

(Hebrews) ch.10:19-39

by Zac Poonen

The sermon explores the profound privileges and responsibilities of believers under the new covenant as revealed in Hebrews 10:19-25.

Duration: 1:17:12

Topics: "New Covenant", "Christian Living"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the privileges and blessings that believers have under the new covenant. They emphasize the importance of constantly thinking about how to encourage others to love more and do good deeds. The speaker also highlights the responsibility of believers to assemble together regularly, especially as the coming of the Lord draws near. They mention four requirements to enter into the new covenant and four responsibilities that believers have in fulfilling their role in the body of Christ. The sermon concludes with a focus on drawing near to God with a sincere and faithful heart, free from hypocrisy and doubt.

Transcript

We turn now to Hebrews and chapter 10 and verse 19. In the previous 18 verses he has been establishing the fact, which he says in verse 18, now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin. Jesus has finished the work for our redemption, for not only for our pardon, but also for our being freed from sin.

You remember the first promise in the New Testament that we read in Matthew 12:1, where the Lord spoke to Joseph and said, Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sin. That was the first promise, not just that he would forgive us, but that he would save us from our sin, and this has been accomplished through the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no more any need for any offering for sin, he says in verse 18, like there was under the old covenant, where every day they were offering sacrifices for sin.

By one offering, Hebrews 10:14, he has perfected forever those who are being sanctified. And now we come to Hebrews 10, verses 19-25, which is really, in a sense, the chief and most important passage of the whole letter to the Hebrews. We could call it the central message of the book of Hebrews, the central passage of the whole letter.

Everything revolves around what is written in this passage. Everything leads up to this passage and flows on from this passage, and in this passage we are told of the great blessings that are ours under the new covenant, the great privileges that are ours under the new covenant, how we can approach God under the new covenant and worship Him and commune with Him, and also the responsibility which the new covenant brings upon us. To whom much is given, much will be expected.

Now we read here in Hebrews 10, verses 19, 20 and 21, the four great blessings that are ours in this new covenant age. These were things that were not true under the old covenant. The first of these is, verse 19, we now have liberty, boldness, confidence to enter the most holy place.

Now under the old covenant, people could enter the most holy place, only the high priest, once a year. One man in the whole nation, once a year. But under the new covenant every child of God has freedom to enter the most holy place, the immediate presence of God every moment of his life.

The most holy place has been opened up under the new covenant. We can come to God and speak to Him as a child speaks to his father. Under the old covenant nobody could speak to God like this.

Sometimes we don't appreciate sufficiently the privilege that is ours in prayer, that we can come freely into the most holy place and draw near with confidence which privilege was not there under the old covenant. If you went to people under the old covenant before Christ came to earth and you told a Jew that he could walk into the most holy place and commune with God, he would think that was the greatest privilege any mortal man could ever have. That is our privilege under the new covenant, to go to God in prayer, to talk to Him and to hear Him speak to us.

The holiest has been opened up. That is the finished work. It's got nothing to do with whether you feel good or don't feel good.

It's finished. Then secondly, it says here this phrase, by the blood of Jesus. It goes on to say in verses 19 and 20, how the holiest place has been opened up.

By the blood of Jesus. The blood of Jesus was shed on Calvary's cross for the sins of man and it is because the sins of man have been completely atoned for through the shed blood of Jesus that we can go into the most holy place. Under the old covenant, people could go into the most holy place.

The high priest could go there only with blood which he put upon the mercy seat. Now the blood of Jesus, which is better than the blood of bulls and goats, as we read in Hebrews 10 and verse 4 about the blood of bulls and goats, but the blood of Jesus is far superior to that. We now come freely into the most holy place because that blood has cleansed us thoroughly.

All our sins have been blotted out, cleansed in the blood. God gives us a clean heart and we don't have to call it unclean anymore. We have to rejoice in the fact that the blood of Jesus cleanses us continually.

If we walk in the light, it doesn't cleanse everybody, it cleanses only those who walk in the light and who are honest and straightforward. They can come into the most holy place freely. And then thirdly we read about the new and living way, verse 20, a new and living way which Jesus has opened or inaugurated for us through the veil that is his flesh.

Jesus came to earth in our flesh. We read in Romans 8.3 that for our redemption God sent his son in the likeness of sinful flesh and through his flesh he made a way by which we can enter into the most holy

place. Here the picture is of the veil that hung between the holy place and the most holy place that shut out the presence of God.

And that veil we are told in Hebrews 10:20 is symbolic of the flesh which Jesus took on when he came to earth. And that veil was rent from top to bottom and that means Romans 8:3 sin was condemned in the flesh of Jesus. How did this take place? Jesus was tempted in all points like as we are.

We are tempted, we are told in James 1 and verses 14 and 15, we are tempted through the desires in our flesh. When we give into those desires sin is conceived. But Jesus never gave into those desires.

So he never sinned. And the result was that veil of the flesh was rent. Sin was judged in the flesh.

It was condemned in the flesh. It was overcome in the flesh of Jesus. Every sin that we can commit, every temptation that can come to us, Jesus was tempted with, but he never sinned once.

And thus he opened a new and living way. The old way was a way of death which we walked in, but he opened a way of life, freedom from sin's power. Thus we enter the most holy place.

The veil is torn, the power of the flesh is gone. Sin can no longer have dominion over us. And fourthly we read, verse 21, we have a high priest over the house of God.

