

v19-25: Exhortations to believers to draw near, hold fast and consider one another

v19 “**Having, therefore, brethren, ...**”; the pivotal point in the Hebrew epistle, when the character of the epistle changes from doctrinal to exhortative. The exhortations, applications & appeals that follow are all based on the truth that has been made known.

v22: “**Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith**”

v23: “**Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering” (RV)**

v24: “**let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works”**”

v19-22: The Worship of the Saints

The sacrifice has been offered (v10), the risen Saviour is exalted (v12), the sanctified worshippers have been perfected (v14), the indwelling Holy Spirit is operating (v15), a covenant has been established (v16), and our forgiveness of sins is assured (v17-18).

With such full acceptance in Christ, a way of near approach has now been inaugurated (v20), and God invites purged worshippers to enter with boldness, and draw near with intimate closeness into His holy presence, into the heavenly sanctuary, to worship Him.

v19: Our physical place of gathering here on earth is not our place of worship; we enter “**the holiest**”, the heavenly spiritual sanctuary of God (see also ch8v2, ch9v8).

This is the privilege for “**brethren**”, i.e. all brothers and sisters in the family of God. In stark contrast to the old economy, all of God’s people today are priests who can worship in God’s immediate presence in the heavenly sanctuary.

The attitude of approach and entrance is with “**boldness**”, i.e. a spiritual liberty, fearlessness and dignified confidence to fully express the worship of our hearts, as a result of knowing our eternal forgiveness in Christ.

Our confidence is only in Christ and the all-sufficiency of His sacrifice (see Eph 3v11-12).

To enter thus with boldness is to honour Christ and His sacrifice; His perfect acceptance before God, based on who He is and what He has done, becomes our acceptance in Him.

It is “**by the blood of Jesus**”, the preciousness of that blood to God, and the knowledge that His sacrifice at Calvary has eternally satisfied God, and we have cleansing from sin.

Israel’s high priest alone could enter through the veil of the Tabernacle into the holiest on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16) with fear and trembling, not without the blood of the sacrifice, and not without the incense from off the golden altar, both speaking of Christ and His sacrifice, and the fragrance of His Person to the heart of God.

v20: The way of our approach and entrance **“through the veil”** into the holiest. It is the **“new and living way”**; newly made / slain; the sacrifice of Christ is as effective on our behalf today, as if He had just been to Calvary. The **“new”** way of approach into God’s presence for the New Covenant. It is a **“living way”**, opened up by His death, inaugurated for us by the movement of the risen & living Lord Jesus all the way to God’s right hand, where He appears in His bodily flesh, in the presence of God for us (ch9v24). It is the way of **“His flesh”**; based upon the efficacy of His one sacrifice for sins, and the sufferings He endured in His bodily flesh upon the cross.

v21: “And having a Great Priest over the house of God (RV)”.

The risen Christ functions as our **“Great Priest”** before the throne of God; He is over all the saints of God (ch3v5-6 **“But Christ as Son over His house, whose house are we”**). This would emphasise the efficiency of administration of Christ’s priesthood, He is over the whole house of God in administrative capacity, as the Ruler, Governor and Praise Leader of God’s people. Ch8v2 **“A Minister of the sanctuary ...”**.

Our Saviour renders our worshipful service pleasurable and acceptable to God the Father; we offer **“spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ”** (1st Peter 2v5); Heb 13v15 **“By Him therefore let us offer ...”**.

Through His great priestly mediation, all our offerings can be presented to God in holy perfection; ***‘To all our prayers and praises, Christ adds His sweet perfume’***.

v22: The risen Christ invites us **“Let us draw near ...”**, into the close presence of God.

In the Church, we know a nearness and spiritual closeness to God in worship that Israel never knew.

We draw near **“with a true heart”**, i.e. with sincerity and genuine heartfelt conviction that we are coming into the near presence of God. Our worship is not the fulfilment of a ritual or ceremony; it should always feel fresh and heartfelt.

