

Tuesday Evening Bible Study at Tokyo Baptist Church
The Letter to the Hebrews – Chapter 10, Verses 19-39
Notes From Class on February 16, 2010
Last Revised on (February 22, 2010)

Good evening everyone!

Welcome to our continuing study of the New Testament Book of Hebrews.

Tonight you will need a Bible and a song book. Please keep the song book with you until the end of class, because we may wish to sing once or twice later in the evening.

If you are using an English translation of the Bible other than the English Standard Version ("ESV") then you may also wish to have the handout we have prepared, which has the ESV text of Hebrews,

There is coffee and tea at the back.

Please get what you want and, then, let's get started.

Introduction

In this class, as you know, we are studying the New Testament Book of Hebrews.

Last week we completed the first 18 verses of Chapter 10.

Tonight we will continue reading Chapter 10, possibly to the end of the chapter.

But first let's begin, as usual, with a very short review of what we have studied so far.

Review

As we have continually noted,

Hebrews appears to be the text of a **sermon**,

written around the end of the **First Century**, A.D.,

to be delivered to a group of **Christians**

at least some of whom were in danger of "**falling away**"

and needed to be encouraged to "**hold fast.**"

The preacher reminds them of the **unqualified** supremacy of Christ **(1:1 - 3:6)**.

He then touches on the sad history of Israel and urges that they not repeat the same mistakes **(3:7 - 4:13)**.

 The preacher introduces the idea that Jesus is like our great **high priest**. (4:14 - 5:10)

 He warns that to reject Jesus is finally to reject **all** hope of salvation. (5:11 - 6:20)

 The **priesthood** and the **law** have been replaced by something better (7:1 - 8:7).

 The **Old** Covenant has been replaced by a New Covenant (8:8-8:13).

 All of the **ceremonies** and rituals of the Old Covenant are obsolete. (Chapter 9)

 And the **New** Covenant is so much **better**! (Chapter 10:1-18)

 What Jesus has done **actually** puts away sin.

 by making **atonement** for all sins that are committed: past, present, and future.

 and by perfecting us so that, when this process is complete, we **will** not sin anymore.

 That is a very quick review of what we have studied so far.

 Before we read on, does anyone have any questions? Any **comments**?

Hebrews, Chapter 10, Verses 19-22

O.K., then, would someone please read Hebrews Chapter 10, Verses **19-22**, in **Japanese**.

 Thank you. Now would someone please read those same verses in English (ESV).

19 Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus,

20 by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh,

21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God,

22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

Thank you.

 Remember that last week's lesson, the first 18 verses of Chapter 10, were about the perfection of the New Covenant.

 Jesus' self-sacrifice **atones** for all sins.

 God changes **us**, putting his laws on our hearts and minds.

 What we have just read, continues that reassuring thought and underlines the practical implications of it.

(Verse 19)

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus,

Under the Old Covenant, the people could carefully draw near to God, once per year, through their representative the High Priest, who would enter the **earthly** holy place to make atonement for himself and the sins of the people, taking with him the blood of **animals**.

 But the Son of God has made all of that unnecessary and done something infinitely better, by sacrificing **himself** to atone for sins, and entering into the **actual** holy places, where God is, as our forerunner

 Thus we are **confident** that we will enter the holy places also, and that **when** we do, we will have been made perfect, (almost) like Jesus.

 This may help to explain why the followers of Christ are sometimes referred to as a royal priesthood.

 Because Jesus has entered into the holy places, we shall also enter in.

 And not into the earthly copy, like priests of old, but into the **actual** holy places!

This is the confidence we have.

 Because of Jesus we are sure to enter into the holy places...

(Verse 20)

by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh,

The way that Jesus opened was "**new**"

 Thus we speak of the **New** Covenant

 and this new way is described as the "**living**" way.

 Indeed it is the **only** way to life eternal.

In John 14:6 do you remember what Jesus says? (AWANA kids?)

"I **am** the...way, and the... truth, and the... **life**; nobody comes to the Father but by me."

The **curtain** referred to here is, almost certainly, the veil that hid the holy places in the tabernacle, which symbolized the separation between God and his people,

and which could only be breached symbolically on the Day of Atonement.

but Jesus **breached** this barrier, not just symbolically, but actually

and not just on his **own** behalf, but on our behalf also.

He opened the way for **us** to enter in!

(n.b. Even the best commentators disagree as to whether Jesus' flesh is being equated with the "curtain" or with the "new and living way" but this does not seem, to me, to affect the overall meaning of the passage.)