When we enter into the most holy place, what do we find there? Jesus is our high priest interceding for us, praying for us. And because of these four established truths the holiest opened up, the blood of Jesus shed, the new and living way through the flesh of Jesus inaugurated, and he standing there as our high priest, we can enjoy the privileges of worship under the new covenant. We were looking at Hebrews 10, verses 19 to 25, which we said was the central passage of the whole letter to Hebrews.

We saw last week in verses 19 to 21 some of the great privileges that are ours under this new covenant. The most holy place, the immediate presence of God, is open to us. And how is this being made possible? By the shed blood of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins.

By a new and living way that he has made through his flesh, having condemned sin in his flesh, made a way for us to follow him into the most holy place. And when we enter the most holy place we find that Jesus himself is there as our high priest interceding for us. These are the facts that we looked at last week.

Now let's look today at verses 22, primarily. It goes on in the remaining verses to tell us about the duties that we are called to. But first of all, we are told to draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

And then he goes on in verse 23, 24 and 25 to say, let us hold fast the profession of our faith, of our hope. Let us consider one another to love, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together. Here we read in verse 22, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our body washed with pure water.

Now in this verse there is reference to our heart, that is the inner man, and to our body, which is the outer man. And as we come near to God into the most holy place, we are to remember that God is interested in our heart and in our body. Notice, for example, in James chapter 4, verse 8, where we find almost similar words.

Draw near to God, that is, into the most holy place, and He will draw near to you. And how are we to draw near to God? Cleanse your hands, you sinners, that is, your body, free from sin, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. To be double-minded is to be unbelieving, hesitant in believing God.

Purify your hearts, and there we find in verse 8 the body and the heart. Who shall ascend into the holy hill of the Lord? He who has clean hands and a pure heart. Both are necessary.

In other words, our internal life, which no one but God can see, and our external life, which others can see. So both are necessary. So we read in Psalm 15, verses 1 and 2, working righteousness externally and speaking truth in the heart.

And that is why we are told in Hebrews 10.22, Let us draw near with a true heart. What type of a heart must we have? A heart which is true and sincere, free from hypocrisy, free from a double attitude. A sincere heart.

God appreciates sincerity. There may be many things we are ignorant of. God will overlook them.

But He can never overlook insincerity. We may not know the scriptures. We can be excused for that.

We may not know the promises of God. We can be excused for that. But never for insincerity.

Jesus hit out against hypocrisy more than anything else. How do we draw near to God under the new covenant? Let us draw near with a sincere heart and with a heart which is full of faith. Notice, it is a heart that is to be full of faith, not our heads.

Many Christians have a lot of faith in their heads, but no faith in their heart, and therefore they are not saved. Salvation comes through faith in the heart, and there is a world of difference between faith in the head and faith in the heart. It can make the difference between hell and heaven to a person.

We read in Romans 10, verse 9, If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, there again the body, and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead. Verse 10 With the heart man believes. The heart and the body are linked together.

Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks, and faith, we are told in Romans 10, 10, is something that is in man's heart, not in his head. The devil has faith in his head, and many Christians have got faith in their heads. In other words, they read the Bible and believe it, but it does not make any difference in their life because that faith has not entered into their heart.

It has not become a living thing. It has not saved their soul. When a man has faith in his heart, he commits his whole life to that which he believes.

That is the evidence of faith in the heart. That is what it means to be wholehearted, the whole heart trusting completely and therefore committing oneself completely to that which one believes. Paul says to the Roman Christians in Romans chapter 6, and verse 17, Thanks be to God that you who are the servants of sin have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered to you and you were freed from sin.

Many are not freed from sin because they have not obeyed from the heart. So faith is to be in the heart, which brings the committal of our life, and it is said here we are to come here with the fullness of faith, full assurance of faith. Further, our hearts are to be sprinkled from an evil conscience.

We are to have a clean conscience, and the conscience is a part of our heart, part of the spirit in man. That is to be clean, and the only way to be clean is by confessing and forsaking our sin. If we walk in the light as he is in the light, the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin, and then we have a clean conscience.

Then we can draw near to God the clean conscience because our hearts have been sprinkled clean through the blood of Jesus Christ. If we walk in the light as he is in the light, if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us. Then we can come with a clean conscience because we have received God's mercy and the blood of Christ has cleansed us.

So we are told we are to draw near with a sincere heart, a heart full of faith, and a heart sprinkled clean from an evil conscience. Three things about the heart, and then one thing about the body. Our body is washed with pure water.

The symbolism here is of water symbolizing the life of the Spirit and coming through the word of God. Jesus cleanses the church, we are told in Ephesians 5, through the washing of water with the word of God, and that is the washing of the life that comes to us through the Holy Spirit with the word of God. Our external life is to be cleansed by the life that comes to us through the word of God.

Our bodies must be in subjection to the Holy Spirit, not in subjection to our own animal passions. That is what it means to have our bodies washed with pure water, our hearts sincere, full of faith, and cleansed from an evil conscience, and our body under the guidance and the cleansing of the water of life through the word of God. It is thus that we enter into the most holy place and enjoy the privileges of the new covenant.

We turn now to Hebrews chapter 10, verses 22-25. We were looking at verses 19-25 as the central passage of this letter, and we have seen how the most holy place has been opened up, the blood of Jesus has been shed, the new and living way has been inaugurated, and our great High Priest stands at the right hand of the Father. We also saw in verse 22 how we are to draw near with a sincere heart, a heart full of faith, a heart sprinkled clean from an evil conscience, and our body washed with the water of life through the word of God.

