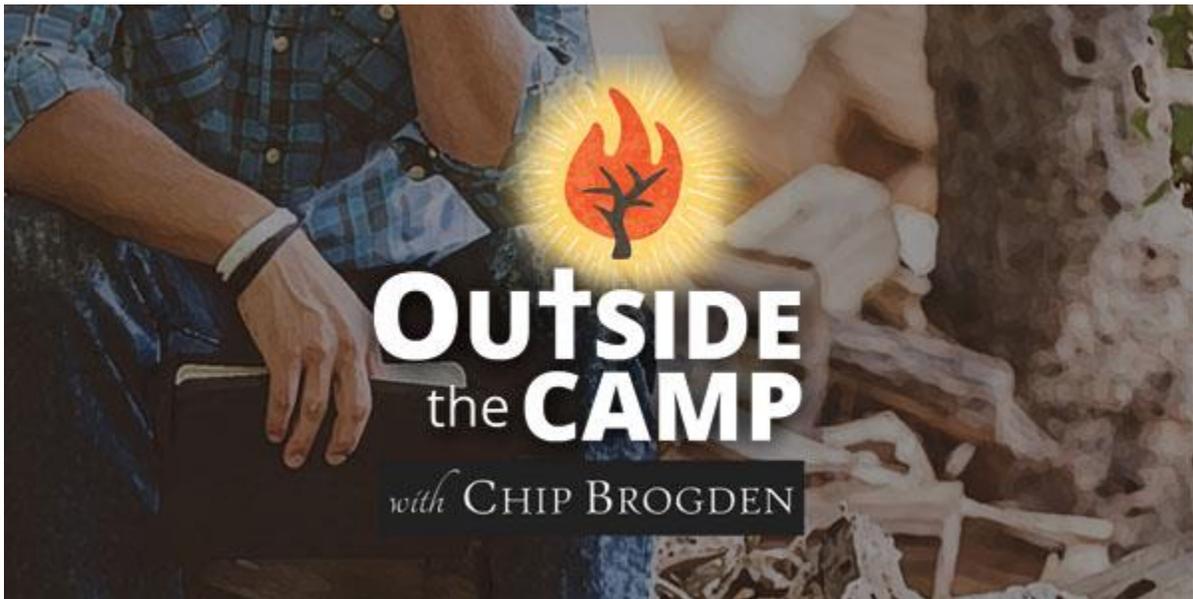


TRANSCRIPT

OUTSIDE THE CAMP WITH CHIP BROGDEN



EPISODE 5: Forsaking the Assembly, Part 1

Audio File Location:

<http://www.chipbrogden.com/otc-05-forsaking-assembly-part-1>

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ANNOUNCER: Welcome to this edition of Outside the Camp with author and teacher Chip Brogden. Helping you discover the freedom and joy of a Christ-centered faith that is based on relationship, not religion. And now, with today's message, here's Chip Brogden.

CHIP: My wife and I have been walking with Jesus outside the camp since 1999, and we could not be more thrilled and excited and joyful since leaving church. Do we miss the people? Yes. Well, some of them, anyway! There are some things we miss. I guess we miss people. But you know what? All those people we miss can come see us whenever

they want. We didn't leave them, they left us. And I know many of you listening to me right now have been through a similar experience.

But I have to tell you – we have gained so much more than we lost. And we lost quite a bit. I lost my ministry position, I lost our home, I lost a paycheck, I lost my job, I lost my credentials, I lost my position, I lost a lot of the friends I thought I had.

And so I perfectly understand what Paul meant when he says he has suffered the loss of all things, yet he counts them as rubbish, compared to the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. What we have gained is so much greater than what we have lost that I don't even think about what we have lost anymore – I'm only thinking about it now as I share my story with you. I don't mourn the old days. I don't dwell on what might have been because where we are now in the Lord is so much better, deeper, higher, than what we knew while we were going to church. And I think many of you can say the same thing, if you're honest, and if you get past the point of thinking about all that you lost. You know, that's a spiritual principle that applies to the Cross. We can look at the cost and say it costs too much, or we can say, you know what? It's worth whatever price we have to pay.

So I'm saying it's worth it. Whatever you have to go through, whatever you have to experience, whatever price you have to pay to know Jesus to a greater depth than what you know Him now, it's worth it. The problem with a lot of people is that just have things too nice and easy. They have never been tested. They have never been pushed beyond their nice, relaxing place of comfort and security. And so they think they are pretty spiritual, they think they have their act together. Then, when a storm comes, when something happens, they fall all to pieces! Their foundation is built on the sinking sand of a church-centered faith, not the solid rock of a Christ-centered faith. They have a religion, not a relationship.

