

Hebrews 10:19-39 “Has Jesus Transformed My Life?”

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[0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama.! Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

Y'all, that is glorious truth being sung, isn't it? Can you imagine if something like that was true and it didn't make any difference in your life? Wouldn't that be really strange?

That's actually what we're encountering this morning in Hebrews, is that glorious truth, like what he just sang, changes us. And it must, and it has to. It's one of the most important patterns in the Bible that we run into this morning. Over and over in the Scriptures, we're told what's true and then what to do. Or you might say what to believe and then how to behave.

Or the amazing reality and the necessary result of it, right? You get that pattern? It's really important to remember that pattern for two reasons, really. To keep those two things connected and in the right order. In other words, that how we live is actually based on what is true about the world, not just how we feel, keeping them connected, right? And also, that our obedience, the way we live, is a response to God's glory and grace. Not a way to earn that. Keeping them in the right order.

So the preacher in Hebrews has, for 10 chapters, spilled a lot of ink and blood, you might say, teaching us how great Jesus is. The first half of chapter 10 summarized that truth. Greater priest, greater sacrifice, greater savior. And now this morning, he says, therefore. Therefore. A summary now of how that great Jesus must transform our lives. It's not just theoretically true, but no one should really care. No, it's actually true. It's ultimately real and everybody should be changed by it. That's what he's saying. We're going to read this passage as we go. But first, let's pray and ask for God's help.

[2 : 37] God, we are so often resistant to change. You know I am. Especially change that's coming from outside of us.

That's not our idea. I just, I so want to do things my way. I want to have my life shaped the way I'm most comfortable. Father, this morning we ask, we long for our lives to be shaped more by your word, by your spirit, by your gospel, than anything else. And so if that's going to happen, we need, we need your help. We need you to speak to us so we hear your voice. We need you to work in our hearts.

We need you to change our lives moment by moment and day by day. So speak to us now, we ask for Jesus' sake and by his name. Amen.

Hebrews 10 verse 19. Therefore, brothers and sisters, addressing the whole family of God here, of course, since, since, since, a quick review of the basis of our transformed life before he gets back to his therefore, okay? What's true? Since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, walking into God's throne room where we have no right to be on our own. We couldn't get there.

By the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, that curtain that kept people out of God's holy place, is torn in two from top to bottom while Jesus hangs on the cross, his body being torn, right?

[4 : 50] And since we have a great priest over the house of God, Jesus is our perfect representative before God for everyone who trusts in him.

Since that's true, don't, don't, in other words, don't start thinking you can change your own relationship with God. Just do it by yourself. Not that. But on the basis of Jesus' work for you, your union with Jesus by faith, don't by any means leave your relationship with God unchanged.

That's what he's saying. If you were to do that, if you were to hear this glorious truth and see no change in your life, that would be ignoring Jesus' amazing work, his sacrifice, his living, loving reign today. No, no. Jesus transforms our lives. He makes a difference. So since all of that that he's been teaching us about Jesus being new and better and greater, since all of those things are true, so what for us? The main thrust of this text is actually in these next four verses.

If you start looking at them, these next four verses have enough lettuce in it to make what theologians refer to as a Greek salad. That's pretty good. Okay. I thought I'd have to explain it to you, but thanks for hanging with me. All right. Got that one out of the way. Here's our focus, right? Here's the focus, the essence of a transformed life. What's it going to look like? How we're to live differently after studying Hebrews. It's been a long time for some of you. Therefore, verse 22, let us draw near.

Draw near to God. Now, if you've been here, we've heard that before, right? This is a summary in many ways. Verse 22, draw near to God with a true heart, not by mere outward conformity to some rules or by completing some religious rituals to get close to God. No, no, no, no, no. The genuine closeness of your heart relationship with him. In full assurance of faith, trusting him that the welcome he extends is sincere. The invitation is not merely optional. Draw near with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience. No more guilt, no more guilt, no more sin. It's been forgiven. And our bodies washed with pure water, whether through baptism or other cleansing rites. The picture is that we stand clean before a holy God by the blood of Jesus. So if you're listening, it's a command. Let us draw near.