Now we would like to look at verses 22-25, where we have four exhortations given us concerning what we are to do now that we have entered into the most holy place. The privileges first shown us in verses 19-21, the way by which we are to enter is shown us in verse 22, and what we are to do once we enter is told us in verses 22-25. These are our responsibilities once we enter into the new covenant.

First of all, verse 22, let us draw near in faith. In other words, we are not to neglect this privilege. We are not to say, well, praise the Lord, the most holy place has been opened up, praise the Lord, the blood of Jesus has been shed, praise the Lord, the new and living way has been inaugurated, praise the Lord, we have a high priest in the most holy place.

That is not enough. We are to take advantage of this privilege. We are to avail ourselves of this great honor that God has given us.

We are to avail ourselves of this great privilege that is ours, that Jesus has purchased for us at such tremendous cost. What would you think if someone paid fifteen thousand rupees and got a very expensive air ticket for you to travel from one place to another, and you just despised that privilege and tore up that

ticket or thought lightly of it? What would your friend think if you treated that which he purchased for you at such great cost? And what do you think Jesus thinks when he has opened the new and living way to enter the most holy place at such tremendous cost by shedding his blood, by walking faithfully through thirty-three and a half years and inaugurating the new and living way through his flesh? And if we do not avail of it, if we do not come into the most holy place and live there, if we do not avail of this opportunity to enter into the new covenant, then it is a terrible crime. It is a great disappointment to God that that which he has purchased at such tremendous cost for us is ignored and neglected by us if we do not draw near.

So the first exhortation is the most appropriate one. Let us draw near. Let us enter into the most holy place and avail ourselves of this privilege that has been purchased for us.

And then we are told in verse 23 a second exhortation. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. What is the hope of the New Testament Christian? We are told in 1 John, chapter 3, verses 2 and 3, that we know that if Jesus should appear we shall be like him, because we shall see him just as he is.

And everyone who has this hope fixed on him purifies himself just as he is pure. So the hope of the Christian is that when we see Jesus face to face we shall be like him. It is not merely the fact that Jesus is coming again.

Many people think that the hope of the Christian is merely that Jesus will come again and that he will take us out of this world of sin and sorrow and make us walk the streets of gold in the New Jerusalem. But there is something greater than merely the fact that Jesus will save us from the sorrow of this world, that we shall be like him. This is the greatest thing that the New Testament Christian looks forward to.

His greatest passion is not to walk the streets of gold in heaven, nor to enter through the pearly gates, nor to enjoy life, but his greatest longing is to be like Jesus. That is what the spiritually minded Christian is looking forward to, not streets of gold and gates of pearl, but likeness to Jesus Christ. That is the hope, that when he shall come we shall be like him.

And everyone who has this hope purifies himself just as Jesus is pure. And so it says, let us hold fast the confession of this hope, Hebrews 10.23, that we shall be like him, because he who promised is faithful. How do we hold fast to this hope? By purifying ourselves as he is pure.

If we really have this hope in us, we shall make every effort to purify ourselves as Jesus is pure. That is what it means to hold fast the confession of this hope, without wavering, because he who promised is faithful. By his grace we shall be transformed and conformed increasingly to the likeness of Christ by the Holy Spirit as we walk the new and living way that Jesus has inaugurated.

Further, in verse 24, we are told, Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good works. These three exhortations, verses 22, 23 and 24, deal with faith, hope and love. We are told in 1 Corinthians 13, verse 13, Now abides faith, hope and love.

And here in verses 22, 23 and 24, we read of faith, hope and love. Let us draw near with a heart full of faith. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope.

The confession is, We shall be like Jesus when He comes. And we hold fast to that and walk the new and living way and become more and more like Him. He who promised is faithful.

Verse 24, Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love. Let us provoke one another not to anger, as the people of the world do, but to love. In other words, we are to think, How can I make my brother grow in love for the Church, for his fellow believers? How can I stir up love in his heart? How can I encourage him to do good works? This is what I am to consider all the time.

Let us consider, let us think, let us use our mind and our imagination to see how we can help one another to love more. We are never to provoke one another to wrath and anger and bitterness, but always seek to see how I can stir up love in my brother's heart for his fellow believers, and how I can encourage him to do good works. Then we come to the fourth exhortation, which leads on from loving one another.

Let us not forsake our assembling together. Let us assemble together frequently as we see the day drawing near. Why do we assemble together? To exhort one another, and to encourage one another.

And so this, too, is an exhortation, the privilege of those who enter into the most holy place, that they must meet together frequently. There is no place for those who enter into the new covenant to live on their own. They must meet together frequently, not once in a while, but frequently as the coming of the Lord draws near.

Do you believe the coming of the Lord is drawing near? Then it is your responsibility to meet together more frequently with your fellow believers with the purpose of encouraging one another. You need to encourage them, they need to encourage you, and to exhort one another. You need to exhort them and challenge them, and they need to exhort and challenge you.

Many people were neglecting this in the first century and are neglecting it today, but those who enter into the new covenant exhort one another daily so that their hearts can be kept from the deceitfulness of sin. Let us assemble together frequently. We have been looking at Hebrews chapter 10 verses 19 to 25 these past three weeks, and this passage, as I have said, is the central passage of the whole letter to the Hebrews.

Everything leads up to this, and everything flows on from this. And here is the central passage pointing out the distinctive privileges that are ours under the new covenant, how we can enter into those privileges, and what are the responsibilities that are ours once we enter into these privileges. So this passage really deals with three things, and we can look over what we have covered in the last three weeks and review this passage.

First of all, the privileges and blessings that are ours under the new covenant. We saw that in verses 19 to 21. I mentioned four things.

