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Expository Sermon

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This is the final sermon in the short series entitled "Truths for Holy Living." The truth of scriptural holiness has been placed on the back burner in the pulpits of so many in the contemporary church. It appears that it is no longer "our watch word and song." Sometime ago I received a survey put out by George Barna. It was startling and sobering. Let me pluck out some quotes written in his survey. This is what he says "Although large majorities of the public claim to be 'deeply spiritual' and say that their religious faith is 'very important' in their life, only 15% of those who regularly attend church ranked their relationship with God as top priority in their life. "People do not have an accurate view of themselves when it comes to spirituality. Americans are not devoted to their faith as they like to believe. They have an important view of their faith, but their faith is rarely the focal point of their life or a critical factor in their decision making. The fact that a few people take time to evaluate their journey, or to develop benchmarks or indicators of their spiritual health, facilitates a distorted view of the prominence or priority and purity of faith in their



life. The notion of personal holiness has slipped out of the consciousness of the vast majority of Christians. While just 21% of adult consider themselves to be holy, by their own admission have no idea what 'holiness' means and only one out of three(35%) believe that God expects people to become holy." In my view this an indictment on the failure of much of the contemporary church to declare the 'full counsel of God." Barna goes on to say "if people's faith is objectively measured against a biblical standard of how faith is to be practiced, Americans are spiritually lukewarm." This reveals the urgent need for the church to commit herself to the biblical message of "Full Salvation." May God help us to make this commitment.

## TRUTHS FOR HOLY LIVING

### THE WALK OF HOLINESS

**Scripture Reading – Hebrews 10:16-25.**

#### **Introduction**

We conclude today with the final message of a short series of two under the general title of "Truths for Holy Living." Last week we traced the steps to a holy walk. We walked up the road to the holy life. We traced the pre-requisites to the life of holiness. We highlighted the steps that God took to open up the way to holiness. Today we will take a look at the walk or the way of holiness in the light of what the Word of God says about it. I am fully aware that holiness of life is not top of the charts in our society. The restraints and disciplines of the holy living are not acceptable by most. People are not lining up to take a sip from the holiness cup. This is not reflection on the truth of holiness; it is a reflection on those who are not discerning enough to recognize the importance of holiness to

their lives and to their eternal future, as well as its importance to a Holy God, for the scripture says that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." But we are on a journey which will inevitably end in an accounting to God. That moment is coming no matter in which age group in which we are privileged to be. It is important then that we address ourselves to the life that God expects and has provided for us at great cost.

The writer to the Hebrews is concerned about showing us the way into God's presence. He reveals the permanency, superiority and perfection of Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God, above the previous temporary and transient sacrifices of the Old Testament. It is not that there is a break between the Old Testament and the New Testament. "The Old Testament anticipates and illustrates the New Testament, and the New Testament fulfils and interprets the Old. (Samuel Chadwick). This letter stresses the truth that there is a continuity that ends in consummation. There is an imperfection that ends in perfection. This consummation and perfection is found in Jesus, who by His perfect sacrifice has made a complete provision for a holy life. The writer in Hebrews chapter 9 verse 26 declares "He has appeared once and for all.....to do away with sin by the sacrifice of Himself." The perfection of His atoning death is contained in the words that He appeared to "...to do away with sin." This is confirmed by the words in Chapter 7:27, "Once and for all." And again in chapter Hebrews 10 :12, "for all time." In chapter 10 he writes "**Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties again and again he offers the same sacrifices which can never take away sins. But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right Hand of God.**" Because of this perfect sacrifice, the power to live the life of holiness has been made available to us. The letter is clear that "**.....we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the Body of Jesus Christ once and for all.**" In simple terms what is being said, is that Jesus died to make us holy. "He suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through His own Blood." Hebrews 13:12. The message of Hebrews is clear, for it lays before us the amazing truth, that the power live the life of

holiness is available to us. The verses in chapter 10 verses 19-25 describes what it means to walk in the way of holiness. In these verses the writer emphasizes,

