

Intro - Open to Hebrews 10:19-25

When I purchased my car a few years ago I bought an extended warranty. I have yet to use it for a few reasons but mostly because I would have to prove that I have kept up regularly scheduled maintenance. I have tried to do that but the receipts and my efforts will likely fail to live up to the requirements. You know what insurance companies are like... I fear that when a major repair comes, that warranty will be no good because it has very specific requirements.

I will admit that this is a bad attitude. For something as important and valuable as a car, it is possible to keep up the maintenance and receipts so that I could use the warranty one day. Yet I don't.

I assume that you are like me and the maintenance of a car comes dangerously close to our attitude about our eternal soul. We know that it's important to keep our faith in tip top shape but yet when it's up to us... The good news is that unlike my car maintenance, you are not alone in the task of faith maintenance. Christ and His church are here for you.

God has ordered a maintenance plan for our souls through the church so that we can have assurance of salvation. That the repairs of this earthly body being transformed into a resurrected body one day are secure.

It is this maintenance plan that the church is intended to participate in. That our faith, hope and love in Christ would endure to the end. The church, as the muscles, organs and sinew of the body of Christ, is meant to be the visible reminder each day that we WERE saved, that we ARE BEING saved, and that we WILL BE saved. If you were born again and you are justified in Christ, like your brothers and sisters. Your salvation is being worked out in your sanctification becoming like Christ, like your brothers and sisters. And one day your death will give way to your glorification in heaven WITH your brothers and sisters. All 3 parts give us assurance that our faith is real, our hope is secure, and our love is for others.

Pray

Jumping into the middle of a book like this can get us disoriented but the author of Hebrews spent the first section looking at doctrine of who Christ is revealed to be in fulfilling the Old Testament. This section here is the pivot into application or practical living in Christ. The first two verses of our text serve as a summary of what has come before. Let's read.

Read Hebrews 10:19-20

We possess confidence and therefore we want to draw near. To not possess it would cause us to run away from the awesome power of God. It would produce a terror that reflects the holiness and righteous judgements of God. Yet, we now draw near. That's what we read in **Hebrews 4:16, that we draw near to the throne of God**, just as the priest drew near to the mercy seat which was on the ark of the covenant in the temple.

Hebrews, as I said earlier, serves as a commentary or an explanation of how Jesus fulfills and explains the Old Testament. In the temple, where the Jews sacrificed, the priest had to offer sacrifices for their sins in order to enter the holy place, the holy of holies, without dying.

Then in verse 20, after the purifying blood is sprinkled to give us access to the holy place, we go through the curtain which used to separate the holy of holies from the rest of the temple. This curtain has now been opened. How is it opened? Well, we know at Jesus' death, his body was broken and as he died **Matthew 27:51** says that **"the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom."** Not bottom to top as if man could have done it, but top to bottom from God to man. Jesus' body was torn so we access God, the curtain was torn so we have access to God. The body and the curtain torn to give us access.

Jesus is both sacrifice and priest. The slaughtered and the one who slaughters. This summary of the greatness of Jesus' sacrifice and our access to God is what brings us to the three implications for our lives as those who have access to God. It is faith, hope and love. Let's start where the author starts, with faith. A real and genuine faith.

One – Faith is Real

Read Hebrews 10:21-22

Remember last week when we talked about the church, the house or household of God. We are being built as holy people, into a holy temple. Jesus is the priest of our temple. He is the one who brings us near to God through his priestly ministry. So as Jesus has made a way, we participate and draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.

Drawing near is most clearly expressed in prayer. It is our communication of dependence and submission and confession to God. We know that through Jesus our prayers come before God, in full assurance of faith that our relationship with God is right and our prayers come before him and will be answered. We can have assurance or confidence because of what Jesus' priestly ministry does. It cleanses us both inside and out.

Read it with me again in verse 22, **“with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience.”** That means that as Jesus' blood covers our sin, as it makes us white as snow, we can have clean hearts (meaning our inner selves) and not evil consciences. To believe in Jesus is to believe that his blood is the only power to cleanse our conscience but it is also the comfort that we can continue to bring our sins to him. The indication of the Greek is that our hearts (and soon our bodies) are not just sprinkled once, or in the past, but are BEING sprinkled. He is continually cleansing what he has declared righteous and made clean in his sacrifice.

