

Timeless Truths

Introduction 4C's

We are looking at the book of Colossians. One of the 21 Letters in the NT.

I chose to study a Letter because I believe the letters contain some of the greatest doctrinal truths that build the foundation of solid Christ followers and solid Christian communities. But they also contain passages that have been twisted to form cults, false religions, and misguided churches. Failure to understand how to interpret the letters is one of the most common reasons those looking in on Christianity struggle.

They see us following some of the Scriptures yet not others because they don't understand the nuances related to letters. And that drives them to see Christians and the faith as hypocritical.

There is tension in the letters of the New Testament aren't there? We all feel it but we don't often talk about it.

The Gospels make sense to us. Stories of Jesus. They challenging but usually not confusing The Historical Narratives of the Old Testament are usually clear, but when it comes to the Letters of the New Testament....things get complicated

We read this book looking for answers, but truthfully it seems to just raise more questions Often we have a hard time understanding the answers we do find....So there is tension If we were totally honest...this book is not always what we hoped it would be

We want it to be concise, clear and consistent. We want it to be wrinkle free...To clearly state God's desires and plans...Yet when we read it....there is a lot of tension and dare I say it confusion

Those who study the Bible learn to accept that this book has tension and mystery. Some things are just not explained and really not well understood. We become comfortable with not being totally comfortable in our understanding. Because we know and trust the God who wrote it.

There is a good deal of faith involved in reading the letters of the New Testament. It is kind of odd really. You read so much of the Bible that makes total sense...you may not like it...but it is clear what happened, what God was doing and what God is doing.

But when you read the letters...it is not that clear. Is the writer talking to everyone for all times? Is the writer talking only to a first century Jewish Audience? Is the writer setting a biblical standard or expousing an opinion?

Is this passage or instruction to remain in the first century because it doesn't carry forward? Is this passage a truth for all times?

Interestingly, you almost have to have read the other parts of the Bible to get comfortable reading the letters of the New Testament.

I often tell people to study the Gospels, Acts, and the Old Testament before diving into the New Testament letters.

You almost need to experience the perfection, the themes, the truth in the other parts of the Bible so that you can have the faith to manage the issues raised in the letters.

When you read the letters of the New Testament, you need to have the mindset that there will be things that you don't understand.

There will be questions, very serious questions, that are not clearly answered. You will find sometimes heated disagreement among believers and true biblical scholars about what is being taught.

Like I said, you have to get comfortable being uncomfortable. The biblical truths are, always have been and always will be true.

But it is in the letters of the New Testament that you really have to trust and know God. Because honestly some of it none of us truly understand.

But, because we know all the rest of the Bible, we know and are taught by the author...God Himself...the Holy Spirit....we understand that the problem in our understanding is not the text....it is our understanding.

In other words,

Our problem with understanding the Bible is our problem with understanding. It is not because of errors or mistakes within the text.

In my opinion, no where is this more evident than in Paul's Letters Even Peter said Paul's Letters were hard to understand

2 Peter 3:15–16 (ESV) 15 And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, 16 as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.

This is why I love Peter. He is so direct. Yes Paul's letters in particular are hard to understand. But that doesn't make them wrong...just deep. If you pan for gold and work at it, God reveals the truth to you. If you skim the surface, Peter says...the ignorant will twist these words to their own destruction...and then I love this last zinger....just as they do all the Scriptures.

Thank you Peter...Peter walked with Jesus and on water and has a hard time understanding some of what Paul teaches. But note the warning. Just because they are hard to understand does not mean we can twist them or any other Scriptures

Some of the understand must come with time. For example, when a first century audience read John's description of what would happen to the Two Witnesses in Revelation 11....that the Antichrist would kill them...

Revelation 11:9–10 (NIV) 9 For three and a half days some from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial. 10 The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth.

A first century audience likely would have said...How could people from every tribe, language and nation gaze on their bodies? How is that even possible?

But today we don't even blink. Of course the whole world can see events as they unfold. Sometimes things written in the Bible will not be understood until the generations that come bring further understanding.

Bible study is not easy. Some things are hard to understand. Some things, even after exhaustive study, we still don't understand. This book has some tension in it and at times a mystery to it...Students of the Bible wrestle with that and then learn to live within it.