### **1. THE PRIVILEGES OF THE HOLY LIFE. Hebrews 10:19-22.**

We are urged to come with confidence into the Presence of God. Verse 19 and 20 confirms this truth. "Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the most Holy Place by the Blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, His body." In the word "therefore" there is the implication that what has been said in the first part of this chapter, is the foundation of what he is about to say. In other words, because Jesus is the supreme and perfect sacrifice who takes away the sins of the world once and for all, and because, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once and for all, and because, God has made a new Covenant with us whereby He writes the laws of God on our minds and hearts and chooses to forget our sins and lawless deeds and we can now come into the most Holy Place. The Most Holy Place, where in a real sense God dwelled, was separated from the Holy Place of the Tabernacle by a curtain or a veil. That curtain served as a barrier to keep people out and as James Stewart says and "to keep God in." Only the High Priest could enter the Most Holy Place, and He only entered once a year. Not all the people could exercise this privilege, but the high priest only, as their representative. Even he could not exercise the privilege any time he chose, but at fixed times and under fixed conditions. But Jesus through His shed Blood on the cross opened a new and living way for us through the curtain....." He rent the Veil in two from top to bottom, and He has broken through the barrier and opened the door for us to God. Since we have confidence to come into the presence of God by the Blood of Jesus, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, we can come into the very presence of God. Let us draw near indicates that there is an accessible way into the presence of a Holy God. We can be ushered in that presence because God wants to mingle with men. He has made this relationship possible by coming to this earth in a form of a man. He

longs to have fellowship with His creation and He provides the way to it. He unlocks the gate to Himself. He Himself has done that. And the writer tells us how He did it.

i. He established a New Covenant. Hebrews 10:16.

ii. He removes the barrier of sin. Hebrews 10:17.

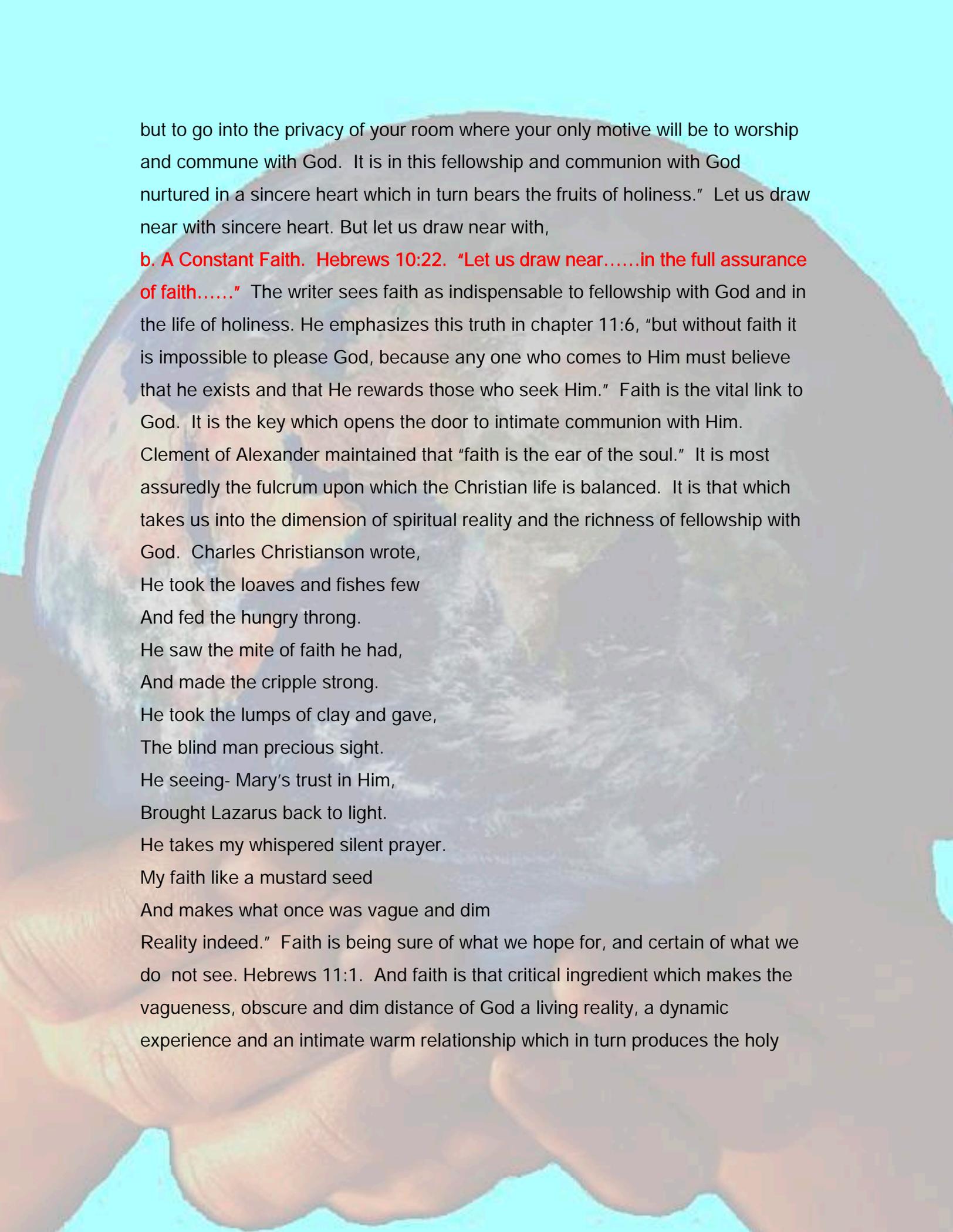
iii. He makes the complete sacrifice for sin. Hebrews 10:18.

