

Hebrews Study Session 16 - Chapter 10:19-39

This section of Hebrews immediately follows the main doctrinal section of the sermon and links it with the pastoral section which will fill the remainder of the sermon. The main goal of this passage is encouraging the audience to live out confident faithfulness to Jesus. This passage can be broken into three major thoughts. 1) The community of faith in Christ enjoys a privileged status that was meant to be lived out boldly (vv.19-25), 2) A severe warning against apostasy (vv. 26-31), 3) Loving encouragement to continue to live faithfully to Christ is given (vv.32-39).

As we get started, we need to remember that the first half of chapter 10 wrapped up the major doctrinal section of the author's sermon. He's going draw upon that foundation laid in order to build his case for them to remain faithful to the Lord, even during their present hardships. In these opening admonitions, the author is going to remind the original audience that Christ is both the great sacrifice for their sins as well as their great high priest before God's throne.

I. The privileged status of the Christian and three exhortations to live it out boldly

[Read Hebrews 10: 19-25]

Q: How are Christians to enter the holy place? (*v.19 - confidently*)

Q: What makes access to the holy place possible? (*v.19 - the blood of Jesus*)

Q: Where is this holy place that we are to enter confidently located? (*in heaven - 9:24*)

The word "inaugurated" - means to make a way that wasn't there before. Several years ago, the powers that be dedicated the Highway 33 bridge that connected Freemansburg Ave. with I-78. This new way was officially opened and it had not been there previously. Getting to I-78 was a major pain until the bridge was opened for traffic. Getting to heaven and thus to God's throne wasn't just a pain but impossible until Jesus inaugurated a new and living way into the Father's presence. This is not the way of the dead animals of the old covenant but rather the new way that comes with the life of Jesus.

Q: What is the significance the author is pointing out by revealing to us that the veil is the flesh of Jesus? (*v.20 - when Jesus died on the cross, just as the veil in the temple was torn from top to bottom, His body was torn from life so that people could now have direct access to God.*)

Notice that the author by using these words, is bringing back to mind the truths that Jesus was the perfect sacrifice and also our great high priest. These are the images the author continues to attempt to link in the minds of those to whom he was preaching. This is followed by three exhortations. These three are all things associated with being a true believer and demonstrating faithfulness to God. All of these are given in the present tense which means they are to be the

ongoing lifestyle of the believer; they are just who we are and as such, how we behave in the world.

Q: What is the first of these exhortations? (*v. 22 - let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith*)

Q: What are the two reasons we are able to draw near to God at all? (Jesus shed His blood as the perfect sacrifice for our sins and He is our great high priest)

Q: Why is it important that we can draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance? (*Because there is no longer any sin between us and God. We may now enter into God's presence because it's where we belong. It a privileged position available only to Christians but one God wants those in that position (of being saved) to take as He desires fellowship with us and us Him. Jesus purified our consciences so that we can enter into God's presence in confidence - confidence in His completed work on our behalf.*)

The pure water mentioned in v.22 is the water of baptism. Baptism does not cleanse anyone but it represents the death that purges us from sin. It's the outward sign of the inward cleaning that already took place at salvation. It's pure because it is based on Christ's righteousness that is imparted to us at salvation. Baptism replaces all other cleansing and washings in the new covenant.

Q: What is the purpose of baptism? (*It is the initiation into the Christian faith - not that it is necessary for salvation but that it is the outward symbolic representation of personal salvation. It also publicly identifies a person with Christ. It is this last meaning that the author is bringing out.*)

Q: What is the second exhortation? (*v.23 - let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering*)

Hope is the trait Christian tightly grip because God is behind the hope. We can have full confidence in God as the giver and fulfiller of our hope. Notice the author mentions the "confession of hope". We'd call this what we say. It our talk. He's exhorting these people to now live out what they have been saying they believe and do so without waffling.

Q: Why does the author say that Christians can hold onto their hope without wavering? (*v.23 - Christ is faithful*)

Q: What is our hope to be built upon according to this verse? (*Christ's faithfulness - not our performance or emotions*)

Q: What is the final exhortation in this section of this passage? (*v.24-5 - let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds*)

Notice that this last exhortation comes last. It is built upon the previous two exhortations

to demonstrate their faith in the world.

The word “stimulate” (or “spur”) is usually used in a negative way and is translated “irritation” or “exasperation”. The fact that something negative can be used in a positive manner is the author’s way to explaining how sometimes it is necessary to show love in a way that may not feel pleasant for that moment but is meant to lead to a more spiritually productive way to life. In this sense, Christians are to provoke each other to love and good deeds.

Q: What is the method the author gives for spurring each other to love and good deeds? (*v. 25 - by attending our assemblies - going to church*)

Q: What is the bad habit of some? (*v.25 - they quit attending the assembly meeting of the saints*)

[Read I John 2:18-19]

Being active and part of the life of the local congregation, the local church body of Christ is actually very important to the spiritual well-being of the saints. To make a habit of missing the assembling together, either by laziness or by placing other things over this, is an actual sign of apostasy - as we’ll see in the next section.