First of all, we have confidence to enter the most holy place. There is no hesitation now. There is no need to draw back.

We can come with boldness, with confidence. We have liberty, freedom to enter the most holy place. That which was shut off from people under the old covenant is ours today freely.

And secondly, this entrance into the most holy place is through or by the blood of Jesus. It has got nothing to do with us primarily. It has got primarily to do with what Jesus has done for us.

And in verses 19 to 21, there is no reference to us. It has got nothing to do with our feeling or with what we believe or don't believe. Everything that is mentioned in verses 19 to 21, all four things, are the result of

Jesus' work.

We must remember that it has got nothing to do with our feeling. The most holy place has been opened up, whether we feel like it or not. Jesus has done that work.

He said it is finished on the cross, and it was finished. The blood of Jesus has already been shed. Whether you believe it or not, whether you feel like it or not, that blood has been shed on the cross of Calvary, and that is a sufficient price for the atonement of the sins of any man.

Thirdly, the new and living way has been inaugurated through His flesh. Through the flesh of Jesus, He made a way by which sin has been overcome. Jesus taking our flesh overcame sin and made a way for us who in our flesh can overcome sin.

This is the significance of the new and living way being inaugurated through the flesh of Jesus, and that is symbolized by the veil in the temple which separated the most holy place from the holy place being rent. The whole meaning of that is explained for us only here in Hebrews 10.20. There is no other passage in Scripture which points out that that rending of the veil was the overcoming of sin in the flesh, the condemning of sin in the flesh, as Jesus inaugurated this new and living way by a sinless life in our flesh. That also has been accomplished.

What the Lord could not do, God did, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, an offering for sin. He condemned or overcame sin in the flesh so that the righteousness of the law, the will of God, might be fulfilled in us who do not walk anymore after the flesh, but according to the Spirit by the new and living way. Fourthly, the fourth blessing is that in the most holy place we have a great high priest interceding for us.

He is the high priest over the whole house of God, and he intercedes for us. So there we have the four distinctive blessings of the new covenant. The holiest opened up, the blood of Jesus shed, the new and living way inaugurated, the high priest standing interceding for us, all of which have got nothing to do with our faith or our feelings.

Those are facts that are true, and we have to look away from ourselves at those facts, at those things which are eternally true. But that does not mean we do not have any part. In verse 22 we read the second part of this central passage, and in the second part we are told how we can enter in.

In verse 19-21 we are told of what Jesus has done for us. In verse 22 we are told of what we have to do to enter in, how we can enter in, how we can draw near. We are told three things concerning the heart and one thing concerning the body.

Again four things. First of all, we are to draw near with a true heart, a sincere heart, free from all hypocrisy. Walking in the light means free from all deception and hypocrisy.

Secondly, we are to draw near with a heart full of faith, free from hypocrisy, first of all. Secondly, full of faith, without any doubt. The Bible says that a heart of unbelief is an evil heart.

Take care, brethren, lest there should be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart in falling away from the living God. He is not talking about an evil, unbelieving mind. No.

Unbelief is in the heart, just like faith is in the heart. We can have faith in the mind and yet unbelief in the heart, and that is terrible. Many Christians are like that.

They have faith in their minds, but it does not change their life because they have unbelief in their hearts. Their life is not committed. Their life is committed to what God has promised.

So we are to come with a true heart and with a heart full of faith. Thirdly, a heart sprinkled clean from an evil conscience. We are told in Hebrews 9.14 that our conscience is purged through the blood of Christ, and so through the blood we are cleansed, and only we can draw near.

All sin cleansed, a clean conscience. And then fourthly, Hebrews 10.22, our body washed with pure water. We saw that that water refers to the life of the Holy Spirit that comes to us through the word of God, Ephesians 5.26. Jesus cleansing us by the washing of water, and water is a symbol of the Holy Spirit giving us life, living water, rivers of living water.

Washing of water by the word, through the word of God, that life comes to us, and our bodies must be brought in subjection to the teaching of the word of God through the Holy Spirit and cleansed by that life, walking according to the standard laid down in the word of God, our bodies submitted to God's word. And then we have in verses 22-25 the four responsibilities that are ours when we enter the new covenant. What are these four responsibilities? First, let us draw near.

Let us not hold back. Let us not despise this privilege. Secondly, let us hold fast to the confession of our hope.

The reason why God brings us into the most holy place is that He might conform us increasingly to the likeness of Christ by the Holy Spirit. Our hope is that when Jesus comes again in glory, we shall be like Him. Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope, not having confidence in ourselves.

No, we have no confidence in our flesh, but, as it says in verse 23, He who promised is faithful. He will complete the work which He has begun in us by the Holy Spirit. Thirdly, let us consider one another how to stimulate one another to love.

Faith, verse 22, hope, verse 23, love, verse 24. Let us consider, let us think how we can provoke others to love others more, how we can encourage others to do good works as a result of their faith. This is what we should be thinking of all the time, how we can encourage others to love more and to do good deeds more.

And, fourthly, let us assemble together as often as we are able. In fact, it says here, even more as we see the coming of the Lord drawing near, encouraging one another and exhorting one another, challenging one another, seeking for the gifts of the Spirit that we might prophesy and exhort and encourage and comfort one another when we come together so that we might build one another up and thus build up the body of Christ through love all the more as we see the day drawing near. And so we have seen the four great blessings and privileges, verses 19 to 21, the four requirements to enter, verse 22, and the four responsibilities that are ours in the New Covenant.

