

## “Be the Blessing God Calls You to Be”

*Hebrews 10:19-25*

What if I said to you this morning that I can show you from Scripture how you can receive God’s blessing in your life and how you can be a blessing to others everyday? Would you be willing to obey His Word in order to receive it? Because, obedience is always the avenue through which we receive and become God’s blessing. And what if what God asks us to do to receive His blessing or be His blessing is not difficult at all, do we want it?

This is what we have in front of us in Heb. 10:24-25 this morning,

*<sup>24</sup> And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, <sup>25</sup> not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

As we’ve been discovering in looking at these one or two familiar verses, we can’t remove it from its context. So we must include vv.19-23 because vv.24-25 contain the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> appeals based on the truth of vv.19-21, with vv.22-23 being the first two appeals that the author makes to his audience based on what he has been instructing them so far. And really, 10:19-25 is the hinge on which the whole book swings because it summarizes all that he’s been teaching up to this point and now he makes a direct application from what he’s been teaching. So then, what’s he been teaching? What is Hebrews all about? Let’s go back to Ch. 4 and read something that sounds very similar to what we read here in 10:19-25,

*<sup>4:14</sup> Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. <sup>15</sup> For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. <sup>16</sup> Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

Ch. 4:14-16 and 10:19-25 begin and end a section of Hebrews where the author challenges his Jewish Christian audience to make sure you fully understand who Jesus is and what He has done for you. Why did he need to do that? Many of these Jewish believers in Jesus were experiencing persecution and some were walking away from their fellow believers and were going back to the sacrificial system and following the Law of Moses – all these things Jesus fulfilled and did away with. This happened during the time of Emperor Nero’s reign. We read about this persecution in 10:32,

*<sup>10:32</sup> Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering. <sup>33</sup> Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. <sup>34</sup> You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions. <sup>35</sup> So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. <sup>36</sup> You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. <sup>37</sup> For in just a very little while, “He who is coming will come and will not delay.*

*<sup>38</sup> But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him.”*

<sup>39</sup> *But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved.*

To avoid persecution some of these Jewish believers had left the church and went back to offering sacrifices. So the author of Hebrews shows how great Jesus is. He is the exact image of God and higher than angels (ch. 1-2). He's greater than Moses and Joshua because they could only take you to the promised land but Jesus can take you to paradise with God (3-4). He's a greater priest than Aaron because Aaron and the other priests always had to keep sacrificing animals and could never take the worshipper past the front of the holy place. Jesus can take you into God's very presence through His once for all sacrifice (5-7). And Jesus makes a better covenant mediator because He paid the price for all our sins and they no longer had to sacrifice animals to have forgiveness of sins (8-10:18).

So the "therefore" that begins 10:19 is a summary of all the results of what Jesus did and the huge benefits He has over the sacrificial system. It was a challenge to these Jewish Christians to encourage their suffering brothers not to quit on following Jesus just because it wasn't easy.

The practical encouragement commanded in vv.24-25 is rooted in the spiritual practices in vv.19-23. Because vv.24-25 is a reminder to love others while vv.19-23 is the prerequisite that the only way you'll love others (second greatest commandment) is if you're loving God (vv.19-23) – the first and greatest commandment.

So if we are doing poorly in encouraging each other and not meeting with God's people like we should, it's because we're not meeting with God the way we should. Revealing that we're not growing in our relationship with Him. So here's how this works. If we want the blessing of vv.24-25 and to be the blessing to others then we need to,

## **Be Strengthened in our Confidence in God** **(10:19-22)**

There are 3 appeals in this passage that all begin "let us" – (let us draw near, let us hold unswervingly, let us consider). But the first one isn't until v.22. Vv.19-21 contain two motivators of confidence ['since we have'] that are meant to point out the great benefits of what Christ did so that we won't go back to an inferior and invalid way of approaching God. All these verses are couched in sacrificial, approach-God-for-worship language to help all readers strengthen our relationship with God by 'drawing near'. 'Drawing near' is to come to God for worship. Under the sacrificial system the worshipper couldn't draw very near to God. He brought his sacrifice to the priest who burned it at the altar outside the tent/tabernacle where only the priest could get nearer [show diagrams]. Now, through Jesus's sacrifice you can come right into God's presence.

