

A New Way of Living

Christ is Enough Series

Hebrews 10:19-39

Pastor Bryan Clark

When I was a teenager, one of the things I wanted was to possess a marriage license. I remember when I met Patti I thought, “Finally, here’s a woman I can share a marriage license with.” I remember the day we got married. I was so excited all through the ceremony, “It’s now only a matter of minutes until I actually possess my dream to own a marriage license.” I remember our wedding night. It was wonderful! I think Patti was feeling a bit romantic, but I said, “Honey, let’s find a store and get a frame for the marriage license.” (*laughter*) We got the marriage license; we put it in a frame; we put it on the pillows on the bed, and all night we just admired the long-sought-after marriage license. And over the last thirty-eight years, one of the most meaningful things in my life has been knowing I possess a marriage license. Right? The purpose of marriage is *not* to possess a marriage license; it is to celebrate the relationship!

In the same way, the purpose of the gospel is not to possess a ticket to heaven but to enter in to a deeply, meaningful, soul-satisfying relationship with Jesus. As we begin to talk about living out this new life in Christ, it’s really important that we don’t start thinking, “This is now my obligation, my duty, because I have a ticket to heaven.” That would be like saying, “I must remain faithful to my wife because I have a marriage license.” It’s kind of missing the whole point. But rather, now that we understand life is found in Christ alone—that Christ *is* enough—this is now a life of meaning...this is a life of purpose...this is the life my soul has been longing for. That’s what we want to talk about this morning. If you have a Bible, turn with us to Hebrews, Chapter 10. As I mentioned last week, Hebrews chapter 10, starting in verse 19, there’s a little shift in the focus from this deep, rich, theology that we’ve been talking about to, “Now what does this look like actually lived out in life?” So, verses 19, 20, and 21 are a little bit of a review and then the action starts:

Therefore, (*so therefore, in light of what we’ve talked about*) **brethren, since** (*So this is the review.*) **since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus,**
(*NASB, Hebrews 10:19)

Again, you have to keep thinking about these tabernacle images that have been so prevalent in the book of Hebrews. In the old covenant no one could have imagined actually entering into the presence of God with the exception of one person, the high priest, and that was once a year. The people understood they were removed from the presence of God by many, many layers. So now in the new covenant *we have the confidence to enter the holy place, right into the presence of God.* How? **By the blood of Jesus.** Verse 20:

...by a new and living way...

The Greek word for **new** means *brand new*—never available to anyone in the history of the world until the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. The idea of **living** is, “Now this is the path of life.” Remember the old covenant was all about death. There were these reminders that there is a death to come. Paul even told the Corinthians that it’s a ministry of death; it’s a ministry of condemnation. But now that Jesus has died our death, it’s no longer a covenant of death; it’s a covenant of life! Think about the words that

Jesus used. Jesus said, “*I am the Way* (that’s the new path) *I am the Truth; I am the Life.*” It’s a **living** path...

which He inaugurated, (*He brought about; He dedicated for us. How?*)

...through the veil, that is, His flesh...His broken body. (*Again, think of the words, “I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father,”*) but how? **...through the veil**, “*through Me.*” This is all the language that Jesus used, and the writer of Hebrews is using. Verse 21:

...and since we have a great priest (*the ultimate High Priest*) **over the house of God**,

We’ve learned in Hebrews, we’re **the house of God**. Jesus is the builder, then let us what? (So those verses were a quick review.) Now three action steps beginning in verse 22:

...let us draw near... (*You remember the better promise of the new covenant was intimacy, and intimacy unimaginable by people in the old covenant.*)

...let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

So those again are two images from the old covenant shadows that have been fulfilled in Christ.