Major Point #1 Today:

All of God's Word is True

There are Doctrinal Truths that we base our faith on. Timeless truths if you will...as true today as it was in the 1st century and as it will be forever. But then there are truths that were true only in the context of the First Century...They don't really travel forward to our circumstances....Some truth doesn't travel across time....Other truths don't travel across culture....They are true but their application stays in the 1st century....We struggle trying to learn how to tell the difference.

For instance....we know that Paul really wanted to go to Rome and he was in Ephesus. They would likely have told him a truth as they knew it...."It is impossible to get to Rome in less than 2 weeks." And their statement in the 1st century is absolutely undisputably true.

Yet today, you can make that trip in 2 hours and 9 min by airline. If I had a fighter jet I could do it in just over one hour. That is true.

Now what if God told us that one day in the future it would be done in 7 minutes? Is God wrong?

Each time is true...in the context of the current reader. 2 Weeks, 2 hours, or 7 minutes. All true in the context in which they are written.

Second Point: Not every truth travels across centuries

New Testament Letters are Rich in Theology

Explanation of and use of the Spiritual Gifts- like tongues, prophecy, healing, and others....The Role of Women in the Church Qualification of Elders and the Structure of the Church The role of husbands and wives and submission and service How to handle conflict and factions within the church The Sins of Immorality The bodily resurrection of believers

False teachers Idolatry, Horoscopes, and fortune telling How women should wear their hair The Length of Men's Hair Greetings one another with a Holy Kiss Women covering their heads The role of women speaking or teaching in the church Church discipline, Divorce, Lawsuits, Settling Disputes

Some we tend to skip over Baptism for the dead The role of angels And how it relates to women covering their heads Food sacrificed to idols Imprisoned Spirits

We read things in the NT Letters Some that we seem to follow....Others that we don't seem too concerned about....Yet they are all Scripture It would seem that we should follow all of them Then why don't we? How can we follow some...but not others? Let me show you two passages.

Galatians 5:19–21 (ESV) 19 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, 21 envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

1 Corinthians 11:6–7 (ESV) 6 For if a wife will not cover her head, then she should cut her hair short. But since it is disgraceful for a wife to cut off her hair or shave her head, let her cover her head. 7 For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man.

1 Corinthians 14:33–35 (ESV) 33 For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints, 34 the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. 35 If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.

1 Corinthians 15:29 (ESV) 29 Otherwise, what do people mean by being baptized on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf?

If we don't follow all of them...how do we decide? It looks like we can pick and choose. They are all Scripture. How can we ignore some and not others? Who decides? How do they decide? We don't baptize on behalf of the dead. Clearly we allow women in our church to serve on our leadership team, teach, speak and do all that while not wearing hats. Why? Those scriptures seem clear enough. How can you not follow them and yet demand that others are followed?

How can we have confidence that we have interpreted correctly? Those who do such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God...That is a pretty strong warning. We better get this right...Can you feel the tension?

The answer lies in understanding the genres of the Bible.

There are several different types of writing in the Bible: Poetry, Narratives, Parables, Letters, Gospels, and others. Each type of writing has a different set of rules on how to interpret it. We don't read a letter like we read the phone book. We don't approach poetry like we would a rental lease. Each Genre of the Bible must be read with the correct rules.

It is like there are several games in the Bible and each game has its own rules. If you apply football rules to a basketball game you will foul out quickly.

Letters are unique. If you approach Colossians with the same rules that you apply to Old Testament Poetry, you will foul out theologically. We are looking at a letter so we must understand how to approach a letter. Letters have limitations that other genres do not.

There is one thing that all NT Letters have in common. This is the crucial thing to know when reading and interpreting them. They were all written regarding specific circumstances in the First Century and they were all from the First Century.

Although inspired by the Holy Spirit and belonging to all time...they were originally written out of the context of the 1st Century. Author and written to the context of the original recipients.

They were brought about by some special circumstances. Either from the readers' side or the Authors' side. They usually addressed one of three issues: 1) A behavior that needed to be corrected, 2) A doctrinal error that needed to be corrected, 3) A misunderstanding that needed further light.

This leads to our third key point today....

They were written to them before they were written to us.

But therein lies a challenge.

We have the written response to the question but not the question. In some ways it is like having the back of your math book...You have the answers...But you have to try to figure out what the problem was. It is like reading your sent emails without any of the original ones that you are responding to.