iv. He opens the way into His Presence. Hebrews 10:18.

v. He is designated as the great Priest who intercedes or prays for each of us.

**Hebrews 10:21.** Jesus has blazed the trail opened the way and pioneered the path to holiness and God's presence. He went first for others, for us to follow. We have a high priest, is the joyful message of this great letter. We can live in His presence day by day. Living in the presence of God is the ground of holy living, for you cannot divorce holiness of heart and life from the abiding presence of God. To be accepted into God's presence, three conditions have to be met. First, let us draw near with a,

a. **A Clear Motive. Hebrews 10:22.** The writer says "Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart..." or with a true heart. This is where holiness begins, in trueness of heart. Holiness resides in clear motives. We are to live in the presence of God with no duplicity, no insincerity or hypocrisy. Chris Haverson wrote, "It is easy to fool others. Fooling yourself is a little harder. Fooling God is impossible." Robert Redford was walking one day through the hotel lobby. A woman saw him and followed him to the elevator. "Are you the real Robert Redford?" she asked him with great excitement. As the doors of the elevator closed he replied, "Only when I am alone!" It is when we are alone with ourselves that we can be honest and true. The confidence in drawing near to God is based on sincerity and it is more than the attitude of sincerity. It is sincerity based on truth. The motive must not only be sincere it must be clear. Jesus said that God is a Spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth." The Psalmist David knew this to true for He said, Lord you desire truth in the inward parts. Jesus urged His followers not to pray on street corners to be seen of men



but to go into the privacy of your room where your only motive will be to worship and commune with God. It is in this fellowship and communion with God nurtured in a sincere heart which in turn bears the fruits of holiness." Let us draw near with sincere heart. But let us draw near with,

**b. A Constant Faith. Hebrews 10:22. "Let us draw near.....in the full assurance of faith....."** The writer sees faith as indispensable to fellowship with God and in the life of holiness. He emphasizes this truth in chapter 11:6, "but without faith it is impossible to please God, because any one who comes to Him must believe that he exists and that He rewards those who seek Him." Faith is the vital link to God. It is the key which opens the door to intimate communion with Him.

Clement of Alexander maintained that "faith is the ear of the soul." It is most assuredly the fulcrum upon which the Christian life is balanced. It is that which takes us into the dimension of spiritual reality and the richness of fellowship with God. Charles Christianson wrote,

He took the loaves and fishes few  
And fed the hungry throng.

