

Hebrews 10:19-39

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[0 : 00] When I opened the series on the book of Hebrews last April, I likened the letter to a sermon and the author to a preacher. In other words, that when you hold the book of Hebrews in your hands, you are literally holding a manuscript meant to be read aloud in one sitting at the time that the church would gather. In fact, if you read it aloud in normal speed, it takes about 48 minutes, less than what I'm going to give you now.

There comes a moment in every message, though, when the preacher heads toward home. When he moves from explanation to application, the preacher doesn't make that move until the argument is won.

But once the preacher is convinced that the heavy lifting is done, he is more than ready to press home the implications upon the listeners for the time of their transformation in life work has begun.

For the writer to the Hebrews, and believe me, he sees himself as a preacher, that moment arrives with our text today. The originality of his arguments concerning the superiority of Jesus are complete.

In Jesus, he has argued we have a better high priest. Starting really from chapter 4 all the way through chapter 7.

[2 : 10] In Jesus, not only do we have a better high priest, but with the shedding of his blood, we have a better covenant. Something that he has reasoned thoroughly in chapters 8 through 10, 18.

But I'm guessing that when he put a period on the close of 10, 18, he paused and put down his pen. For what he had set out to explain was now ended.

The superiority of Jesus from his perspective as God's Son was now sure. The means by which we enter into a relationship with God, according to him, had been forever changed by his logic.

Forgiveness could be had. Religious offerings were no longer needed. And with ingenious exegesis and commanding arguments, the preacher had proved it all.

And now, 10, 19, the preacher turns to preaching. Pressing. Wanting all the truths that he has unfolded to run like arrows to the hearts of his hearers.

[3 : 28] I want you to hear it in its oral tone. Look at the opening words of 10, 19.

The message is now heading toward home. These two words. Therefore, brothers. Therefore, unlike any other therefore we've seen in the letter to this point, is a therefore that indicates the time for heavy lifting is done.

Brothers, which is a term that hasn't been used from chapter 3, hints at the moment, is now here to lay down some implication. And then look, with great rhetorical strength, how he, through repetition of the word since, encompasses the two arguments that have been moving from chapter 4.

Listen to it. Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that is open for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, you can hear the echo of the argument on covenant and the shedding of his blood as being better than any other blood.

But then he goes on. And since we have a great high priest over the house of God, in those two verses, he has introduced all that he's been saying, almost with the resonance of one of the great African-American preachers that we could hear today.

[5 : 13] Therefore, brothers, since, since, and now look at it, threefold exhortations, 22 to 25, let us draw near.

Verse 23, let us hold fast. Verse 24, let us consider how. Now, I'm not saying that the writer to the Hebrews was an African-American.

I'm pretty sure he was not. But I do know that there have been those who have said to me, I feel like you have been influenced by the black church. And that is true. Over the last five years in particular, I believe the great expositors in our country coming out of the African-American tradition are great preachers, in part because they preach as the writer to the Hebrews wrote.

He lands with the simplicity, the clarity, and the force of it all. His sermon style, if you were, if you were to call it that, is now putting all of his arguments into forceful application.

And so, if you have been here, this is the day that the argument turns to his stated end. This is the takeaway that he has been laboring hard through his exegetical work.

[6 : 49] And it's threefold. Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith. Notice the connection between drawing near and faith.

faith. He wants his listeners to have full assurance of faith. In contrast to what? Well, I think in contrast to what we normally feel when we consider approaching God.

A fear of rejection. Social scientists have long understood our need for acceptance as human beings.

In fact, our need for acceptance governs much of what we do day by day. And when writing about it, they often pair human acceptance with the negative implication of human rejection.

We do what we do in life on those pivots. According to the writer to the Hebrews in the spiritual realm, the first consequence of the gospel is that now you can have full assurance, full assurance in faith to enter into the very throne room of God, to be united to God in a good relationship, something that you have wondered whether you ever could have.

[8 : 25] Let me put it to you as simply as I can. The writer says, you, through Jesus, can be accepted by God through faith, therefore draw near with full assurance.

At the close of the service today, you'll notice there's a change in the order. Normally, we respond to a sermon by simply singing a song. Today, we're going to respond in two ways.

By sharing an opportunity for you to stand where you are and share something concerning how this work of faith in Christ has changed your life.

I know that there are some of you who have come to faith even in the last few months. That this reality of finally being able to come forward in full assurance is yours. I know there are others of you who are longing to be able to say, is it really true?

Is it really true? Is what I've been hearing in church really true? Am I able to come into the presence of God, knowing who I am, in full assurance in faith, and to stand and to simply say, thank you, Lord, for granting to me that faith.

[9 : 39] That's not all. He doesn't just want that. Verse 23, he says, let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering for he who promised is faithful.

Notice now these very famous words are rolling with his points. Faith and now hope. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope.

For the Hebrew listener, he wanted it without wavering. The temptation for the listener to this sermon when it was let loose for the first time was that the congregant was wondering whether or not they should let go of Jesus, especially given the problems that come if they are to remain associated with him.