[8 : 14] Not merely a statement that you can come before God. We've heard that. We know that's true. But actually, a call to draw near. Really to live under the desk. Truly to speak freely to your Father about what's on your heart. He's saying here, don't let anything keep you from God. Not doubt, not fear, not shame, not sin. Don't let it stop you. Run to God. Can you imagine how transformative that would be for someone, an Old Testament believer? Who they've been told and they've seen and felt in the tabernacle and temple that they can't really get close to God, especially when they're unclean or unworthy. They need to be really far away, right? This is transformative. How transformative is this for us who often feel distant from God? Who think we couldn't possibly be good enough? What he's saying is, now live in an entirely different location, a relationship with God. That's what needs to change the way you live. See, this morning, I want us to notice that sometimes what happens to us is that life changes and that changes our relationship with God. Life changes and that speaks back into how we experience our relationship with God. No, no, no. We want it to be the other way around, letting our new relationship with God transform our lives, right? I mean, just think about how life changes when trials start to make God feel to you. And that moment, if you're like me, you really like feeling comfortable and getting close to God doesn't really feel like that maybe. And so you just, you start avoiding him, avoiding time with him. It's more comfortable not to think about it. And he's calling you back right now. Draw near. He said, no, don't drift away. Draw near. Maybe life changes when you have kids.

Having kids change anybody's life? Okay. We'll just take laughter as a show of hands. But you have kids and you think, I'm going to bring them to church because you think that there's something there that they need God or morality or something that you think you're really too grown up for. And so you bring them near to God while staying distant to yourself, even in the sanctuary.

And God calls you back right now. No, no, you. You draw near. Draw near. What happens when you do? Pastor Andrew Murray helped me start thinking about what it's like to actually live your life always near God. Feeling like no matter where you go, you are in the throne room of heaven. God is right there with you. What does that mean for our lives as we slow down to remember Jesus has actually brought us in near to God? I'd encourage you to close your eyes for a minute and imagine that that's where you're right there near to God. You're right there with him because of Jesus bringing you right there to his feet. What's true? You can see the Father's face shining on you. You can feel the Father's love embracing you. The holiness of God begins to overwhelm you and at the same time attract you.

You're there with Jesus and the sacrifice of Jesus stirs unending thanksgiving in your heart. The prayers of Jesus, you can hear them and they're building this unending confidence in you. Our souls are not merely united to Christ a little bit. They're completely connected to him and being conformed more and more to his likeness. There's a comfort of God's presence that assures us that we're never alone. The Holy Spirit fills us as an ever-streaming river flowing from the throne of God

and the Lamb right to us. So we're empowered and emboldened to be intercessors before the throne of grace on behalf of others. We're able to mount up as on eagle's wings when we're weary. We're able to go as God's priest to bless a dying world in his name. The longer we stay there with him and know that God's with us, the more we're equipped and encouraged to be the living instruments through whom the King announces his salvation and through whom he works out his full and final triumph in this whole world. And we're a part of that. And we're there with God and we taste in him the fullness of joy and deep pleasures forever. And it's not just right now when you're in a sanctuary listening to a sermon.

[13 : 56] It's all the time whenever we will actually draw near to God. Let us draw near to God, he says.

Next, let us hold fast. It's another repeated exhortation in Hebrews. Don't drift. Don't give up. Don't turn back. We have a sure and steadfast anchor for our souls. Hold fast the confession of our hope. Like what we confessed together this morning in the Apostles' Creed. That Jesus really is greater. That he alone is Lord. That our present and our future are secure. Our sins are forgiven. Our welcome is guaranteed. So hold fast. What does he say? Without wavering. For he who promised is faithful.

There's a verse for you to memorize if you want one this week. It's short. Hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering. For he who promised is faithful. He's saying don't give up on the only one that you can always trust. You do that and it will leave you unmoored in life from any anchor. Right? You'll be wavering back and forth for the rest of your life because the truth is you're not perfect. The truth is other people are unreliable.

The truth is that the future without your anchor becomes uncertain. You don't know where you'll end up. Life changes. Maybe life is changing and you're realizing for the first time in your life your faith in Jesus is costing you something. Maybe not your very life like believers in some areas right now. But maybe it's costing you your reputation. A friendship. A control of all your spare time that seems so precious. Or maybe what's changing is that you're starting to see other people with more things than you. More connections. More fun it seems than you're having. And you feel your heart is attached to the things of this world more than you realized. More than you wanted to admit.

[16 : 38] And you're starting to drift there. You're starting to think that's where I'll find life. And God says to hold fast. Hold fast to the promises of the one true and living God. How transformative will they be from living for the fading promises of this world that don't hold. Rushing and grasping to be fulfilled by a new house or a new hobby or a new relationship. Is that where I'm going to find life? Is that going to last? It says he's faithful. He will come through. He'll never change his mind. So your hope in Jesus is eternally secure. Listen, Jesus died and lives for you. No one and nothing else in this world has done that or will do that. He has died for you. He lives for you now. Life in him really is more glorious, more lasting than anything else. Draw near to God and hold fast to him.