But I want to backtrack and talk a little bit about this idea of a **sincere heart in full assurance of faith**. Sincere heart could be translated *true heart*. Basically, what that’s saying is that I have been invited to draw near into the very presence of God, but to do so with a full assurance of faith—meaning believing the truth. A **sincere heart** is about *motive*. It’s about realizing I’m not entering into the presence of God to impress Him. I’m not doing that to impress others. I’m not doing it to somehow further atone for sin. I’m not doing that to make myself more acceptable or more righteous or more impressive to God. Understand those things, frankly, are offensive to God because they’re forms of self-righteousness. I’m not doing that. I understand the truth that my sin has been paid for by the blood of Christ and there’s nothing more that’s needed! All He’s asking is that I believe that. That’s the **full assurance of faith**, and therefore enter His presence just in order to delight in the relationship with Him. That’s the invitation—an invitation that was unimaginable to people in the old covenant but an invitation made to us in the new covenant! The second action step is verse 23:

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, (Why?) for He who promised is faithful;

Now this is not new to us. He’s talked a lot about the idea of *holding fast...hold on tight...anchor down* to what we know and believe is true. **The confession of our hope**—that word **confession** basically means this is a body of doctrine we agree with. You hear of *confessions of faith*. It’s the same idea: This is a body of doctrine we believe is true and this is the basis of our hope. This has been a theme in the book of Hebrews. Our hope is not ultimately that everything in this life is going to work out. Our hope is not that everything in this life is going to make sense. Our hope is found in the truth that, at the end of the story, Jesus wins and He’s coming back, and He will deliver us to a new heaven and a new earth that will be everything our souls long for today! So what he’s saying is that sometimes life is going to get really hard. These people are headed into severe persecution, and sometimes all they can do is hold on tightly to what they know is true. Why? **Because the One who promised you is faithful.**

Now I just want to stop and put some of this together a little bit. I want to retrieve an imagery that we used years ago when we were going through the book of Galatians—an imagery that we referred to as the *Light Room* and the *Dark Room* because this is *Light Room* theology. The idea is that in the *Light Room* is the place where Jesus dwells, and in the *Light Room* it's continually playing the music of *Amazing Grace*. And the invitation on the basis of the grace of God, on both my best days and my worst days, is to draw near—an invitation to come into the *Light Room*—in order to celebrate the relationship with Jesus, to dance with Jesus to the music of *Amazing Grace*—even on the days when I've totally messed up, because even on those days I stand in the righteousness of Christ! My sins have been paid for. There's nothing more I need to do—and so I celebrate life in the *Light*!

But here's the problem: When we don't have good theology, what we create is a *Dark Room* because that's what makes sense to us. The *Dark Room* is a place of shame; it is a place of guilt. It is a place where I punish myself because of my sin. It's a place where I beat myself up because once again, I'm "Loser Christian". We hear the voice of God in our ears that sounds like an angry parent, "You are Loser Christian, go to your room!" So that's what we do. We go into the *Dark Room* and we try to somehow punish ourselves enough that we think somehow, someway, we may be worthy of some degree of forgiveness from God. But we have to understand, that is deeply offensive to God because again it's a form of self-righteousness. I'm thinking there's still something I can do...must do...to make myself acceptable to God. What happens is we get lost in the *Dark Room*. We define ourselves as Loser Christian, so I live like Loser Christian and I just begin this cycle that keeps me in bondage, rather than realizing my sin has been paid for. There's nothing more I need to do! On my absolute worst days, I need to flee to the *Light Room*, and I need to remember: "Here I am loved. Here I am accepted. Here I stand in the righteousness of Christ!" In the *Light Room* there is true repentance of sin. There's true confession of sin. My soul comes back to life with this passion for righteousness, and I'm renewed, and I realize, "This is the way I want to live. I want to live for righteousness!" If we can rightly understand the truth and live in the *Light Room*—that's where life is found—that's the path that our souls are looking for, and that's what He's saying, "Draw near; this is true. You just have to believe it's true! This is the basis of our hope!" Third action step: Verse 24:

...and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. (Vs. 24-25)

