

HEBREWS VERSE BY VERSE - The New and Living Way - Part forty

Sunday, January 21st, 2018 - 10:00 a.m. - Teaching #2023

Pastor Don Horban - Cedarview Community Church, Newmarket, ON

“LET US DRAW NEAR....LET US HOLD FAST....LET US CONSIDER”

Hebrews 10:19-23 - “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. [23] Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.”

This text opens up the second main portion of the book of Hebrews. The theology turns into application, the truth into action. And the great value of today’s text is it demonstrates the way our minds are to process and engage our lives in the things we have come to know from God’s Word. How does Biblical data become living bread?

This text is all about **making connections** with Biblical statements. It’s about **forging practical links** with the things we have learned previously. You can see the Holy Spirit pulling us along through the mental process. First He calls our minds **backward** to the things just taught - “...since we have....” (19), “...since we have....” (21) - and then the Spirit presses our minds **forward** into the logical conclusions - “...let us draw near....” (22), “...Let us hold fast....” (23). And in next Sunday’s text, “...let us consider....” (24).

So we start to see a **momentum** in understanding and application - “**Since we know this, let us do that. Since we have discovered this we ought to be doing that.**” So we are prompted into this rhythm of seeing - “**Since this, then that.**” This is how the Spirit **takes us from** reading to feeding on the logic of Biblical revelation. This is what turns **ideas** into **bread**. You can starve spiritually while reading your Bible if you don’t read your Bible **aggressively following through on the forged links between truth and application right in the text**.

So this text isn’t just about certain doctrinal ideas from the letter to the Hebrews. It’s also a text about **how to read your Bible**. It’s a text about **connecting the dots** when you sit at devotions or listen to a sermon. This is the Holy Spirit’s way of moving us from a way of **knowing** to a way of **living**.

1) **YOU SHOULD HAVE MORE CONFIDENCE IN “DRAWING NEAR” TO GOD THAN ABRAHAM OR DAVID EVER DID**

Hebrews 10:19-21 - “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....”

Our writer spells out **four benefits** of the new covenant opened up to us through the sacrifice of Christ’s death. And where he’s taking us with these benefits is spelled out in the first words of the very next verse - **Hebrews 10:22** - “**let us draw near....**”

In other words, thinking through these four benefits of the new covenant will help a sinner like I **draw closer** to a holy God rather than **shy away in fear** from a holy God. If I don’t ponder deeply these four benefits of the new covenant my condemning heart will become my own worst enemy spiritually. I will think I have no business drawing near to God. I will avoid Him and consider Him unapproachable just when I need Him most. So there’s a lot at stake here. Consider carefully these four benefits of the new covenant:

- a) **The new covenant inspires confidence because all the obstacles to drawing near to God have been removed - “...since we have confidence....” (19).**

There were plenty of obstacles under the old covenant. There was the **curse of a law, broken and unkept**. Do you remember the **boundaries** set around the mountain when the law of commandment was given to Moses? A fence was needed just to keep people or animals from even **approaching** the mountain. They were kept from “**drawing near**” that holy spot.

Then there was the **separation of the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies** in the tabernacle and temple. Do you

remember what happened if anyone but the priest and high priest entered those sacred places? They died. And do you remember how many times people had to **bring their sacrifices for sin** to the priest? Every day.

This is the covenant king David lived his whole life under. He was reminded of his **continuous, un-removed, standing sin** every day of his life.

But consider the roots of new covenant **confidence**. The law of God has been perfectly fulfilled in the Lamb of God slain in my place. His sinless life fulfilled every detail perfectly. There is an **accomplished righteousness** in the presence of God on my behalf. God doesn't condemn one broken law in Don Horban as I stand in the sinless sacrifice of Christ Jesus.

Consider also there are no longer **any sacrifices offered for my sins**. This was the point our writer made in **Hebrews 10:18** - "**Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.**" This is my ongoing reminder that my sins have been **permanently dealt with**. There is nothing yet required for reconciliation with God.

Consider also the old covenant visible **separation from the presence of God**. The high priest went through a heavy curtain that separated the Holy of Holies from every other place. And when the High Priest went in alone he **pulled that curtain shut behind him**. That curtain was to bar all others from coming into that dwelling place of God. And **that** was the curtain torn from top to bottom when Jesus died on the cross. The **barrier** was permanently removed.