Q: Why do you think that faithfully being part of the local church body is so important? (*various answers - it builds the individual up as well as others, it allows for the body to practice the aspects of faith, it allows the body to heal itself by ministering to one another, etc.*)

Q: What is the day the author is referring to at the end of v.25? (*the return of the Lord Jesus - judgment day*)

Q: Why is it more important to spur one another to love and good deeds in light of the second coming of Christ? (*varied answers - times will be rougher on believers in that time so it will be more necessary, etc.*)

Q: Do you ever need to be spurred on to love and good works? (*Then you need the body of Christ to do it*)

Q: What are some ways in which we can spur one another on to love and good works?

II. A severe warning against apostasy

[Read Hebrews 10: 26-31]

In this section the author makes use of three parallel clauses that show God’s contempt for apostasy. All of these are given as aorist participles which mean that they are given as a summary of a persistent attitude. This is not a once-and-done accidental lapse or poor judgment call that happened in one instant but rather that this is the way of life demonstrated by a heart bent against God. To do this the author uses the lesser to greater argument. He’s going to start

with a something that is serious but then move to a more serious problem followed by the capstone and most serious problem of apostasy.

It is important to keep in mind that the thought is not just any sin. While many have used this verse to mean any sin, the context is the sin of apostasy or falling away from the faith. The nature of apostasy is leaving the faith whereas other sins usually don't include a complete repudiation of the faith as it does - so it's not accurate to apply this verse to any and all other sins, though they certainly are never God's will. In specific, based on the last exhortation that came just before this, he's talking about the sinful habit of neglecting faithful participation in the local congregation of believers. And, as we'll see, he's not talking about Christians here. He's talking about people who come into the fellowship and learn the truth and even show signs of spiritual insight but never come to salvation. Instead of making the commitment to Christ, they back out and make the decision to leave once and for all. We know these are lost people because they didn't take up the sacrifice of Jesus - the only sacrifice that purges us of sin - to be saved. They bypassed it for Judaism or something else in this world. Notice the difference between the person who is saved and can enter confidently into the presence of God and the expectation of horrific judgment of the person who refuses the sacrifice of Christ for their sins. The difference is huge and eternal.

Another point is that while neither John nor the author of Hebrews speak much about the second coming, both discuss the second coming in light of apostasy of those who never really came to know Christ though they lived like it while it was convenient.

Q: What was the penalty for setting aside the Law of Moses? (*v. 28 - death*)

Q: Throughout our study, what has the Law of Moses represented? (*the old covenant*)

As Jesus was shown as superior to Moses and the new covenant He established superior to the old covenant under the Law, now the author will move to make the point that to disregard Jesus and His sacrifice and His new covenant is worse than the death penalty under the old covenant.

[Read 10:29]

1. "trampled under foot the Son of God" - This is a figure of speech that means scornful rejection of something or someone. To have heard the truth of the gospel message and then choose to return to the world or a former dead religion is to scornfully reject Christ - trample Him under foot. There is a paradox here in that the author is making. How could anyone trample under foot the One being in the universe who possesses transcendent divine dignity?

2. "regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant" - The blood of Jesus is the only thing that cleanses a person from sin. Again, there is a paradox in thinking here. The person who is apostate is treating the blood of Jesus, which is the only thing which can cleanse a person, as unclean, as defiled. They are deliberately rejecting the new covenant brought about by Jesus' blood. Thus they are rejecting the power of the blood.

a. The word "defiled" here is used in the old testament to describe unfit for service in the temple or impure ceremonially. In the old covenant great lengths were made to ensure that a

sacrificial animal was indeed pure and undefiled. The author of Hebrews goes to great lengths to make sure the readers know that the blood of Christ is superior to that used in the old system.

b. For the apostates, they are declaring that Jesus' blood is unfit as a sacrifice for their sins. The phrase translated (NASB) "he was sanctified" is literally "by which one is sanctified". This suggests (again) that those who engaged in this apostasy had not actually been cleansed or sanctified by Christ at all. If a person is sanctified by the blood of Christ, they are sanctified (perfected) for all time.

[Read Hebrews 10:14]

3. The last phrase used to describe the actions of those apostates is "insulted the Spirit of grace". **[Read Hebrews 9:14]** "Insulted" means to "outraged". The one who has fallen away has outraged the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of grace. The presence of the Holy Spirit in a church congregation is one of the signs of true spiritual life and of God's grace being present. The apostate has insulted the presence and work of the Holy Spirit by denying His activity and power and work. **[Read Matthew 12:30-1]**

These three describe a persistent on-going attitude of contempt for salvation being graciously offered to a person through the finished work of Christ. Together, these represent a complete rejection of the Christian faith. These people will embrace worldliness in preference to the community of the saints. Their denial of their need for the community of God reflects a willful hardening of their hearts against God and His people. The punishment for the one who tramples under foot the Son of God, treats the blood of the covenant as defiled, and insults the Spirit of grace is far worse than just physical death as mandated by the Old Testament law. It is eternal separation from God in hell (see v.27 for reference to fire).