So the third action step is to, "*Come together.*" It is interesting that this is roughly thirty-some years after the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ—after Pentecost and the launching of the Church—and there's already a problem with Christians forsaking the gathering of the people of God. There's something deep within us that convinces us, "I don't need that. I can do it myself!" If that was a problem thirty years after the launching of the Church, is it possible that's a problem two thousand years later in a very selfish, individualized, consumer-driven culture? A consumer comes to church and says, "What's in it for me?" And that's how they think. "I don't need it this week." But a proper understanding of what he just said is, "This isn't just about me." We come together as the people of God **to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, to encourage one another**, to challenge one another, to hold one another up. As a matter of fact, the last thing he says there is, "It's only going to get worse." As we get closer and closer to the return of Christ, it's only going to get worse and so it's needed all the more. And so there is this reminder that we're in this **together**, a mutual commitment to help get one another to the finish line together like champions!

So he says, “Based on what we’ve learned is true, we should *draw near*. We should run to the *Light*. We need to hold fast; we need to hold on tight to what we know is true because He who promised will be faithful, and sometimes life is going to get really, really hard and we come *together*. We come *together* to worship. We come *together* to encourage. We come *together* to challenge. We come *together* as part of our expression that we are in this *together* as the people of God, and let’s *together* challenge ourselves to make it to the finish line as champions!

Starting then in verses 26 through 31, this is what’s referred to as the fourth warning passage in Hebrews. It’s interesting to note all four warning passages have the same focus. None of them are focused on bad behaviors. All of them are focused on the truth—understanding and believing the truth, and the danger of no longer believing the truth. This one is the same in that way. So, there are many different opinions, many different interpretations. This one is very similar to Hebrews chapter 6, so it would be right to say how we interpreted Hebrews 6 is going to strongly influence how we interpret this passage—and that is certainly the case. So, I’m just going to give you what I think makes the most sense. Verse 26:

For if we go on sinning willfully...

Okay, this is the core issue: What is the sin? It’s something that has been happening—you can tell by the verb tenses. It’s continuing to happen and it’s not accidental—it’s **willful**; it’s on purpose. So what is that? Now some would just say, “It’s any sin,” but that makes no sense. That’s not been the discussion in Hebrews at all. That’s certainly not been the discussion in this context. So, what is the problem? Well let’s see if the text helps us with that:

For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, (So now we know what’s true.) there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,

Now this sounds a lot like Hebrews 6. Now we know the truth and we’ve done something with the truth that has now prohibited the forgiveness of our sins. All that remains is judgment. So now we know the sin has something to do with the rejection of the one means of salvation. That’s why all that’s left is judgment. Verse 27:

...but a terrifying expectation of judgment and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES.

Starting in verse 28 he’s going to make a logical argument from the old covenant into the new covenant. Verse 28:

Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses (meaning the old covenant) dies without mercy on *the testimony of two or three witnesses.*

Okay, now the pieces are coming together. We’ve come across this idea of willful sin a couple of times already in the book of Hebrews. It’s not language we typically use, but very familiar in the old covenant. It’s what he’s referring to here. In the old covenant, if someone sinned, there was a sacrifice for sin. But if someone rejected the old covenant, meaning they rejected the Law of Moses, they rejected the tabernacle and the sacrificial system—they rejected everything that it represents—then there is no basis for **mercy**. They’ve rejected that which God has provided to cover their sins. Therefore, the only thing left is judgment. In the old covenant that was actually a capital offense. If there were two or three witnesses that could confirm that this person had rejected the Law of Moses,

the old covenant, then they were put to death. So the logic of the argument is: if the punishment was that severe for rejecting the shadow—the old covenant—then, verse 29:

How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he (or it could be translated by which one) was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?

