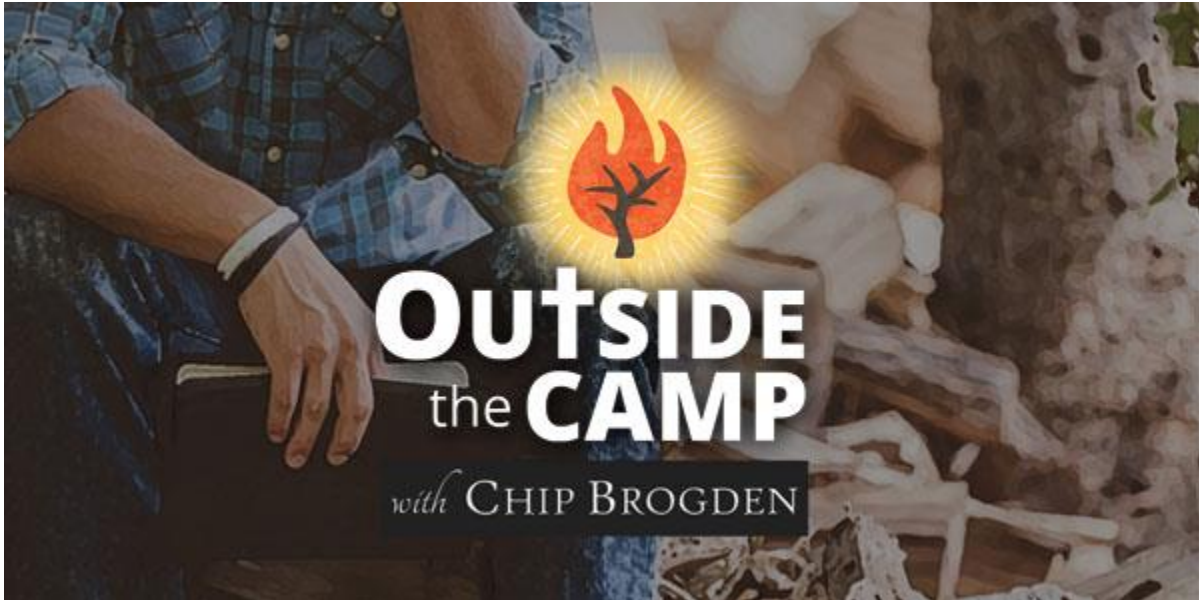


# TRANSCRIPT

## OUTSIDE THE CAMP WITH CHIP BROGDEN



### EPISODE 6: Forsaking the Assembly, Part 2

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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: We've been discussing the thing that is most likely to come up in a discussion between two people who both say they love the Lord, but one goes to church, and the other does not. And for a lot of people that is an awkward situation, because they are made to feel as if something is *wrong* with them for not going to church. The one I hear the most is, "Oh, you're just hurt." In other words, your feelings are hurt, but you'll get

over it. Or, your feelings are hurt, and something is *wrong* with you. Maybe you are too sensitive or whatever. But they say this as if you something is *wrong* with you for being hurt. Kind of like blaming the victim of domestic violence by saying, “Well, she had it coming!” We don’t justify any kind of physical, emotional or sexual abuse along those lines, and we don’t minimize victims of physical, emotional or sexual abuse with a wave of the hand and a flippant statement like, “Oh, you’re just hurt. You’ll get over it.”

And yet, when it comes to spiritual abuse, church abuse, religious abuse, it seems it’s always the fault of the person who is “just hurt.” It’s not the fault of the pastor or the church or the religious leader or religious organization – it’s your fault that you are “just hurt!”

Well, I think being hurt is a normal part of life. I also think it makes sense that painful things are supposed to hurt, and if you are being abused, it doesn’t feel good. So I’m not sure what people mean when they say, “Oh, you’re just hurt by church” as if it is just an imaginary thing, blown out of proportion. It is very real and very damaging, in many ways more damaging than any other kind of hurt, because you are effecting not just the physical and emotional part of a person, but you are interfering with their spiritual walk, you are creating a stumbling block in that person’s life that could cause them to fall away, not just from church, but to be upset and hurt to the point that their relationship with God suffers. So we should not just take it lightly when someone has been hurt by church. Those who do dismiss this as no big deal are usually hard-core, religious, church-going Christians who have been indoctrinated and brainwashed into a church-centered faith. If they were to miss a Sunday of church their faith would be shattered.

And yet, these are the very ones who will quote a Bible verse they learned by heart. The first one you learn is John 3:16 – you learn that in Sunday School. I think the second one you learn is Hebrews 10:25: “Don’t forsake the assembling of yourselves together.”

This is the proof-text for church attendance. This is what they beat you over the head with, especially if attendance begins to dwindle.