*"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 . . ."*

Only the High priest could go in the Most Holy Place where the Ark of the covenant was (the symbolical presence of God) and that was only once a year. Now through faith in Jesus the veil that kept you from drawing nearer to God is gone; access to God is wide open all the time. There is no need for the temple or tabernacle because Paul said in 1 Cor. 6:19 that our body is now the temple of God because God's presence – the Holy Spirit – dwells in us. So we can go to God any time to strengthen our relationship and as a result our confidence.

And that . . .

## **Requires consistent time (vv.19-20)**

For the reader, the writer was saying 'since you have this Better and easier way to God why go back to a way with limited access and no confidence you are in God's presence?' I believe He's emphasizing our personal time in God's presence because the application of all this in v.24 is corporate time in God's presence with God's people. That makes sense. The less time I spend with God personally will result in less time I spend with God's people corporately which means I won't be a blessing to them and won't receive a blessing from them.

We have a new and living way to God through Jesus. The old way was through dead animals. But since Jesus is our great high priest over the house of God to strengthen our confidence in God. . .

## **Requires consistent prayer and praising (v.21)**

Again, he's still talking about our personal worship and prayer time. Corporate worship is on v.24. The priest under the Law was your mediator to God. He sacrificed your animal, he presented to God, he prayed to God on your behalf. This is what these Jewish Christians left behind to follow Jesus – why would you go back? You can draw near yourself through the new and living way on your own because Jesus has already made this possible.

The only way we strengthen any of our human relationships is through regular communication and affirmation – marriage, children, friends, work. No different with God. When we read His Word He's affirming us. This is what this passage is all about – God is affirming us! Prayer is when we communicate with God and praise is when we affirm Him because He values and affirms us.

The author of Hebrews is saying if we don't have a healthy relationship with God we won't have a healthy relationship with His people. We won't consider them. We won't meet with them, we will forsake them and we won't spur them on to love and good deeds. Most likely, if you're not growing in your relationship with God, your desire to be with God's people is not strong. Because their joy and love for God will only remind me that I'm not where I should be.

When a Jewish worshipper brought a sacrifice to God it was usually to deal with sin in their life.

*<sup>22</sup>let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from a guilty [literally evil] conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.*

When you brought an animal to be sacrificed for your sins it had to be without defect. It was then washed and its blood was sprinkled on the horns of the altar. To strengthen our relationship with God. . .

## **Require a clean conscience (v.22)**

The benefit of Jesus' sacrifice for our sins is we can come to Him for forgiveness at the moment we sin. We don't have to wait until we can travel to the temple or tabernacle. Since we have this, let's take advantage of it and deal with our sins quickly. When our conscience is convicted of the evil we have done (that's what God calls all disobedience) – confess it, which means to admit with God what it is. When we accept Jesus Christ as the sacrifice for our sins, we have full assurance through faith that God's Word is true – that forgiveness of sins is available through Jesus.

*"If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." [1 John 1:9]*

*If we claim we have not sinned we make Him out to be a liar and His Word has no place in our lives. My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense – Jesus Christ the righteous One.”*

When we don't deal with our sins quickly, it hardens our hearts and makes a healthy relationship with God and others difficult.

The second appeal to prepare us to be and receive God's blessing is,

*“Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess for He who promised is faithful.”*

To be in the place to receive and be God's blessing. . .

## **Keep Trusting in God's Faithfulness** **(10:23)**

Holding fast or unswervingly means keep a tight grip on the faithful promises of God. We grow spiritually by reading and studying and reminding ourselves of God's promises. If we are not in the Word consistently we won't be reminded about faithful God is to us and how much He loves us. When we doubt God's presence in our life or love for us that's swerving. If we take our circumstances and superimpose them over God's promises, we will question what God says. Hold unswervingly to what God says first and see your circumstances from God's perspective. When we superimpose our circumstances or our imagined scenarios over God's Word, we are overruling God. And then you wonder why people get insecure about their relationship with God. God describes Himself as our Father. A perfect Father who loves us no matter what. We have to come to Him by faith and believe He sent His only Son to die on the cross for our sins. When we receive Him we become His children. God doesn't swerve, we swerve. God isn't unfaithful, we doubt. God doesn't move away from us; we move away from Him.

