Here is what our outline would look like if you substituted the phrases I started with.

### Being precedes...

1. Since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus
2. Since we have a great priest over the house of God

### ...doing

1. Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith
2. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering
3. Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works

### Who I am is the foundation...

1. Since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus
2. Since we have a great priest over the house of God

### ...of what I do

1. Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith
2. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering
3. Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works

### My identity in Christ must always come before...

1. Since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus
2. Since we have a great priest over the house of God

### ...my service to Christ

1. Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith
2. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering
3. Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works

My very being, my identity in Christ is determined by what Christ has already done for me. I am a child of God. I am secure in my Father. I have crossed over from death to life. I have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place. I am accepted in Christ, therefore I can serve Christ.

But you can see if I reverse the order you end up with this: I serve Christ so that I will be accepted by Christ. Do you see, we may have started our Christian life with grace but now our religious engine is being fueled by good works.

Here is an illustration that might help. We are starting to get a little crowded in this Sanctuary, so what if God asked you to build a new, million dollar building next to this one? I don't know anyone's personal net worth but I am guessing we wouldn't have any takers. But I am not finished yet! What if Operation Christmas Child grew so large in our area that they needed to hire a full-time director and a full time secretary and rent some office space, so God asked you to give them \$150,000 a year? The church planting efforts among the Latino population is growing in our denomination throughout the U.S. They have plenty of willing leaders but they are dreadfully short on cash. What if God asked you to give \$3 million dollars a year to fully fund this church planting work? But I'm still not finished. What if God asked you supply the funds for 3,000 native church planters in India, because the church is growing so rapidly there and they are so dreadfully poor. This will only cost you ten million dollars per year.

I could go on and on but I think you get my point. None of us individually nor all of us collectively could begin to manage such a financial feat. Now, what if you were given a trillion dollars? A trillion dollars is one million times one million. You now have one million separate accounts of one million dollars each. You are not likely to run out of money no matter how much you give. Here's my point. Spiritually speaking, each of us are trillionaires.

Using this illustration, our outline would look this way:

You are a trillionaire...

1. Since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus
2. Since we have a great priest over the house of God

...therefore, spend your money for Jesus

1. Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith
2. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering
3. Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works

This is grace based living—spending what you already have, not working to have what you can never earn. But even this illustration fails because we are not really trillionaires, are we? We are vigintillionaires. A vigintillion sounds like a vegetarian who has a lot of money, but vigintillion is a real number. It is ten with 63 zeros after it. Or are we centillionaires—ten followed by 303 zeros? Our spiritual riches have an infinite number of zeros in front of it because we have an infinite God. We cannot exhaust his grace. The purchase of your salvation came at an infinite cost to Jesus and he has filled our spiritual bank with infinite grace. Spend that grace for Jesus.

This proper way of thinking could be part of any message but it was especially evident in this section of Scripture. Since we have this...then do this. God has done and is doing his part, now let's look at what we need to do as a result.

From verse 22: *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.*

We are to draw near to the Lord, and since this is a command, it means that it is something in which we have to actively engage. I have been saved, I am secure in Christ and my name is written in the Book of Life, but this does not mean that I automatically draw near to the Lord. And it's important how we draw near—in full assurance of faith. I don't know if I am a typical case or not, but there has never been a time in my Christian life that I have ever doubted my salvation—not even for one second. Is this because I live such a righteous and victorious life that I continually have full assurance of my faith? Ha!! Ask my family that question and you will learn the truth. I don't have full assurance of my faith because I obey the Lord at all times, but I have full assurance of faith because my faith rests on what Christ has done for me, not on what I do for him. Which goes hand in hand with what I was saying earlier: my identity in Christ must always come before my service to Christ. My assurance comes because of Jesus not because of Rich. Therefore, we can draw near because we have full assurance. We can draw near because our hearts have been sprinkled clean from an evil conscience.

I heard someone say that when he became a Christian, his mother was worried about this new religion he had found. His mother claimed that he had just been brainwashed. “Her son, the new believer said to her, “If you knew what in my brain, you'd be glad that it was washed.” You and I have been washed, our hearts have been sprinkled clean from an evil conscience.

Our second responsibility comes in verse 23: *Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.* This is similar to the previous one. We are commanded to hold fast the confession of our hope. Even though it is our responsibility to hold it fast our confession but in the same verse we are reminded of the means of our hope—for he who promised is faithful.

When a young child has a bad dream, when they wake up all they want to do is to hold tight to their mom or dad. They cling to them as if their lives depended on it but what they don't fully realize is that their parents are the one holding them. No matter what, mom and dad will not let them go. This is the case with us as well. We need to hold fast to the confession of our hope but as we hold tight, our Father is holding us tighter. In fact, we can only hold on because he is holding on to us.

Our final responsibility comes at verse 24: *Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging (exhorting) one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*

One of the keys to this verse is the word “stir.” The NIV reads that we are to “spur one another toward love and good deeds.” Similarly, the KJV says, let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works. Out of the three words—stir, spur and provoke, I think the word provoke best captures the meaning. Regarding this word, Kittel's theological dictionary reads, *the word usually means “to stir to anger” or “to be irritated.”*<sup>1</sup> We can learn more about the word from a passage in Acts 15.

