

## ***FPFWC Christian Development***



### **Faith Gives Us Hope**

August 2021

Summer Quarter

**August 14, 2021**

## **Lesson #2 – A Patient, Persevering Faith**

SCRIPTURE TEXT – Hebrews 10:23-36

### **ICE BREAKER** –

1. *What does persevering faith look like?*
2. *What area of life do you most need to give to the Lord in letting Him judge rather than you trying to do so yourself? (vs.30)*
3. *What can you do differently in your devotional times this week to “draw near to God”?*

**Key Verse: Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised).—Hebrews 10:23**

### **LESSON BACKGROUND**

What is often called the *letter* to the Hebrews has almost none of the usual characteristics of an ancient letter, apart from a couple of brief greetings at the end (see Hebrews 13:24–25). Instead, the letter relies heavily on action verbs that have to do with speaking and listening; this serves to suggest that we are listening in as a preacher speaks to an audience (examples: 2:5; 6:9; 9:5).

It seems best to understand Hebrews as a first-century *sermon*. The phrase “word of exhortation” (Hebrews 13:22) is the same used in Acts 13:15:

After the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.

This further bolsters the theory that Hebrews, like the spoken word in Acts, was primarily an oral address. Indeed, 13 of the New Testament’s 19 uses of the underlying Greek word for exhortation occur in Hebrews. It is possible that a listener wrote the sermon down so that it could be passed along as a letter to believers.

Arguing for too clean a distinction between written and oral communication would be a mistake, however. There is no reason this document could not have been written as a sermon to be delivered as a letter and then read aloud. In truth, either direction we choose brings us to improved insight into the overall structure of the work.

There is broad agreement that the long central section of the letter is devoted to the main arguments that the preacher is trying to make to his audience. One compelling outline divides the letter this way:

- 1—Introduction (1:1–2:4)
- 2—Main Proposition (2:5–9)
- 3—Arguments (2:10–12:27)
- 4—Final Exhortation (12:28–13:21)
- 5—Epistolary Postscript (13:22–25)

Today's text lies at a point of transition from exposition to exhortation. That is the significance of the word *therefore* in Hebrews 10:19. That verse and the two that follow form a crescendo of the doctrinal exposition that then resolves into practical exhortation beginning in 10:22.

Our opening verses (Hebrews 10:23–25) are usually understood to be part of a larger unit inclusive of 10:19–25. In light of that, a brief word about 10:19–22 is in order. This section is part of a larger doctrinal argument about the nature of sacrifice and the superiority of Jesus' sacrifice over the animal sacrifices stipulated under the old covenant (see 7:1–10:25). The doctrinal expositions at the heart of this sermon are each followed by a word of exhortation from the preacher to his audience (example: 7:1–10:25 followed by 10:26–39).

### LESSON COMMENTARY

**10:19–25.** Relating back to God's pledge never to recall believers' sins (10:17), **therefore** (10:19) draws an inference expressed as three subordinate exhortations: **let us draw near** (10:22), **let us hold fast** (10:23), and **let us consider** (10:24). This threefold exhortation is reinforced by two reasons—our having both access to God (10:19) and a high priest over the family of God (10:21). In prayer believers possess **confidence to enter the heavenly holy place** (10:19). This access is secured not by the believer's performance in the spiritual life, but by something much more sure, the atonement, obtained by the sacrifice (**blood**) of **Jesus**. Further described in 10:20, this access is **a new** (i.e., previously unavailable) **and living** (i.e., effective—it really works) **way** (i.e., a method of doing something, specifically here, of appearing before God). This access Jesus **inaugurated for us through ... His flesh** (i.e., the offering of His body in sacrifice). As such He is now our **great priest over** the community of God's people (10:21).

All this being so, in 10:22 the writer urges his readers to join him in drawing **near** heaven's throne in prayer. The twofold manner in which prayer is to occur is (1) **with a sincere heart**, i.e., in sincerity, and (2) **in full assurance of faith**, i.e., certain of having the divine ear. Their periodically approaching God may be done after becoming followers of Christ when their **hearts** were **sprinkled clean** and their **bodies** were **washed with pure water**. This last phrase most likely does not refer to baptism, which is only symbolic of cleansing. Rather, it is a figurative expression that refers to the spiritual cleansing that Messiah's sacrifice made possible (cf. 1Jn 1:9). A similar figurative expression is used in Ezk 36:25 to refer to the cleansing brought by the new covenant. Fidelity in prayer enables one to comply with the next summons, **let us hold fast ... our hope** (Heb 10:23). The wavering Jewish believers are being exhorted to embrace faith in the divine promises as true. Hope patiently waits until one possesses the blessings vouchsafed in those promises. The believer's waiting will not be in vain, **for He**

**who promised is faithful** to deliver all pledged benefits. A follower of Christ is not to live in isolation, but is part of a new community. So 10:24 speaks to the social obligation of being concerned about one another. The intent is **to stimulate ... love and good deeds** in this community. Mutual consideration cannot be expressed by **forsaking their assembling together**, **but** it can happen only by **encouraging** each other (10:25).