We draw near **“in full assurance of faith”**; believing that we are accepted as purged worshippers to commune with God, assured that He is deeply interested in our worship and delighting to listen to us offering the worship of our hearts.

Believing this promise of unhindered access, we act on that belief, and thus draw near.

We are cleansed by the blood and water of Christ’s sacrifice, i.e. internally **“hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience”**, and externally **“bodies washed with pure water”**.

From His pierced side (Jn 19v34) came forth the blood and water to meet all our need. The blood was Godward, meeting our judicial need, cleansing from the guilt of our sins. The water was manward, meeting our moral need, cleansing from the defilement and pollution of our sin, and necessary for our priestly service.

“Let the water and the blood. From Thy riven side which flowed.

Be of sin the double cure. Cleanse me from it's guilt and pow'r.” (Augustus Toplady)

Ps 24v3-4 **“Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD or who shall stand in His holy place; he that hath clean hands (the external cleansing of the water) and a pure heart (the inward cleansing of the blood)”**.

Our **“hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience”** is essentially the NT truth of justification, based on the blood of Christ, we are judicially acquitted from the guilt of our sins.

“Bodies washed with pure water” is essentially the truth of our positional sanctification, all that we came into the full blessing of at salvation, based upon Christ's sacrifice.

v23: “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope (RV, JND, Newberry) without wavering”; our certain hope is centred in the risen Man exalted in heaven (ch12v2).

We persevere in the path of faith, holding fast to the promise of His soon coming again.

Our trust in the faithful God; **“for He is faithful that promised”**; to waver or doubt concerning the promises of our God would be a slight on the divine character.

“In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began” (Titus 1v2). Nothing can happen in this world that could derail the fulfilment of His promise, or cause Him to revise what He has promised.

v24: “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works”.

The practical expression of our fellowship with God means that there should be loving fellowship with one another as God's people, with mutual consideration for one another.

We must stir up, encourage and motivate each other **“unto love and to good works”**, producing stronger fellowship, as well as a stronger positive testimony to the world.

v25: The “assembling of ourselves together” (Gk *episunagoge*), meaning a gathering together to a place or person (see also 2nd Thess 2v1).

Christ is the focal point, the gathering centre; He is in our midst every time we gather.

Some of the Hebrews were forsaking the gatherings, by reason of intense persecution.

We seek mutual encouragement and edification from our gatherings, **“exhorting one another”**, and all the more in view of an approaching day of greater testing (AD70).

Before fulfilment of the Day of Atonement for Israel, the extreme test of the tribulation.

v26-31: Parenthetical warning passage regarding spiritual apostasy

The 4th warning passage of the epistle regarding the seriousness of the sin of apostasy. Ch6v4-8, we see how high the apostate professor can be in terms of privilege and how close they can be to the real. In ch10, we see here how low they will fall in judgement, how far away they will be if they have not the real thing.

v26: Apostasy is a wilful, definitive persisting renouncement of the once for all sacrifice of Christ. These apostate ones had received **“the (full) knowledge of the truth”** concerning Christ’s sacrifice, truth that they once had professed to embrace, but they sin wilfully by turning away specifically from the singular accomplished sacrifice of Christ. For the true believer, **“no more offering for sin”** is required (v18); but for the apostate God has nothing else to offer, **“no more sacrifice for sins”** (v26) is available. For the wilful Christ-rejecter, nothing else has any efficacy as a sacrifice for sins.

Such direct turning away from the Saviour after initial acceptance of Him was the Lord’s own experience. John 6v66 **“From that *time* many of His (apparent) disciples went back, and walked no more with Him”**, prompting the Lord to say to the twelve **“Will ye also go away?”** Peter responded with a clear confession of faith **“Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God”**. The Lord says **“Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?”**; referring to Judas, the prototypical apostate.

v27: What remains for those who deliberately turn away from Christ’s sacrifice is inescapable devouring divine judgment, **“a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries”**.

This confirms that this passage cannot be about backsliding or disobedient Christians.

v28-29: Contrasting divine judgment under the OT Law, with that which will be the portion of the Christ-rejecting apostate.