Thus Letters in particular are a challenge. You see how that can cause problems? It is like listening to one side of a telephone conversation. We listen but we don't have all the context. There is something going on between these two groups. There is a problem or concern that they understand but we only get a glimpse of. Some things they didn't have to say because they both knew it. But we don't know what was understood so we are left trying to understand the unspoken.

Because we have a limited perspective.. We have to be very careful not to conclude then too much from only one letter. We need to look at other areas of Scripture to try to see the overall picture

Which leads to this fourth point The Letters cannot mean what they never meant

What I mean by that is that these letters were written first and foremost to a first century audience. The letters were first written for them....addressing their problems....It was written for them before it was written to us. All of the letters are from the First Century and in the context of the First Century

The Letters are not going to reveal a new truth to us that was not first true for them NT letters are not always what we want them to be ...We want them to tell us everything about a topic ...They were never meant to be exhaustive dictionaries of Christian doctrine

They are letters addressing part of a topic And the intent of the author of the letters was not To fully explain a topic But rather to zero in on a limited problem or concern When theology is addressed it is being addressed To a specific audience For a specific purpose

This is so important to understand We have to realize that when we come to the letters for answers to our questions The answers that we are reading are answers to THEIR questions AND we don't know what their questions were

When we go to NT letters looking for an answer to Infant baptism Divorce and Elder Qualification Remarriage after Divorce The role of women in the church We must understand The answers that we are seeing Are probably not to the questions we are asking

So when it comes to the letters we have to be very careful to make sure that we are not basing our theology on one verse meant for one context. That is how cults and false religions are started That is how new churches founded on making you rich or comfortable are started

For example. The Church in Corinth was the church gone wild. Prostitutes from the local pagan temples had infiltrated the church. They wore head dresses....they spoke loudly...they interrupted the services. They had money for pearls which designated them as temple priestesses. Obviously, Paul had been asked a question from this congregation and was responding to it.

The question could have been anything....How do we deal with our congregation that is being totally disrupted by these prostitutes? Or maybe they asked....How do we reach the prostitutes for Christ when they are constantly drawing attention to themselves and interrupting with their speaking? Or maybe they asked...

What should the role of women be in all churches and for all time?

So when we are reading the letters and we see things..What do we do?

1 Timothy 2:8–15 (ESV) 8 I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; 9 likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, 10 but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works. 11 Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. 12 I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. 13 For Adam was formed first, then Eve; 14 and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. 15 Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.

Are we to always pray with our hands lifted? Is it only men who are not to quarrel and have anger? What about women? No braided hair? No gold? No Sunday best dresses? Pearls forbidden in church? Paul starts off saying...I Desire...so is this a directive from God or a preference issue of Paul...a man who was not ever married? Are childless women not saved?

What do we do with this?

We Pray We Trust the Holy Spirit to teach us We trust God's Word speak for God's Word

We first look for Scripture to Interpret Scripture The Things God wanted to make sure we knew are repeated throughout Scripture So when it comes to the Letters, we can't take one verse out of context We have to look for it or an overarching theme in other letters and Scripture.

We look for the Biblical and Compatible If we don't find it there Baptizing for the Dead Women never being allowed to speak in church Men disgraced for having long hair Then we can attribute that to a cultural context and not camp out on it.

There is plenty in the Bible that is crystal clear and repeated

1 Timothy 2:8–15 (ESV) 8 I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; 9 likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, 10 but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works.

Are we to always pray with our hands lifted? Do we see that in other Scriptures? Not always This must then represent an attitude Not a physical demand of prayer

What about women? No braided hair? No gold or pearls? No designer labels? Do we see that in other Scriptures? No but We do see repetitively in other Scriptures that women should dress modestly, profess godliness, and self control. The truth in this Scripture is that women should honor God by covering their bodies.

The Braided Hair, gold, pearls, and fancy clothes Were specific to women in that church Dressing like the local prostitutes and coming to church Today He might have said miniskirts, tank tops and heels

So lets not get lost and forget what we are looking for...We are looking for God's Gold...God's truths that are true for all time. Truths that are Eternal and Cross Cultural.

God's Truths are true for all times But it is true and will be true in the past, today and forever. It will be true in all cultures and for all time. Those are the truths that we base our Theology on. Camp out on the truths that are consistently taught in all of Scripture.

