

The Book of Hebrews #2 Bible Study Lesson 3

Hebrews 10:19-25 Questions

My Sins are Many, But God's Mercies are More

Introduction:

(J. MacArthur) There are only two possible consequences to knowing the gospel. When a person knows the truth of the gospel, he either goes on to believe or he falls back into apostasy. Hebrews 10:19-25 is speaking to the person who makes a positive response to the claims of Jesus Christ.

A positive response results in salvation. As Paul makes clear in the beautiful thirteenth chapter of his first letter to the Corinthians, salvation involves faith, hope, and love. It is these three aspects of salvation that are focused on in our present passage.

These Jewish people, are being urged, on the basis of the careful doctrinal groundwork that has already been given, to take hold of the perfect sacrifice, Jesus Christ---to come confidently through Him in to God's very presence and to dwell there for all eternity. The author uses every persuasive argument to bring them to a positive decision.

If a person tries to go into God's presence based on his own character, his own works, or his own religious affiliation, he will find no access. He will certainly not have access on the basis of a mere verbal profession of Christ. "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness'" (Matt. 7:21-23). All the things that Jesus mentioned were seemingly good. But they were not really in His name, because they were not done through faith in Him and by His power. These professors, Jesus said, did not know Him personally. Obviously they knew His name, in the sense of His title and position. They recognized Him as being "Lord," But they had not received Him as their own Lord and their own Savior, and everything else counted for nothing.

The blood of Jesus Christ, however, counts for everything, and the person who trusts in His atoning work can come with complete boldness before God, claiming all the blessings and promises in His Son. We can come expecting mercy and grace (Heb. 4:16), rather than justice. For if God gave us justice, He would have to condemn us, because this is what we deserve. But Jesus, through His shed blood, satisfied God's justice in our behalf, so that we can now claim God's mercy and grace. God cannot be just and condemn us who are in Christ.

Jesus gave no clearer or more moving illustration of God's grace than the parable of the prodigal son. Actually, the son who stayed home was also prodigal, but the story focuses on his brother, because his brother finally realized his squandering indulgence and came home. He did not deserve to come home and he certainly did not deserve to be accepted back with such lavish celebration. But it was the father's love, not the son's merit, that prompted the welcome. The son came back out of desperation, but he came; and his coming was all the father required. Everything else the father himself provided. The concept of simply coming to God was revolutionary to Jews---and to many others throughout the centuries and today. When Adam sinned, had not God put him out of the garden and placed the angels and the flaming sword to guard the entrance? And were not all men forbidden, on pain or death, to enter into His presence in the Holy of Holies? But now, the writer says Jesus' blood, in effect, has quenched the fiery sword, and He has torn the veil of the Holy of Holies in two. If you come through Him, you not only can come into God's presence, but you can come with confidence.

The word NEW (prosphatos) in verse 20 is used only once in the New Testament. Its original meaning was "freshly slaughtered." Jesus is the new way, the freshly slaughtered sacrifice, who opens the way to God. It seems contradictory that the freshly slaughtered way would also be the living way. But Jesus' death conquered death and gives life. His death is the only way to life that is everlasting.

While Jesus was preaching and teaching and healing---that is, while He was alive---His flesh was a barrier to God's presence just as was the veil in the Tabernacle. An uncrucified Savior could not have saved. If Jesus had only come into the world and ministered in His flesh, He could not have been Savior, no matter how many years He may have preached or how many thousand more miracles He may have performed. As long as His flesh was alive it was a barrier, in the sense that only by its sacrifice could men's sins be atoned for and the way to heaven be opened. When the physical veil of the earthly Temple was torn in two during Jesus' crucifixion, the spiritual veil, so to speak, of His flesh was also torn.

Jesus not only opened the way to God but He is now our great priest over the house of God. He does not merely show the way to God, or even just provide the way to God; He takes us with Him to God and ministers for us in heaven. A paraphrase of Romans 5:10 could be: "If His death could do so much to save me, what must His life be doing in the presence of God to keep me!"

Christ The Only Gate or Door:

(A.W. Pink) Christ is the only way by which we enter into the Holiest. No sooner had Adam sinned, than the door of access to the majesty of God was bolted against him, and all his posterity, the cherubim with the flaming sword

standing in his way (Gen. 3:24). But now the flaming sword of justice being quenched in the blood of the Surety (Zech. 13:7), the door of access is again wide open. The infinite wisdom of God has devised a way how His “banished ones” may be brought home again to His presence through the satisfaction of Christ.

Christ Is our Confidence to Enter God’s Presence:

(A.W. Pink) Having told us that we have ‘an entrance into the holiest,’ he now declares what the way is whereby we may do so. It is through the humanity of Christ that the way to heaven has been opened, renewed and consecrated. But prior to His death, the very life which was lived by the man Christ Jesus only served to emphasize the awful distance which sinners were from God, just as the beautiful veil in the tabernacle shut out the Israelite from God’s presence. Moreover, the humanity of Christ was a sin-bearing one, for the iniquities of His people had all been imputed to Him. While, then, the flesh of Christ was uncrucified, proof was before the eyes of men that the curse was not abolished. As long as He tabernacled in this world, it was evident that sin was not yet put away. The veil must be rent, Christ must die, before access to God was possible. When God rent the veil of the temple, clear intimation was given that every hindrance had been removed, and that the way was opened into His presence.

Christ Our Great High Priest Over the House of God:

(A.W. Pink) Here is the third great privilege of the Christian, the third inducement which is presented to us for approaching God. Christ is now set forth as Priest over the house of God. O what encouragement is here! As Priest, Christ is “ordained for men in things pertaining to God” (Heb. 5:1). He is a living Savior within the veil, interceding for His people, maintaining their interests before the Father.