He saw the mite of faith he had,  
And made the cripple strong.

He took the lumps of clay and gave,  
The blind man precious sight.

He seeing- Mary's trust in Him,  
Brought Lazarus back to light.

He takes my whispered silent prayer.

My faith like a mustard seed

And makes what once was vague and dim

Reality indeed." Faith is being sure of what we hope for, and certain of what we do not see. Hebrews 11:1. And faith is that critical ingredient which makes the vagueness, obscure and dim distance of God a living reality, a dynamic experience and an intimate warm relationship which in turn produces the holy

life. Let us draw near in the full assurance of faith. Furthermore the scriptures move on to say, "Let us draw near with,

**c. A Clean Heart. Hebrews 10:22.**

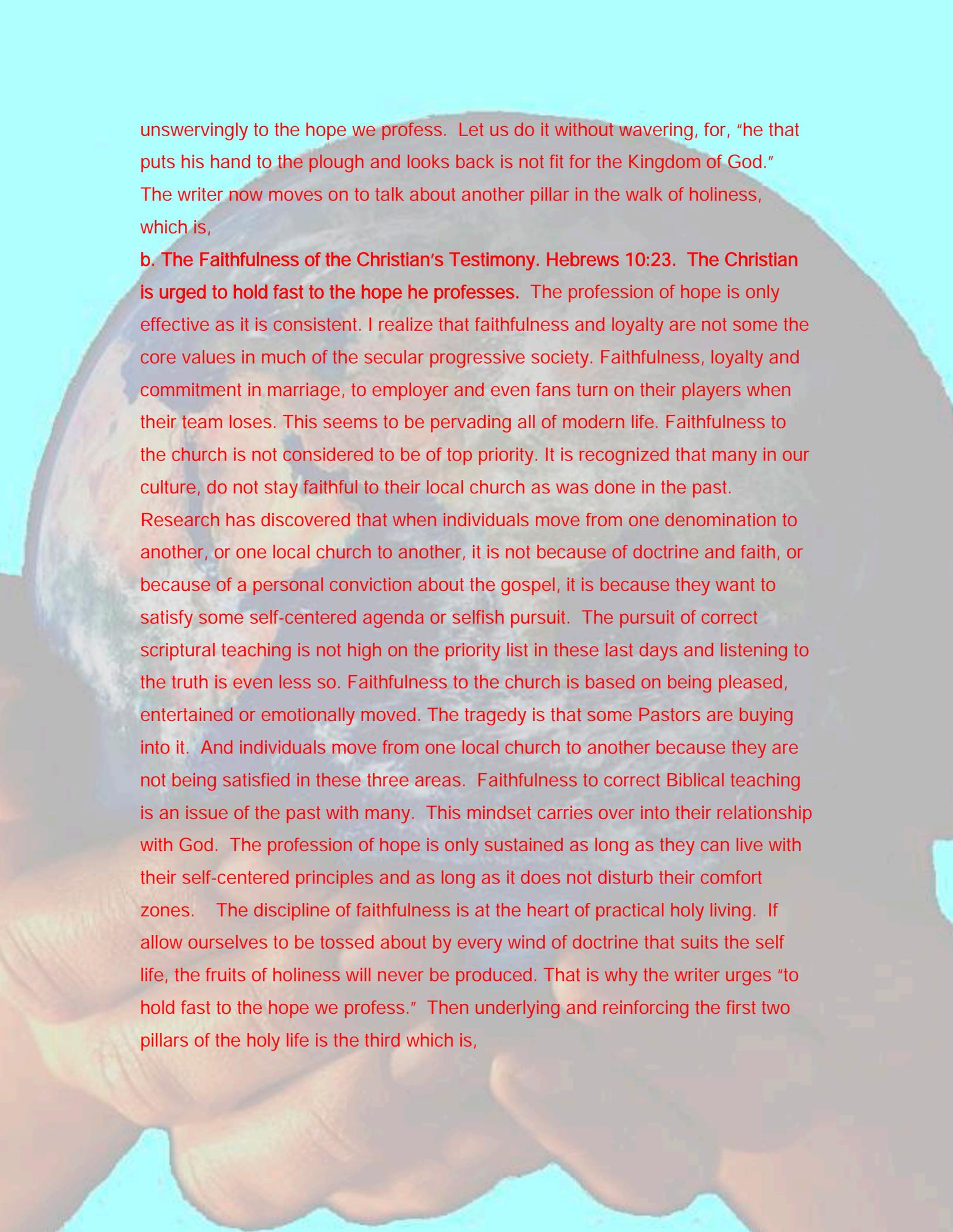
The writer underlines this truth in verse 22. Having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water." The word sprinkled alludes to the ceremonies by which the Jewish Priests were cleansed from defilement. They signify that impurity had been present and then cleansed. These ceremonies were the shadows and a preparation for the complete and perfect sacrifice of Christ who would take away sin once and for all. The Prophet Isaiah foretold that Jesus would "sprinkle many nations." Isaiah 52:15. In the opening verses of this letter we are told that Jesus made purification for our sins. (Hebrews 1:3). This is where we begin in the life of fellowship with God and holiness of life. Purity of heart is fundamental to intimacy with God, and intimacy with God is indispensable to a holy life. The message of this book is that, access to God is a glorious privilege, but there are responsibilities and conditions of access to God. The God with whom we have to do and with whom we have fellowship, is a Holy God, and thus the privilege of access to Him must not be misunderstood. If we are to draw near to God in fellowship, we must do it with a clear conscience and a pure heart. The clean heart and the clear conscience is the condition of having confidence towards God. The Psalmist caught this truth and touched on it in his Psalm. "Lord who may dwell in your sanctuary? Who may live on your holy hill? He whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous, who speaks truth in his heart." The death of Jesus, His vicarious death and efficacious sacrifice on the Cross enables the sincere seeking soul to walk in holiness.