<sup>36</sup> Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us go back and visit the brothers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing.” <sup>37</sup> Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, <sup>38</sup> but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. (Acts 15:36-38)

This is “great conflict” that we are familiar with in Scripture. We like this passage because it reminds us that even Godly men like Paul and Barnabas did not always see eye to eye. We have conflict. They had conflict. Conflict is inevitable. End of story.

Not so fast. Theirs’ was no mere disagreement. This was not one of those situations where everyone agrees to disagree. The next verse finished the story. *They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company.* This was a serious disagreement and it is somewhat shocking to see it recorded for us in Scripture. What I want us to see here is that the two words translated a sharp disagreement” is the exact same word in our passage translated as stir, spur or provoked.

If you had to describe this disagreement between Paul and Barnabas which word would you use? Were they stirred to action, spurred to action or provoked to action? In my mind there is no question that they were provoked to action. They were both so passionate in their beliefs that they were forced to part company. Barnabas was convinced that John deserved—and needed—a second chance and Paul was equally convinced that John had no right to join them on another missionary journey when he had deserted them the first time. He was not to be trusted to this extent. We can almost feel the emotions jumping off of the page. Not only were their thoughts and emotions on overdrive, but their thoughts and emotions led to the radical decision to part company. Their decision is just as radical today as it was two thousand years ago. Even the phrase “they parted company” does not do the story justice. This was a parting like the Red Sea was a parting—it was massive with huge repercussions. And it happened because they were provoked to action. This is the sense in which we are to provoke one another to love and good deeds.

Before we explore what that looks like, I want to make two other comments. The first is that we are to *consider* how to provoke each other. Part of the process is to ponder how we can provoke one another. I think this is where the process becomes very personal and purposeful. Take your own children, for example. As a parent, you need to consider how to provoke each of your children to love and good deeds. Are each of your children different? You need to have the same standards for each of your children but you may need to provoke them in different ways. In the same way that some kids respond to you when you just give them a stern look and others need a much more firm hand of discipline, your children will respond to different ways to provoke them. Consider on a case by case basis how you can provoke them to good deeds.

Since I developed this word provoke quite strongly, I need to give two warnings. First to the men, this provocation is not exasperation. Be careful and don’t step over that line. And to the woman please understand the provocation is not nagging.

The other comment I wanted to make is to point out the environment for such provocation. Where is this supposed to happen? Look at verse 24 again. *Let us consider how to stir up one*

*another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*

Some in this church were developing a habit of not meeting with other believers. They were what I call “Lone Ranger Christians.” They are out fighting the bad guys on their own and they don’t need help from anyone. Here is our author’s point: you cannot be *encouraged* by other believers if you do not spend *time* with other believers.

Last week, Tim Farrell shared a story with me that I think is a perfect example of provoking other to love and good deeds. Tim had recently adopted a new favorite Bible verse, 2 Peter 1:2: *May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.* Tim was excited about this verse so he shared it with two people at work. Tim saw one of these people a week later and he approached Tim and said, “I wanted you to know that the Scripture you shared with me had a huge impact on my life. I had been feeling down and had started to backslide lately. I even went out drinking a few times”, which was really bad for him because he used to be a heavy drinker. But then he said to Tim, “Sharing that verse with me turned my life around. I have recommitted my life to the Lord and I want to live a life of holiness.”

Admittedly, it doesn’t always work this easily, does it? But I love this story because Tim’s goal was to bring encouragement to his co-workers, and the word encouragement is part of this verse. *Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another.* But interestingly, the Greek word for encouragement can be translated as either *encouragement* or *exhortation*, depending on the context. So even though Tim’s plan was to encourage his co-worker, through the Holy Spirit, his words actually had the effect of exhortation. And given the fact that we are to provoke others toward love and good deeds, no doubt this word encouragement could just as easily have been translated as exhortation. Encouragement and exhortation are two sides of the same coin.

Rich Maurer  
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<sup>p</sup> See ch. 4:16

<sup>3</sup> Or *brothers and sisters*

<sup>q</sup> ch. 9:25

<sup>r</sup> ch. 9:8; [John 10:9; 14:6]

<sup>s</sup> ch. 9:3

<sup>t</sup> Zech. 6:11–13; [ch. 4:14]; See ch. 2:17

<sup>u</sup> Ezek. 36:25; [ch. 12:24; 2 Cor. 7:1; 1 Pet. 1:2]

<sup>v</sup> ch. 9:14

<sup>w</sup> [1 Cor. 6:11]

<sup>x</sup> ch. 4:14

<sup>y</sup> ch. 11:11; See 1 Cor. 1:9

<sup>z</sup> [ch. 3:13]

<sup>a</sup> [Acts 2:42]

<sup>b</sup> Rom. 13:11–13

<sup>c</sup> See 1 Cor. 3:13

<sup>1</sup> Kittel, Gerhard (Hrsg.) ; Bromiley, Geoffrey William (Hrsg.) ; Friedrich, Gerhard (Hrsg.): *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI : Eerdmans, 1964-c1976, S. 5:857