This is why I stress the *relationship*. Your *relationship* with Christ will see you through those storms, those difficulties. Your *relationship* with Christ will be strengthened as you follow Him outside the camp, in the wilderness, when you no longer have all the support systems to keep you propped up. You'll just have to rely on Him. What a great place to be – I call it being *reduced to Christ*. You don't need more; you need less. With more of Him, there is less of everything else. Nothing else really matters. Only ONE THING is needed, and once you discover it, no one and nothing can take that away from you.

Part of the reason for this broadcast is to be a voice of encouragement and support to those of you who are following Jesus outside the camp – you who are escaping from Churchianity and learning how to live a Christ-centered faith. To let you know that you are not alone, and you are not crazy.

The other reason for this broadcast is to spend a little time answering some of the common objections and questions people have as we explore what a Christ-centered faith is all about. It seems that people have more questions about leaving church than they do following Jesus. They are more focused on where they are and where they've been instead of being focused on the exciting and interesting place that God is bringing them towards. And, to be fair, so many folks have been brainwashed by religion, beat up by their pastor, that they aren't even free enough to think about life on the "outside" – they have been institutionalized into a church-centered faith and that's all they know.

So it's natural that as soon as people like me start talking about the possibility of a different kind of faith – one based on Jesus, not based on church – their knee-jerk reaction is to say, "Yeah, but what about...?" They are the "yeah, buts" out in the crowd who can't even process present truth without their "yeah, but" kicking into high gear. As soon as they hear something that doesn't fit into their neat little box they throw up the

“yeah, but” defense. And once they get really good at it, they will quote Scripture to you as though they are sharing something you have never read before.

Hebrews 10:25 is one of those “yeah, but” Bible verses. It says, “Forsaking not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is: but exhorting one another, and so much the more, as you see the day approaching.” So pastors will take this verse out of context and tell people it means you better go to church every time the doors are open, and if you don’t, then you are forsaking the assembling of yourselves together. They do this for three reasons. First, to keep the faithful members faithful. Second, to get the less-faithful members to be more faithful. And third, to scare people who are ready to leave church altogether that the devil is going to get them, or God is going to punish them, if they stop going to church. Never mind that this verse has nothing to do with going to church, since “church” as we know it did not exist at the time this was written.

Now if you’ve heard this once in church then you’ve heard it a thousand times. So I don’t wonder why I get this objection every week, when people hear me talking about God calling people to come out of church. What? How can that be? And they hit the panic button, just like they’ve been programmed, and they’ll write and say, “Yeah, but what about Hebrews 10:25?” And they’ll even quote it for me as if I’ve never even read it before! As if I didn’t even know that was in the Bible, right? As if they expect me to say, “Wow! I never saw that before! Well, that changes everything!” Ha!

The truth is, I know all about Hebrews 10:25, and I’ve taught from that passage many times over the years, from the perspective of the pastor trying to scare his members into coming to church, as well as from the perspective of someone following Jesus outside the camp with no church agenda, a little more wisdom, and a lot more maturity, so I can

rightly divide the Word of God and not let my “yeah, but” get in the way of what the Holy Spirit wants to say.

What *does* Hebrews 10:25 mean, in context? Well, as I say, that question has been asked and answered so many times, so let’s dig into it by listening in on one of those teachings where we get into Scripture and talk about it. Have you forsaken the assembling of yourselves together when you stop going to church? Let’s see what the Word of God has to say.

[Begin Live Excerpt]

Let's go to Hebrews 10:25 and let's read it - and in case you're wondering, I usually read from the New King James Version; but you can follow along in whatever version you have and it will be just fine.

So the verse says, “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some: but exhorting one another, and so much the more, as you see the day approaching.” So this is the Scripture that is probably one of the first Scriptures that you hear when you encounter someone who is attending church (and you're not attending church) and there's that uncomfortable conversation that usually takes place. Especially if it's someone that you used to go to church with, and now you're not going to church anymore, and they don't realize it; and you run into them in the grocery store, or on the sidewalk, or at some event.

And the conversation goes something like, “Hey Bob! Where are you going to church now?” Or something to that effect. Because he knows you're not going to *his* church. And then you mumble and you kind of murmur and you say, “Well I'm not... I'm not really going to church right now.”

And then usually the next step is they want to invite you to go to *their* church. And then you have to explain, “Well, I'm not going to *any* church.”

And so automatically it seems like they've been trained to go to this verse. And they'll quote it and say something to the effect of, “Oh brother, you need to find you a local body of believers and get plugged in. You don't want to be forsaking the assembling of yourselves together!” And so you feel guilty, and it's awkward, and then you part ways.

Another misuse of this verse is the pastor, when he's in the pulpit and he's trying to get people to be more committed, and he's trying to get people who are not coming to church as often as he thinks they should to become more faithful. And so this is a key verse of Scripture that is used: “Don't forsake of the assembling of yourselves together!” And (as I said on the signup page) I used to use this verse all the time, to try and get people to give more, pray more, attend more, be more supportive. Come support the programs, and if you're not there every time the doors are open, then you get the guilt trip: “Bob or Sue or Bill or Mary is forsaking the assembling of themselves together!” Especially if you miss church for more than a couple of Sundays in a row - then everyone gets real somber and serious, and the proof text is Hebrews 10:25.