To have despised and deliberately broken the OT Law meant death **“without mercy under two or three witnesses”** (v28), i.e. 2 or 3 human witnesses of the transgression. But to sin wilfully by renouncing Christ’s sacrifice means **“much sorer punishment”**; the divine Witnesses are the 3 Persons of the Godhead; God the Father who gave His Son to be the sacrifice, **“the Son of God”** who provided Himself as the accepted sacrifice, and the Holy Spirit, the **“Spirit of grace”** who strives with man.

By treating Christ's sacrifice in such a way was to have **"trodden under foot the Son of God"**; showing Him the greatest possible contempt.

He is the One who will come again to this world as the warrior King (Psalm 110), to rule in the midst of His enemies, to strike through kings in the day of His wrath, and to make His enemies the footstool of His feet (v13). Those who were turning away from Him, were aligning themselves with those enemies & adversaries that He will judge.

To reject Christ's sacrifice is not a neutral position; to then go back to the OT animal sacrifices in the temple would **"crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh"** (Heb 6v6).

Such a renunciation of Christ's sacrifice profanes the precious blood of Christ; **"and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy (i.e. a common, Newberry) thing"**.

Those who were so privileged to hear the truth, and be associated with the company of the true saints of God who had truly believed in Christ and His sacrifice for sin, were relatively **"sanctified"**, but not positionally as for true believers (vs10 & 14).

How thankful we are for **"the blood of the covenant"**; we value that blood, we recognise its inestimable value, its preciousness to God as well as to ourselves. His blood is not common blood; we are **"not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold ... but with the precious blood of Christ ..."** (1st Peter 1v18-19).

The action of turning away from the gracious divine provision of Christ's sacrifice did **"despite unto the Spirit of grace"**, outraging the very divine Person by whom conviction of sin is wrought, by whom God's gracious gospel is administered, and by whom God's grace, mercy and forgiveness is made available.

These apostate ones were wilfully turning their back on the divine grace and mercy that is in Christ, and were putting themselves back under the Mosaic law, which had no grace to offer, and which judged a man **"without mercy"** (v28).

v29 is framed as a rhetorical question; **"Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy ...?"** The consequences should be obvious for those who so treat the Son of God and the gracious Holy Spirit of God, and reject their gracious provision of salvation.

v30: They are worthy of the most severe and eternal punishment from the God whose holy and righteous judgment has been displayed many times before.

He is the living God to whom “**belongeth vengeance, and recompence**”, and who “**shall judge His (professed) people**” (Deut 32v35-36).

In Moses song of the Rock, God’s people are condemned for their disobedience and lack of discernment, particularly concerning the disciplining ways of the sovereign God.

v31: It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

God is personified as having hands that will administer His righteous judgment.

As “**the living God**” (see also ch3v12), He responds actively in judgment against those who disregard His grace and mercy provided in His Son.

In contrast, believers in Christ are eternally in the arms of the loving Saviour.

v32-39: Exhortations to believers to endurance, steadfastness, continuance in the faith

v32-35: Largely retrospective, looking backward to their past endurance.

v36-39: Largely prospective, looking forward to the perseverance they would have to continue to demonstrate.

v32: Call to remember what happened after that moment of conversion to Christ, those “**former days**” in Christian experience, and “**after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight (conflict) of afflictions**”.

As soon as they professed the Name of Christ, they were in an entirely new spiritual conflict, they became the target of persecution, they suffered many afflictions, they experienced the reproach of Christ (see also Philippians 1v29-30).

The true believers among the Hebrews, at their conversion had been “**illuminated**”, enlightened to the truth of the once for all sacrifice of Christ at Calvary.

“**The eyes of your understanding being (having been) enlightened**” (Eph 1v18).

Salvation involves that moment of divine illumination into our hearts (2nd Cor 4v6).

But they had “**endured**” in the conflict; a military term, they had held firm, stood their ground, they had displayed a good track record of such endurance for the sake of Christ.

v33: They were “**made a gazingstock**”, a public spectacle, the object of this world’s theatre and entertainment, as they were publicly derided “**by reproaches and afflictions**”.