But as I say, it creates an awkward situation. Because you've been taught all your life that it's dangerous to be out there in the world, by yourself – supposedly, assembling together inside the safety and security of the four walls of the institutional church creates a sort of spiritual bubble that keeps you from becoming infected by the world. Well, we know how ridiculous that is, because church can be just as dangerous as the world, if not more so. The spirit of religion, in my view, is more subtle and harmful than the spirit of the world. Because you know what the world is, but the spirit of religion looks, sounds, and feels like something godly and spiritual. Yet – and I stand by this statement that I have been saying now for more than two decades – organized religion is the single greatest distraction from the simplicity of Christ that I know of. It just is. The temptation for most Christians is not out there in the world, to get caught up in some sinful, demonic thing; the temptation is to get caught up in some religious thing, some prophetic thing, some church movement thing, some ministry thing – all of these “things” that seem really good and spiritual but they lead you away from the simplicity of Christ. They rob you of the freedom and joy you could be having with a Christ-centered faith, and they bring you into bondage to a church-centered or self-centered faith. It's very subtle.

So naturally, if some religious fanatic begins quoting Hebrews 10:25 to us, in a way that is designed to bring us into bondage to fear, or in bondage to man, or in bondage to religion, I think it we should look into the Word of God and find out what it really says so we can give an appropriate response. I realize that in most cases the best response is to say nothing at all, but some people just won't shut up until you shut them up with what the Word of God actually says. That's why we're looking more closely at Hebrews

10:25, to answer the question: If you stop going to church, have you really forsaken the assembling of yourselves together?

Well, we began to answer that last week, and when we left off, we had turned from Hebrews 10:25 and gone over to I Corinthians 11:17, where it says, “Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that you come together not for the *better*, but for the *worse*.” And I think the describes most of the meetings and services and gatherings taking place today – they come together not for the better, but for the worse. Perhaps because they have already lost the simplicity of Christ, and they have turned the Christian life into a series of religious meetings and services – and I don’t just mean Organized Religion, I mean house churches and home groups as well, because they can be just as religious and dead as the denominational systems they claim to have come out of.

But what made their gathering together so much for the worse that Paul said I can’t even praise you for gathering together? What were they doing wrong? Let’s go back to that live teaching and see what Paul meant, and dig into this question a little bit more.

[Begin Live Excerpt]

[In First Corinthians 11: 17] Paul says, “I do not praise you, because when you come together, it is not for the better, it is for the worse.” How many gatherings and fellowships and churches and home meetings have we been to where we would have been better off to stay home - because we're gathering not for the better, but for the worse. But what makes it so bad?

Well verse 18, he says, “First of all...” - You know there's lots of issues here, that he starts out with “first of all” – “...when you come together as an *Ekklesia*, I hear that there are

divisions among you, and in part, I believe it.” So in the first place he says when you come together, the way you're behaving now, it's not a testament to your faith. It's not a testament to your great spirituality that you're gathering together, that you're having a meeting, that you're having fellowship - because when you come together, it is not for the better, it is for the worse. He says you come together and there are divisions among you.

So listen folks: Just because you can get people together doesn't mean that they are all in unity; it doesn't mean that we are all like-minded, just because we are all gathered together. Oh, you can get people together in a room, tell them what they want to hear and feed them lemonade and cookies and they'll gather together, but that's not a testimony to the fellowship of the saints. Paul says, “When you come together as the *Ekklesia*, I hear that there are divisions among you.” I wonder what he would think if he were to see our gatherings today and all the divisions and however many thousands of denominations. “Divisions among you.”

So much so, that as you continue to read on, you see that they could not even partake of the Lord's Supper without one going hungry and the other becoming drunk. In fact he says it would be better for you (I'm moving ahead mentally in the chapter) it would be better for you to *stay home*. Stay home, than to come together and eat and drink yourselves into condemnation. Why? Because you're not rightly discerning the Body of Christ - not just the elements of the Lord's Supper, you're not properly understanding what it means to gather together as a fellowship, as one Body in Christ. You're supposed to be a family gathering together, encouraging, edifying, uplifting one another. Instead, he says, you come together and you eat and drink and your very *eating* and *drinking* together shows your division. He says if you're that hungry, if you're that self-centered, stay home. Because when you come together you're causing more harm than good.

Oh, it's right there in the Scriptures folks, but we don't read the Scriptures. We just think, let's just all get together – that's what it's all about! I'm telling you there's a higher place of fellowship than just getting people together. I can get people together! That's not a problem. But what is a problem is: Can we come together, and can we truly serve one another, and edify one another, and lift each other up, and not come together for the worse but come together for the better when we go? When we come together and leave, are we better for having been together? And in that respect friends, we're not much better (those of us outside of the institutional church) than those who are still inside the institutional church. I mean that's just the truth. So we still have a ways to go here.