Let us enjoy and fulfill our responsibilities under the New Covenant. We turn to Hebrews, chapter 10, and verse 26. We have been looking at the privileges that are ours under the New Covenant, and we saw that we have the most holy place opened up to us by the blood of Jesus, by new and living way which Jesus has inaugurated for us through the veil that is His flesh, that we read in verse 20.

And He Himself stands there as the great high priest over the house of God. And therefore we are called to draw near with a sincere heart and full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience, our body washed with pure water. And then we are told in verse 23 to 25 we are to draw near in faith, confess our hope, hold fast to that confession, consider one another in love, and not forsake the assembling of ourselves together.

These are our responsibilities. Now we already saw when we studied chapter 8 that the New Covenant was as much superior to the Old Covenant as the blood of Jesus and the body of Jesus is superior to the blood of bulls and goats. Therefore, because our privileges are greater, our responsibility also is greater.

The way we respond to the New Covenant can bring greater blessing than the way people responded to the Old Covenant, if they responded in a similar way. At the same time, whenever privilege increases, the possibility of judgment, if we disobey, also increases. In other words, if we reject the New Covenant, that's a far more serious thing than rejecting the Old Covenant.

And this is one of the things that He begins to speak of here in chapter 10, verse 26 following, and He comes to deal with that later on in chapter 12 as well. And so it says in verse 26, if we sin willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there remains no longer any sacrifice for sin. But instead of sacrifice, there remains a certain terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversary.

Now the reason is because under the Old Covenant, verse 28, anyone who set aside the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much greater will be the punishment for him who has trampled underfoot the Son of God and regarded as unclean the blood of the Covenant by which He was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of Grace. Now the question comes as to whom the apostle is speaking of.

Is he speaking of an unbeliever, or is he speaking about those who have believed? When we read verse 29 carefully, we are really left in no doubt. We are told that this refers to someone who had been sanctified by the blood of the Covenant. In the middle of verse 29, he regarded as unclean the blood of the New Covenant by which He was sanctified.

Now, no unbeliever is sanctified by the blood of the New Covenant. It refers to a believer who has been sanctified by the blood of the Covenant, and the possibility is that this man can now sin willfully verse 26. Now the word willfully is put there on purpose.

This is not accidental. This is not a slip-up, despite the man's best efforts, but this is a deliberate choosing of a way of sin, even after receiving the full knowledge of the truth. The truth he refers to there would be the truth that he has just spoken of in verses 15-25 preceding.

That is, the glorious truth of the New Covenant of the Most Holy Place being opened up, and after he has understood this fully and come to receive it, if he turns back, turns his back on all that God has done for him and sins deliberately against known light, then there remains no longer a sacrifice for sin. Now, these are quite serious words. The Bible exhorts us in Romans 11 to behold not only the goodness, but also the severity of God.

Romans 11.22 says, Behold then the kindness and also the severity of God. We have a tendency, as believers, to behold only the kindness of God. Now it is true that we have to behold the kindness of God,

and the kindness of God is mentioned first in that verse.

We have to know God's kindness. That is what drew us to Him, God's tenderness and gentleness with us. But we must also know the severity of God.

We are to know not only His grace, but also His fear. Otherwise we get a warped, twisted idea of God. If you behold only the kindness of God and refuse to consider His severity, you will not get a proper picture of God, and the God you worship will then no longer be the God of the New Testament, the God of the Bible, but it will be a God of your own imagination.

Equally, on the other hand, if you only consider the severity of God and do not consider His kindness, again you have a warped, twisted idea of God, and you do not have the God of the Bible. But the balance is when we, as it is exhorted in Romans 11, consider and behold the kindness and the severity of God. And so when we consider the promises of the New Covenant and the tremendous blessings that are promised, think of the kindness of God when He says something like, Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.

Isn't that kindness and goodness? Hebrews 10, verse 17? And boldness to enter the most holy place? Confidence to come right into the presence of God? Because Jesus has shed His blood, He has made a way through His flesh for us? This is all evidence of His kindness. But then we should not stop there. We must be willing also to consider His severity if we go on sinning willfully, verse 26.

After receiving the knowledge of the truth there no longer remains a sacrifice for sin, but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment. Now to whom is the apostle writing? We read in Hebrews chapter 3, verse 1, Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, it is to these holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, that He writes these words. If we sin willfully, He includes Himself, He includes those holy brethren, He includes these believers, and says if we sin willfully, and so there is the possibility of those who have come to understand and experience the blessings of the New Covenant and then who go on sinning willfully, and their punishment will be much more severe than those who died without mercy.

One would think what is described in verse 28 is severe enough. They died without mercy under the Old Covenant, but it says here how much more severe will be the punishment of those who now trample underfoot the Son of God, despise the blood that cleansed them, consider that blood something light that they could sin again, insult the spirit of grace who seeks to keep them from sinning, and so we are warned to take heed. If we consider the goodness and the severity of God, then we can grow up as balanced Christians enjoying the fullness of blessing in the New Covenant.

We were looking last week at Hebrews chapter 10, verses 26-29, and we saw there a warning for those who have come into the New Covenant. In verses 16-25 we had seen some of the blessings and the duties to which the New Covenant called us, but then immediately after telling us something of the great kindness and mercy and grace of God, He goes on to tell us of the severity of God to those who despise this New Covenant, those who sin willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth. To them there no longer remains a sacrifice for sin, but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment, because what they have trampled underfoot now is not Moses, who is a mere creature, but the Son of God Himself, who is the one who has become the mediator of the New Covenant.