The writer rejoices in the truth that to walk in holiness is a possibility and a privilege. "Let us draw near to God with sincere in the full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water." "Let us draw near..." This is the expression of faith in the life of holiness. Then the writer highlights,

## 2. THE PILLARS OF THE HOLY LIFE. Hebrews 10:23.

"Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful." The key words here are "let us hold unswervingly." This speaks of,

**a. Steadfastness of the Christian's Commitment. Hebrews 10:23.** What comes through so clearly here is the idea of determination, a resolute will, and persistent perseverance? We are exhorted to "Hold unswervingly to the hope we profess" v.23. The confession or testimony of Christ's saving work in our lives is one thing, but to hold firm to it when life's stones are hurled at us is another. But it is vital because the scriptures are clear, that "he that endures to the end will be saved." The confession of our hope only retains its value as we unswervingly hold on to it. An elderly lady was once asked by a young man who had grown weary in the struggle in life, whether he ought to give up the fight, "I am beaten every time," he said in despair. "I feel I must give up." "Did you ever notice," she replied smiling into the troubled face before her, "that when the Lord told the troubled fishermen to cast their nets again, it was the same old spot where they had been fishing all night and caught nothing. It is with that kind of perseverance that we are to hold to the confession of our hope if we are to walk the holy life. In the chapter 12 of this letter the writer calls upon the followers of Jesus to "consider Him who endured opposition from sinful men so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. V.4. In your struggle against sin, you have not resisted to the point of shedding your blood." And if you answer back "I have resisted. I really did try to be steadfast in the hour of battle. **I did try to fight through, but its' no use. When you are confronted by this question take time to look into your soul and ask - where are the blood marks? Have you resisted to the point of shedding your blood? What did the steadfastness of Jesus mean to Him? Climb with Him up Calvary's hill for a moment and gaze on that center cross. The hymn writer caught some of its meaning when he wrote these memorable words "See from His head, His hands, His feet, His side, His very heart. Sorrow and love flowed mingled down. In His struggle against sin he resisted to the point of shedding His precious Blood."** The writer of this letter urges us to hold



unswervingly to the hope we profess. Let us do it without wavering, for, "he that puts his hand to the plough and looks back is not fit for the Kingdom of God."