But the point of bringing that up in the context of Hebrews 10:25 is this: those inside of the church building are not necessarily gathering for the better. Now, we're not judging their heart, but we look at the fruit. I don't have to see the heart. I can look at the fruit, and I can discern by the Spirit of God - and I've also got common sense, listening to the testimonies of people who are still in the institutional church, outside of the institutional church, and my goodness - I spent sixteen years in the institutional church myself, not just as a someone who was sitting in the congregation but someone who was a pastor and worship leader. So I understand that system inside and out.

So that's what Hebrew 10:25 does *not* mean. Now let's look at what it *does* mean and what it means is this - really two very simple ideas. Number one: *it means that Jews should not go back to the synagogue*. And you're thinking, “Oh, brother Chip, how in the world do you get that?” It's all a question of context. And we'll talk about that context, I will explain it and you'll get it. But what does it mean to me and you? Well, what Hebrews 10:25 means to me and you is that *we should make the most of any opportunity we have to encourage one another* because that's what the purpose of gathering together is. In the King James Version, *edified* means to build up, to strengthen, to encourage. When you edify a fortress, for example, you're making it

stronger. You're building it up so that it can resist attack. It's more defensible. So when you edify one another - Paul says when you pray in an unknown tongue you edify *yourself* but when you come together the purpose is not to edify yourself it's to edify your brother.

And that is consistent with what we find in Hebrews 10:25. We can turn back there if you haven't already done so. Back to Hebrews 10:25, where he says, “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some; but exhorting one another...” That just means encouraging. Building up. Strengthening one another. You know it's really easy to tear people down. Our job is to build people up - but not build them up on a false hope, not build them up in a self-centered way, but to build them up in a Christ-centered way. There's plenty of slick preachers on television that will build you up in a self-centered way. That's nothing. That's not edifying. Boosting your self-esteem is not edification. It's actually weakening you because it's leaving you unprepared for spiritual war; and so you're not built up spiritually, you're built up in the flesh. You're built up in your own self-esteem instead of being built up in Chris-esteem.

So to build up an encourage and edify one another *in Christ* - it means, among other things, speak the truth in love. Speak the *truth* in love - not what you *want* to hear but what you *need* to hear, and a lot of times folks, we come together in the name of fellowship and we don't speak the truth to one another. We don't speak the truth. There's sin that needs to be confronted or confessed or forsaken. Or at least exposed. But in the name of “fellowship” how many times have we gotten together and just put our arm around each other and said, “I just love you, brother! I love you, sister! Hallelujah! Keep on! Everything will be alright!” - and there's no true edification, no true encouragement. We don't come together to say, “Here's what I'm struggling with. Here's what I need help with. I need deliverance!” God's people need deliverance from things! So there's so much more to edification than just telling you what you want to



hear. That's not edification. You may think it is, but it's kind of like bubble gum - you can chew it and chew it and it tastes sweet, but it provides nothing of any nutritional value to you. It's not going to help you grow. You can chew all the bubblegum you want and it will taste sweet for a while. You can even swallow it, but it's not going to do you any good. In fact, you eat enough of it – bubblegum - and it will do you harm.

And that's what a lot of television preachers and some pastors give out in the name of edification. It's not Christ-centered building up towards spiritual maturity, it's just self-centered. Self-indulgent. Self-esteem. Positive and encouraging. That God loves you “no matter what.” And that's their message. And it's true God does love you “no matter what.” But there's more to the Gospel than just God loves you “no matter what.”

So when we come together, and we exhort one another, and we encourage one another, and we build one another up in a Christ-centered way instead of a self-centered way, then we are functioning as the family of God. And that's all Hebrews 10:25 is telling us: that we should make the most of every opportunity that we have to encourage one another, to build one another up.

Now see the problem - the issue that we inherited from our years in the religious organization - is we were led to believe that the *only way* and the *only place* that you can gather together with other people is *if you go to church* and particularly if you go to *my church!* But what we have found, since we've been on this journey in the wilderness outside of organized religion (personally it's been for us going on fifteen years or so) is that there are more opportunities for true fellowship *outside* of the institutional church than there are *inside* the church. There's more. The fields are white unto harvest and there's plenty of brothers and sisters outside the four walls of the church that we can have fellowship with, and interact with, and build one another up, and encourage one another, on a basis that is Christ-centered, not church-centered, and not self-centered.



On the other hand I find the doors slammed shut and locked, that prevent people like me from being able to enter in [to the institutional church]. You have to do it on *their* terms in *their* place and submit to *their* leadership and play by *their* rules in order to have fellowship with them. Oh, Jesus says that you're just whitewashed tombs; you look good on the outside but inside you are full of death.

