

# Hebrews 10:19-39

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[ 0 : 00 ] Hebrews 10, we're on page 1007. Our family used to holiday in a tumbledown cottage in a remote part of Ireland.

! And when we started going there, no one had been to the cottage for quite a long time. And the path at the side that took you up there had become overgrown.

And what had once been a kind of driveway of sorts was covered in mud. And really the whole thing was impassable. You couldn't get up. So we couldn't get to where we wanted to go.

I cut back some of the overgrowth, spent some time hacking away at all the branches that had grown over. And I got someone to come and lay a truckload of stones on the path.

Now I didn't do that just so that the path was functional again for its own sake. I didn't do it just so that I could step back and say, well that was a good job of cutting back the overgrowth.

[ 1 : 04 ] And well that path now looks really, really good. I did it so that we could actually use it. I did it so that we could benefit and that we could gain access to where we wanted to go.

Now there's a sense in which the same sort of thing is true with all of the theology that we've been given so far in the book of Hebrews. Back as far as chapter 5 we've been given the sustained case for the supremacy of Jesus.

He is our high priest, the true and better high priest. And his sacrifice, offered as it is in the reality of heaven, is superior to all that went before. But all of that doctrine isn't just given to us as an end in itself.

Chapter 10 verse 19, therefore. So he's saying, the author is saying, in light of all that I've just said to you, something must now be done.

All that has been rolled out for us in chapters 5 to 10, you could say is summarized in verse 19. The blood of Jesus, which creates then verse 20, the new and living way that is opened for us through the curtain, that is through his flesh.

[ 2 : 15 ] Verse 21, and since we have a great priest over the house of God. He's saying Jesus shed his blood. He gave up his life in order to atone for our sins. He has opened a way back into the presence of God.

And he now mediates for us as a perfect priest in heaven. We are reconciled to the Father. We've been over this, haven't we, the last few weeks. And we're told all of this in rich detail.

Not so that we can say, well isn't that nice? Although it is. Not so that we can pass a doctrine exam, although the theology is vital. Not just so that we can meditate on the sheer grace and mercy of it all, although we must.

Not simply so that our hearts would be captivated with joy with all that this means for us, although they very much should be. But so that we might act on it. So that we might do something with it.

So that it might shape our lives. That the way that we live would look like an implication of all of that. And that's where we start this evening.

[ 3 : 22 ] Two points this evening. The first is this. Live like we really know Christ. Therefore, live like we really know Christ. That's verses 19 to 25.

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus. Since we have confidence to do this, he tells us to act in three ways. First of all, let us draw near, verse 22.

Let us hold fast, verse 23. And let us consider verse 24. And I want us to see that as we think about these things, that as he calls us to do them, he's calling us to do them together.

The language is corporate throughout. Now what that means is, when he says, therefore, brothers, it's brothers and sisters. It's the church family. Then verse 24. The us in view there. The one another of the church community.

We'll get more practical on this later. But recognize that what we're called to here, which is the ancient triad of faith, hope, and love, we're called to together. This is a corporate exhortation. [ 4 : 28 ] This is a team talk, as it were. What will that mean? Verse 22. Draw near in faith. If you live like you really know Christ, you will draw near in faith.

Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Now whatever your reasons might be for shrinking back, for keeping God at a distance, whether because you're cross with Him, or because you feel that you've let Him down.

So whether it's something He's done or something you feel about yourself, if you're a Christian, if you're trusting the Lord Jesus, you can set all of them aside. Indeed, the word translated confidence in verse 19 is literally boldness.

We can boldly approach the eternal throne of God. How can we do that? Through the finished work of Christ, our high priest. Because He offered His blood in the true heavenly sanctuary.

You have been sprinkled clean. You're clean this evening if you're in Christ. And you know this because of the washing of our bodies, the very thing that is depicted in Christian baptism, what we've just seen this evening.

[ 5 : 44 ] Christ's blood, we sing it, really does make the foulest clean. And if you are trusting in the Lord Jesus, His blood avails for you.

So for the believer in the Lord Jesus, there is no reason to keep God at a distance. Because there is no sin too great that cannot be covered by His atoning blood.

Now for those of you who are given to self-doubt, for those of you who think that you've sinned your way beyond His reach, Christ's sacrifice on your behalf commands you to draw near to God and to do so boldly.

Don't hold back. And for those of you for whom life is hard, and because life is difficult, if you're honest with yourself, there's a part of your heart that is angry with God, or because life is difficult, you've pulled back and you've allowed your heart to go cold to Him, Christ's sacrifice commands you to come back, to draw near, go to God in faith.

Draw near in faith. Having done that then, verse 23, we are to hold fast with hope.

