**Bethel Christian Fellowship**

**Fair Lawn, NJ**

**Hebrews (30): The Book Of Better Things**

**“Three Urgent Exhortations”**

**Hebrews 10:19-25**

**January 12, 2025**

When we turn to this section of the book of Hebrews, we have now concluded the main portion of the letter. That was the concentrated, doctrinal section in which our author was laboring to demonstrate why Jesus Christ is *better and greater* than anyone or anything that has preceded Him (Heb. 1-10:18). He is greater than the angels (Heb. 1-2). He is greater than Moses (3:1-4:13). He is greater than Aaron, the High Priest (4:14-7:28). He mediates a better covenant (8:1-13), in a superior sanctuary (9:1-28), because of His superior sacrifice (10:1-18). It’s a sacrifice that takes away sin once for all (10:1-10) so that it need not be repeated (10:11-18).

What follows are a series of exhortations that are based upon these great doctrinal truths (10:19-13:17). In view of the superiorities of Jesus Christ, and all that He has done through His once-for-all sacrifice of Himself on Calvary’s cross, we are encouraged to respond to the privileges and blessings that He has secured for us. This is precisely what we find here in the verses before us today (vv. 19-25).

After describing in glorious detail what Jesus Christ has done for people like you and me (10:1-18), our author opens this next paragraph with the indescribably important word, “Therefore” (10:19a). “*Therefore*,” he says, in light of everything that has been accomplished for us by Christ, “*let us draw near . . .*” (vv. 19-22); “*let us hold fast . . .*” (v. 23); “*let us encourage one another . . .*” (vv. 24-25).

The first exhortation is based squarely on his preceding argument (10:11-18). Because of Christ’s “*one sacrifice*” for sin, all believers have the privilege of entering directly into the presence of God without hindrance, and without any need for further sacrifice. Therefore, “*let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith*” (vv. 19-22). The second exhortation necessarily follows; “*let us hold fast the hope we profess*” (v. 23). The third exhortation emphasizes the necessity of assembling regularly with other Christians; “*let us encourage one another to love and good deeds*” (vv. 24-25). As we can see, the three great Christian virtues are evidenced here. They are the fruit of God’s saving grace: *faith* (v. 22), *hope* (v. 23), and *love* (v. 24).

**A. Draw Near in Faith (10:19-22):** “*Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is his body, and since we have a great high priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water*.” There are several important truths that surface in this first exhortation.

*First*, the invitation to “*draw near*” conveys the sense of an approach that never ends. It should be a daily, even an hourly approach. There is *never* a time when it is inappropriate to draw near to Him. There is *never* a time when He is *not* available to us. There is *never* a circumstance that makes entering His presence a bad idea. We *never* need to make an appointment or clear His security detail. He is always available, 24/7!

*Second,* this confidence to enter God’s presence is not based on anything we have done or any merits we possess, but because of the “blood of Jesus.” Under the terms of the Old Covenant, there was an elaborate system and structure in place designed to make sure that you could *not* draw near to God (Heb. 9). But under the terms of the New Covenant of Jesus Christ all the barriers and rules and obstacles have become obsolete (Heb. 8:13). There is only one requirement for those who wish to draw near to Him – repentant faith in Jesus Christ.

*Third,* Christ has opened for us the “*new and living way*” through the curtain, which is a metaphor for Christ’s *flesh* (NIV), or *body* (ESV). The author’s analogy seems to be as follows: Just as the veil of the temple was torn to open the way into the Most Holy Place (Matt. 27:51; Heb. 6:19; 9:3), so also Christ’s body was “torn” so that His blood might be shed to open the way into the heavenly sanctuary, or *The* Most Holy Place.

*Fourth,* our great High Priest is within this heavenly sanctuary. He is “*over the house of God*,” which means He rules over God’s household of faith (Cf. 3:6). Even though He has opened the way for our immediate approach to God, His ministry on our behalf never ends. He continues as our living High Priest, guiding, strengthening, encouraging, and interceding on our behalf. These *two* privileges – direct access to God and a sympathetic and merciful High Priest – ought to give every true believer constant encouragement to continually draw near to God.

*Fifth*, “*full assurance of faith*” should characterize our approach to the throne room of heaven. Why? Because a proper understanding of these great truths about Christ should result in no wavering or looking back to the old religious system. How so? Because those who draw near are the ones whose “*hearts*” are “*sprinkled clean from a guilty conscience*” and whose “*bodies*” have been “*washed with pure water*.”

The sprinkling of our heart that cleanses our conscience has already been accomplished. It refers to what Christ has achieved for us by the cleansing power of His blood. That doesn’t mean we have to *feel* cleansed to draw near to God; it means that we can confidently trust that we *are* clean because of Christ’s atoning work. The same is true for our “*bodies washed with pure water*.”

That’s probably not a reference to water baptism, as some have suggested. Rather, our author is most likely referring to the *spiritual* cleansing mentioned in Ezekiel 36:25-26, “*I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities, and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.*”

If so, then we have another analogy: just as real water washes our bodies clean from dirt and grime, so the spiritual water of God’s mercy and grace washes our hearts and souls clean from the guilt of our sin.