Think of it. If you are associated with Jesus and that is your hope, there are negative implications in the way in which you will be viewed.

but he says hold fast to that hope without wavering. In other words, he is writing to bring people back to their confession.

[11 : 01] Are you a Christian? Can you say without wavering yes and given all the milieu of the problems associated with it and the hours I would have to speak to you to separate myself from some of its entanglements, I will never neglect holding fast to that confession that Jesus Christ came for sinners such as me and makes me right in the presence of God.

Some people here today need to be able to stand and simply say this is the steadfastness of hope that I am recommitting to for indeed I have wavered.

There will be plenty of people to come around you. Third though, that's not all he wants, verse 24 and 25 in that great sermonic style, not only let us draw near with full assurance of faith, let us hold fast to confession of hope, but here it is, let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together as the habit of some, but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the day approaching.

Let us consider how to stir one another up to love. That is why I'm going to end the sermon today with an opportunity for you to do this very thing. It's not enough today to simply sing a final hymn.

The writer of the Psalms, Psalm 45 says that my tongue is like a ready pen to exalt the name of the Lord. And there are tongues that need to say it is time for us to love one another and to stir one another up to the same.

[12 : 56] Interesting. Interesting. Interesting. When the letter was read, evidently some people had already stopped going to church. A lot of reasons not to go to church.

Pain in your life might be too great to want to be associated with another moment of interacting with others on Christian faith. But don't neglect the strength of the verses.

the purpose of coming to an assembly and gathering like this is not primarily your individual privatized chance to express praise to God.

You can do that anywhere at any time. The purpose of coming to a gathering like this and committing yourself to it over the course of your life is for edification of others.

And that you would be edified. those who neglect to continue to come and sit under the word forego the opportunity of strengthening others in their faith and being strengthened by them to love and good deeds.

[14 : 13] So here it is. There's the actual purpose of going to church. Not worship but edification. Paul makes this clear in 1 Corinthians as well.

But in the writer to the Hebrews we find that shared. In a moment briefly there will be an opportunity for you to demonstrate how this body has come around you how it has helped you how it has loved you and how you would call us to love one another.

We ought to be moved to perform good works. the preacher to the Hebrews then is like a good coach because the remainder of this reading and it won't take us long to unfold it are basically two paragraphs that motivate his congregation to the things which he wants.

He wants you to be full of faith. He wants you to hold fast and not waver to the gospel. He wants you to stir up other people to love and good deeds and he knows what will get you to do it.

Two paragraphs first a warning and then beginning at verse 32 an encouragement. The warning is one of the strongest warnings in all the scriptures.

[15 : 37] Verses 26 through 31 notice how it begins for if we go on sitting deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins but a fearful expectation of judgment and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.

If there are three exhortations in the first paragraph there is one fearful expectation in this paragraph! That if you neglect Christ if you walk away from the strength of his message if you say Jesus is not for me and living under his word I will repeatedly ignore then indeed you can only expect judgment and that warning is to induce you to godly living.

I was in adult ed this morning it was a moment early in church history where Constantine converts to Christianity early fourth century then there's a moment later in the same century where Theodosius actually makes an edict where Christianity is the religion of everyone but in between the two is Julian the apostate for Julian had been reared under the Christian teaching and said enough no more not for me this paragraph is a warning against apostasy it has nothing to say to those who have never heard the gospel it has everything to say to those who have heard those who have tasted of it those who have walked in it those who have been raised in it and yet walk away from it this is what I tell my children five of them all having come under the water of baptism in their infancy as the

Bible puts forward that's just to keep you with me and I have told them that that water is a visible sign on the faith of your parents that we are waiting for the activity of God and we have raised you in the nurture and admonition of the Lord and you and you alone can become apostate you can renounce you can reject you can walk away you can disown the one who's never heard and didn't grow up in my home well I don't know whether they can commit the sin of apostasy but you can that's what the writer is doing here he is saying you have come under the water of baptism at your conversion and you are now warned that if you neglect Jesus if you don't receive the knowledge of the truth that's been put forward in the death of Christ then what offering for sin remains this paragraph is one of the most challenging ones for me personally the older

I get the more I'm engaged with the faith community the more I know I know I know I know my heart that my sins more than others can be presumptuous in nature I can presume on the kindness and grace of God in ways that others cannot because I have tasted of the kindness of God in ways that others have not God now he is actually using this argument to motivate them to what he wants he doesn't actually think they're non-believers by verse 39 he's very clear but we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed but those who have faith but the ones who have faith even if you backslide it is time for some to stand and renounce and say I repent and I'm coming back home as the preacher of the