All who do enter in are the "house of God" and Jesus is their great High Priest,

(Verses 21 and 22)

and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

Here the preacher is, once again, **admonishing** the congregation

If they **believe** what he has been saying about the New Covenant, their response should be...

to **draw near**

to **God**, that is.

Now **nothing** hinders them from drawing near to God,

except their own hearts and minds.

Their hearts, he says, should be **"true"** --- which I take to mean sincere.

They should approach God because they truly **desire** Him, and not for any other reason.

This is a message ---- in favor of sincerity and against hypocrisy ---- which is driven home at several places in the Bible. (e.g. Ananias and Sapphira)

Pretending just doesn't work with God.

Verse 22 also says that they must draw near to God in "**full assurance of faith**," --- which I take to mean that they must truly believe (a) that God **exists** and (b) that he is **good** and (c) that he will **reward** all who truly seek him. (**c.f. 11:6**)

the final clause of Verse 22 speaks of having "**hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience**"

Q. What does **that** mean?

A. Clearly it speaks of an **inward**, spiritual, cleansing effected by the blood of Christ.

A. Surely it means that when we confess and repent of our sins, we are truly forgiven.

A. Thus, there could be **no** sin that stands between us and God, except for those we **refuse** to repent of.

The final clause of Verse 22 also speaks of having our bodies **washed** with pure water.

Q. What does that mean?

A. It may find some parallel in the ritual purification of the Old Covenant.

A. It may refer to baptism under the New Covenant. (*n.b. someone in the class suggested this.*)

A. In either case, the object would be **not** the external act of washing but the inward spiritual reality which is being symbolized by that act, and the work of God, the Holy Spirit, within us, as understood from both and Old (Psalms, Jeremiah, Ezekiel) and New Testament perspective.

In other words the outward washing is a sign of the new, pure heart within, which is the hidden work of the Holy Spirit.

So, in summary, there is nothing stopping us from drawing near to God, except possibly our own **insincerity**.

We must always approach God **honestly**, and not merely pretend to do so.

I guess at this point, Pastor Dennis would ask, "So, what about you?!"

Are you approaching God **honestly**, or merely pretending to do so?

This is a scary question, and leads into what follows.

Hebrews, Chapter 10, Verses 23-25

Would someone please read Hebrews Chapter 10, Verses **23-25**, in **Japanese**.

Thank you. Now would someone please read those same verses in English (ESV).

23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.

24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,

25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Thank you.

The three verses we have just read are, in many ways, I think, the main message and purpose of this sermon. (i.e. the New Testament Book of Hebrews)

(Verse 23)

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.

Everything this preacher has been teaching in this sermon has been intended to help these people, and us, to "hold fast" the confession of our hope.

Q. What is the confession of our hope?

A. The Gospel of Jesus Christ. What we confessed when we first believed and were baptized in his name.

Q. Why should we hold fast, and without wavering? (The answer is crucial.)

A. Because he who **promised** is faithful!

Our confidence lies NOT in ourselves...AT ALL... but in he who promised.

Q. And who is that --- i.e. "he who promised?"

A. **God**: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

This all boils down to trust: to believing that God **is** doing and will **continue** to do all he has promised.

And one of the things God said he **would** do, is to cause us to love one another and perform good works.

And this is something that Christians are **seen** to do and **encourage** one another to do.

So our preacher adds this thought in Verse 24

(Verse 24)

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,

It is pretty much impossible to love one another, and to serve one another, and to encourage one another to love and to serve, if we rarely see one another.

So the preacher adds in verse 25:

(Verse 25)

not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

How sad will it be, on Judgment Day, if we must stand before the Lord knowing that we have neglected that which he most cares about --- i.e. his church.

More frightening still is the thought that those who habitually avoid Christian fellowship may never have been Christians at all.

Either way, Satan wins.

At this point our preacher's message becomes a little scary again.

Hebrews, Chapter 10, Verses 26-31

Would someone please read Hebrews Chapter 10, Verses **26-31**, in **Japanese**.

Thank you. Now would someone please read those same verses in English (ESV).

26 For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,

27 but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.

28 Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses.

29 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?

30 For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people."

31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Thank you.

In what we read previously (i.e. Verses 23-25) the preacher, looking forward to the coming Judgment Day, admonished his listeners to **continue** ... to **meet** together and to **love** and support one another so that each one might **hold fast** to his confession of hope.

Now, in what we just read, he allows himself to think of what would happen if we fail.