**Q.** What, then, do we hope to experience when we draw near to God? **A.** Here are just a few of the glorious privileges and blessings Christ has secured for us: **(1)** When we draw near to God as members of His household, we can tell Him everything – our complaints, our needs, our confusion and our hopes for the future; **(2)** when we enter corporate worship, we can praise Him for His goodness and greatness, and thank Him for His faithfulness and tender mercies; **(3)** we can rejoice that whenever we are in His presence, we can find “*fullness of joy and pleasures forever more*” (Ps. 16:11); **(4)** we can enjoy communion with Him, resting in the peace that He brings to our hearts (Isa. 26:3-4); **(5)** we can be still and anticipate hearing Him speak to us as we meditate on His Word.

**B. Hold Fast the Hope We Profess (v. 23):** “*Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.*” Throughout this letter we have seen our author’s repeated emphasis to “*hold fast our confidence and the hope of which we boast*” (Heb. 3:6; 4:14; 6:18). This hope is like an anchor, providing security and stability for the soul (6:19). It’s the hope of eternal glory, when we will be rid of these frail, fallen bodies and receive resurrected, glorified bodies. This hope is the incentive for persevering faith, and it is rooted and grounded in the faithfulness of God, for God has given us the promise of entering His rest (4:1).

**Q.** How, then, do we hold fast to our public confession of hope in a hostile, unbelieving world? **A.**  By devoting our time to reflect on God’s character, and to read and study His promises found in His Word, and to actively participate in the fellowship of a Christian community. It’s through our mutual encouragement that our hope of glory is strengthened.

**C. Encourage One Another to Love and Good Works (vv. 24-25):** “*And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another and all the more as you see the Day approaching*.” Here are verses that not only explain the necessity of Christian community and what our mutual responsibilities are; they also serve as a rebuke to so many professing Christians who are lackadaisical toward gathering regularly with a local congregation of Christians.

This “*meeting together*” (v. 25a) is not simply the Sunday morning “hour of worship.” If we are committed to “*encouraging one another*,” it would seem our author has in mind something that happens in our “Q and A” times and in our mid-week small group. Morning worship is *essential*, of course. But it’s not enough. The ideal setting in which you can interact with others and motivate others to love and serve others is a smaller, less formal meeting. It’s the place where others can encourage you to do the same!

It's also important to note that our author is challenging us “*to consider how*” we may spur one another on to love and good deeds. This means that when we gather together, we don’t drift aimlessly into a meeting. We are intentional; we are on a mission; we are on the lookout for those we might be able to help; we have a plan; we don’t wait for people to approach us, we approach them; we think of ways to encourage them to love and serve others *better* than they already do. In the same way, others in the group ought to have you in mind when they show up, so that you feel more equipped and motivated to love and serve others.

To think that we would ignore and neglect these gatherings, “*as is the habit of some*,” is simply unimaginable! As we all know, we don’t cultivate bad habits overnight. It takes time. It begins by making excuses, which leads to a pattern of excuses; or by saying “yes” to family outings or work opportunities, which leads to more outings and taking on more work on Sundays. Before we know what is happening, we find ourselves *immersed* in a habit. It’s one we can’t shake or break – *if we live unintentionally*. If we don’t have a plan of action, prioritizing the many things that compete for our time and allegiance, it won’t be long before we’ll be neglecting the regular attendance at and participation in the communal life of our local church family.

At the end of verse 25, our author explains why it’s so important to meet regularly, so that we can stir up one another to love and good deeds. He says we should do this “*and all the more as you see the Day approaching*.” This means that with each passing day we come closer to the end of the age, *the* day when Christ will return.

**Q.** Why is that so significant? **A.** Because as we approach the Day of Christ’s return, things will get *worse,* not better. According to numerous New Testament texts, the end of the age will bring with it more and more trouble, more and more cause for stress, and more and more Satanic opposition to the people of God (Cf. Matt. 24:36-50; 2 Tim. 3:1-9). There will be increasing chaos and persecution and trials and hardship that will impact the church of Jesus Christ worldwide. Here at home, the moral and spiritual decay of our society will continue to escalate, and the pressure to conform will be greater than ever before. It will be *increasingly difficult* to be a committed, outspoken Christian in the days ahead, and growing slack in our devotion to Christ will be *increasingly easy* as the pressure intensifies. Never have we so *urgently* needed to help one another by meeting regularly for mutual encouragement.

Not everyone has the opportunity to confidently draw near to God. Not everyone has the hope of eternal glory. Not everyone has a community in which they can be encouraged by others. These are *privileges* and *blessings* that have been secured for us by the saving work of Christ, our great High Priest. If so, then let’s not wait another minute to utilize these glorious privileges! Let us confidently draw near to God; let us maintain our Christian confession and hope; let us consider how to encourage one another to love and serve others even more than we already do!