Now the third let us is new. So let's slow down a little more here. Verse 24. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works.

Let us stir up. Fits better with draw near and hold fast. But if you're looking closely at the text, the command actually tells us to do what?

Let us consider. Let us contemplate. Think about. Spend time planning. How to stir up other people. That's kind of exciting, right? Don't you know we need more pot stirrers here at Southwood? Some of you would volunteer to serve on that committee, wouldn't you? The Southwood Pot Stirrers Committee. Man, that is the one for me right there.

[18 : 45] I'm not commending gossip or controversy or quarreling. You know that. But sometimes we need to be stirred up a little bit, don't we?

To stir up is often a bit uncomfortable, even painful. Maybe in the translation you're holding, you're seeing that word translated as spur on.

The picture is of a horse, right? Who's just standing there until there's metal jabbed into his sides and he jolts into action, right? The spurs do something. The pain motivates action.

We are to stir one another up to what? Love and good works. Motivate to loving God and loving neighbor. Inspire to living the reality of our new relationship with God.

Not just talk about it some, but come on, let's let this change everything. Notice the communal nature in that, right? He doesn't merely say, hey, just get on with it.

[19 : 51] Let us love and serve. Is that what he says? No. He says, no. No. He says, let us consider one another. He urges us to look around, to help one another toward this.

And y'all know as well as I do, that kind of community, that's an extra hurdle for ruggedly individualistic Americans. We'd rather just get the job done. He says, that's not the way I've set it up.

I want you to look around and I want you to help someone else be a part of it. There's, in fact, a specific caution about losing community. Verse 25, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, already then, that early, but encouraging one another.

Now, y'all have heard this verse. Sometimes we use this verse merely to make people feel bad about skipping Sunday morning. And you can't really do that while they're already here. So, you know, skip over that.

It is not less than worshiping together in the sanctuary that should be a priority. Our hearts and others' hearts are helped to draw near and hold fast by regular Lord's Day worship rhythms.

[21 : 07] The gift of that that so many treat so lightly these days. It is a warning against that. But the word here in this context goes beyond merely this formal gathering.

These Christians, we know, were gathering day by day in one another's homes in contexts where encouraging one another was intentionally fostered.

See, it's really talking about what we would refer to as grace group level community. That it, that that is characterizing all of your life, not just a meeting once or twice a week.

Notice, it doesn't contrast giving up meeting together with sitting in a pew on Sunday. That's, that's not the two things.

What's it contrasting not meeting together instead of that? It's contrasted with encouraging one another. Right? There's a relational dynamic coming alongside to urge on your brothers and sisters, cheering for them as they face life's challenges.

[22 : 18] So yes, this verse tells us don't leave a church when you're rubbing against one another. When her politics or his personality or their parenting rubs you the wrong way.

Now, it doesn't mean you go quit being a part of that church. but beyond that, it is calling us to be the church together.

And see, there's a big difference here I want to tease out for just a minute in how we view church being a part of that. Is church a place?

An event? Or people? You may know the answer but think about that honestly in your life and the way you live.

If functionally church is a place then we go to church. I don't mind the phrase, I've been saying it since I was a kid. If that's true, then adding an educational wing on the side is building the church.

[23 : 24] If that's true, then you can expect to see these new members who were down here this morning a few more times when you're all in the same room when you go to church. But that's it.

What if church is an event or events to you? Maybe you love being a part of church events. Well, then we attend church or do church in those moments when there's something on the calendar.

And then your job then would be to make sure that you show up enough to make God happy or maybe make your spouse happy, whatever the case may be. Maybe you do show up to a grace group meeting and if one of these new members happens to be there, then you'll probably learn their names and some basic info about them because otherwise, if you don't, the events are awkward.

Right? And it's weird to introduce yourself to the same guy ten times. So you get to know him a little bit. Now let me be clear, there is actually some encouragement from just being together.

Period. In a place, at an event, especially when life is hard and you're just showing up. But think about the difference if church is people.

[24 : 42] Encourage one another. That means church is relationships. There's something, there's a building of community, really a family that's built then.

When's the church built? It's built, for example, when someone is baptized. And we delight in that and say, oh, the church is being built. Right now, that's when the church is built.

It means I'm expecting to have at least some of these new members at some point in the future praying with me for our kids, perhaps through tears. To expect that some of us will be comforting one another with the hope of heaven when we grieve because we're not a family.

That some of us will be challenging one another to share the good news of Jesus with our neighbors and inviting them into the family as well. You see how life becomes different if church is the relationships, the community, the people.

