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Sermon Notes

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Know and Be Known: God's Vision for the Local Church

Hebrews 3:12-14; Hebrews 10:24-25

I. A Community Commitment to Holiness: Hebrews 3:12-14

Hebrews 3:12-14 See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. ¹³ But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. ¹⁴ We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first.

A. The Greatest Danger: Turning Away from the Living God

1. The danger in a word: apostasy!!

Hebrews 2:1 We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away.

Hebrews 3:12 See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.

Hebrews 6:6 ... if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance

2. Nearness with the living God is the goal of our salvation

Hebrews 4:16 Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Hebrews 7:19 a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God.

Hebrews 10:19-22 Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith

3. The Greatest Danger of Our Lives

Mark 8:36-37 What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? ³⁷ Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?

4. Christ came to save us from our sins... only by a living faith in Him can we live forever

5. BUT the danger here is apostasy... turning away from the living God

B. The Root Cause: Sin's Effect on the Heart

Hebrews 3:12 See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.

1. The essence of our salvation: hearts turned toward God and away from sin by Jesus Christ

2. The essence of apostasy: a sinful heart of unbelief

3. The origin of a sinful unbelieving heart: the deceitfulness of sin

Hebrews 3:13 hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

4. The DECEIT is the real issue... sin comes to us as a deceiver, and we can't always tell what it's doing to us... we need HELP from the outside

C. The Remedy: The Vigilant Encouragement of the Church

Hebrews 3:13 But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

1. A healthy church will protect its members from sin

2. The biggest enemy here... indwelling sin

Romans 7:15-17 I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. ¹⁶ And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷ As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me.

3. All of us have blind spots...

CJ Mahaney, *Humility: True Greatness*

As I sat with my family at a local breakfast establishment, I noticed a finely dressed man at an adjacent table. His Armani suit and stiffly pressed shirt coordinated perfectly with a power tie. His wing-tip shoes sparkled from a recent shine, every hair was in place, including his perfectly groomed moustache.

The man sat alone eating a bagel as he prepared for a meeting. As he reviewed the papers before him, he appeared nervous, glancing frequently at his Rolex watch. It was obvious he had an important meeting ahead.

The man stood up and I watched as he straightened his tie and prepared to leave.

Immediately I noticed a blob of cream cheese attached to his finely groomed moustache. He was about to go into the world, dressed in his finest, with cream cheese on his face.

I thought of the business meeting he was about to attend. Who would tell him? Should I? What if no one did?"

4. We need the insights of others to show us how sin is deceiving us

D. The Warning: Only Those Who Finish Every Really Began

II. A Community Commitment to Fruitfulness: Hebrews 10:24-25

Hebrews 10:24-25 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. ²⁵ Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another-- and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

A. Full Treatment Later... when I preach on that Text

B. Context: this was the very issue the author was addressing

C. For Now, Some Observations

1. This is also a COMMUNITY verse, a CHURCH verse: "Let US..." and "one another"... "meeting together"

2. The GOAL: someone else's fruitfulness... "love and good deeds"

3. The Means:

a. Consider ONE ANOTHER (not, "Consider HOW...")

b. Spur on

c. Encourage daily

4. The danger: making a HABIT of giving up meeting together

D. Central to this: WE must BE TOGETHER and KNOW EACH OTHER

E. The Ultimate End: Good deeds that build up the church

Ephesians 4:16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

III. Ten Steps for FBC Toward a Happier, Healthier Community Life

A. Desire to Grow in Salvation and Help Others to Grow Too

The concept: if we realize that none of us is fully done being saved, we will get active in the process of ongoing salvation as ministered by the church and its spiritual gifts.

If you think that salvation is a simple, once for all decision you make at an evangelistic rally... praying the “sinner’s prayer” and then being told “once saved, always saved” then you don’t understand

Let me make it clear: a **TRULY JUSTIFIED PERSON CAN NEVER LOSE HIS SALVATION...** what God began in us, He will **MOST CERTAINLY** complete on the final day and raise every last one of us up to live eternally with him

BUT salvation comes to us in **STAGES**: justification, sanctification, and glorification

All truly justified people will most certainly be sanctified... growing day by day in Christlikeness... if you’re not growing, there is a good question as to whether or not you’re truly justified

BUT a yearning to grow in salvation, coupled with actual progress made in holiness, is a good indication that you are really justified

AND we should yearn for that for others

If you have that simple view of salvation, you will **UNDERESTIMATE** the need for a healthy church involvement

B. Understand the grave danger we are all in

The concept: we have to see with spiritual eyes the incredible danger we are all in from the world, the flesh, and the devil. These three ancient foes of the church are relentless and deadly. Only if we properly see their danger will we properly be committed to a local church.