When it is said that Christ is “over the house of God,” it is His headship, lordship, authority, which is in view. The Lord Christ presides over the persons, duties, and worship of believers. In that all their acceptable worship is of His appointment; in that He assists the worshippers by His Spirit for the performance of every duty; in that He directs the government of the church, ordains its officers, and administers its laws; in that He makes their service acceptable with God. He is King in Zion, wielding the scepter, protecting the interests of His church, and, according to His pleasure, overthrowing its enemies. It is the Lord who adds to the church those who are to be saved.

Assurance of Salvation

(J. MacArthur) From the earliest days of the Old Covenant, God had demanded a sincere heart. “You will seek the Lord your God, and you will find Him if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul” (Deut.4:29). The people who find God are those who seek Him with their whole heart, with total genuineness.

Faith cannot begin until a person realizes his need for salvation. If he is without Christ, he needs salvation whether he recognizes it or not. But he will not have reason to believe until his need is felt, until it is recognized. Often a person's felt need is only partial. The first feeling of need may only be for a purpose in life or for someone to love us and care for us. Or it may be a sense of need for forgiveness and removal of guilt, for inner peace. The most important thing is that a person realize that the answer to his need is in God. People came to Jesus for many reasons, some of them rather superficial. But when they came, Jesus met all their needs. They may have felt only a need for physical healing, but He also offered spiritual healing. Felt need does not require theological understanding of the doctrine of salvation, only a sincere heart that knows it needs salvation. On the other hand, a person who does not feel a need for salvation, no matter how good his theology, is far from faith in God. Felt need is essential, but inadequate on its own.

Knowledge of the Gospel:

A person does not have to comprehend the full knowledge and understanding of the doctrine of salvation before he can be saved, but he does need the gospel truth (1 Cor. 15:1-5) that he is lost in sin and needs the Lord Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. He must know the gospel. God does not demand faith without giving reason for faith. The writer of Hebrews, for example, piles up truth upon truth and presents Jesus as the Jews' promised Messiah. He also shows that the New Covenant is far superior to the Old, that the old sacrifices were ineffective, and that only the new sacrifice can bring a person to God.

Commitment to Christ:

The climax of faith is commitment. Professing Christ, without commitment to Christ, is not saving faith. John MacArthur's father often told the story of a tightrope walker who liked to walk a wire across Niagara Fall---preferably with someone on his back. Many people on the bank expressed complete confidence in his ability to do it, but he always had a difficult time getting a volunteer to climb up on him.

Many people express complete confidence in Christ but never trust themselves to Him. As a missionary translator in the New Hebrides, Joh Paton was frustrated in his work for a long time because the people had no word for faith. One day a man who was working for him came into the house and flopped down into a big chair. The missionary asked him what the word would be for what he had just done. The word the man gave in reply was the one Paton used for faith in his translation of the New Testament. Without hesitation or reservation, the man had totally committed his body to the chair. He had felt his need for rest, he was convinced that the chair provided a place for rest, and he

committed himself to the chair for rest. A believer must, in the same way, totally commit his life to the Lord Jesus Christ. Only then is faith, saving faith.

Evidence of the Believer:

Hebrews 10:22 Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of **faith** . . .

Hebrews 10:23 Let us hold fast the confession of our **hope** . . .

Hebrews 10:24 Let us consider how to stimulate one another to **love** . . .

(W.L. Lane) These Christian qualities, faith, hope, and love, to which the writer alludes in 10:22-25 anticipates the development of the remainder of the sermon (book of Hebrews):

Faith is celebrated in 11:1-40

Hope is expressed through perseverance in 12:1-13

Love furnishes the key to the conclusion of the sermon in 12:14-13:21

Faith:

(A.W. Pink) "To draw near to God is an act of the heart or mind, whereby the soul, under the influence of the Spirit, sweetly, and irresistibly returns to God in Christ as its only center of rest. The believer, as it were, fixes himself in the cleft of the Rock of ages; he gets into the secret place of the blessed stair, by which we ascend unto heaven; and then he lifts up his voice in drawing near to God, by the new and living way.

Hope:

(J. MacArthur) Holding on is the human side of eternal security. The Reformers called it "the perseverance of the saints." It is not something we do to keep ourselves saved, but it is evidence, on the human side, that we are saved. It is a paradox, just as is the doctrine of election. God sovereignly chooses those who are saved, but He will not save anyone who does not believe. God keeps us secure in His Son, but our own wills, expressed in holding on in perseverance, are also involved. God's sovereignty does not exclude man's responsibility. Jesus said, "No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him" (John 6:44), as well as, "If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine" (John 8:31).

How sad that many come to Christ and say they believe and yet are gone so soon. In the parable of the sower, Jesus illustrated four different kinds of responses to the gospel. Some people are so far from wanting salvation that the devil simply takes away the seed of God's Word before it has time to germinate at all. Others respond joyfully at hearing the Word, but they run into a few problems. True believers, however, "are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance" (Luke 8:15).

Love:

(J. MacArthur) So the writer is telling them that one of the best ways to hold fast to the things of God---the real things of God that are found only in the New Covenant of Jesus Christ---is to be in the fellowship of His people, where they could love and be loved, serve and be served. There is no better place to come all the way to faith in Christ, or to hope continually in Him, than the church, His Body.

The only place where we can remain steadfast until He returns is with His people. We need each other. We need to be in fellowship with each other, as we mutually strengthen each other and encourage each other.

The writer is saying very simply, "The door is open, the way is made available to enter into God's presence. Come in and stay and fellowship with His people, and enjoy God's company forever."

References:

Sermon: Austin Duncan from Grace Church "Direct Access and Divine Advocacy"

Arthur W. Pink "Exposition of Hebrews"

William L. Lane "Word Biblical Commentary"

John MacArthur "New Testament Commentary Hebrews"