So what he just said is: If this is the consequence for rejecting the old covenant, how much more severe are the consequences going to be for rejecting the new covenant? Basically they despise, they **trample under foot the Son of God** *and the blood He shed for their sin*. Saying it's **unclean** is just simply saying, "It's just blood and he's just a guy and he died. That's all there is to it. There's no saving power in the blood of Jesus." And in doing that, then they're **insulting the Spirit of grace**. They are rejecting Jesus' death on the cross for their sins, and they are rejecting God's offer of grace.

At this point I would say the "willful sin" is obvious; it's defined in the text. What they had been doing was rejecting Jesus and maintaining the old covenant. That was their sin. Now they know the truth. They've been enlightened, but they're choosing not to believe it. Therefore their sin is they are *trampling under foot the Son of God; they are rejecting the blood of Jesus for their sins; they are rejecting this message of grace*, which leaves them with no other option but judgment, which is what he says: Verse 30:

For we know Him who said, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY." And again, "THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE." It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Vs. 30-31)

Now we know from earlier passages in Hebrews—we've identified these—that there is a concern that the writer has that there may be some among them who do not really believe. We've seen that in several places. When he opens in verse 26 with the word "*we*" it's an editorial "*we*". It would be no different than me saying this morning, "If we reject Jesus," it doesn't mean I'm rejecting Jesus; it's just the editorial "*we*" - *some among us*. Well, this has been a concern all the way along. He's writing primarily to believers but has a concern there are some that aren't truly believers. This is the fourth time he's offered a warning passage.

So a couple of things: One is human nature, such as it is, means that if this morning you receive ten compliments and one criticism, what are you going to fuss over all afternoon? It's the criticism. We all get that. So, after all this wonderful, beautiful, hope-filled theology, people get hung up on these warning passages: "Oh no, what if that's me?" So, let's be clear here: If you are willfully, intentionally rejecting Jesus and His death on the cross for your sins, then it is you! But if that's not what you're doing, then it's not you!

The second thing would be to understand this is continuing, willful action. So I may be rejecting Jesus today, but if tomorrow I decide to receive Jesus, I experience His salvation and I'm no longer guilty of that sin—and I can be forgiven. The only unpardonable sin is to die without ever accepting Jesus' death for my sin! At that point there is no basis by which God can forgive. You can reject Him up to five seconds before you die, and if in that moment you choose Jesus, God is faithful to save!

Alright, so then starting in verse 32—this is almost identical to chapter 6—he reaffirms the people that that isn't them. He has the same concerns I just expressed—that now people start to panic! It's not them, so he says:

But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one. (Vs. 32-34)

So just like chapter 6, he's reaffirming the evidence of your life is clear—that you have truly been radically changed by the power of Jesus. They have been persecuted. They have taken their stand for Jesus. They have stood with those who have been persecuted. The idea of visiting people in jail or in prison was that in the ancient world people were thrown in prison and often just neglected. If there wasn't someone that brought them food, if there wasn't someone that brought them clothing or whatever was needed, they often just died there. So the idea was that the Christians brought them what they needed, but in so doing that, they outed themselves as fellow Christians, setting themselves up for persecution. It wasn't just a nice thing to do. It had serious consequences. They had their possessions seized, but they're okay with that. They're **joyfully** okay with that because they understood what they had was more valuable and would last forever. So what the writer is saying is: “The evidence is overwhelmingly clear—you have been radically changed by the power of Jesus!” Verse 35:

Therefore, do not throw away your confidence (*don't panic, because confidence...*), **which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance** (*perseverance*), **so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.** (*Then he quotes from Isaiah*):

**FOR YET IN A VERY LITTLE WHILE,
HE WHO IS COMING WILL COME, AND WILL NOT DELAY.**
(*...the return of Christ. Then he quotes from the prophet Habakkuk.*)
**BUT MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY FAITH;
AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK, MY SOUL HAS NO PLEASURE IN HIM.**

But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, (*meaning they're true believers*) **but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.** (Vs. 35-39)

What he's saying is that they need to look at their lives, and once again the evidence is there. They *do* truly believe; this *does* matter to them; they aren't rejecting the Christ, and so they *need* to have confidence. They need to persevere. What he's basically saying is, “Life's going to get really hard, and you're going to have to persevere all the way to the end. But we want to finish this race like champions, and to do that we have to have confidence. We have to remember what's true. We have to believe what's true all the way to the finish line.