The outside is addressed with **“our bodies washed with pure water.”** This indicates the holy living expected of those in the household of God. The purity symbolized in our baptisms, the purity of a life committed to the commands of Christ partnered with a pure heart give evidence of a true faith. We know that in this perfect standard, we need Christ to purify us from our past sins and be ready and willing to cleanse and purify us from our sin each and every day.

This is not to say that occasional sin means that we are not saved. That would lead to the opposite of assurance. Whelp I was grumpy, must not be saved. Or more seriously, I went back to my sin of addiction or have fallen into anger or coveting, I must not be saved. As Christians, these sins grieve our God and we must turn and repent of even the smallest of sin. Yet... We do not rock back and forth at every sin, Jesus' sacrifice was effective to cleanse us. So what can it mean?

Verse 26 is a helpful clarification here when it says **“if we go on sinning deliberately”**. That is the place where we begin being concerned when we know the law, when we know it is sin that we have been freed from, yet we do it all the same continually. This deliberate sinning is dangerous not when it is once, but when it is repeated and continual. This means that true faith will not be measured by the absence of all sin, but it is measured by our grief of sin and consistent repentance when sin is brought to Christ.

It is not the church membership or even a profession of faith or baptism that gives proof of salvation. It is whether godly living proves the reality of faith. When we see a brother or sister in Christ who is sinning deliberately, we lovingly rebuke and call them to repentance to win them back to the truth.

So real faith is not self-attained righteousness, it is the Jesus-accomplished cleansing which we submit to daily looking forward to the day when Christ makes us fully pure. This is the hope we turn to next.

Two – Hope is Secure

Read Hebrews 10:23

Faith is confidence in what God has done, Hope is confidence in what he promises to do. That what he has taught us, what we confess in our doctrine and in our beliefs will be proven right and find its greatest joy in Christ's return to put the world right.

Hebrews 6:19 says that **“We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain.”** The author repeats Faith, Hope and Love throughout this letter to Jewish Christians.

The purity we are called to in our faith is secured by the hope that our righteousness is secured not by us but by Christ. It is right that we draw near to God in prayer, we act in response to God. Yet, it is more certain that God has come and will come again. That is the steadfast anchor.

When we hold fast to the confession, there is debate about whether the author meant a specific creed or the more general confession of faith in Jesus Christ. Yet an early creed found in 1 Corinthians 15 will instruct us in both. Verses 3 and 4 are likely the earliest Christian Creed dating maybe within a decade of Jesus' resurrection.

3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,

We don't deviate; we don't manipulate; we don't shift... because our God doesn't change. We cling to our confession with hope that God has proved faithful in the past. So let us hold to the true confession that God has provided.

We must take seriously when a church member joins our church and signs our church covenant and agrees with our church statement of faith. They have committed that we would help them hold fast to the truth. If the practice of real faith is prayer, the practice of hope is the reading, the preaching, and the belief in scripture as we hope in the truth.

Every day that you wake up in belief that you are a sinner in need of the savior Jesus Christ, you should be confident in your salvation and hold fast to your confession. It is when you feel you graduate from the gospel into loftier theology, or are seeking for a more convenient truth or believe in the foolish notion that you are not a sinner. That is the warning sign that you may have never been born again or are suppressing the Holy Spirit's work in your heart. You should fall on your knees and beg God for salvation which again is the reassurance that you believe the truth of your condition and the truth of God's salvation.

It is hope that what God has done in our lives will endure. Not because we are strong to hold fast, but because God is faithful to hold us fast. He loves us with a divine love that wants our best, which is why he gave us the church to be the people who encourage each other in love.

Three – Love is for Others

Read Hebrews 10:24-25

Now that we have reached the end of our passage, I want you to see why I divided our passage up this way. See the repetition of "let us" in v22, v23, and v24. These are not commands but they are instructions that are based upon the work of Christ. Since... let us... It is a god ordained invitation into the joyful responses we make as the church because of Jesus' priestly work.