There are hundreds of truths stated clearly throughout Scripture We are to be sexually pure and Fornication and Homosexuality are sinful Sexual relations outside the covenant of marriage are sinful These are truths that are crystal clear throughout Scripture

We are to love others and Selfishness, Greed, Anger, Jealousy, Pride, are all sinful Crystal Clear in all of Scripture

We are to have Self control and Orgies, drunkenness, are all sinful Again crystal clear

We are to Worship only God and Idols are sinful and detest God Like worshipping money, ourselves, other religions all sinful Again very clear

We are to believe and know Jesus is God and Came to earth to die for our sins Paid the price Was our substitute We accept Him in faith..we don't earn it The only one worthy of our worship Again crystal clear throughout all of Scripture

Camp out on what is Central not on that which is peripheral, cultural or situational

So the Christian Doctrine expressed in letters. Most often is clearly supported in other letters and other Scriptures When we see confirmation in the word, we can with confidence, interpret them And apply them

Be careful if you can't find support for a truth outside of the letter. It may still be able to stand alone, but just be very careful before you make it the essence or foundation of your faith

Let me give you a recent example of how this plays out in everyday decision making. As you know every church had to make a decision about whether or not to keep meeting during the Covid pandemic. The government made it clear that they did not want large gatherings and for good reasons- people could die. This request seems to align with Scripture

Romans 12:10 (ESV) 10 Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.

Romans 13:1–2 (ESV) 1 Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.

1 Peter 2:13–17 (ESV) 13 Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, 14 or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. 15 For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. 16 Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. 17 Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

Romans 16:16 (ESV) 16 Greet one another with a holy kiss.

Ok let's practice that....everyone turn to the person on your left and pucker up....just kidding. Is that what we are going to do?

Ok...love one another with brotherly affection- that's cool. Submit to Authority...challenging...Greet each other with a Holy Kiss.....I don't know.....I have a hard enough time hugging people. Unless you want to go around Kissing Everyone you need to understand how to interpret letters. To know which truths are central to the entire message of the Bible And which truths were central to the audience and their context at that time.

All of Scripture tells us that we are to love one another with brotherly love We see that timeless truth in multiple passages The same truth spoken in many ways

Now when we look at Greeting with A Holy Kiss that is not reflected in other parts of Scripture...Not a consistent theme in other letters and thus not a timeless truth for all time

It represented their cultural experience of greeting one another with a kiss Perhaps today "High 5 Everybody for me" Or friend me on Facebook But it is not a command to our church today. We can all relax and get back to hugging

Both honoring others and obeying authority are timeless truths of Scripture. There is no debate there. Those were not just for the first century...they were for us today as well.

When it comes to submitting to Authorities We see the timeless truth throughout Scripture that God has placed every authority in place That He can remove anyone in authority That as Christ followers we are to submit to that authority Unless we are being commanded to personally sin At that point we have to make a decision to place God's commands above those in authority With the exception of those rare circumstances we are to submit to the authority God places above us.

And it doesn't matter what we think about it. By resisting authority placed by God Paul tells us that we are resisting God's Authority And we will be judged

So pretty simple decision right? God says to obey the authorities...the authorities tell the people to stop meeting in large numbers and some even tried to legislate the closing of churches..seems like a no brainer. Obey the authorities unless they are directly commanding that you sin.

Doctors knew Covid was coming before most people. We were getting CDC updates. Before the first US case was announced, I had been praying for several weeks and searching the Scriptures for answers on what we were to do if this became a pandemic.

I wanted to go remote. It would have been so much easier. Home on Friday Nights, Saturday Nights and Sundays....for weeks. It would have been so easy....honestly it would have been nice. But again, what I want or think doesn't matter. The question we must ask is what is God commanding us to do? I must admit I had doubts. What are the chances that God would speak directly to us....about Covid 19....about whether or not we should keep meeting? I was expecting to go to God and confirm that it was ok to stop meeting during this pandemic.

So, I prayed....and told God we would do whatever He directed us to do. That I would obey no matter what. The key lesson here is that you don't go to Scripture to find a Scripture to validate what you want to do. You seriously ask God to show you what He wants to do and you agree to do it before you start.