The law came through Moses, but grace came through the Lord Jesus Christ, and the severity of rejecting the New Covenant is seen in the contrast between Moses and the Lord Jesus. If you despise Moses, you

died without mercy to the testimony of two or three witnesses, verse 28. If you despise the Lord Jesus, the mediator of the New Covenant, the judgment is that much more severe as the Lord Jesus is above Moses.

And we know that the difference between the Lord Jesus and Moses is infinite. One is the second person of the triune God, and the other, Moses, was a mere creature. So how much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled underfoot the Son of God? And further, as regarded as unclean, the blood of the Covenant.

This is not the blood of bulls and goats spoken of in verse 4 of chapter 10, but the blood of Jesus spoken of in verse 19. This blood of the New Covenant, and the difference in judgment between those who turn away from the New Covenant as compared to those who turn away from the Old, is the difference between the blood of Jesus and the blood of bulls and goats. Again, an infinite difference.

And thirdly, he has insulted the spirit of grace. All that God gave people under the Old Covenant was a written law externally. But under the New Covenant, God gives us his very person in the Holy Spirit who gives us grace.

And the difference is, in the Old Covenant, a written table of stone, two of them. Under the New Covenant, the person of the Holy Spirit within our heart. Look at the difference between the two.

That will be the difference in the degree of judgment in those who despise the Old Covenant and those who despise the New. So the point of verse 29 is to show that if under the Old Covenant, people turned away, they died without mercy. People who had come under the Old Covenant, but who turned away.

These are not people outside the Covenant who died without mercy. They're not the Egyptians and the Philistines, but the Israelites. Likewise, verse 29 is not talking about the heathen, but it's talking about believers, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, who sin willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth.

Now, as I said last week, many believers do not look at the severity of God, and therefore they have an imbalanced idea of God. They have a warped, twisted idea of the true God. They're seen as grace, but not as truth.

They're seen as love, but not as purity and holiness. And therefore, when they come to verses like this, they begin to indulge in tremendous intellectual gymnastics to try and make these verses mean something other than what they plainly mean. They come to these verses with the idea, well, this cannot apply to believers.

There are many, many believers who come to these verses with that idea already in their mind. These verses cannot apply to believers. And so they have to twist it to make it suit their preconceived theology.

And therefore they go into error. It's a serious thing to twist the word of God. Every word of God is tested, it says.

We have to submit to it, not try and make it fit into our preconceived ideas. It says very clearly that those who are sanctified by the blood of the covenant, verse 29, can sin willfully, verse 26, and thus get severe punishment. It's possible for those who are sanctified by the blood of the covenant to treat that blood as unclean.

Otherwise, verse 29 is meaningless. It's possible for such people to trample underfoot the Son of God and to insult the Spirit of grace, and thus to be lost eternally. Eternal security is promised to those who follow Jesus.

John 10, verse 27-29 is very clear. My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me, and I give to them eternal life, and they shall never perish. That is, those who are His sheep, which is manifested by the fact that they hear His voice and follow Him.

What about those who do not follow Him? Well, obviously they do perish. That's exactly what's spoken of here. For we know Him who said, verse 30, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, and the Lord will judge His people.

Very clear. His people. Not the heathen, but His people.

And it is His people the Lord is going to judge. That's what's spoken of here. And in relation to His people, it says in verse 31, it is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

He who has ears, let him hear, dear friends. Be willing to lay aside the traditions that you have heard from your fathers, from the elders of your church, who have taught you and lulled you into a spiritual sleep and blinded you to the severity of God. Dear friends, God is kind, but behold His severity also.

He wants to blot out our sins, but behold His severity to those who sin willfully. The Lord will judge His people. Are you one of His people? The Lord will judge His people if they sin willfully.

And it's a terrifying thing for those people to fall into the hands of the living God. But, remember the former days, it says in verse 32. He's speaking again to these believers.

To them He is saying, be careful that you do not sin. You have come into the new covenant, you have come under grace. And the privilege of being under grace brings with it the responsibility that you do not sin.

See Romans chapter 6, verse 14 and 15. For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under the old covenant, but under the new covenant. Do you see the difference? The mark of those who have come into the new covenant is they have come to a place where sin doesn't rule over them.

It is not that it is impossible for them to sin. They can sin any moment, but they need not. Sin is no longer master.

Sin's power over them is broken as long as they remain under grace, by the grace of God. But if they move away from that grace, and fall away from God's grace, then sin again begins to rule over them. And the question that comes in Romans 6.15 after that statement of victory is, what then? Shall we sin even once? That's the meaning in the original.

Shall we sin even once now? Because we are not under law, but under grace? May it never be. That's a misunderstanding of grace. That is insulting, the spirit of grace, as it says in Hebrews 10.29. People under the old covenant never knew the Holy Spirit as the spirit who gives grace.

It is only prophesied in Zechariah 12, verse 10, that one day God would pour out the spirit of grace upon his people. That came on the day of Pentecost. Now we have grace.

But remember the former days, when after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of suffering. Hebrews 10.32. In the former days, he's speaking again about believers who were enlightened. To them, he is saying, it is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Now, the reason I've emphasized this considerably in the last study and in this present one, is to remove from our mind preconceived ideas that have given us a distorted image of God. It's only when we have a true image of God, that we can worship him, that our Christian lives will be balanced and right. We turn now to Hebrews 10.32. He has just spoken in the previous six verses about the severity of God, after having first spoken about the kindness of God, in verses 16 to 25, about it being a terrifying thing, verse 31, to fall into the hands of the living God.

