

Behold, I Thought; Now I Know

Joe Slater

Despite being a leper, Naaman the Syrian army commander retained his pride. Didn't his status merit a dramatic healing ceremony from Elijah? "*Behold, I thought, 'He will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place, and heal the leprosy'*" (2 Kings 5:11). Instead, Elijah had sent a servant to instruct Naaman to dip seven times in the Jordan River. How undignified! But when he set aside his prideful anger and obeyed, the cleansed leper's "*Behold, I thought*" became "*Now I know*" (v. 15).

This wasn't the first time someone's think-so turned out to be wrong. When Abraham and Sarah journeyed to the Philistine city of Gerar, Abraham told King Abimelech that Sarah was his sister (just as he had done in Egypt many years earlier). Abimelech promptly took Sarah into his harem, but the Lord just as promptly ordered him to return her to her husband. The indignant king demanded an answer from Abraham: "*Why have you done this thing?*" Abraham's excuse was, "*I thought surely the fear of God is not in this place, and they will kill me on account of my wife*" (Genesis 20:1-11). Yes, he thought – but was dreadfully wrong.

Looking back at the time he had been a Jesus-hating abuser of Christians, Paul said, "*Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth*" (Acts 26:9). Like Abraham and Naaman, Paul had to come to grips with how utterly wrong he had been.

What a difference between "Behold, I thought" and "Now I know"! The line of demarcation: Learning and obeying God's will.

Faithfulness

The command not to abandon the assembly (Hebrews 10:25) is an opportunity to pause and ponder. On the one hand, there are those whose attendance to the assembly of the church is nearly perfect. They are present, as we often put it, "every time the doors are open." On the other hand, note that one can be faithful in attendance and still not be in obedience to Hebrews 10:24–25. The imperative not to forsake is only one side of the coin; the other is the command to stir up or encourage others (v. 24).

John is a busy man; he always attends worship with his family, but he is scarcely present mentally during the worship and never engages with other church members before or after services. His mind is always elsewhere.

Jane hasn't missed one worship service or period of Bible study since she had surgery thirty-nine years ago, though several church members wish she'd skip every now and again—you see, Jane is a chronic malcontent who is always tearing down rather than building up.

Jacob was raised as a child to always be in church, but his family was never involved in the LIFE of the church. As he was trained, he arrives exactly two minutes before worship begins, slips into his traditional spot on a back pew, and is out the door as soon as "Amen" is said. He neither knows nor cares to know anyone else in the congregation. While he would never put it like this, his attendance is just one of many proofs of his checklist approach to Christianity.

Each of these individuals are under the impression that they are in obedience to Hebrews 10:25, but they are not since they do not have the slightest inclination to engage in mutual encouragement with the body of Christ.

The Lord wants us to be faithful in gathering with our spiritual family to worship, but that includes being faithful to encourage them as well.

Michael Whitworth

Why Do You Wait?

Most of us know better than we do. And most of us intend better than we perform. But we feel as if time is on our side. We'll get to it eventually. We'll begin tomorrow. But, sadly, we too often never "get to it," and tomorrow never comes. Procrastination is still the thief of time.

The Bible places a premium on today. Not tomorrow, of which we are warned not to boast (Proverbs 27:1); not next year, of which we have no certainty (James 4:13-16); but today – now.

"*Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation*" (2 Corinthians 6:2). "*But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*" (Hebrews 3:13).

Even our Lord, while in the flesh, understood the transient nature of time and thus the urgency of today. He taught, "*I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night comes when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world*" (John 9:3, 4).

You have yet to obey the gospel? Follow the example of first-century converts who, having heard the gospel, obeyed immediately, even "*the same hour of the night*" (Acts 16:33). Don't put off your soul's salvation! Tomorrow may never come. Tomorrow may find you changed and calloused with a newly-hardened heart. Tomorrow is filled with uncertainties. Today is the day of decision.

The good you intend to do? Do it now. The kindness you plan one day to extend to those you love? Do it now. The forgiveness you know you ought to offer those who have slighted you, offended you, or caused you pain? Do it now.

As Emerson once observed, "You cannot do a kindness too soon, for you never know how soon it will be too late."

Yesterday is past; tomorrow may never come. The only currency we have to spend is the currency of today.

--Dalton Key (Tulsa, OK) via *Old Paths*