When you read your Bible look for repetitions like this. It may take a commentary or a bible study guide to help you see it, but the more you look the more you find.

So this last invitation is to stir up, to provoke, to encourage (as it says in v25) one another to love and good works. So here is where a proper definition of love would be helpful in a world that bandies the word about until it is meaningless. Love, when the word is used in scripture, is desiring good for another according to God's standard. It is not a subjective meaning, or just a lack of offense, but it is a positive meaning to feel, act and live for the benefit of another in God's will.

This is why books like Rob Bell's "Love Wins" denying the doctrine of hell, or phrases like "Love is Love" to defend sexual immorality are unconvincing for a true Christian. They are a man-centered definition of love that devolves into sentiment. If our love is determined by how we feel about something, we will be fundamentally lost as the culture shifts. If we are tuned into anything but the image of Christ, the objective standard of God's revelation, the definition of love will go with it.

God's definition of love could be drawn from a few places but 1 Corinthians 13 gives a long definition of love. Yet notice that verse 6 shows us that love is connected to God's standard for good and evil. **it (love) does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.**

Love is not the feelings we carry. Love rejoices in the truth. It is what Paul and the author of Hebrews, and God says it is.

Now we are to consider, to ponder, to figure out the ways to encourage each other to love and... good works. The love cannot be disconnected from good works. It cannot be separate from actions taken because we love God.

Then in verse 25 the author gives a negative statement to contrast with stirring up. So what would make us unable to stir up each other to love... neglecting to meet together.

This passage must seep deep into our understanding of what our church does as it gathers. We do not gather out of mere obligation. We do not gather for offering collection. We do not even simply gather for worship of God although that is our fundamental task every moment, every hour, and every day. We gather to do what we cannot do separately, we encourage one another to love God like Christ does and have good works like Christ did.

If you say, Travis, I don't need the church. I have Jesus inside me. I have heard wiser men than me say that if you love a man but despise his wife, you should expect that man to not want to spend time with you. If you love Christ but despise his bride, the church... If you say, Travis, I have a wife who goes to church, or my friend, and they are spurring me on. That is all well and good but are you saying that what scripture says is a church gathering activity has now been reduced to just a two person gig? What happens when their faith fails? Who will you turn to? But the church is full of hypocrites... well it could use you who loves Christ's bride to help them see the speck in their eye. But they will help you see your plank.

Conclusion

As the day of Christ's return draws near, the Day draws near, our urgency to meet together, our urgency to strengthen each other should only increase.

God's "faith maintenance plan" is church membership. It is for the assurance and sanctification of every Christian. The plan is not a complicated series of hurdles like my car warranty. It is the steady joys of daily and weekly gathering as we seek assurance and sanctification in the grace given through church prayer, doctrine and encouragement.

Church membership is good for the 3 types of Christians in the church.

1) Christians who have embedded their life in the church. You have submitted to God's plan of assurance and sanctification as you are built up in faith, hope and love. If that is you this morning, be assured that this is God's gracious plan and good gift that the saints around you are to encourage you, strengthen you and uplift you. As you do the same for them.

2) Christians who are unsure of their salvation. You come to the church each week and need to be assured each week. You sense your need for assurance and I pray and hope that this church, this body, will be the place you turn to become like Christ. We will help you strengthen your faith, help you hold fast the confession of your hope, and stir you up to love and good works.

To search, to be uncertain, is more reason than ever to commit to a healthy local church. What the church will do is help to uncover the lies you have believed, call you out of deception, and point you to Christ and real, authentic life change. Submit yourself to Christ with the church and let God slowly but surely turn your doubt to solid faith.

3) Are Christians in name only who are uncaring or dismissive of their salvation. They either have a false confidence or have grown cold to the gospel and spiritual growth that either they don't attend church or stay long enough to be seen and do not wish to know the believers, the pastor or the life change offered in integrating your life in the church. I don't wish to tell you that if you aren't doing XYZ ministry that you should doubt your salvation. That is legalism and has no place in the church. Yet to despise the church's ministry to think that these people aren't meant to be a vital and spiritually nurturing part of your life is to neglect the ministry you are called to.