Every single one of us is in a vicious **FIGHT** for our soul’s health

1 Peter 2:11 Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.

In a healthy church, we are deeply AWARE of this warfare, and we are committed to helping each other through it

Christ was DEEPLY concerned about this danger:

John 17:11-12 I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name-- the name you gave me-- so that they may be one as we are one. ¹² While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost

We need to increase our watchfulness over each other as though we are buddies in an infantry unit in a fierce war... we want to protect our buddies, make sure they are okay... push their heads down in the foxhole when they are not paying attention

C. Develop an eternal perspective

The concept: we fail to invest fully in local church because we think far too highly of worldly things, and far too little of Judgment Day values. We must develop a faith perspective that sees all of life in the light of eternity, so we can make the hard sacrifices necessary to invest in the church.

An eternal perspective sees people in light of eternity... this brother or sister must stand GLORIOUS on the Day of Judgment... I want to be sure they are there, AND maximally fruitful for Christ... I want to help them be RICH on Judgment Day... that is an eternal perspective

Ask a simple question about your church involvement: what will the Lord say on Judgment Day about my commitment to the church? Can developing an eternal perspective help me focus more on what Christ is doing and less on the world's agenda...

And what is Christ doing?

Matthew 16:18 on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

If that is the single-minded focus of Christ's heart, ask Him to make it your own

And an eternal perspective is vital to the next step

D. Weed your life of distractions

The concept: the world is full of alluring alternatives to healthy church involvement. The Bible calls these "idols." In the parable of the seed and the soils, the weeds are a "desire for other things" than Christ. We should be willing to assess our lives

vigorously by the eternal perspective just mentioned, and made hard choices that will free up time, energy, and money for healthy church commitment.

What HARD CHOICES? Well, do a time inventory... how much time do you spend working at your job? Can any hours be freed up by thinking differently about your financial goals?

How much time do you spend in good but not Christian activities... especially growing families with music lessons and sports teams and scouting and civic commitments... all of these are good, and may be EXACTLY what God is calling you to do if it gives you a chance to witness to lost people

BUT it could be that we are too busy with good activities that we have no time to develop our church fellowship

How much time do you spend in personal recreation... electronic entertainment: Direct TV, cable, internet surfing, facebook, computer games, Wii or x-Box or the like? Can some hours be freed by weeding your life from these kinds of distractions?

E. Love your brothers and sisters in Christ with sacrificial love

The concept: we have to love one another deeply, from the heart, and care enough about each other's spiritual health to be involved in each other's lives. We should ask Jesus to give us the same committed love He has for church members. Without it, we just won't care. And this love must result in sacrifice... without sacrifice, we aren't really loving

It is not Christian love to stay aloof from one another

It is Christian love to INVEST DEEPLY in each other's spiritual development

To care enough to listen to them as they pour out their hearts to you

To sacrifice the time enough to offer HOSPITALITY or to start a men's bible study or women's accountability group

These things have at their root SACRIFICIAL LOVE

Of course, it will manifest itself in practical ways when needs arise

1 John 3:17-18 If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? ¹⁸ Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.

But I am especially thinking of WATCHING OVER ONE ANOTHER IN BROTHERLY LOVE **SPIRITUALLY**

Simple thought here... FBC will make NO PROGRESS in genuine Christian fellowship without sacrifice... sacrifice of time, especially...be willing to change you plans so you can love on a brother or sister

F. Humble yourself

The concept: Our tendency is to present a façade of having it all together; we don't really want to have anyone in our business. Without genuine humility, we will not be open enough to expose our weaknesses and seek help for our growth. Also, without humility, we will put our own selfish agenda ahead of serving others in brotherly love.

C.J. Mahaney has a great chapter on this topic in his book *Humility: True Greatness...* the chapter title is "Inviting and Pursuing Correction"...

"The pursuit of humility cannot be a solitary endeavor. That's why the next practice—*Invite and pursue correction*—has a prominent and vital place on my list of ways to mortify pride and cultivate humility. Sin in its deceptive power so often blinds us, leaving us unaware of flaws that others notice clearly.

Take for example the man described in this story I came across:

As I sat with my family at a local breakfast establishment, I noticed a finely dressed man at an adjacent table. His Armani suit and stiffly pressed shirt coordinated perfectly with a power tie. His wing-tip shoes sparkled from a recent shine, every hair was in place, including his perfectly groomed moustache.

The man sat alone eating a bagel as he prepared for a meeting. As he reviewed the papers before him, he appeared nervous, glancing frequently at his Rolex watch. It was obvious he had an important meeting ahead.

The man stood up and I watched as he straightened his tie and prepared to leave.

Immediately I noticed a blob of cream cheese attached to his finely groomed moustache. He was about to go into the world, dressed in his finest, with cream cheese on his face.

I thought of the business meeting he was about to attend. Who would tell him? Should I? What if no one did?"

C.J. went on to tell what he calls "My Own Cream Cheese Moment

Let me tell you about a cream cheese moment in my life, one of many such experiences that have helped convince me that no sin is more deceptive than pride.

I'm in an accountability group with men who care for and watch over my soul. In a meeting with these brothers, I was telling them of a specific pattern of sin I had noticed in my life in the past week. I'd become aware of this sin and been convicted about it, and I'd confessed it

to God and received His forgiveness. Now I wanted to inform these men about it as well--then move on, because there was another particular issue I was more concerned about and wanted to discuss with them.