He says, “Because of what is true,”—these are our actions steps—“we draw near; we run to the *Light*; we dance in the presence of Jesus, not because we performed so well today, not because we're Super Christian, not because we deserve it, but because of what Jesus has done on our behalf.” Therefore, we come with a sincere heart. We know this; we believe this—this is what God has offered us—and so we run to the *Light* and celebrate the new life we have in Christ. This is

what makes grace so life-changing! We hold on for all we're worth to the truth, to the hope of the gospel. We do believe Jesus is coming back! We do believe God wins! We do believe the future is glorious!

But the reality is sometimes in this life it can get very, very hard. It gets very confusing. So, in the midst of all of that, sometimes all we can do is hang on tight to what we know is true. But we also need one another. One of the effects of the *Dark Room* is it isolates people. People that get stuck in the *Dark Room* isolate themselves, and that's part of this death spiral. One of the ways we avoid that is we keep coming together. We keep remembering what's true. We keep remembering what we believe. We keep remembering who we are as the people of God. We encourage one another. We stimulate one another. We challenge one another. We carry one another. There's this mutual commitment that we are the Church—we're a family; we're the people of God—and together we're going to run this race, and there's a mutual commitment that together we're going to get to the finish line and, to the glory of God, we are going to finish as champions! We just can't forget that!

Our Father, we celebrate this morning this magnificent truth. What we've been offered as people in the new covenant was unimaginable to the people before the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Lord, may we draw near. May we hang on tight and may we commit ourselves to the coming together as the people of God, that we might finish this race together as champions for Your glory! In Jesus' name, Amen.

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A New Way of Living

Christ is Enough

Hebrews 10:19-31

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Opening Discussion

1. What are the differences between viewing salvation as a ticket to heaven and viewing salvation as the beginning of a new life in Christ?
2. What is the difference between obeying Christ as an obligation because He saved us and understanding that obeying Christ is a new way of living that leads to life?

Bible Study

1. Read Hebrews 10:19-25. Since what is true according to verses 19-20? This is a review of things we've learned from Hebrews so far. See also 4:14-16.
2. Since these things are true, we should draw near, hold fast and come together. Talk about each of these as they are presented in the text. How does getting stuck in the dark room (isolated in our shame and guilt) keep us from drawing near, holding fast and coming together?
3. Read Hebrews 10:26-31. This is the fourth warning text (2:1-4; 3:7-4:11; 6:4-8). Do a quick review and comparison of 6:4-8. What was Bryan's interpretation of chapter 6?
4. What is the willful sin that has been going on and is continuing? Try to answer it from the information in the text. How is that like the core issue in chapter 6?
5. Read Numbers 15:30, 31. What was required if someone intentionally rejected the Covenant of Moses (the Old Covenant)? If one rejected the Old Covenant there was no other covering for sin. There was no other means by which they could receive mercy. Then what is the sin according to 10:29? Who are the sinners?
6. Read Hebrews 10:32-39. What could the believers look at to help confirm that the true believers had experienced something life changing? What do you see in your life that confirms something has indeed changed in you?

7. According to 10:35-39, what do we need in difficult times? Put this together with drawing near, holding tight and gather together. What is needed to really persevere victoriously in a hostile world?

Application

1. Rate yourself on a scale of 1-10 on these three actions
 - a. Drawing near
 - b. Holding Tight
 - c. Gathering together

2. Notice how much emphasis there has been on knowing what's true in all four warning passages and in this text specifically. What are the things you can do to keep growing in your understanding and belief concerning what God says is true?