And he's referring to the Lord's people. As it says in the last part of verse 30, the Lord will judge his people. But, verse 32, he tells these believers to whom he writes, there is no need for you to come into that condition.

There is no need for you to sin willfully. Yes, that possibility exists, but there's no need for you to go into it. Remember the former days, when after being enlightened, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, you endured a great conflict of suffering.

He's telling them that in the beginning of the Christian life, when they came out from Judaism, they came out from the Jewish faith and surrendered their lives to the Lord Jesus, were cast out by their families, they were persecuted by the people in the synagogue, and by others, they endured. They endured such a lot. They were willing to suffer so much, and they were wholehearted in desiring to turn from sin, which had crucified the Lord Jesus.

He says, remember those days. Why are you slackening off now? In those days, you suffered partly, verse 33, by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. In other words, they had suffered themselves, and then they had also suffered through sharing with those who were being persecuted.

Because they showed sympathy to the prisoners, who had suffered because of their faith, and they accepted joyfully the seizure of their property, people took away their goods, knowing that they would not fight, because they were followers of Jesus, who had told them not to fight. And they allowed their possessions to be shared with those who were in need. That's also included.

It says in verse 34, they had sympathy to the prisoners. And the reason why they had this loose attitude to material things, no attachment to material things, an open hand, willing to give to other fellow believers who were in need, willing to let people take away from them things, and never to fight for it, was because they knew that in heaven they had a better possession and an abiding one. Those early Christians were gripped by the fact that their inheritance was in heaven.

It's not that they did not have material things, but they were not attached to material things. It's one thing to have material things, it's another thing to desire more and more of them, and to be attached to them. The Bible forbids us from being attached to material things, and from having more and more of them, desiring more and more of them.

But God gives us these things to use, and if one day it pleases God to have them taken away through theft, or through seizure, or through force, or through our own voluntary giving to others who are in need,

we can rejoice. It says they took it joyfully. They didn't give their material goods to their fellow believers in grudgingly, but gladly.

Their property was seized, and they accepted it. They suffered because they were Christians, and they did not complain about it. They took it joyfully, because they knew that in heaven they had a better possession.

Now remember that all this leads on from what we read in verse 19 about having boldness to enter the most holy place through the blood of Jesus. It's only as we enter into the most holy place and live there and see the glory of God that material possessions will lose their value to us. Why is it that so many believers have such a clinging attitude to material things? It's very obvious that they have not entered into the most holy place.

Like it says in the little chorus we sing, turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face, and then the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace. But what about those who don't see His glory and grace? They will think that the things of earth are of great value, and they'll run after it and pursue it and fight for it. But those who enter into the most holy place and see the glory of God and the grace of God, they hang loose on material things.

They don't hang on tight to material things. They use them, but they're not attached to them. And if they lose them one day, that's all right.

They praise God. Like Job, when he lost all his property, he could praise God and say, thank you, Lord, you gave and you have taken away. Think of a man who lived even before the old covenant was established, before the law of Moses, who had such a devotion to God that he realized that the things of earth didn't have any value.

How much more those who come under the new covenant need to have this attitude to material things? And so the apostle is reminding these Hebrew Christians in verses 32 to 34 of those former days when they were willing to forsake everything, when they suffered in themselves and they denied themselves and followed Jesus, took up the cross and remained free from sin. He says now, verse 35, do not throw away that confidence, because it has a great reward. Don't throw away that confidence.

You had it. Now don't throw it away. Cling on to it.

Hold tight to this. Don't lose your grip. Don't relax your grip on your confidence.

This is the meaning of that phrase. Don't even relax your grip, but hold tight to your confidence, which has a great reward, the confidence that in heaven you have a more abiding substance. That is the confession that we are to make.

Jesus said before Pilate, I am a king, but my kingdom is not of this world, otherwise my servants would fight for the things of this world. What are the things of this world? Honor, pleasure, material things, position, all these things. The disciples of Jesus do not fight for them, because they are following a master whose kingdom is not of this world, and our kingdom is not of this world.

We are to be kings, and so in the spiritual realm, not in the material realm. And so it says, you have need of endurance, verse 36. You're looking for a reward very quickly.

You're looking for a reward here on this earth, but the Lord says your reward is to come in heaven. So now that you've done the will of God, you've obeyed God, now you need endurance so that you may receive what was promised. You need to endure.

God has done so much for you. You have been blessed. You have received God's blessing.

You have done His will. Now don't expect an reward, but be patient. You have need of patience.

Very often in the Christian life, we are tempted to give up. That temptation comes to everybody. It even came to the Apostle Paul.

But he said in 2 Corinthians 4, verse 1, therefore having received this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not faint. And again it says in 2 Corinthians 4, verse 16, for which cause we do not faint. All our afflictions do not make us give up, because we've received such a glorious ministry.

We've come into the new covenant. We are willing to be patient. We've done the will of God, but we're not expecting an immediate reward.

We're willing to be patient that in God's own time He will give us a reward. For yet a little while, verse 37, and He who is coming will come and will not delay. He is coming very soon.

So until that time, we are to live by faith, verse 38, and not draw back. If we draw back, verse 38, God will have no pleasure in us. But we are not of those who draw back, verse 39, to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul, who will persevere until the end.

We turn now again to Hebrews chapter 10, and verse 37. He has been speaking in the previous verses of the need of believers to endure until the end. You have need of endurance.