(Verse 26)

For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,

Every one of us who sins, no matter how deliberately, should quickly repent of these sins and return to Christ and his Church.

But this passage is not thinking about this or that particular sin.

It is considering the more frightening picture of someone who has first come to know the truth, about the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but then turned his back on that truth, actually preferring a life of unrepentant sin.

To knowingly reject Christ is the most dangerous thing because, as Verse 26 points out, there is no other sacrifice for sin, now that Christ has come and atoned for sin, **once** for **all**.

As for those who have rejected Christ (the preacher means to say), they experience in this life a fearful expectation of **judgement**.

And those who persist until the end in rejecting Christ will finally be **consumed**.

That is the sense of Verse 27

(Verse 27)

[there is no sacrifice for sin] **but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.**

The preacher clearly does not wish to down-play this point.

Rather he goes on to **amplify** it in what follows.

First he remembers what happened to people who set aside the law of Moses under the Old Covenant.

(Verse 28)

Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses.

Here he has in view the capital crimes of blasphemy, idolatry, murder, adultery, and etc.

Someone who was convicted of such things, based on the testimony of only two or three human witnesses, was executed.

Now compare that with the sin of willfully rejecting the Son of God.

Verse 29 reads:

(Verse 29)

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?

Clearly the preacher means to say that, something much **worse** than the death is deserved by one who willingly rejects Christ.

This means, first of all, that there **is** something worse than death. (c.f. Jesus words: that it would be better that some had never been born!)

This fate belongs to those who have **spurned** the Son of God.

and outraged the **Spirit** of grace.

Here this can only mean people who have **understood** the gospel before they rejected it.

That would basically be people who have spent enough time in **church** to comprehend the Gospel that is, but who have then fallen away without being actually transformed by it.

Several of Jesus parables speak to this, including that of the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares and the Parable of the Sower.

This is not a question of being saved and then later losing one's salvation, which is not possible.

This is a question of merely seeming to be saved, but without that being the case.

We need to be so clear on this point, because the consequences are so profound.

It helps to remember God as he was first revealed to Israel, under the Old Covenant.

The preacher continues:

(Verses 30 and 31)

For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." 31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

The people of Israel knew, and we who were raised in church know, something of God's character.

He is a holy and righteous God who demands that his people be like him.

To dishonor and disobey God is dangerous.

This is why the Gospel of Jesus Christ is **good** news.

And this is why **disregarding** the Gospel is the most dangerous thing imaginable.

But only people who have spent some time in church can really know that.

So the fear of rejecting Christ lies heaviest on us --- we churchmen!!

My point is that Verse 31 really only speaks to people who really do **know** God!!

This verse is **intended** to scare us **back** into church and into a more **sincere** relationship with Jesus.

The Holy Spirit scares us in this way, to save us from a fate which is literally worse than death.

But now it is time for the preacher to reassure his listeners once again.

Hebrews, Chapter 10, Verses 32-34

Would someone please read Hebrews Chapter 10, Verses **32-34**, in **Japanese**.

Thank you. Now would someone please read those same verses in English (ESV).

32 But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings,

33 sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated.

34 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.

Thank you.

Remember, he has been saying some frightening things, so that they will not **fall** away.

Now he mixes in some reassurance, so they will not be **paralyzed** with fear.

(Verse 32)

But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings,

This almost certainly speaks of the early days following their **conversion** --- i.e. soon after they accepted Christ.

The preacher reminds them that **then** there were zealous and brave and joyful in the faith.

Very often new believers **are** this way and it later helps us to remember those early days, and to be reminded of them.

Q. Why? ---i.e. why is it reassuring to remember how zealous we **once** were?

A. Because that is evidence of God's **Spirit** dwelling in us. And once he moves in, he never leaves us!

If he helped us to endure struggle and suffering **then**, he will do so **now** and until the end.

Q. What was the nature of their struggle?

A. The answer comes next

(Verse 33)

[they were] **sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated.**

Most likely this means that the young Christian believers, directly and indirectly, were **willing** to suffer mental and physical injury **for** the Gospel

This is a very important thing to remember, since it is the prospect of falling **away** from this very same Gospel that most endangers them now.

Surely they will **not** finally fall away from that which they once suffered to defend!

Verse 34 continues

(Verse 34)

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.

It seems they had once suffered even prison and loss of their property for the Gospel and, what's more, they had done so joyfully, because they once **did** understand what would be their eternal inheritance.