This is the verse that is brought out to come against everything that God is doing when He is bringing people out of organized religion and into a spiritual house of living stones. He's giving people the revelation of Christ. This is not some private teaching or private revelation; this is a massive move of the Holy Spirit, as the spirit of Jesus tells us, and calls us, to “come out of her.” And many of God's people are responding to that call, but this is the verse that would get pulled out to nullify everything that God is doing in the earth, in the lives of millions of people, by putting them under a spirit of rebellion because they have supposedly “forsaken in the assembling of themselves together.”

And it always tickles me a little bit to hear the accusation, because I suppose the only possibility in their mind of assembling together is: you have to go to church. Like that's the only way you can assemble together, the only way you can gather together with other believers is you must go to church!

So that really brings up the question, and that's the motivation for tonight's message. Because then people will email us or write in to us and they will ask, "Have I really forsaken the assembly? Is this true?"

Well, first I would say, if that is true, and if not attending church means that you have forsaken the assembly of yourselves together, and that's what that verse means, I think you should live by the Word of God. Go back to church - if that's what this verse means. So I am all for going to church if that's what God's Word says to do, if that's what the Word of God actually teaches. Of course the question is: Is that what it actually teaches, or is that just what religion has taught?

Jesus says, "You nullify the Word of God with your traditions," and he called them hypocrites. They're not spiritually mature people, they're hypocrites, when they take the Word of God and they twist it for the sake of their own traditions. He says you draw near to Me with your mouth and you honor Me with your lips - you talk about what God's Word says, talk about what the Bible says, but your hearts are far from Me.

So what does Hebrews 10:25 really mean?

First of all let's talk about the actual verse itself, which we just read. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is: but exhorting one another, and so much more, as you see the day approaching." Now, one principle of Bible interpretation that you should be aware of is that you never take a verse out of context

and just read one verse; but to understand the meaning of the verse you have to read it within the context. Context is very important. For example, if I told you “I am *hungry*, I’m about to *starve*,” that has a different context for me living in the United States than it does for someone that is living in a refugee camp in a third-world country someplace. So you see the words can be the same: “I’m about to starve!” But the context can give a completely different meaning to the words that are used.

So it's not enough just to be able to quote the verse, or just to be able to repeat what the pastor said. You have to be able to rightly divide the Word, which is to take what is being said and consider it in the context in which it is being stated; or in this case, in the context of the letter in which it was written.

So first of all, let's talk about what Hebrews 10:25 does not mean. Whatever it means, it can't mean that you must attend church services! Now, how can I say that Hebrews 10:25 does not mean you must attend church services? Well, because church services did not exist at the time that Hebrews 10:25 was written. The Letter / Book of Hebrews was written prior to 70 A.D. in the very, very infant stage of the church some time before - or the *Ekklesia* I should say - some time before the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70. And the purpose of the letter to the Hebrews was *to encourage those Jewish believers in Jesus not to forsake their new faith in Christ and go back to Judaism*. That was the purpose of the Book of Hebrews. It's to demonstrate that Jesus has given them, given us, given the Jews and given us - given all mankind - *a new and better covenant!* A new and better covenant established upon better promises.

We don't know for sure who the writer of Hebrews is. I think it was Paul. Some scholars would say no, it's not Paul, but somebody else. It's an anonymous letter, so we don't know exactly who wrote the letter. I would venture to say (based on what I know about

the man) that Paul wrote the letter anonymously; and the reason he wrote the letter anonymously is: if he had signed his name to it, the Jews hated him so much they may not have even read the letter. So he did something that I sometimes do - you write things anonymously. You don't put your name on it, and that way people tend to be able to read things with a more open mind.

So regardless, the writer of Hebrews is writing to Jewish believers in Jesus, telling them, “Don't forsake your faith in Christ and go back to Judaism.” And that's the big overall context of this entire letter. So whatever you think Hebrews 10:25 means, it certainly does not mean that you must attend church services.

Secondly, Hebrews 10:25 does not mean you must support church programs. The misuse of this verse has evolved from “you must go to church” to “you must go to church every time the doors are open” to “you must support every church program and function that we have.” And they keep a very busy schedule for you to have something to do all the time.

So Hebrews 10:25 certainly cannot mean that you must attend church services or you must support church programs *because church as we know it today did not exist* - thank God! - in the days of the New Testament. In the time when the New Testament was written there was not a church system. There was no organization. No religion – well, there was no “Christian” religion. What they had was a fellowship of believers who shared their lives with one another. I'm not saying that they didn't gather together, but what I'm saying is, their gathering looked and felt and *was* a completely different experience from the gathering together into church services and church buildings that we know of today.