You have done the will of God, true, verse 36, but now, in order to receive what has been promised, you have need of endurance, not only of faith, but of endurance, patience. Those who inherit the promises are those who have faith plus endurance, as we saw in Hebrews chapter 6, verses 12 and 15. Faith and endurance, or faith plus patience, makes us possess the promise.

This is one of the main emphases in the book of Hebrews. You have need of patience, you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. For yet, in a little while, he who is coming will come, and he will not delay.

The Lord is coming very soon, and even in the first century, an apostle could write, in a little while, he who is coming will come. How much more we who live in the twentieth century? This is God's desire that all his children live in the constant expectation of his coming. It is not wrong for an apostle to say, we will be caught up, including himself.

It is not wrong for an apostle to say, in a little while he will come. These are the last days in the first century, because that is the way God wants his children to live all the time. It is not a question of intellectually trying to argue.

Well, that has been twenty centuries ago that that was said. To answer that question, Peter says, one day with the Lord is a thousand years. It has just been less than twenty days, as far as God is concerned, since Jesus went up to heaven.

Just twenty days since Jesus went up to heaven. We are in the last days. Any moment he will come.

In a little while he will come, and then it will have been worth it all to have suffered, to have been faithful, to have endured until the end. You will see in that day when you get your reward and you possess God's promise that all the suffering we went through would have been worth it all. All the loss we suffered, all the things we denied ourselves in, all the places where we gave up our rights, every point at which we denied ourselves and took up the cross, we will have no regrets on it at all.

Who is the one who will have a regret when Christ comes back? Those who did not deny themselves, those who did not take up the cross when God gave them the opportunity, those who did not bear in their body the dying of Jesus. But those who have received the cross and accepted it, they will have no regrets. Those who have not drawn back are those who have lived by faith.

In verse thirty-eight we see a contrast. My righteous one shall live by faith. If he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.

Here is a contrast. Either we live by faith or we shrink back. Why does a person shrink back? Only one reason.

Because he does not want to deny himself. He does not want to die to himself. He does not want to suffer in the flesh.

In contrast, he wants to indulge the flesh and take pleasure in satisfying the flesh. That is why he does not go forward. That is why he does not follow Jesus wholeheartedly.

At some point of temptation, he shrinks back and goes into pleasure instead of going forward with Jesus along the way of suffering and self-denial and dying to oneself. Think, for example, when someone irritates you and you have a glorious opportunity at that moment to follow Jesus who denied himself and who would not revile back, who would bear injustice, bear the mocking and scorn of others, bear the imperfections in others. What an opportunity! And at that moment, instead of following Jesus, we can shrink back and say, I do not want to go that way.

I do not want to deny myself. And then, of course, I can lose my temper. And then it says, if any man draws back, or if he draws back, this one who has been living by faith up until this time, he draws back.

God says, my soul will have no pleasure in him. The very fact that it says, if he shrinks back, points out to us again the possibility that one who is living by faith can shrink back. There is no teaching in the that once you have put your trust in the Lord, it is impossible to shrink back.

If that were the case, many, many large sections of scripture could be completely removed from the Bible. It is tragic that some people have done that, maybe in ignorance, maybe as a result of tradition, but they have always suffered. If they drink poison, even in sincerity, we still die.

Our sincerity is not going to save us from the effects of the poison. We may have been sincere, but if traditions have poisoned our thinking and blinded us to the truth, we can still be eternally lost. If we do not make the word of God our guide, the word of God is our guide.

We are called to live by faith, to live in trust. To live by faith is to live in dependence upon God, to have no confidence in the flesh, to hate the flesh, to follow Jesus. That is to live by faith.

That is the one who is righteous. That is the man who is walking along the path of the righteous. We read in Proverbs 4, verse 18, that the path of the righteous is like the shining light that shines more and more and more until the perfect day.

Right until that day when Jesus comes back in glory, the path shines brighter and brighter and brighter. It does not get dimmer and then brighter again, dimmer and brighter again. No, it does not.

Because that is the way of those who walk by faith. To live in dependence upon God is to be conformed increasingly to the likeness of Jesus. There is no going back.

And so we need to see this contrast between living by faith and shrinking back. A man who shrinks back is not living by faith. And living by faith, spoken of in verse 38, has got absolutely nothing to do with the currently accepted usage of that phrase in Christian circles of full-time workers living by faith, all of which means is that the man does not get a regular income.

He lives on an irregular income, on gifts that he receives. But that is not the meaning of living by faith in the Bible. In the Bible, you never once read of this phrase, living by faith, being related to money.

Every place where you find this phrase, living by faith, refers to righteousness of life. It says the righteous one shall live by faith. It's righteousness of life.

It includes money. But it includes many other things that are much more important than money. It includes righteousness in money matters.

It's got nothing to do with a regular or an irregular income. And so we shouldn't misunderstand this phrase and use it the way tradition has taught us to use it. The just, the righteous shall live by faith, and the mark of those who live by faith is what? Not that they get an irregular income, but that they do not shrink back in the moment of temptation.

They go through into victory, overcoming temptation. They don't shrink back into the flesh and give in to that temptation. When temptation seeks to draw them backwards into sin, no, they forsake it and go forwards into the fullness of life in Jesus.

And so he says in verse 39, we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith. There again the contrast. We are not of those who shrink back, but of those who have faith.

And the mark of those who have faith is that they do not shrink back, and the end result is they preserve, verse 39, their soul. They preserve their soul. And so this is the thing that we need to bear in mind.

This is the introduction to chapter 11, where he goes on to speak about faith even among those in the Old Testament. But we need to see what faith really means. It means we press forward, we endure until the end, and we do not shrink back.

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