The writer now moves on to talk about another pillar in the walk of holiness, which is,

**b. The Faithfulness of the Christian's Testimony. Hebrews 10:23. The Christian is urged to hold fast to the hope he professes.** The profession of hope is only effective as it is consistent. I realize that faithfulness and loyalty are not some the core values in much of the secular progressive society. Faithfulness, loyalty and commitment in marriage, to employer and even fans turn on their players when their team loses. This seems to be pervading all of modern life. Faithfulness to the church is not considered to be of top priority. It is recognized that many in our culture, do not stay faithful to their local church as was done in the past.

Research has discovered that when individuals move from one denomination to another, or one local church to another, it is not because of doctrine and faith, or because of a personal conviction about the gospel, it is because they want to satisfy some self-centered agenda or selfish pursuit. The pursuit of correct scriptural teaching is not high on the priority list in these last days and listening to the truth is even less so. Faithfulness to the church is based on being pleased, entertained or emotionally moved. The tragedy is that some Pastors are buying into it. And individuals move from one local church to another because they are not being satisfied in these three areas. Faithfulness to correct Biblical teaching is an issue of the past with many. This mindset carries over into their relationship with God. The profession of hope is only sustained as long as they can live with their self-centered principles and as long as it does not disturb their comfort zones. The discipline of faithfulness is at the heart of practical holy living. If allow ourselves to be tossed about by every wind of doctrine that suits the self life, the fruits of holiness will never be produced. That is why the writer urges "to hold fast to the hope we profess." Then underlying and reinforcing the first two pillars of the holy life is the third which is,

c. **The Trustworthiness of God.** Hebrews 10:23. **"Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful."** The basis of steadfastness and faithfulness is Divine trustworthiness. God is the rock and the unshakable pillar of the holy life. Everet Storms was a schoolteacher in Kitchener, Canada, when he took the challenge to discover how many promises were in the Bible. For a year and half he scoured the pages of scripture and took detailed notes. During his twenty-seventh reading of the entire Bible, Storms concluded that the Bible contains 7,487 promises by God to man. We are reminded in 2 Peter 1:4 that God's promises are "precious and magnificent," and Romans 3:4, assures us that God can be trusted to deliver on his promises. "...He who promised is faithful." Paul prays, "May God Himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and He will do it." 1 Thessalonians 5:23 -24. Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful. Here is the expression of hope in holy living. Finally note

**3. THE PURPOSE OF THE HOLY LIFE.** Hebrews 10:24. **"Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up on meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, let us encourage one another –and all the more as you see the Day approaching."**

Two dynamic truths merge in these words. They are love and fellowship and they go together. These dynamic truths are dependent on each other and are indispensable to the life of the church. The purpose of the holy life is to experience, express and encourage the life of love. This love is the heartbeat of the heartbeat of holiness. It is the blood stream of the Body of Christ. Note that in these words there is first of all,

**a. The Priority of Love.** Hebrews 10:24-25. **"Let us consider how we may spur one another to toward love and good deeds."** Love as a priority is to be encouraged. **"Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love..."** Love within the Body of Christ is not a luxury to be enjoyed but a dynamic quality