So whatever you think Hebrews 10:25 means it certainly can't mean that you have to go to church every time the doors are open. It's like the electric light bulb - there was no electric light bulb at the time this was written, and there was no church building at the time this was written. So you can't join them together. Church is an invention; it was invented by man. It's not the same thing as the *Ekklesia*, the spiritual House of Living Stones. Jesus says I will build my *Ekklesia* and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. We're not going to get into the complete teaching tonight on the difference between the *Ekklesia* and the church - I'll just tell you that the *Ekklesia* is a spiritual House of Living Stones that Jesus is building, and church is a counterfeit of that, that has successfully undermined and counterfeited and confused and distorted the true spiritual fellowship of God's people.

So we are in a recovery mode right now. We're trying to restore that and recover that and get people to embrace the *Ekklesia* as a called-out a group of people who share in the same life of Christ, as opposed to a particular denomination, or a building, or a program. So either you get it or you don't; there's plenty of information and teachings available on the website if you'd like to investigate that further.

But Hebrews 10:25 can't mean church services or church programs. It also does not mean that those outside of church are rebellious. Now again those outside of “church” - by “church” here I never use the word “church” to refer to the spiritual house of living stones, the family of God, the Body of Christ; all of this relates to *people*. “Church” relates to an organization. Church relates to a structure. Church relates to a corporation. Church relates to a religious system. And so I never use the word “church” to refer to anything that has to do with the spiritual *Ekklesia*. The *Ekklesia* is the called out assembly of the people whom God has called out of darkness and into his marvelous light. “Church” as an invention of man that is completely outside of, and separate from, the *Ekklesia*.

So if Hebrews 10:25 isn't referring to the local religious system, then those outside of "church" are not rebellious. That's not what Hebrews 10:25 is telling us, that you have forsaken the assembly because you don't go to church. So this verse doesn't mean that those *outside* of church are rebellious. It also doesn't mean that those *inside* of church are truly *gathering for the better!* You see how everything is backwards once the Spirit of Jesus gives you insight and wisdom and revelation? It's completely backwards! Those *inside* of the church think that they are drawing nearer to God by gathering *inside* of their religious organization; and they think those *outside* of that religious organization are either lost, or backslidden, or they have a spirit of rebellion because *they* have "forsaken the assembling of themselves together."

Well, that's quite an assumption - because actually it's possible that those *inside* of the church are not truly gathering for the better. They may not be gathering together in the name of the Lord. They may not be gathering together under the headship and Lordship of Christ. They may not be gathering together in the power, and in the government, of the Holy Spirit. Instead they could just be gathering together because that's what they do. They gather together because that's their tradition. It's the way they were taught. It's the way they grew up. They're going through the motions of *Churchianity* instead of truly gathering for the better.

Now it's even possible for believers like you and me to gather together and do *worse* in our gathering together than if we had just stayed home. There's an example of that in the New Testament. Keep your finger there in Hebrews and turn to First Corinthians, chapter 11. First Corinthians chapter 11. Beginning in verse 17. And Paul is writing to the believers in Corinth. Thankfully, they didn't have a church *system* that they had to worry about, but just because you are out of the church *system* doesn't mean that you are spiritually mature, and you are enlightened, you are superior. So these Corinthians were practicing basic New Testament organic body life. They were gathering together.

But look at what Paul writes to them in First Corinthians 11:17. He says, “Now in giving these instructions I do not praise you, since you come together, not for the *better*, but for the *worse*.” Now we can apply that to a lot of gatherings and meetings and fellowships and things done in the *name* of Jesus, and done *for* Jesus, but they do more harm than good!

[End Live Excerpt]

You’ve been listening to my take on Hebrews 10:25 – it’s actually part of a whole series of teachings from [Free At Last! How to Be a Christian Without Going to Church](#). It’s available on my website, just go to [ChipBrogden.com](#) and click on the “Listen” link at the top of see how you can get a copy of the teaching series.

Well, that gives us plenty to think about for now, I believe. And we’ll pick up where we left off on the next episode of *Outside the Camp*. Until, this is Chip Brogden, reminding you that THIS is the day that the Lord has made, so make it a GOOD day; and remember that GREATER is He that is in you, than he that is in the world!

ANNOUNCER: You’ve been listening to Outside the Camp with author and teacher Chip Brogden. We hope you enjoyed today’s broadcast and found it helpful and encouraging. If you’d like to get additional teachings, audio recordings, books and other Christ-centered resources to help you grow spiritually, visit us online at [ChipBrogden.com](#). Outside the Camp is made possible by the prayers and financial support of listeners like you. Until next time, on behalf of Chip Brogden, I’m Kathy Smith, reminding you that you can do all things through Christ Who strengthens you!