Actually, not just an answer you could give on a test but in your life. Can you be honest about what church has meant to you? See, the writer here is concerned, yes, with those who aren't showing up. [25 : 54] That's true. But he's especially concerned with those of us who are around, who are present to hear, for example, God's word being read to them as the church is gathered.

Those are the ones he's speaking to, to us. And he's concerned that there would be those of us who don't call those who quit showing up at Grace Group for a season and just say, somebody else will check on them.

He's concerned about us that we don't thank those who've started to drift for all the time they've been investing leading a small group for our kids. He's concerned that there are those of us who are here in the church but not living as the church and seeking out the hurting for dinner or coffee.

He's concerned about us. I want you to think right now of someone in your church family even if this is not your church family. That you could encourage.

Maybe if the relationship is close enough you could even stir him up. Tell him the gifts you see in him and how you think we really need him to serve as a deacon.

[27 : 02] Tell her the heart that you see in her and how you think she would be a great Grace Group leader and help even more people have a place to connect in the family and grow together. Tell them that you'd like to bring them dinner and sit down and listen to their journey with Jesus and get to rejoice in his love together and learn more about walking with him or tell them you'd like to go on a missions trip together with them to visit one of our partners next year and spread that encouragement even further.

Whatever it is you can make up your own idea but would you write a name down? Would you think of someone you've got to if you need ideas just you know put your head on a swivel. There's people around some of you in the front might really have to turn around if you need help?

Maybe just picturing people you know aren't here would help you who especially need your encouragement. Because see what can happen is that life changes and we don't even realize that it changes our relationship with God.

Maybe life's changing you're a senior about to graduate and leave home for the first time and you're going to have a chance to set your own agenda and new relationships. Don't give up meeting together.

Maybe life's changing and you're a retiree now and you've heard it all at church honestly. You've heard this sermon before. You're already starting to check out. Can't I just use my extra time to travel?

[28 : 37] I mean to do my stuff? Haven't I earned it? Please don't give up meeting together. We need you and you need us. Or maybe you're anywhere in between those two stages and you're just so busy with so much important stuff.

But if you're honest what you're thinking is there's nothing I could give up. I've had to put my true friendships on the shelf for a season. There's just no time to invest in them.

We've got too much going on. Friends don't wait to pick them back up. Don't give up meeting together. Instead let the reality of Jesus change your life.

How transformative this is from our self-consumed society walking around with my head and my phone and my heart focused only on myself. He's saying no, no, no, no.

Lift your eyes up. Consider one another it says. How to stir one another up. Don't leave the team when the game's on the line.

[29 : 49] See the day is drawing near. The day when Jesus returns to bring us home forever and so we've got to encourage one another to draw near and to hold fast until that day.

We've got to stir one another up to invite others into the throne of God through Jesus. We're a family all on a mission treasuring and pointing to Jesus.

That's what we're up to. That's what the church is supposed to be. Now I know I have a tendency of communicating in a way that you hear something very pleasant like do this if you like when it works for you if you think that's a good idea I know that's more my personality.

If that's what you hear this morning I'm not helping you hear God's voice. that's not the way he's communicating. There is an urgency the urgency of eternity as the day is drawing near that is connected to these three primary commands to see your life transformed so that you draw near hold fast and stir up.

Verse 26 for we must do these things because warning for if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.

[31 : 28] In other words if you willfully neglect Jesus' sacrifice and walk away from it there is no other sacrifice for sins. Nothing else will reconcile you to the holy God but a fearful expectation of judgment and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.

Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by the one who has spurned the Son of God and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified and has outraged the spirit of grace?

He's saying if people were punished for ignoring God's word through Moses what about the greater word sent through Jesus right? How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?

You're starting to feel the seriousness of this warning? For we know him who said vengeance is mine I will repay and again the Lord will judge his people it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

You're hearing it now. This is one of many passages asserting as our mission says that our relationships impact eternity.