[19 : 47] Hebrews is returning us home I'm on my way I don't want to be subject to the warning of 26 to 31 which is illustrated in ancient Israel's own rejection which is why he brings forth Moses in 28 he gives them forward as an example you know Moses has put it forward that the people who reject the law of the Lord actually do receive punishment if you heard it if you heard the word and you reject the word you have no expectation other thing than judgment and he moves beyond just that example of ancient Israel's history but he actually rolls it forward with these three phrases that just lay like weights upon the soul 28 anyone who is 29 how much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by the one who's trampled underfoot the son of God and has prevailed the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified and has outraged the spirit of grace these are three lines that fall with all the force and weight of Hebrew poetry they indicate what do you really think will happen to those of us who willingly repeatedly simply walk the son of God under our feet this is a renewed call to holiness someone asked me last week what are your prayer requests for your congregation my first request was simply this that the pastors of this congregation would lead the congregation in our pursuit of holiness holiness that there would be a doubling down on our need to be men who do not trample underfoot the son of

God or to sin presumptuously but to renounce all backsliding and under the strength of the spirit live as his people let me say a word your high school age or younger if you've grown up in this church you cannot trample underfoot all that you've been given and think that God will not call you to account he backs it up here not only with ancient Israel's example but look at verse 30 and 31 with two quotes from the Old Testament as if to say it's inevitable not only if you discard

God's son but judgment is the inevitable consequence given what we know of God for God says vengeance is mine I will repay and the Lord will judge his people you know this to be true he says therefore that little phrase it's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a living God it makes me think of Jonathan Edwards who delivered that sermon on sinners in the hands of an angry God July 8th 1741 and when he closed the sermon he did so with these words therefore let everyone that is out of Christ now awake and fly from the wrath to come that is the deal and there are times where you and I get out of Christ we fall along the way we're on the side of the road suddenly this paragraph then is for you as an instrument of good therefore let all who are out of Christ now awake and fly from the wrath to come what an opportunity given even today to say oh

Lord may I heed the words of the warning but then he moves because he's a coach and he knows he's a coach he's a preacher he's a coach changing my metaphors he knows that not everyone is motivated simply by the hammer right if all I do is throw a sledgehammer on you to motivate you you're not going to run very far most of us are motivated and we need encouragement to do the right thing having been warned then he now encourages them having looked back at ancient Israel's example of disobedience he calls them to look back at their own example in their life experience he goes you know this look at 32 but recall the former days when after you were enlightened you endured a hard struggle with suffering sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction and sometimes being partners with those so treated for you had compassion on those in prison you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one he's now encouraging you to do what needs to be done based on your own history there have been times in the last year where

I have been under the weight of my own ways and I began to reflect but David you know your history you know there were moments when your heart was fully given when you sat on your floor your knees on the ground your hands on the sofa thanking God for the glories that he had given you in Christ and you got up and you walked in righteousness and truth and justice you know that even when opposition came to you when people put you aside you remember that he's calling upon you this morning to look back at your own life and say you were there once that ought to motivate you he hasn't left you he hasn't abandoned you you endured some of you have been in jail and you know the grace of God came to you and met you there and perhaps today you ought to tell somebody some of you have had your own plundering of life and yet you know that God was with you and you had joy in the midst of it and you ought to tell somebody you ought to reflect on it you ought to recall it you ought to remember it that's his encouragement to you and if looking back to your past is not enough he closes the text by having you look forward look what he says in 36 and following for you have need of endurance so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised for yet a little while in the coming one will not delay but my righteous one shall live by faith and if he shrinks back my soul has no pleasure in him but we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed but those who have faith and preserve their soul just as in the warning when he anchored his understanding that

[27 : 02] God is who he is and you can't thwart it in Old Testament text he now takes another Old Testament text and he anchors himself and he says look back at the text itself in Habakkuk's day when Habakkuk wondered God where are you and the call to Habakkuk was that God's judgment will come it will fall on an unbelieving world but you are to press on you are to have faith you are to endure you are to pick yourself up you are to keep walking what a wonderful encouragement look back to your own former days when you endured past tense look forward for God is going to restore all things and make them thing and you have need of endurance and so the text then is complete the preacher is done in one sense he has laid out a three-fold exhortation followed by one fearful expectation meant to motivate you followed by one encouragement and there it is so today

I give you a chance to respond not merely with song which we'll do in a moment but after I pray you're going to have a chance to stimulate one another on to love and good deeds I'm going to put this right into play you need to be brief so that we can hear from many you need to wait for a mic I don't want to hear anybody say I don't need one you do and I want people to be ready to share their their lips like a pen indicating to us all that we might be edified that you have recently come to faith or are coming today in full assurance of the same sharing that you have been wavering in your confession but your desire is to hold fast encouraging the others here with a brief word that would call us to love and good deeds by relaying an example perhaps of how the body even here in this room has done the same for you or to simply stand and repent of living in ways that might have put you in danger of apostasy but for the grace of God and the strength of the gospel

I'm going to pray Bing is going to have a mic that's going to reach the second half TJ is going to grab a mic for the first half all you've got to do is raise your hand they will give you an opportunity to thank the Lord that the preaching is finding its way into our hearts our heavenly father we now give ourselves to a few minutes of sharing your work in our lives that we would be your family to the end that others would be edified and to the end that our own our own lives would be fixed in a direction that is fitting and then Lord we want to lift our voices in praise for indeed we have one who stands at your right hand forevermore amen