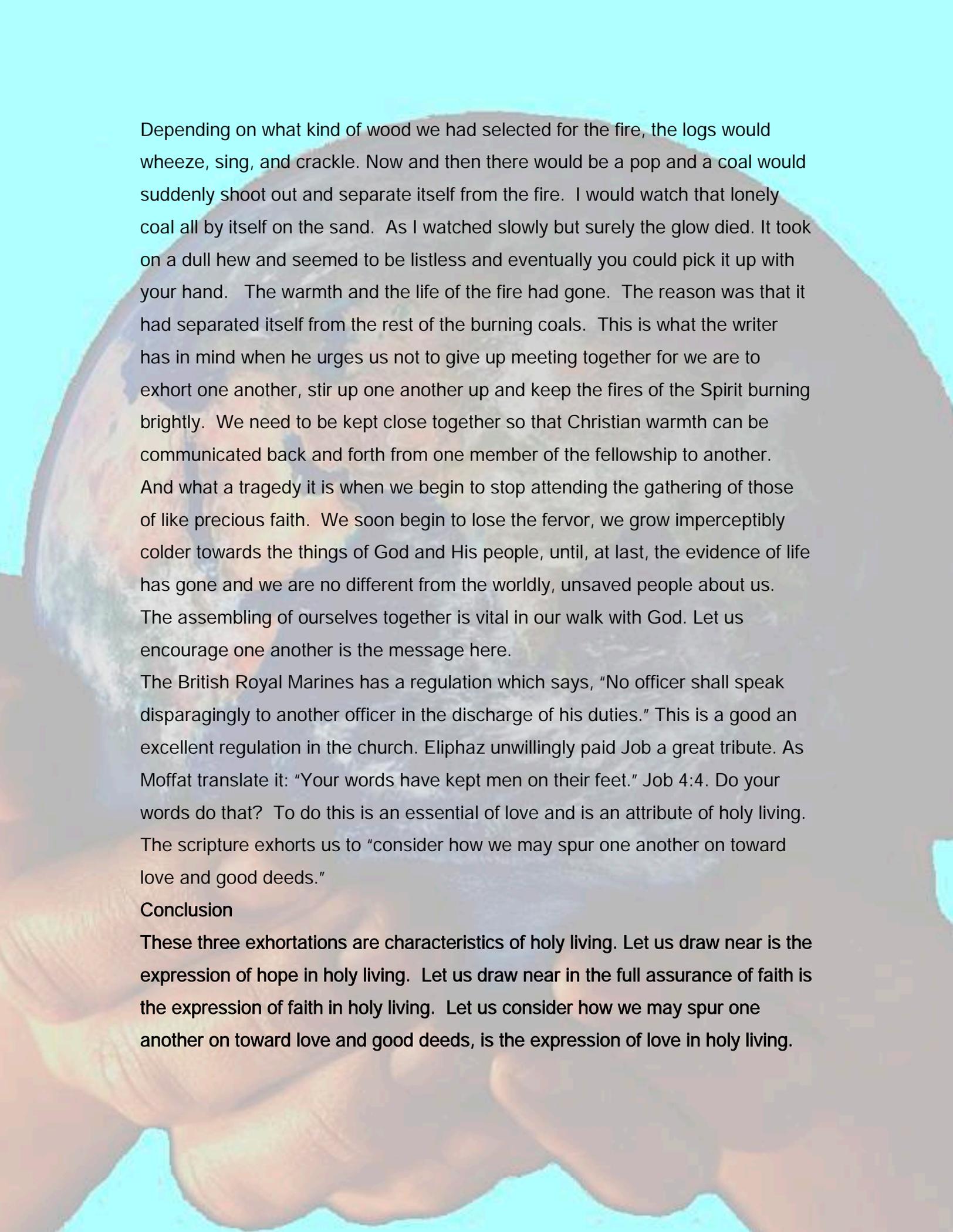
of life to be lived. These words in Hebrews assume and accept the teaching of Jesus. They know that love is first and foremost a Divine command to be obeyed. Jesus said, "My command is this; love each other as I have loved you. You are my friends if you do what I command." John 15:12,16.) And in v.17 He repeats it; "This is my command love each other." This is why the writer exhorts us to "spur one another on toward love and good deeds." This is vital in the church because so much rests on it. Love is the distinguishing characteristic of the Children of God. Jesus said "all men will know that you are my disciples if you have love one for one another." The critical nature of love within the Body of Christ is amplified in the words of John when he wrote "We know that we have passed from death to life because we love our brothers, and he who does not love remains in death." 1 John 3:16. What I see in this passage of scripture once again is the priority of love as an indispensable attribute in the church. The presence of love must be a priority. But in this passage the writer highlights, "Let us consider how we may spur one another toward love and good deeds. We also are impressed by,