[ 7 : 00 ] Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. As Christians, we confess all that Christ has done for us as the basis of our hope.

What is your hope? Your hope is all that Christ has done, His finished work. We have a great high priest, one who has gone into heaven on our behalf. When we sin, or when Satan brings his accusations against us, the Lord Jesus steps in and pleads the merit of His blood.

Father, He says, He was purchased at the cost of my life. She is free because I took her punishment in her place. This is our hope.

That is the ground of all of our hope, the finished work of Christ and the fact that He mediates for us. And the author reminds us that we must hold this hope with a tight fist.

We must hold it unshakably. Don't doubt. Don't fear. Don't put your hope anywhere else. Why? Because God, He who promised, is faithful.

[ 8 : 06 ] He's faithful. What a relief. Isn't that a relief? If this depended on us, we would be lost. We know how fickle our hearts can be.

I certainly know how fickle and cold mind can grow at times. We know how easily tempted we are. We can have the highest, most lofty thoughts of our God, and within a moment, within a split second, we can have our gaze drifting off after some glistening idol somewhere else.

We think to ourselves, maybe I'd be happier if that was my life. We know, if we're honest with ourselves, if making it to glory depended on our faithfulness, we would be in nothing but trouble. But it doesn't. It doesn't. It depends on the faithfulness of God to His own promises, and because He is faithful, we can hold on to our hope through even the most intense, difficult, painful, nerve-shattering storms of life.

I don't know what you're going through this evening as you seek to live for Christ. Temptations that feel overwhelming. Pressure from outside in some way.

[ 9 : 21 ] Difficulties at work. Struggles in your family. A sense of shame that you feel unable to let go of. Anxiety about any number of things. Go to God and hold fast your hope.

Because He's faithful. He is faithful. And He has put His Word on it. He will see you through. And He'll see you through step by step by step all the way to the end.

Sometimes when we're struggling and hope is thin on the ground, we think to ourselves, I'm never going to make it to the end. We don't need to think like that. Just take the next step. And the next. And the next. And all of a sudden, you realize you've come quite a distance, and God has been faithful all the way. Hold fast with hope.

And then next, thirdly, if we're going to live like we really know Christ, stir up to love. Verse 24. Stir up to love. The corporate aspect comes through most clearly here.

[10:20] Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works. The best sports teams, whatever the sport, if it's a team sport, the best sports teams are those where every player knows their job, but doesn't play as an individual.

Whatever the sport, and you can ask experts in any one of these sports, any of the best coaches that there have ever been, and you say, what makes an absolutely top-notch player?

They'll say, yeah, they're talented. Yeah, they're this. But in the end, they put the team first. They know that their role is to contribute to something bigger than them. It's the team as a whole.

And we need to think about our Christian life like that. It is a team sport. And the team isn't there just to help you succeed. But we all see our role as contributing to the progress of the whole.

You're asking yourself the question, how can I get the best out of my brothers and sisters? The word for stir up here, let us consider how to stir up one another.

[11:27] That word could be translated provoke. Provoking one another. Provoking someone is usually doing something. Normally, it's annoying, isn't it? You feel provoked by somebody.

But it's doing something to bring out a response. And here we are to provoke one another to love and good works. And I take it that that means then, verse 25, what does that look like?

What do the love and good works look like? Not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another. And all the more as you see the day drawing near. You see, if you are struggling to kind of hold fast to your hope, what do you need?

You need someone to come along in love and to encourage you to take the next step. You come along and you say, we know that gathering as the church, week on week, is absolutely vital.

Being here for worship is the beating heart of Christian life. And so you come, not just to consume yourself, what is provided for your worship or your encouragement, but you encourage others to do the same.

[12:40] I'm struggling to hold fast my hope. And you say, make sure you're there on Sunday. I'll come and pick you up. You say, oh, you're cold in your faith at the minute. Well, confess your sin and draw near to God in faith as He calls you to.

Go boldly to Him. You're discouraged for X reason, whatever it might be. Hold fast to Christ, my brother, my sister, and do it with hope.

He's praying for you in heaven right now. In the midst of this struggle, the Son of God is praying for you. Keep going. Work is killing me at the minute.

I'm just so busy. I just can't, I can't keep going. There's so much opposition. I'll pray for you. Can I help in some way? I'll come and meet with you and pray with you.

Let's read the Bible together for a bit just to get through this next phase. Now, often when we're discouraged, when discouragement hits, what's the first thing that goes by the wayside? We withdraw from the people of God.