[32 : 50] Are you pursuing the wandering? Are you clinging to the anchor and building a chain to reel the drifting one back in? Are you encouraging especially the brothers and sisters you've committed to in a grace group in your neighborhood or at school together let's draw near let's hold fast are you not just there but you're you're moving into their lives my brother Bob calls this rejecting isolation because God's word here tells us being isolated before one another without community is dangerous because being isolated before God without Jesus is deadly being isolated before one another being without community is dangerous because being isolated before God without Jesus is deadly eternity hangs in the balance of how we handle these requests of our hearts and lives don't treat his death so lightly as to stay distant from

God or his people to treat what Jesus has done so lightly that you start believing your own press that you're okay on your own to quit caring about other people for whom he has shed his blood no instead verse 32 but recall the former days when after you were enlightened you endured a hard struggle with sufferings sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction and sometimes being partners with those so treated for you had compassion on those in prison and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one I remember when I was 18 and ready to win a secular college campus for Jesus no matter what happened what they thought of me or what it cost me maybe you've gone without to see God's kingdom supported and advanced praying for persecuted brothers and sisters like their lives depended on it let goods and kindred go this mortal life also the body they may kill

God's truth abideth still his kingdom is forever forever so look back and remember that zeal for what really matters that you once had and then look forward in light of eternity with confident hope verse 35 therefore do not throw away your confidence which has a great reward God will come through for you have need of endurance so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised what's the promise it's the coming of the Messiah it's this person who's going to come in judgment yes but also in promised reward for yet a little while and the coming one will come and 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 of those who have faith and preserve their souls he's got much to say about faith but that's next week in the meantime don't forget we're all so capable of neglecting our relationship with God neglecting our relationships with one another along the way don't shrink back instead in light of what

Jesus has come and accomplished for us in light of what Jesus is coming again to accomplish for us draw near to God hold fast to Jesus stir up one another I want us to consider that at the Lord's table as well this morning let's start by remembering what's true what it's all about what's true is that the Lord Jesus the night he was betrayed took bread he broke it and he gave it to his disciples as I ministering in his name give this bread to you he said take and eat this is my body given for you do this in remembrance of me in the same way after supper he took the cup and said this cup is the new covenant in my blood shed for many for the forgiveness of sins drink from it all of you for as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim his death until he comes that's what's true if Jesus is not your hope this morning you don't need to leave just because you're not taking

the bread and the wine we're glad you're here and we would welcome you to observe with us to ask questions about this

Jesus and the hope that he offers we'd love to talk with you about him but if Jesus is yours by faith what's true is that all who come to this table are undeserving and he's the one who brings us in what's true is that every one of us as we come doesn't come alone but comes in a family that Jesus has brought you into by his blood he's given you a new father and so many many new brothers and sisters if those are the things that are true what should we do even in the next few minutes while we're celebrating this sacrament I want to give you three good things that you can do don't just sit there at least pick one of them okay draw near you can draw near come and eat with God and pray to experience his presence with you today it's a great thing to do hold fast as you contemplate the sacrifice of Jesus and as you remember that he died for your sins personally have your faith built in him hold fast to him those are two things that I think you're used to doing when we celebrate the Lord's

[39 : 20] Supper here regularly draw near hold fast there's a third that may feel a little bit different this morning but I'm encouraging us towards that I want to give you permission to talk to one another while we have the Lord's Supper you already had it if you didn't know that but I'd like you to stir up one another this morning talk maybe before or after it's your turn to come forward and you would like to take a moment to draw near and hold fast please don't feel awkward about that there's going to be a little bit of music playing it'll cover you don't have to be boisterous like it's meet and greet time but you can walk all the way across the sanctuary if you want to what I have in mind is that you're going to be looking around at brothers and sisters and they need your encouragement you might need to say hey brother it just encourages me that you're here this morning in the midst of battling cancer

I'm so glad to see how God's sustaining you you may look at the person standing next to you and say hey can we spend a minute just praying for one another before we go down to take the Lord's supper maybe you just say this is awkward and Will made us talk what do you say isn't Jesus great isn't this wonderful it's so good to see you here it doesn't have to be profound right maybe you can say I wrote your name down during the sermon and I just wanted to confess that to you now I'm supposed to encourage you this checks it off my list I don't whatever you say I want you to see that God's put you in a family and I want us not just to think that but to live that it's not this is not the only time we can do that but it's a good time that's part of the truth we celebrate here is that Jesus has brought us into a family and so we're not to neglect the body when we're together to celebrate after I pray I'm going to give you the freedom to stand and move and then come as you can the ushers have promised both to help you and to be flexible when you're not sitting where you usually are when they come to your row come to a table as you're able and we're happy to serve you let's pray father we're so grateful for this gift because it reminds us of your presence with us your love for us your forgiveness of our sins your welcome into a family we could never have earned our way into thank you thanks that we never come alone that there's brothers and sisters that we need and who need us give us grace to speak and live that truth that life changing truth into one another's lives use even these common elements to do something deeply spiritual and supernatural in our hearts today that would carry through this week in our lives we ask in Jesus name amen for more information visit us online at southwood.org