So what is Hebrews 10:25 telling *us*? It's telling *us* that we should receive one another and make the most of every opportunity. And let me tell you a story as to why this is, and how easy it is to forget to make the most of every opportunity that we have - and it's because we get this mindset of the *meeting*. The meeting! The meeting! We are so concerned for the meeting! The meeting! The meeting! We have "Meetingitus" - Chronic Meetingitus that we got from going to church three times a week.

So I met with the brother who said he wanted to meet with me, and we met for lunch. This was a number of years ago but I still remember it. And as I'm sitting across the table, we were sharing a meal and we were talking about things of the Lord (or trying to). He eventually got around to the real question he wanted to ask me which is: "Where do you *go* to fellowship?" Where do you *go* to fellowship? And I said, "I don't *go* anywhere to fellowship." He said, "Well, there must be a meeting, there must be like-minded people that you're gathering together with!" I said, "No, there's not."

And he had such a look of disappointment. His whole face just drooped, and his shoulders slumped and he just let out a sigh, and he just said, "Ohhhhhhhh! I was soooo hoping I could find fellowship around here!" And we finished the meal and we excused ourselves politely and said good-bye and so forth, and I never heard from the guy again.

But I had an observation that day, and I want to share that observation with you. And the observation is this: That while the brother was looking for fellowship - he said he was looking for fellowship - what he was really looking for was a *meeting*. He was looking for a meeting because he had Meetingitus. Because if he was *really* looking for fellowship, as he said, then he would have seen the fellowship right in front of him. The fellowship was *right* there. He was in the midst of the Fellowship *right* then. Oh, but you see, I wasn't teaching and I wasn't leading us in a worship song and I wasn't - you know - doing the things that you would expect to do in a meeting. And so he missed the opportunity for fellowship because he was looking for a meeting.

And my challenge to you is: Are you looking for fellowship or are you looking for a meeting? Because if you're looking for a *meeting* I would say there's meetings everywhere - take your pick. There's lots of churches and they have lots of meetings - and if a meeting is really what you're looking for, there's plenty of meetings around.

Fellowship, on the other hand – Christ-centered, Christ-based fellowship - it's not common. It's rare. It's very precious, but it's not so difficult to have as you think it is. And the reason we think it's difficult is because we have this meeting mentality, that nothing important happens unless we get together and we have a meeting. We have to sit in a circle and we have to talk about the Bible and we have to hold hands and pray and then we have to have a meal. When really, that is simply a hangover that you have from your days spent in the religious system, where everything revolves around the meeting.

Instead what we should be thinking of it, not in terms of a meeting, but in terms of a *family*. So let me ask you a question. You have members of your family: some of those members are immediate members that you actually live together with. And you have members of your family that you don't live with; they are in close proximity to you and

you see them on a regular basis. Then you have members of your family that you would say are distant relatives, that maybe you will only see once or twice a year at Thanksgiving or Christmas, or some holiday where everybody gets together, and you see your distant relatives, and they call it a “family reunion.” And then there are some members of your family that you don't see at all! You don't even know you have an Uncle Joe or Aunt Susie! Or, there are some relatives that are so distant that the only communication you have with them is by telephone or by email or by letter.

But here's my point: *You don't stop being a family just because you're not meeting with your family members three times a week. The family has nothing to do with the meeting.* You say, “But Brother, strong families, they need to stick together!” I understand that. I agree with that. But I'm saying the strength of your family does not consist of how many times you get together with your family members. Because people have their own lives. You get married. You move several states away. Families are no longer in the same location anymore. My point is you don't stop being a family member just because there's no face to face meeting going on.

My daughter just moved back to North Carolina. I'm up here in New York. She doesn't stop being my daughter just because she's not living in the same home with me anymore. Do you understand what I'm telling you? Scripture says that we are the family of God. We are brothers and sisters. So we are still the family of God, no matter how distantly we may be separated; because it is a question of being a member of a family, not being a member of a meeting.

Now do the family members get together? Absolutely! Sure they do - family reunions, birthdays, Christmas, Thanksgiving, special occasions, marriages, deaths. You celebrate these milestones together. But what I'm trying to tell you is: Spiritual fellowship is not based upon the physical meeting together; and if you think it is then you're going to be

just like the brother who was sitting right across from me, and had a chance for fellowship, but he went away disappointed because he wanted a meeting, not a fellowship. Which do you want?

[End Live Excerpt]

You've been listening to a message that is just one of a series of messages from my teaching series [Free At Last! How to Be a Christian Without Going to Church](#). That teaching series is available as a downloadable audio program, so if you're interested in getting the whole thing, visit [ChipBrogden.com](#) and click on the "Listen" link at the top of the page.

That's all the time we have for this episode of *Outside the Camp*. So until next time, 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!*