

# (Hebrews - Part 29): The Assembly of Believers

by A.W. Tozer

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*A.W. Tozer emphasizes the importance of actively engaging in our faith through drawing near to God, holding fast to our profession, and assembling together as a community of believers.*

**Duration:** 27:11

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Hebrews 10:22-25

**Topics:** "Expositional"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of the church and the need for believers to be actively involved in it. He encourages the congregation to draw near to God, hold fast to their Christian profession, consider one another, and not forsake the assembling of themselves together. The preacher highlights the fellowship and connection that can be found within the church, even across different locations. He concludes by emphasizing the urgency and privilege of actively participating in spiritual growth and advancement. The sermon references several Bible verses, including Hebrews 10:22-25.

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## Transcript

Now, here we find four, let us, exhortation. Let us draw near to God, verse 22. Let us hold fast to our profession, verse 23.

Let us consider one another, verse 24, and then also, because it follows the let us grammatical construction, let us not forsake the assembling of ourselves together. Now, these words, let us, they mean, come on, we must do this. They're words of exhortation and urgency, showing us our privilege and our duties.

Now, such words teach us that we can't hope to deadhead into spiritual advancement. We can't ride on a pass. It requires active exercise of our spiritual faculties.

We don't, we simply dare not allow ourselves to hope that time will aid us. Time never helped anybody yet, and never will. Time is the medium in which we may help ourselves, or seek God's help, but time never helped anybody.

Now, it says here, let us draw near, and it means that we have something to do. That the whole work of God with men floats in a sea of grace, and rests upon the foundations of grace, if I might change the figure. But it doesn't paralyze the human will, and it doesn't exempt us from spiritual activities.

Let us draw near, he says. And it is to God that we are to draw near. The great good news is that we can approach God.

This is really the great good news of the gospel, that man can approach God again. That the man who went out at the stern command of God from the garden can now come back with all of his race who will come into the presence of God again. And yet, that approach is not one of physical distance.

It's very important that we know this, that our approach is not one of physical distance. It is as if God were far off, and we made a pilgrimage to find him, as though God were in Mecca, and we traveled to Mecca, getting nearer to him as we went, and when we came back, getting further away from him as we left. As though God were in Jerusalem, and we made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and as we cut the miles down and got nearer to Jerusalem, we were getting nearer to God.

No, don't think of it like that. To do so is to think falsely. God is not far from every one of us.

Though God is here, let us adore and own how dreadful is this place. God is here, and the nearness we talk about here is not one of distance. It has to do with the rich relation of person to person and of soul to soul.

It has to do with trust and love and intimacy of heart. People draw near to each other, not in distance. They may do that, too, but that is not what is talked about here.

Let us draw nearer, he says, to God. That is for you to be doing. If you allow one week of your life to pass by and you have not done something toward drawing nearer to God, then we, if we do this, are not obeying the instruction here.

We are trying to deadhead into the kingdom, and being in the kingdom, to deadhead into spiritual advancement, and it won't work. He said, Let us arise. The second one is, let us hold fast our profession of faith.

Let us hold fast. We would like to get a spiritual experience that would float us on high above all. We'd like to go into orbit and be sure there was nothing to do but simply to ride around.

You don't go to heaven that way. I saw an ad that my wife had picked up somewhere, maybe a hand in at the door. It said, Step on air.

It was an ad for a pair of shoes. You put them on and just walk around on air. But people imagine that the Christian life is the same way, that you get converted and get blessed and then walk around on air for the rest of your life.

You do nothing of the sort. Not only that, you don't fly to heaven, and there is no such thing known in the kingdom of God as wheels. I mean Christians.

I know there is a wheel in the middle of the wheel up there somewhere, but Christians don't happen to be in that place yet. So we don't go to heaven on wheels, as the colored song says. You can't go to heaven on roller skates.

And we can't go to heaven in any other way but the simple pedestrian way of walking. The Lord does not talk about a flight of faith, nor does he talk about a tour of faith. He talks about a walk of faith.

We are to walk. The temptation to quit the journey comes to everybody. Have you been tempted sometime over the last while to just give up the whole Christian life and be done with it? I suppose you feel very guilty, and you are, but I will comfort you by telling you that you are not guilty all by yourself.

People of God have that temptation come to them when things get tough and say, What's the use of trying anyhow? I can't do what I want to do. I can't serve God as I long to do. And the temptation is to quit, but people are ashamed to admit it and they cover it up.

But if the testimonies were as frank as they should be, many a man, instead of getting up and saying, Pray for me that I may hold out faithful, and so on, he would say, I was tempted last week to give up this whole deal, but the Lord helped me and I didn't. That would be frank. It would be a little difficult to do that, because usually we're taught to win friends and influence people and never tell the truth at all, say the thing we're supposed to say, rather than the honest thing.