We're being led to **connect the dots** in our text. It's the removal of these obstacles that inspires confidence to draw near to God (22). Remember, David never saw any of this in his lifetime. On to benefit number two:

- b) ***The way you and I approach a holy God is described as both "new" and "living" - Hebrews 10:20a - "...by the new and living way...."***

We're meant to see more than beautiful poetic language in these two words. They describe a totally different reality than ever existed under the old covenant. I hope I can help make you see how precious both of these adjectives are.

The way to drawing near to God is **new** not merely because it is **different** from what was before. In other words the **newness** of the new covenant isn't just that it's **an additional** idea God had. The new covenant isn't new just because it's a **replacement**.

Our new covenant access to God is called **new** in the sense that it is totally **unlike** the old covenant that is described as **obsolete** and **vanishing** - **Hebrews 8:13** - "**In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.**"

Notice that phrase, **"growing old."** It speaks of diminished power and vigor. It speaks of failing strength. It speaks of something **tired**.

This helps define the **newness** of the new covenant. It isn't a **weakening covenant**. It isn't an **aging** covenant. There is never any **lack** in it. It comes into every life with the same **freshness** as when it was first birthed. After reaching into the sinful, decaying hearts of multiplied millions it comes into the next heart with no decrease in effectiveness or power or hope. It is **always** new and **never** aging. It's as though each redeemed sinner is the very **first** redeemed sinner in the eyes of this **new** covenant.

In addition to being called **"new"** our covenant is called **"living"** - **"...by the new and living way...."** (20). The new covenant is **living** in the sense that it **produces** the life it **requires**. The new covenant is a **generating** covenant. It was initiated by the One who conquered death. It is implanted in our hearts and minds by the living Spirit of God Himself. It is an **overcoming** covenant - **Romans 8:1-2** - "**There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. [2] For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.**"

You can see this covenant *carries its own energy*. It *creates* what it *demand*s. This is what those words, “...set you free in Christ Jesus...” mean. This is not just *emotional* freedom. This is *moral* and *spiritual* freedom. This is the freedom to grow into being what you were never free to be before.

On to the third benefit of the new covenant:

- c) ***The torn flesh of Christ’s body is the proof of the open way and the torn curtain - Hebrews 10:20 - “...by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh...”***

In just a few sentences our writer is going to invite - in fact, *urge* - all these doubting, struggling believers to “...draw near with a true heart with full assurance of faith...” (22). This would have been an outrageous thought under the old covenant. The veil in front of the Holy of Holies - the only place where any kind of temporary pardon could be established for the sins of the people - the veil in front of that place said “Keep Out!”, not, “Draw near!”

This is the central place of the crucified body of Christ in proper atonement theology. His broken body is still the *only* place where the way remains open to the redemptive grace of a just and holy God. No other ways were ever opened. And there never will be another option. But as surely as Christ died - as surely as His body was broken and His blood shed - that opened way will never be closed to the repentant heart.

Consider the fourth benefit of the new covenant:

- d) ***The new covenant establishes our corporate worship as surely as our private devotion - Hebrews 10:21 - “...and since we have a great priest over the house of God...”***

There is so much fresh consideration needed here. How prone we all are to think only of our *personal* access to God provided through Christ’s sacrifice. Our writer insists Christ’s new covenant sacrifice was made with the “house of God” in view. There was a *corporate purpose* in Christ’s shed blood. He died for your place in His Church. He died to ensure your chair this morning wouldn’t be empty and Christ-denying. He died to purchase *corporate celebration*. He died to purchase *corporate witness*.

It takes thoughtfulness to savor this aspect of the cross. It takes the *self-denial* of treasuring our own time and schedules over the miraculous privilege of corporate life. Every time you park your car, trudge through the snow, hang up your coat, take your kids to the washroom, and finally find your favorite seat in the sanctuary *a miracle is about to happen*.

God is about allow - to *invite* - the likes of us to bring our collective voices before Him in praise and adoration. We can urge one another on in faith, obedience and prayer for one another. This is not like going to the theater or the concert or the country club. This transcends all of those. All of this - this *household of God* - happens through, and *only* through, the shed blood of Christ.