• **Fourth Parenthetical Warning: The Danger of Disparaging the Gospel (10:26–31)**

**10:26–31.** In assigning a reason not to abandon congregational meetings, **for** (10:26) introduces the epistle's fourth warning passage. Some who had once been associated with the recipients of this letter were in the habit of avoiding their spiritual community. This can lead one to deliberately sin **after receiving the knowledge of the gospel** (10:26). The intentional moral failure in view here is neither wrongdoing in general nor a particular serious sin such as murder, adultery, or stealing. Instead it is contextually described as departing from association with those who make up the community of the Messiah. This abandonment is motivated by the refusal to have faith in Jesus as Messiah by someone who had never genuinely come to know Him. (For an explanation of the spiritual condition of those who are the addressees of the warning passages, see the comments on 2:1–4, and especially 5:11–6:8.) For one who persists in spurning the Messiah's sacrifice, **there no longer remains a sacrifice for his sins** because of his refusal to avail himself of the benefits of Jesus' sacrifice. The Levitical priesthood cannot, and the heavenly high priest will not, make an offering to atone for this willful sin. **But** instead what awaits those who turn away from Christ is awful divine **judgment and ... FIRE** that will **CONSUME** them (10:27). An infraction of the Mosaic law often resulted in the execution of the guilty (10:28). **But much severer punishment** remains for the spiritual turncoat. His apostasy is described as trampling **under foot the Son of God**, no longer regarding **the blood of the covenant** as efficacious but now as ordinary, and insulting **the Spirit of grace**. Only eternal death is worse than physical death. The writer verifies this punishment to be worse and shows how certain it is (10:30). **For** the church knows the identity and the resolve of **Him who warned, VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY, and THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE** (Dt 32:35–36). This divine avenger means what He says and will carry out His threats. God will repay those who mistreat His genuine followers, and He will punish the abusive professing believers among His people. The author concludes this warning by giving his own evaluation on this worse punishment (Heb 10:31). It is **terrifying**, coming as it does from the **hands of the living God**. On the identity of these deniers of the faith, see the comments on 6:6.

**B. Exhortation to Perseverance (10:32–12:13)**

The readers were urged again to endure adversity as they had done successfully, earlier in their walk with Christ. If they did it once, they can indeed do it again. For many OT believers weathered life's ills and persisted in their relationship with God. And these believers before the coming of the Messiah had

far fewer spiritual resources than those after He had come, because God has provided something better for Jesus' followers (11:40). So believers are to run with endurance the race that lies before them (12:1), mindful of adversity being one of heaven's tools to mold character and forge conduct into what God desires (12:3–11). So the discouraged must strengthen tired hands and weakened knees while they return to and remain on the spiritual path following their Messiah (12:12–13).

**10:32–39.** Beginning in this section, the recipients are summoned to recall **the former days** following their decision to follow Jesus as their Messiah, **when they endured a great conflict of sufferings** (10:32). During this difficult time, they often were verbally taunted and suffered physical afflictions (**tribulations**, 10:33). Moreover, they ministered to **prisoners** and joyfully **accepted ... the seizure of their property** (10:34). In view of their track record of persevering and their knowledge of how to persevere, 10:35 prohibits throwing **away** their **confidence**—i.e., that frame of mind enabling them to bear suffering with determination. The reason it must be retained is its yielding **a great reward**, which consists of their being peacefully sustained and subsequently being divinely recompensed.

For the current time they need **endurance**. The reason for this **need** is **so that when they have done the will of God**, they will **receive** all that God has **promised** (10:36).

**LESSON NUGGET** – The same Savior who died for you now lives for you and invites you to come into His presence to worship and to share your needs. The Old Testament high priest could go behind the veil only once a year, but we can come into God's presence any time. Be sure that you are cleansed and prepared to meet Him. You can trust Him: "He who promised is faithful" (v.23)

**Sources: Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary and Wiersbe Expository Outlines on the New Testament**