But the honest thing is, sometimes the pressure is just so great that we almost look up to God as Elijah did and say, God, I've had it. There isn't any use. My father is a take-me-to-the-Lord, there's nobody around that's any good.

We're tempted like that sometimes. But I'll tell you some things. I've got a little key for you.

I don't hand out keys usually, but I've got a little key for you this time. I suppose you'd love to have a verse of scripture with wings on it, vibrant, fluttering wings with musical accompaniment. A fellow walked up to me down at Temple Baptist Church Friday night after the meeting when they were gathered around talking, and he walked up to me and said, Give me a verse.

He wanted me to be a prophet and an apostle and a hymnist right there, and give him a verse. And I couldn't think of one. So I turned over to the Bible and gave him a verse, but I'm quite sure I disappointed him, because he wanted something beautiful and brilliant with a bow tied around it.

I have a little secret how you hold fast the profession of your faith, and it's so down-to-earth and pedestrian and common that it'll disappoint you, but it's pretty good. I'll tell you what to do. Just outlive your troubles.

Just outlive them. I have outlived so many things, so many people that didn't like me, and I just outlive them. And somebody writes against me, I just outlive him.

And problems that bother me, just outlive them. You just go right on outliving your difficulties. That neighbor that moved in and slams the door all hours of the night and morning and turns the TV on until it comes roaring through the partition, and you, oh God, just outlive him.

He'll move, you'll move, you just keep right on where you are. That neighbor whose dog howls incessantly tied to a tree out there, just keep right on living. He'll move, God'll get rid of him.

And so with everything else, your problems, all your problems, brother, as a district superintendent, you've got, oh, I don't know how many churches under him now. He referred to it as a little different ministry, I'd say so. He's got all these churches, and if you think that preachers aren't prima donnas, you don't know preachers.

They're prima donnas with temperament galore, and they're godly fellows, you know, and prophets are the most high, but they're carnal sometimes. And the superintendent has to try to untangle that and babysit for

them all the while. Well, let me say to my good and loving brother here, if he's got problems in his district, as some of us preachers, we'll move, don't worry, we'll get out, you just keep on outliving us.

And that's the way to do with your problems. That boss you work for, that boss of yours, you just don't know how you can go to work. You don't mind the work, but you just wish you were somewhere else.

And you're shopping around for another job and you can't find one, well, you just keep right on walking with God, and one of these times something will happen. That fellow will be moved to some other town, or he'll get blessed or he'll get to liken you, or the thing will untangle. You just keep on.

It won't kill you if you walk on with God. Let us hold fast, says the Word of God. But it says, to the profession of our faith, but the profession of our faith has its ramifications right down in our living.

So you just wait around, it'll come out all right. A dear old colored brother, I told you about him once before. He didn't have too much education, but he was a dear Saint, and he said the passage of scripture he loved among the very most favorite passages was, It Came to Pass.

He said, When I get in trouble, I just look up to God and say, Father, I remember this came to pass. And it passes after a while, and all of your problems came to pass. They'll pass if you just outlive them and you keep right on.

Now, there's nothing poetic about that, and I suppose nothing very spiritual, but there's a whole lot of salty common sense in it. Then the other is, Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works. We have serious responsibility for other people.

God has laid the welfare of others upon us, and he will hold us responsible. I suppose one of the most insolent and cynical statements or questions in the entire Bible was Cain's question after he'd murdered his brother, Am I my brother's keeper? Why are you asking me about my brother? Do I have to take responsibility of him on my life? Yes, you do. You take the responsibilities of others on your life.

We should be responsible before all men for our lives, for our example, for our word, and we should be responsible to arouse people and incite people and urge people. Once in a while, somebody will say something that makes it worth your while to preach, or to write, or to teach, or to labor, or to be a member of a board, or a prayer band, or whatever you are. Once in a while, somebody will say something that makes you feel that it's worth your while.

At the Temple Baptist Church in Philadelphia, where I told you I was going to ask you a prayer, and thank you now for praying, we had a meeting there, and this Dr. Vroom, I didn't know him, I'd never met him, he'd never met me, but apparently he'd read everything that I'd ever written, because he said this to me, and I felt good about it without pride, but with the satisfaction that a man would have if the Lord sent him out to gather fruit, and he got a basket of fruit and came in and said, Here, Lord. Well, this man said this to me. I remember just walking over to answer a telephone, and as he walked over to answer this ringing phone, he said over his shoulder to me, he said, When I read your books, I want to be a better preacher and a better man of God.

Then he answered the phone. And that was all he said about that particular thing. But I said to myself, This is it, brother.