It shallows out our church life tragically when we think of our meeting this morning merely as something we *do*. This is something Christ’s redemption has *created* just as surely as God *created* the heavens and the earth. An eternal, corporate people has been divinely created. It is God’s collective building project and He loves it dearly. Never belittle what God so loves.

Remember where we are. We’ve been considering *four benefits of the new covenant over the old*. And our writer’s logic is *since these things are true* we are now enabled - like was never possible before - to do certain things. We are to work this through in our minds. We are to connect the dots.

And here’s where this leads us next:

- 2) **WE MUST NEVER ALLOW ANYTHING IN OUR INNER SELVES TO KEEP US AWAY FROM FATHER GOD**

Hebrews 10:22 - “...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.”

Because this verse is the tail end of one continuous sentence begun at verse 19, the *“Therefore”* at the beginning of verse 19 applies to the conclusion of verse 22 - *“Therefore(19)...let us draw near with a true heart and full assurance of faith....”(22)*.

That *“Therefore”* means God has done all He can possibly do to *encourage* our drawing near. He has removed the barriers. He has revealed a finished sacrifice in Christ. He has given all He can give. We are to *weigh this evidence*. Then we are to come to Him. We are to *“draw near.”*

- a) ***We are to draw near with hearts full of faith and empty of conniving duplicity - Hebrews 10:22a - “...let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience....”***

Notice the repeated emphasis on the condition of the *heart* in these words. On the positive side our hearts are to be *“true,”* and in *“full assurance of faith.”* On the negative side our hearts are to be *“clean from an evil conscience....”*

I think these are different ways of teaching the same idea. While none of us possesses a *sinless* heart (that’s why we need to draw near in the first place) we must come with *pure* hearts. And *sinless* and *pure* are not the same thing.

Purity of heart means our hearts must be honest and uniform in their dependence on Christ. They can’t be trying to *manipulate* God. They can’t be trying to *cover up a hidden agenda* while appearing devoted to God. This kind of scheming is not easy to root out. It is easy for me to want God’s help and grace in *one* area of my life while cherishing self-rule in another.

And because no one else can *see* my heart the only pressure I will feel to be totally honest and thorough will come from the Holy Spirit. And I’m the only one who will ever know if I’m listening to Him.

That’s what those words mean about my heart being *“true”* and *“cleansed from an evil conscience”(22)*. My heart is *“true”* in the sense that I never *push past* the voice of the Spirit when I deal with God - when I *“draw near.”*

- b) ***We are to draw near with a willingness to find transforming grace for outwardly binding habits - Hebrews 10:22b - “...and our bodies washed with pure water.”***

There are some who think this is a reference to Christian baptism. But most commentaries don’t see any connection to baptism in these words. I think it’s best to explain them as the *external* application of the *heart* cleaning just mentioned in the same context.

There are *outward, visible sins* that mess up homes and churches and individuals. And many times we almost despair for transformation. Hopelessness can keep us from *“drawing near.”*

Our writer wants to feed hope. So many of the needs Jesus triumphed over were *outward* and *visible* in nature. He even raised physical bodies from the grave. Trust God’s grace with the sins that form destructive habits and the needs that break your heart. *“Draw near.”*

- 3) **NEVER, NEVER, NEVER TAKE YOUR FAITH IN CHRIST LIGHTLY**

Hebrews 10:23 - “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.”

We don’t use that old English anymore. *“Hold fast”* doesn’t carry much relevance in contemporary speech. But it’s not so dusty we can’t see what our writer is saying.

If I tell you to *“hold fast”* to something, what am I implying? I’m telling you whatever you’re grasping isn’t easily retained. I’m telling you there are active agencies pulling it away from you. There are forces in an *opposite, contrary direction*.

We need to be clear in our understanding. We are saved by *faith* and *not* by *works*. True enough. And yet it takes *considerable work to “hold fast” our faith*. The only thing that will happen to your faith while you’re *not* thinking about it is it will quietly *slip away*.

Here's what that means. There is more power and transformation to be found in regular Christian maintenance than the average Christian dreams. And more disasters creep into our souls by gradual, silent laziness than we discern until it's too late.

So don't **"waver."** Apparently I need to be **told** that. There is a **daily routineness** to a powerful Christian life. There are glorious moments, to be sure, but it's not going to be all fireworks. You can become all that God calls you to be. Every promise of God will be found trustworthy over time. Christ will put every enemy under His feet.