So I began looking at Scriptures and prayerfully considering what God instructed regarding meeting together...particularly when the government was against it. Not hard to find....Paul didn't stop....Jesus didn't stop..Peter didn't stop...

Acts 5:27–29 (ESV) 27 And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, 28 saying, "We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us." 29 But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men."

Daniel 3:16–18 (ESV) 16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. 17 If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. 18 But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

Daniel 6:10 (ESV) 10 When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously.

Ok God...but those were clear sins they were trying to get those men to do...to worship idols...to not pray to you....those are clear...those are easy. This is just about meeting together and whether you are ok with our church meeting online. Where in the word do you direct us on what to do in these circumstances?

In each of these Biblical Moments, God's people knew what the leaders demanded and refused to do it because they believed it was a sin. The leaders were demanding that they disobey a clear truth in God's word. So as I kept praying and searching...I asked God...but what about right now....what if we get everyone infected and someone dies? I am a Doctor...how will that look God?

Seriously, Covid 19 spreads by close contact. Deadly for the elderly and some others. Clearly seems like a good thing to avoid close contact. Church can be done online...right? The Government authorities were strongly encouraging churches to not hold services. It never really became a law of the entire land because almost all the churches immediately closed. It was incredible. We never would have predicted just two weeks prior that God's people would stop coming to church. It seemed to be the noble...honorable...legal...humane...sensible...and yes patriotic thing to do.

But deciding to close the worship of God, the teaching of the Word, the fellowship of believers, and the place of refuge for people during a time of crisis is not a decision to be made lightly. Deciding not to meet together is never a decision to be made lightly. Forget whether or not the Government has the legal authority to actually mandate the closing of churches....The only thing that matters is what does God want? What is He mandating?

So I prayed. Jesus this is your church. You are the only One who can tell us to stop meeting together. Please God show us what you want us to do. Your command iswell....your command and we will obey it.

That is when God took me to Hebrews 10.

Hebrews 10:23–25 (ESV) 23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

I remember being blown away by this verse for several reasons. First, the context of this verse is to not shrink in fear when times become uncertain.

Second, God is directing that we not stop meeting together....that it could become a habit..and that we needed to keep meeting because people were going to need to encourage one another. God says many will neglect to meet...that means to choose not to...to act as though being together is unimportant. And worse...God says it will become the habit of some. But believers are to stir one another up to love people and do good works. People were going to need our help during this pandemic.

Third we are to hold fast to Jesus without wavering because He is faithful.

And finally, this is a very unique verse because it applies more today than the day it was written. We don't have to ask if this truth travels forward to us....God tells us that this one is written to us. All the more as you see the Day drawing near....We are closer to the Day of Christ's return than any human who has ever lived. This passage is a message to us. This is not a passage that must be brought forward....it is a passage that is already forward.

I felt God showing me that I needed to trust Him. Trust Him with our church...with our homeless ministry...and with our lives.

Several came to me and told me if we didn't stop meeting they would never come back. There was a great deal of pressure to just go online.

So some in our church are not coming back. They did not agree with us staying open. Most of them quoted to me the passage from Romans about submitting to authority.

They said that meeting online was meeting together. That I was being arrogant and leading people to sin. So people who love Jesus can disagree.....and they often do.

So I asked God to reveal to me the gold that is in this verse....

Hebrews 10:24–25 (ESV) 24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

God, is meeting online is the same as meeting together in person? Is a worship service something that we watch or something that we do? Can we keep our hearts engaged if we don't gather together? Throughout Scripture, it is rarely good for God's people to be isolated. Isolation opens one up for spiritual attack. Satan loves what isolation does to people of faith...what it does to a sheep....

So the truth of this passage, the gold, depends upon us understanding the Greek Word for meeting together...When God says don't stop meeting together is He talking in general or specifically in person together?

Do you know that the Greek Word used here is only used one other place in the Bible? That makes this a bit easy....If the other place this word is used is a casual or distance kind of gathering...or not very important...then Facebook, Online Church and emails may suffice for the right reasons.

But it turns out that word is used in this verse.

ἐπισυναγωγή occurs twice in the NT. In both instances the context confirms the eschatological orientation. Eschatology is a part of theology concerned with the final events of history, or the ultimate destiny of humanity. This concept is commonly referred to as the "end of the world" or "end times".

When Jesus said...when two or more are gathered in my name....He used a completely different word. The word for church gatherings used throughout the Bible is a different word.