[13:42] We withdraw from church. I don't really feel up to it this Sunday. Well, the author is saying that when we don't feel up to it, it is when we need to go. And not just for ourselves, but so that other people who know that we're struggling, who know that we're going through it, see us recognizing that this is a priority and we gather together and they are encouraged.

I think this verse gives us an insight into the original context. People, what was going on? So people were discouraged because of opposition, so they distanced themselves from the church community.

They distanced themselves from the church community and so they felt the draw back to old covenant religion was more attractive. In the meantime, the people that they left behind were then discouraged because there were fewer of them at church.

And church life was harder and it felt more fragile. Here's the thing. I think we can all sign up to this idea in theory.

Yeah, I'm a team player. I know that we all got to pull together in the life of the church. But ask yourself this question. When it comes to being provoked, when it comes to being stirred up towards

greater obedience, deeper faithfulness, more consistent, evident Christian discipleship, would you let someone speak into your life?

[ 15 : 13 ] Would you allow someone else to challenge you? Would you respond to their encouragement?

Or should they just keep their nose out of your business? There are so many demands on your time. So many demands that are pressing on your time and the brightest minds in the world are paid millions of pounds to lure your heart away after their products rather than being captivated by the Lord Jesus Christ.

We all feel the pressure in different ways in our culture to step back from faithfully following Jesus. And we also all have blind spots. Blind spots by definition.

We can't see them. So we need other people to point them out. None of us can stand on our own. We weren't designed to do that.

None of us can do it because we weren't designed to do it. We cannot live the Christian life in isolation and we weren't designed to do that. And by the way, what we might call the Christian industrial complex, they haven't helped us actually because we can access all kinds of Christian resources online that give us the impression that we can live the Christian life on our own.

[ 16 : 38 ] If you have an internet connection, we're told that you can live a rich Christian life. You can't. The Christian life is inescapably corporate. The New Testament has no vision of the Christian life apart from the local church.

This is reflected in the vows we take here as church members. Vow number four, do you recognize the authority of the elders and assent to the governance and oversight of the International Presbyterian Church? And do you agree to accept their discipline if that should ever be necessary?

We need elders who will teach, encourage, and correct us. Vow number five, do you promise to support the church by prayer, giving money and time, and caring practically for individuals?

We need the practical care of one another. Vow number six, do you commit yourself to building and maintaining healthy relationships within this church, treating your fellow believers as your brothers and sisters in Christ?

What is that vow if it is not Hebrews 10, 19 to 25? We need others to help us live the Christian life. So when we gather like this, when you gather with the church, you don't just gather for your own benefit or for your own personal growth, but for the benefit and growth of others.

[ 17 : 58 ] And just turning up, just being here, or just turning up to the prayer meeting, that is an encouragement to your brothers and sisters.

They look around and they say, they're still holding fast. They cared enough about the Lord and about me to be here. Their voice made the singing more encouraging. They want to provoke me to godliness and encourage our church to keep going.

I'm going to do the same. If they can do it, so can I. But again, for this to be a reality, we need to be willing to be provoked.

To receive a brother or sister in church life telling us that we need to change certain behavior. We need to repent of an obvious sin. We need to change our priorities.

If someone in church life, if one of the elders challenged you about your parenting, how would you take it? Ooh. You can talk to me about anything else, but don't touch the idol right at the heart of everything.

[ 19 : 05 ] How dare you? We should welcome their willingness, actually, to care enough to get involved, to provoke us to love and good works and to keep going in obedience.

Live like you really know Christ. Draw near to God in faith. Hold on to the gospel in hope and lovingly encourage others to do the same in all areas of discipleship.

live like you really know Christ. Point number one. The author then follows this with a warning, if you don't, and an encouragement. Point number two, live with a wise perspective.

Live with a wise perspective. That will mean two things, 26 to 31. First of all, remember what's coming. Remember what's coming. For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.

Here the author raises the reality of judgment. Now what's interesting is, if you've been with us over these weeks, he has just spent several chapters talking about the complete sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice for every sin.

[ 20 : 30 ] All confessed sin is forgiven sin. So there does remain a sacrifice for sins, even today, even this evening, for anyone who hears Christ's voice and doesn't harden their heart, but turns their lives over to him.

So what does he mean here? Well, this is where the context really matters. The problem here, as we've said all along, is that some Christian Jews are attempting to go back to the blood of bulls and goats.

And to do that, they would need to travel to Jerusalem to offer their sacrifices. But this letter was written around the late 60s AD, just before the war broke out that destroyed Jerusalem, the destruction that Jesus said in the Gospels would happen within the lifetime of those that he was speaking to, and it climaxed in AD 70.

So he's referring to those who would go back to the old covenant ways and go back to Jerusalem to do that and incur that judgment that was going to come. So if I can paraphrase, it's this.