But as I described in detail my sin from the previous week, my friends started to ask caring and insightful questions about the root issue behind the sin. I assured them the root issue was obvious: It was pride. I even transitioned into a brief teaching on pride, then let the guys know I wanted to move on to something else I thought was more important and more serious. I'm sure there was mild irritation in my voice.

But the men had more questions. They had observations. And they began to challenge me to look deeper at the pattern of sin I had shown in the previous week.

Again I felt irritation. I assumed I understood that particular sin completely. Why were we spending so much time on something I'd already figured out?

In essence, there was cream cheese all over my face, and I didn't know it. My underlying sin had deceived me. I was blind. I didn't see it and couldn't see it. But they saw it clearly.

In my pride, I thought no one understood my heart as well as I did. But Scripture doesn't support such a conclusion. Actually, God's Word tells me, 'No, C. J., sin is subtle, sin is deceitful, and sin blinds you. And you need feedback from others in order to understand your heart.'

By God's grace, because the men seated around me in that room are true friends who care for me and aren't afraid of me, they persevered. Though I was arrogant--not only in assuming I fully understood my sin and its root issue, but also in my reluctance to explore it more deeply--those men persevered in kindness. And only by their kindness and perseverance, and only by God's grace, did I finally begin to perceive how much my sin had indeed deceived me. I saw that my confidence about fully knowing my soul in this situation, and in assuming I needed no one else's eyes upon it, was actually the height of arrogance.

They were guarding my heart and helping me to see the true extent of my sin. I thought I'd already wiped the cream cheese from my face and it was gone, but they were faithfully telling me, 'It's not gone; we're staring at it! And were telling you this because we love you.'"

Without HUMILITY, we will never seek genuine Christian fellowship... we will hide behind a façade of righteousness and go one being anonymous...

HUMILITY is essential

G. Know and be known

The concept: As we said above, the key to both the negative and positive aspects of healthy church life is a willingness to know and be known. Anonymity is the enemy

of genuine church fellowship and corporate sanctification. We have to be willing to INVEST IN SOMEONE ELSE (“know”) and to OPEN UP (“be known”).

This is inherent in the story we just told as well

True Christian community comes from an honest appraisal of sin in our lives

Mark 2:17 Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

We know that, but as soon as we come to Christ, we begin to pretend that we have everything in order...

The church should be a community of people that genuinely KNOWS each other and is KNOWN BY each other

We said above, the negative aspect of healthy church life is

Hebrews 3:12-14 See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. ¹³ But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

You can't do that without genuinely knowing the person...

And no one can do that for you if they don't genuinely know you

H. Encourage by the gospel

The concept: the hearts of our brothers and sisters is the key to genuine discipleship, and there are no physical tools we can use to change the heart. The effective tool is the word of God, especially the promises of the gospel. Both Hebrews 3 and 10 make “encourage” the key verb, and the text of encouragement is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 3:13 But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

Hebrews 10:25 ... let us encourage one another-- and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

We must FILL our church relationships with the word of God, and especially the word of the gospel... let's speak the gospel again and again into each other's lives... let's saturate our church relationships with the good news that Christ died for sins, that He rose, that He is at the right hand of God interceding for us to be holy, that He sent the Holy Spirit to make us holy and help us live godly lives in a corrupt world; and that “He who began a good work in us will most certainly carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus”

Men: Get together at Starbucks one on one or in small groups on a Tuesday morning and speak the gospel into each other's lives

Women: Pair up as prayer partners and speak the gospel into each other's lives

Youth: talk the gospel to each other... talk about how Jesus died and isn't that awesome that He rose again on the third day

Senior Adults: talk the gospel to each other in your living rooms and your social times together

I. Pray consistently for the spiritual health of church members

The concept: We can deeply know and be known by only a small percentage of church members, but we can pray spiritual themes for every church member. A key application point is the use of the church's phone directory. Get it out and pray through the names a page a day. Pray spiritual things based on Colossians (as printed on the back page).

PRAY THE PHONE BOOK

J. Be committed to public worship and home fellowships

The concept: Make it a habit to attend both public worship and home fellowships. Don't commit and then fail to see it through. And when you notice that someone is missing, pursue them sweetly and with love.

Hebrews 10:25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another-- and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Please don't make it a habit of missing church or Bible for Life or Home Fellowships

IV. Other Applications

- A. Grab lunch with someone who lives near you or works near you. Get to know them. Ask their testimony. Pray together. If you enjoy it, do it again.
- B. Mothers—start a play group for moms near you.
- C. Have another family over for lunch. Don't make a fancy dinner. Don't spend four hours cleaning the house. Just spend an hour or two over a meal talking and encouraging one another. Simplicity means sustainability.
- D. Realize that God wants you to have brothers and sisters who encourage you, and not just people in your own family. God wants the whole body to build up the whole body in love.

- E. Start asking some friends specific spiritual questions. Examples: How is your walk with Christ? What have you been learning lately? How is God encouraging you right now? What are you struggling with? Is there sin in your life that you need help with? Etc.
- F. Be prepared to answer some specific questions. It will be awkward and painful and unnatural, but will result in greater joy.