This word is used here...we are commanded to gather together...and it is used in only one other place in the Bible.

1 Thessalonians 4:16–18 (ESV) 16 For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore encourage one another with these words.

So this unique word that means gathering together in the end times...occurs in Hebrews 10 and 1 Thessalonians. God equates us meeting together in the same manner that we will meet together in the clouds.

So how important is it that we are together physically in these times? The same as when we will be together physically at the Rapture. While meeting online seems to be good enough....God disagrees.

We have lost a good number of people because of the decision to remain open. We have been called unpatriotic, uncaring, and reckless, arrogant, and unkind. We no longer have a Friday night young adults group. Many whom we love have moved to other churches.

Yet, God has spoken clearly....no need to debate it....we are just to obey it. Not reckless, not uncaring, not arrogant, not unkind....just God's truth...and our obedience. Knowing how to interpret Scripture is critical for our walk with Christ. If we are not going to obey God's truth, we may as well close the churches. Keeping Remnant open was a huge faith step for me and many others.

God has protected many from Covid...but He may choose not to... Notice how God ends the discussion in Hebrews 10. He speaks of us not shrinking back in fear....but rather going forward in confidence and faith. Yes we must endure but the Day is near.

At the beginning of this passage, I told you that the context of this verse was to avoid shrinking in fear. Let me read to you the whole passage

Hebrews 10:19–25 (ESV) 19 Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, 20 by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Because of the blood of Jesus...because of the fact that Jesus is the Priest....note this over the House of God....over Remnant...let us draw near...let us hold fast to our faith.let us stir one another up for love and good works...and Let us not stop meeting together.

Then as if to drive the point home again....

Hebrews 10:34–39 (ESV) 35 Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. 36 For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. 37 For, "Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; 38 but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him." 39 But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.

You and I have been given confidence through our faith in the blood of Jesus. It is a great reward....it is GOD's Gold. God says don't throw it away and don't shrink back in your faith....particularly as the Day draws near.

But let me close with this final warning

The Letters are full of Christian Doctrine and critical to our understanding and walk as Christ Followers Failure to follow the timeless truths in these letters carries significant eternal consequences We cannot as students of the Bible approach these truths in a superficial manner We must pan for Gold You cannot pick and choose what you want to follow....We allow the Holy Spirit and God's Word to choose for us...Then we align our lives and our church to follow Him

We allow women to speak, teach, serve and lead in our church because they do so throughout NT Scripture and did so in Jesus' ministry. Jesus highly valued women in his ministry as did Paul and other apostles

Many of the comments in the letters related to women were targeting specific women in a specific culture with a specific problem. So when we are puzzled by Scripture...we must turn to other Scriptures for understanding

You must allow the Holy Spirit to help you interpret Doctrinal truths With the help of the Holy Spirit...Scripture interprets Scripture

You will begin to understand that which is an eternal truth of the Word of God And that which was true in but needs to stay in the First Century

That which is not clear in the letters, we accept and note. But we don't camp out on it. We don't create our own truth. We don't use an isolated verse as our life verse...or the basis of our new cult... or the foundation of our new church

The overwhelming majority of God's Word is crystal clear. Representing timeless truths with no cultural boundaries or limits So yes, there is tension and mystery in this book But we can release that tension a bit by understanding Even though the letters may have limitations God has given us the entire Bible to use God gave us the Holy Spirit to teach us all things The things God wanted to make clear He made very clear If something is not clear we can be ok with that

One final thought God chose to make this book a bit of a challenge to understand That use to really frustrate me

But during my seminary training I began to understand God has always just wanted to commune with us He is all about the relationship His word that is challenging accomplishes that goal It separates those with demands of God from those who really want to know and submit to His truth He identifies those who are really panning for God....and panning for God's truth.

Because this book has tension and mystery...we have to slow down. The Challenges and Tension in this book force those who are serious to spend time with God His book is not clear and concise because He wants you to spend time with Him...so He can explain it to you.

We have to depend on the Holy Spirit We have to read the rest of Scripture And as we open this book and explore the truth we begin to feel the tension. It is when we feel the tension that we get excited....because we know the Holy Spirit is about to teach us. We experience and begin to understand the Author....It is all about the relationship. And that relationship changes everything. Let' pray.