Let us consider one another. Let us so live, let us so pray, let us so do whatever we do with the thought of other people in mind, so they will want to be better Christians because we've been around. Some Christians have a bad effect on other Christians.

Let one Christian get with a group of other Christians, and they have to fight to keep up their spiritual lives. This one Christian drags them. There are other Christians, when you're with them, their very presence is an incitement to you to want to be a better Christian.

That's what it says here. Let us consider one another to provoke them. Provoke, of course, means to stir them up to love and good works.

And then let us not forsake the assembling of ourselves together. Let us not forsake. There is a significant mark of lack of relish for the apostolic assembly.

When you see it, when going to church becomes a problem, something is wrong, when the circle of believers becomes too dull for us, there are many excuses given, but there is only one reason, and that reason is that we've cooled off in our spirits. The thing Christians have always done, they've come together to worship and to pray and to reminisce and to anticipate and to search the scriptures and to sing holy hymns and to testify, they've done this from the day of Pentecost to the present hour. And when I become a Christian and I am not led by a magnetic attraction to the circle of believers, something is wrong with me.

People ought to assemble together. He says, Don't forsake the assembling of yourselves together. The assembly is the church.

I believe in this. I believe the church is the assembly, and the Christian assembly is the church, the church of God, and there are reasons for our assembling. We're not simply doing this out of habit or because it's a custom that we can't get over.

We do it because there are reasons for it. I remember the first time I heard the word gregarious, when I was a young fellow in a country school up among the pine trees in the state of Pennsylvania, Clearfield County. Our county supervisor came and made a talk, and he was quite some fellow, really.

And for a farm boy, he used big words, and one word he said was this. He said, Boys are gregarious by nature. Can you imagine saying gregarious to a farm boy? But I guess I loved words then, too, because I found out as soon as I could get around to it what the word gregarious meant.

And I found that it meant, as you know that it means, herding together like sheep, loving to be together, a sense of sociability and wanting to be with others of your kind. Now, we're gregarious by nature. Being let go, they went to their own company, is a sentence that's characteristic of the people of God as well as sinners.

People always go to their own company, and so it's perfectly normal for us to want to go to our own company. All the beasts of the jungle meet at the waterhole, and there's a strange truce there at the waterhole. They may fight to the death in the jungle, but when they go to the waterhole, there's a truce.

They all meet together where there's the water. And God's people meet at the waterhole. They meet where the fountain flows, and they meet together.

They are gregarious. Those who raise sheep say that the sick sheep is the only one who doesn't like the flock. He wanders off by himself behind a bush and dies.

But the sheep that are healthy all like to be where the sheep are. And the second reason is that we need each other. And if we don't feel that we need each other, then we need each other more than if we felt that we did.

The individual Christian needs the company of Christians, and God can say to a company of Christians what he can't say to an individual Christian, just as he can say to the individual lonely, praying soul what he can't say to the company. If all your Christianity depends upon my preaching, then you're a long way from being where you should be. If you do not have a private, secret conduit, a pipe leading into the fountain where you can go anytime, all by yourself, whether there's a pastor here or not, whether you've heard a sermon in a year, you have nevertheless an anchor, you have a route, you have a conduit.

You can get the water from God. That's for the individual. That's necessary.

And God can say to you there what he can't say to you in church. But over against that and supplementing it and correcting it is this, that God can say to you in church what he can't say to you all alone. Always been so.

God would take a man on a mountain and talk to him and send him down where the people were and talk to him down there. And he could say to him down there what he couldn't say up there. So we must close the door and have private prayer, but we need to have our private prayers corrected and brought into symmetry by the public prayers.

We need to read the scriptures all by ourselves. Then we need to hear the scriptures expounded in the public assembly. So we need each other, you see.

And then I noticed that Christ went to the synagogue as was his want. He had the habit of going to church on the holy days. And I say he went even though he didn't agree with much he found there.

He went because he wanted to be in the company of people who at least ostensibly were worshiping God. And you go ahead, the Lord will arrange it somehow, you'll hear truth. Christ went to the company regularly and we should.

Christ promised special blessing to the company where two or three of you are gathered in my name. And the assembly, the gathering together of God's people is in historic tradition. Now why Christians go to the assembly only occasionally? I've heard it said that some people go to church only three times in their lives.

The first time they sprinkle water on them, the second time they sprinkle rice on them, and the third time they sprinkle dirt on them. And that, of course, is so old and dried up that you don't even smile at it anymore, but there's so much truth in that that it's tragic. That we use the church as a place to get christened in, married in and buried out of.

Tragic, my brethren, because if we have that attitude we don't know what the church is. Suppose that you were in Russia, and suppose that you were all out of joint with Russia. You didn't like the way they were doing, you didn't like Khrushchev as who could, except his wife.