He's saying, for if we sin deliberately by returning to the Levitical sacrifices which must be offered in Jerusalem, after we've received the knowledge of the truth that Christ died once for all and did away with the repetitive sacrifices in doomed Jerusalem, well, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins back there, but a fearful expectation of judgment.

[ 21 : 50 ] Roman armies, massacred Jews, fury of fire which will consume the adversaries. The author is concerned about a specific historical judgment and so he warns his hearers about going back to Jerusalem to worship when the city is on the verge of destruction.

And that destruction came to pass just as Jesus promised. The city fell and many who, verse 26, had spurned Christ were lost. And what that does for us all these years later is remind us that God keeps his word.

He has promised that he will take vengeance on those who oppose him and on that day whenever it comes it will be a fearful thing to be in that situation. Verse 31. Christ has done all that is required to reconcile you to God regardless of your background, regardless of your status or your ability, regardless of what you've done with your life, however good and however bad, the blood of Jesus has opened the way to God if you will take it.

But if you won't, if you would rather navigate this life on your own terms, the only alternative is to fall into the hands of the living God, not as your father but as your judge.

It is real warning to real people. So remember what's coming. We always have to calibrate our behavior in the present in light of what we know about the future.

[ 23 : 17 ] Remember what is coming. Apart from the Lord Jesus Christ who has done everything to reconcile us to God, to take us all the way to glory. Apart from that, all that there is is judgment.

It is very sobering. Real warning. The author follows this with a reminder of his hearer's past experience as well.

Remember what's coming, he says, but also remember what's past. Verse 32. Remember what's past, but recall the former days when after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction and sometimes being partners with those so treated.

For you had compassion on those in prison and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property. When you started out on this Christian life, you took a lot of grief. You were mocked and humiliated and rejected and abused and robbed, but you kept going.

It's almost like the author is saying, remember the conversation we had that time after your flat was ransacked and they spray painted all that stuff over your front door.

[ 24 : 30 ] You had your valuables stolen. It was an awful time. And do you remember that I was saying I was sorry that you'd experienced this and you rebuked me? You said that this was reproach for the sake of Christ and that you were glad to be counted worthy to suffer for his name's sake.

Do you remember that? The author is reminding these weary believers what they went through in order to get to this point.

And he's saying, well, first of all, they had the right perspective back then. They happily accepted the loss of what they had. Verse 34. Since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one.

That's what Christ holds out to us. Something that is way better than anything we could ever have here. Something that is way better than if we were to give up now because it's too hard.

We think it's too hard. We would be forfeiting just something unimaginably wonderful. and one that is not going to be fleeting but one that is going to abide.

[ 25 : 37 ] You had the right perspective back then, Hebrews. You know and you knew then that Christ was your real treasure. But also, secondly, in order to encourage them to persevere and not give up.

He's saying, do you remember you went through all that? Why would you give up now? Verse 35. Do not throw away your confidence which has a great reward. You've come through so much. You know like the person who takes on the massive challenge? Those kind of big challenges that are cool these days. I'm going to swim around Europe. I'm going to row across the world on my own in my pants.

And they set off with great confidence. And there's a great fanfare in all of that. And despite all the challenges, at the start, they keep going. And at some point, in this great challenge, there'll be some people who say, I can't do it anymore.

And they stop. But there'll be others who think, you know, I've come through so much. I can't stop now. That's the person that he wants these people to be.

[ 26 : 41 ] He's calling these hearers to be that person and to endure. Not to believe in themselves, but verse 37, can you see, to trust Christ's promises and to have faith that God, who has promised to be faithful, will see them through.

That's the only way anyone will endure to the end. Now, some of you need this reminder. As we come to a close, some of you need this reminder. You made a courageous start.

You made a costly start in the Christian life. It cost you friends. It cost you relationships. Your family are annoyed with you. They're disappointed that their dreams for you haven't been fulfilled.

because you've given yourself to being Christian.

You were warned by HR because the views you expressed on X weren't in line with the company's position on inclusion. At the beginning, you lost your job because you liked the social media, posted, quoted, the Bible, and so on.

Remember those days. And if you're tempted to walk away from Christ now, remember those days and don't throw away your confidence. Don't lose your nerve.

[ 27 : 47 ] When following Christ is particularly tough, we need this twin perspective in order to be confident and keep going. Remember, judgment lies ahead and there is nothing else for those who walk away from Christ. It's very sobering.

And at the same time, remember what you went through to get this far and don't waste that struggle. Instead, live like you really know Jesus.

Live by faith in our good God who will keep us for glory. And let's do it together. Let's pray.