Q: According to our passage, who does vengeance belong to? (v.30 - *the Lord*)

Q: What are two reasons why the author would interject this statement into this passage? (*The Lord will be the One to exact revenge upon these people for their lack of faith in Him and His gracious offer of salvation. Those hurt by these apostates should not take up the banner of vengeance against those who have backstabbed them or walked away from their community of faith. Other answers possible*)

[Read Deuteronomy 32:35-36]

According to v.31, the problem with denying Christ or failing to enter into salvation with God is that He is a living God, not some dead religion or fake god which has no power to do anything beyond killing the body of a person.

Now, after this blistering warning against apostasy, the author follows the same pattern he did in chapter 6 and moves immediately to comfort and build up the congregation so as to not leave them hopeless and floundering in their faith.

III. Loving encouragement to live faithfully to Christ

[Read Hebrews 10:32-39]

The word “conflict” in v.32 actually means “public contest” and is the word we get athletics from. This is the only place in the New Testament this word is used. It carries the connotation of boldly enduring trials.

Q: What is the first thing the author does to encourage the original listeners? (vv. 32-34 - *he causes them to remember their acts of faith in Christ and love for Christ that accompanied their salvation*)

Q: What were the hardships this early church endured according to this passage? (vv. 32-34 - *they endured great conflicts and suffering, they were publicly humiliated through show-trials and abuses of governmental powers, not running from those who were treated harshly but rather standing up for them publicly. They showed sympathy for their brothers who were imprisoned. They joyfully accepted the seizure of their property (probably the looting of their houses while imprisoned)*)

What is important to remember is that these things were not a list of things that could possibly happen but things that actually did happen to these people due to their faith in Christ. Also, it is critical to keep in mind that these people did not hide or run from the trouble. They didn't ask for it but they publicly did what was right in God's sight through the ordeal.

Q: According to this passage, what allowed them to endure these tribulations? (v. 34 - *they knew that they had a better possession, an abiding one*)

Q: What was that better, abiding possession? (*heaven*)

Q: As we suffer tribulation and persecution as Christians, why do you think it is important to do so openly? (*It encourages other believers and it allows the lost to see God's power and grace, other answers possible*)

Q: The author called upon those suffering Christians to remember their past tribulations. What is the value or power in reflecting upon past hardships? (*it leads people to remember God is bigger than the problems and is more valuable than anything on this earth. It shows how insignificant this world truly is. Other answers possible*)

The second form of encouragement from the author is a challenge to remain confident in their faith.

In v.35 the word “throw away” means to “throw away as worthless” but also “reckless disregard for something valuable”. The author feared his audience would not take into account the powerful influence of their faith in Christ and walk away from it as something worthless.

Q: What was these Christians (and our) confidence in? (*Christ's saving work*)

Q: According to this passage, what these people endured was what to them? (*v. 36 - a reward*)

Q: What did these early Christians need according to the author? (*endurance*)

This word means cheerful or hopeful patience or constancy. If you lack the hope that God is sovereign over this world or that your He is not ready to reward your faith, then giving up on your faith is only one step away. This brings up an important point. God's will isn't just doing something. God's will is doing something in the joy and hope of the Lord - the confidence in Him. His will involves our entire being - but it by necessity requires faith in Him that is bold and fully reliant upon Christ.

[Read Habakkuk 2:3-4]

This was an Old Testament Scripture pointing to the coming of the Messiah in due course. The "very little while" points to a very short time. The argument of the author is that they should not let the very little while of waiting rob them of the reward God has for them.

Though the author has made significant changes to the Old Testament text, the only real significant change for our interpretation is that he's reversed the order of the two clauses from Habakkuk. This makes vv.37-39 a unit. It follows that it is good, bad, bad, good. Thus his opening statement in v.37 is hopeful, then followed by two warnings, but ends on a high note of encouragement and certainty that his audience will continue to live faithfully to God.

Q: How can a Christian be assured of the enjoyment of salvation? (*v. 38 - faith*)

Q: What sustains the Christian's hope of his final salvation in Christ (*v.39 - his persevering in that faith*)

Our hope does not save us but it will motivate and encourage us to remain faithful to God throughout our lives.

Notice the use of the pronoun "we" in v.39. The author does not take a position of superiority here but sees himself as one of them. While he sees two possible fates (shrinking back to destruction or enduring in faith to the reward) he is convinced that these believers possess the faith need to endure this life.

Q: What do you see as necessary in order for a Christian to endure (as defined by our text) through this life? (*recognizing the authority of God's Word and that he is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, that the things of this world are passing, that God is rewarder of faith in Him, more possible answers*)

This chapter openly hit the concept of the importance of faithfulness to God and thus faithfulness to His body the local church. There are two forms of Christian community: 1) The foundational assembly that is the local body of believers meeting regularly for worship of God and fellowship around the Word, 2) Christian fellowship that is in the form of Christian friends that transcend the boundaries of the local church. Both are valid but the first is critical to growth

in faith and possessing enduring hope.

As mentioned earlier, this passage is the introduction to the rest of the book of Hebrews. As it deals with the importance of remaining faithful to God as He has been faithful to us, the author uses this as the springboard into a major discussion of faith in the next chapter.

Q: Do you have any questions, comments, rebukes or rebuttals?