Can you see how these very things which should **encourage** them are also what make apostasy **possible**?

Only those who have truly **known** Christ can truly reject him.

So this warning must **always** be spoken **in the Church**, until Jesus comes back.

Hebrews, Chapter 10, Verses 35-36

Would someone please read Hebrews Chapter 10, Verses **35-36**, in **Japanese**.

Thank you. Now would someone please read those same verses in English (ESV).

35 Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.

36 For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.

Thank you.

So in view of everything, the message is clear and comes to a point.

(Verse 35)

Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.

These Christians who were confident at the beginning, must remain confident to the end.

The stakes are high.

In one direction (forward) lies perseverance and the greatest possible reward.

In the other direction (backward) is the falling away into something worse than death.

Christianity is a matter of endurance. (*endurance is a fruit of the Spirit*)

And so he says in Verse 36

(Verse 36)

For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.

The promise here in view is nothing that comes in this life.

What happens in this life is the doing of God's will, and that, we understand, is difficult.

"What is promised" here refers to what comes after this life, when we finally join Christ in the holy places.

Q. Do we all have such endurance?

A. Time will tell.

The final proof will come when Christ returns and we are found to be within the House of God, or not.

Hebrews, Chapter 10, Verses 37-38

Would someone please read Hebrews Chapter 10, Verses 37-38, in Japanese.

Thank you. Now would someone please read those same verses in English (ESV).

37 For, "Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay;

38 but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him."

Thank you.

Remember, in what has gone before, the preacher is calling for **endurance**.

Now he adds some **reassuring** thoughts, quoting briefly from a Greek Version of the Prophet Habakkuk.

(Verse 37)

For, "Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay;

The coming one --- that is God---is definitely coming.

Furthermore, he will come without delay.

And the waiting time shall be "just a little while."

I believe that the preacher here is mostly looking forward to the Second Coming of Christ.

However the same words are spoken to and heard by God's people in all circumstances where they must endure trials and sufferings while awaiting deliverance from the Lord.

To quote Calvin, **whenever** God reaches out his hand to help us in any way, in that sense he may be said to come to us.

All of those things are **encouraging** to those who are waiting, particularly those who are suffering and enduring trials of various kinds.

However we must remember that this reassurance comes on top of the earlier statement that God's people need **endurance**.

Thus God never comes so quickly as to remove the ground of our **faith**.

Which explains the following Verse 38

(Verse 38)

but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him."

God's people, at all times and in all places, live by faith.

They are reassured by his promises: that he will come, that he will come without undue delay, and that his coming will seem like "a little while"

And they are reassured by these promises even when they must endure waiting,

 even waiting through suffering and trials.

 The Prophet says that God has no pleasure in those who are faithless, who shrink back, who become impatient.

 Again I hear Pastor Dennis saying, "What about you?!"

 Are we among the righteous who live by faith, or are we among the faithless who shrink back?

 In the final verse of this chapter, Verse 39, the preacher moves to answer this question.

Hebrews, Chapter 10, Verse 39

Would someone please read Hebrews Chapter 10, Verses **39** in **Japanese**.

 Thank you. Now would someone please read those same verses in English (ESV).

39 But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.

Thank you.

 Despite all of the difficult and scary things the preacher has said to his listeners, he takes this position in the end, that he and all or most of those whom he is addressing really **are** of the faith and bound for glory,.

 Let's pray now, before any discussion, that the same assurance belongs to each person here tonight.

Closing Prayer

Let's pray.

 Heavenly father, please be merciful to us, sinners all.

 Help us to examine ourselves, to recognize our sins, to confess them to you, and to repent of them.

 Help us to do this with a true heart, in the full assurance that you will pardon all sins for Jesus sake.

 We confess that our hearts are not always true, and almost never as true as they should be.

 Please sprinkle us with the blood of Christ and wash us with clean water, so that our consciences may be clean and we may draw near to you.

Please help us to love and encourage one another, to do the good works that you have prepared for us to do, and therefore to continue meeting together with other Christians as you have commanded, for our own good.

No matter how flawed the church and other Christians may sometimes be, please help us to really understand that the Church and other Christians are exactly what matter most to Jesus and are exactly why he came to die on a cross.

Please give us Jesus' own heart to care for his church and his people.

And finally please help us to grow stronger in our faith as time passes and, with your help, and the help of other believers, to endure faithfully until the end, even through trials and suffering, so that we will finally come into the holy places where Jesus has gone ahead to prepare a place for us.

In Jesus Name we pray.

Amen