And you didn't like their communistic system, you didn't like their secret police, you didn't like anything about Russia at all. And then you were walking one day in the country and you noticed a little building, an old building that had been forsaken, and you walked by and you heard a noise. And you said, I believe that's English, they're singing.

And you went close to the door, and when you got to the door you noticed what they were singing. They were singing Canada. And you peeked in and you recognized Canadian faces all around you everywhere, would be the hostile, deadly, dangerous Soviet.

But here by themselves, shot away, met from here and there, gathered together for a little while, a fellowship, hidden here in a little building by themselves. There were a couple of dozen Canadians, and you burst in on them with a big smile, and they saw you, some of them recognized you. Pretty soon they sang a hymn together, and you began to talk.

Oh yes, I used to live in Barrie, sure. Have you ever been down at Guelph? I never could pronounce that word. And pretty soon, pretty soon you've got a fellowship, a fellowship way across the ocean, way over in that big continent there where it snows, Canada.

Oh, how good you'd feel. Then you'd shake hands and say, well I've got to go back to the grind, got to go back to the grind, back to the secret police, and back, back to, I don't like it. And you all shook hands and parted, but said, now next Saturday let's meet again.

Next Saturday you all, don't you see how perfectly normal that would be? Don't you see, you'd live for it. You'd say, during the week I have to be out here with people whose language I don't know nor like, and people who are suspicious of me. Out here, I don't like this, I'm here, but I don't like it.

But oh, I live for the time when I can get back into that little building and sit and chat and reminisce and talk old time, and sing good songs with my friends. Now that's a natural thing, isn't it? Nothing wrong with that. That's delightful.

And isn't it true that here we Christians are a minority group in a great big sinful God-forsaken world, or almost God-forsaken, for they've driven him out and refused to have this man reign over us? We live in the week, we go to school, we work, we sell, we buy, we tend store, we drive trucks, we do something all week long under the pressure of it. But if we know where there's a company that think as we think, whose hearts are like our hearts, who love what we love, who are our people, whose faces are recognizable, we know who they are, and we like to shake their hands and smile at them. Don't you think that's reason enough for everybody to go to church all the time that they can, allowing only sickness to keep them away? I love the people of God, I really do.

Sometimes I have to get after them a little bit. But I love them, I love the kingdom, I love the church. But you know, when people don't practice it, when they go nearer or intermittently, and when they take that old bromide about, I can serve God under the trees, yes, I suppose so.

If you were in Russia, you wouldn't say, Well, I can think about Canada here under this beech tree. You'd get for your company just as fast as you could get. Talk about Owen Sound and Ottawa and this and that river.

You'd want to talk to people who know your language, who are of your blood and kin, and who have the same spirit you have. So I can worship God under a tree deal. It's a bromide, it's a cover-up, it's an

excuse, it's only hiding coldness of heart.

And usually a fellow loses his love for the company of Saints, he rationalizes, he blames the minister, or he blames the music, or he blames the unfriendliness of the people, or he blames the hypocrites in the churches, or he blames the church building. Now his wife says, Come on, Jim, let's go to church. No, no, the church is too cold, I'll take cold down there.

Come, Jim, let's go to church. No, it's too hot in there, I'll just smother in that place. Let's go to church.

No, it's too drafty there. Let's go to church, Jim. No, no, in the back of the church is noisy children crying, and it's terrible.

And then as soon as she's gone, he ensconces himself in front of the TV. Well, he's going to his own company, see. The people who draw him, the people whose spirit he has, he's with them.

And his wife hops in her little Simca and drives off to the church, and she goes among her people. The reason I said Simca was that when the pastor, Dr. Room, met me at the hotel to take him to church, he took me in a Simca, and he apologized. He said, Sorry, take me in a little car, and I said, I see lots of them in town.

So she gets into her little Simca, and off she goes to church. And people say, There comes Mrs. Jones, she's a faithful soul. Why is she faithful? Because she recognizes her own people.

She loves them. I love the church of Christ. I'm commissioned to love it, to scold it, to warn it, and to feed it, and to pray for it.

Thy church, O God, the house of thine abode. I love the church. So now there are our four texts.

Let us draw near to God. Let us hold fast to our Christian profession. Let us consider one another and be responsible to help each other.

And let us not forsake the assembling of ourselves together. For the sweetest place in all the world is the assembly of the Saints. Thank God for freedom in a land like this, where there are no policemen listening to what I have to say, ready to catch me at midnight and condemn me because I have dared to talk about God to a people who wanted to hear about him.

Thank God for freedom such as ours. Let us not sell it out or neglect it. Let us take advantage of it.

Freedom to worship God among the people of God. Amen.

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