To their credit, the Hebrew believers were not motivated by self-preservation; they had been brave “**companions**” or fellow partakers, standing shoulder-to-shoulder with other believers who were being similarly maltreated and publicly humiliated.

v34: The writer appreciated the sympathetic solidarity of these Hebrews with other believers who were imprisoned; **“ye had compassion of those who were in bonds”** (RV). Their attitude was very commendable when being persecuted; they **“took joyfully the spoiling of your goods”**.

The reason for that tremendously positive perspective was because they were assured of the glory that lies ahead for all believers in the Lord Jesus; **“knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance”**.

That eternal & heavenly blessing is always going to be the Christian’s compensation. See also Romans 8v18; 2nd Cor 4v17-18; 1st Peter 1v4.

v35: The writer encourages the Hebrews to keep going on, **“Cast not away therefore your confidence”**, continue to display the same endurance previously displayed. When we arrive on the heavenly shore, we will have that **“great recompence of reward”**.

v36: For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise

Looking forward to the needed perseverance they would have to continue to demonstrate; **“For ye have need of patience (i.e. endurance)”**.

An appeal for continuance; Col 1v23 **“If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel”**.

In Christianity, continuance is the hallmark of genuineness; perseverance & endurance is an evidence of genuine salvation, even when circumstances are demanding & difficult.

And **“after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise”**. God’s will for every believer is to endure, to keep going on faithfully in the pathway of faith.

That promise of eternal blessing will be received when our blessed Saviour comes again.

v37: Referencing Habakkuk 2v3, **“For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry”**. The fulfilment of the vision of the prophet Habakkuk will be brought to pass at the time appointed of God.

The vision and prophecy of Habakkuk is personalized to our Saviour; He is the coming One, **“For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry”**. Our Saviour will come again at the appointed time, and we need to be characterized by endurance and continuance for this **“little while”** as we wait for His imminent return.

His coming again will not be delayed, there is an appointed time for His return, and that will be to fulfil all prophecy.

v38: Quotes the next verse Habakkuk 2v4 “**Now the just shall live by faith**”.

When quoted in Romans 1v17, the emphasis is “**The just shall live by faith**”.

When quoted in Galatians 3v11 “**no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith**”. The OT law is not of faith, and believers are justified by the principle of faith, as oppose to works & the observance of the law.

Here in Heb 10v38, the emphasis is “**The just shall live by faith**”; faith is the great principle for Christian living, and every step of the Christian pathway is one of faith. Faith is the key to a life of Christian endurance & continuance, and doing the will of God.

Hebrews 11 goes on to expound this text, detailing all those OT saints who lived their lives by that principle of faith.

Hebrews 12v1-2 is the practical application of this text to ourselves.

Further clear word of warning from the Septuagint quotation of Habakkuk 2v4; “**but if any man draw back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him**”.

The lines of demarcation are very clearly drawn. The true believer can “**draw near**” (v22) into the divine presence, and appreciate that in Christ they are the object of divine pleasure, as they would engage in worship in God’s presence. But the defectors who apostatize from Christ will “**draw back**” irreversibly, to face divine displeasure and inescapable judgment, for “**without faith it is impossible to please Him**” (Heb 11v6).

v39: A clear word of assurance for true and genuine believers in the Lord Jesus.

“**But we (emphatic ‘we’) are not of them (the apostate ones) who draw back unto perdition (damnation); but of them that believe (them that have faith, RV) to the saving of the soul**”.

The writer is expressing his confidence in the reality of faith in the vast majority of these Hebrews. The Christian life is a real test of our faith, but the end in view is the eternal “**saving of the soul**”.

We need that long view perspective; not to be derailed in our faith by present temporal difficulties, but to remember the eternal blessing and salvation that lies on before.

A very basic message relevant to the Christian faith, one that we need to constantly remind ourselves of, so that we do persevere, so that we do keep the faith.