**b. The Power of Love. Hebrews 10:24-29.** "Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds." Love is ever selfish. It considers how others may be encouraged and spurred on to love and good deeds. Love gives birth to love. The word spur is a strong one. The central thought is that we should give careful and deliberate consideration to find ways on how to provoke, stimulate, excite, and spur the believers to love and good deeds. The question arises "How does your life effect the fellow believers in the church? Is your life an inspiration to others in such a way that they will be incited to do good deeds, or do they walk away from your presence bruised, battered and bleeding inwardly? Does your attitude build up the church or does it damage its witness? Paul writes in Romans 15:1-2 "We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not please ourselves. Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up." And He instructs the church in Galatia "Carry each others burdens, and in this way fulfill the law of Christ." Galatians 6:2. And then

in Colossians he urges "...clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other." Again Paul writes in Philippians 2:3-4 "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. V.4. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others." Unselfish consideration of others builds them up, strengthens them, and incites them to love. What kind of influence are you exerting on others in the Body of Christ? It is well to remember that "no person is an island to himself." All of us are exerting some kind of influence on someone someday. The writer urges each of us to "Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds." This is the operation of the power of love. But finally note,

**c. The Purpose of Love. Hebrews 10:24-25. 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."** The exhortation is to congregate as the people of God. We must worship together. Some Christians are what Moffet called "pious particles." They are in isolation. This goes against the very nature and purpose of the Kingdom of God. We really do need each other in these last days.

One of the pleasures of living in the African bush was the freedom to see the animals in their natural environment. In our second assignment, periodically, 20-30 missionaries who worked in the area we were assigned to would get together and drive to a place in the bush where there was a clearing. We would build a fire. Then we would enjoy a barbeque and potluck. The reason for our gathering in that way was two-fold. The first was fellowship with each other and the second was to see the animals. For all of us the premier viewing was to see lions. This was our prime goal. Once we had viewed them we were satisfied. Those were the evenings that vividly remain in my memory. As the darkness dropped like a curtain across the bush, you might begin to hear the yelp of the jackal, shrill laugh of a hyena the raucous bark of a baboon and maybe the intimidating roar of a lion. I would sit there fascinated by the glowing wood coals of the fire.



Depending on what kind of wood we had selected for the fire, the logs would wheeze, sing, and crackle. Now and then there would be a pop and a coal would suddenly shoot out and separate itself from the fire. I would watch that lonely coal all by itself on the sand. As I watched slowly but surely the glow died. It took on a dull hue and seemed to be listless and eventually you could pick it up with your hand. The warmth and the life of the fire had gone. The reason was that it had separated itself from the rest of the burning coals. This is what the writer has in mind when he urges us not to give up meeting together for we are to exhort one another, stir up one another up and keep the fires of the Spirit burning brightly. We need to be kept close together so that Christian warmth can be communicated back and forth from one member of the fellowship to another. And what a tragedy it is when we begin to stop attending the gathering of those of like precious faith. We soon begin to lose the fervor, we grow imperceptibly colder towards the things of God and His people, until, at last, the evidence of life has gone and we are no different from the worldly, unsaved people about us. The assembling of ourselves together is vital in our walk with God. Let us encourage one another is the message here.

The British Royal Marines has a regulation which says, "No officer shall speak disparagingly to another officer in the discharge of his duties." This is a good an excellent regulation in the church. Eliphaz unwillingly paid Job a great tribute. As Moffat translate it: "Your words have kept men on their feet." Job 4:4. Do your words do that? To do this is an essential of love and is an attribute of holy living. The scripture exhorts us to "consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds."

### **Conclusion**

These three exhortations are characteristics of holy living. Let us draw near is the expression of hope in holy living. Let us draw near in the full assurance of faith is the expression of faith in holy living. Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, is the expression of love in holy living.

There it is faith, hope and love. The greatest of these is love. These are the hallmarks of the holy life. To live these qualities is walk the way of holiness.