*“Never will I leave you or forsake you”* doesn't have conditions attached to it. 'And lo I am with you always' isn't followed by an 'except when . . .' clause. Keep a tight grip on God's faithfulness so you will grow spiritually and be able to obey vv.24-25.

Some of these professing believers had drifted away from the faith to avoid persecution, reverted to a culturally acceptable religion (Nero only targeted Jesus followers). They failed to strengthen their faith and to trust God's Word and as a result missed out on the blessing of the encouragement of their Christian family. So, if we are growing more confidently in God and trusting His faithfulness even when circumstances suggest we quit, how do we get this blessing from God then?

## **Pay Attention to the Needs of Others** **(10:24-25)**

*<sup>24</sup>And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, <sup>25</sup>not neglecting to meet 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.*

“Consider” means pay close attention through observance. The reason we don't meet people's needs is because we're not really looking to meet people's needs. Especially if we're not growing in our walk with God. But if we're observing people as to how we can bless them that will

## ***Encourage them to serve God through loving actions (v.24)***

That word 'spur on' or some translations say provoke, means to prod, to stir up. We need everyone in the local body to use their gifts to serve God so we can meet each other's needs as well as reach the community for Christ with their greatest need of the gospel. But we can't and won't do that if we're not regularly getting together. Because some of these Jewish believers were afraid of persecution they stopped meeting with the believers. And because they were no longer there, the service that they had provided to the church was no longer available. The word 'forsake' or 'neglect' means to abandon. When we choose not to meet with believers it means we abandon them and rob them of the blessing of our gifts. So we need to pay attention to other's needs . . .

## ***We won't rob them of our gifts (v.25a)***

When we quit serving or stop meeting together the gifts that we have to offer are not available. Failing to meet with other believers means to rob them of the blessing your Holy Spirit given gifts bring. See it's never about coming to get something it's coming to give of yourself. If, as Paul says in 1 Cor. 12 we are a body made up of many parts, then when we fail to show up we cripple the body. We're the missing ear, or leg, or eye, or foot. This is why the ministry of presence is the ministry of encouragement. When we just show up here, to Sunday school, Bible study, a fellowship gathering or invite someone to your home we encourage each other. When you come and serve that's even greater!

*"And all the more as we see the day approaching"* means Jesus is coming back soon. The closer we get to Jesus' return the harder life will get for believers. We need to stick with God so we will stick together. We will be tempted to abandon God and each other. So the author of Hebrews reminds people that Jesus is coming back and if we hold unswervingly to our faith

## ***We will be rewarded for how we blessed others (v.25b)***

There are many references in the New Testament about rewards in heaven and also that we will be held accountable to how we lived our life here. Jesus indicates that earthly service results in heavenly rewards and responsibilities. I don't know how that all works but I don't want to miss out on a blessing in eternity that I could have had, had I taken my relationship with God more seriously.

Jesus summarized all God's commands when we said in Matt. 22:37

*"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind."* <sup>38</sup>*This is the greatest and first commandment.* <sup>39</sup>*And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'*

I'm sure the astute Jewish reader caught this in this passage. Love God with your entire being in vv.19-23 and you'll love others in vv.24-25. How are we doing at blessing others? Have we robbed people of our gifts because we rarely meet with other believers? The solution isn't just as simple as saying 'Yeah I need to do that more', because the problem isn't not doing enough. It's our relationship with God isn't what it should be. We can't get vv.24-25 right if we're not getting vv.19-23 right. If our relationship with God is inconsistent, so will our relationship with other believers. Inconsistent walk with God shows in inactivity with other believers.

Back in Ch. 3 the author of Hebrews had a similar appeal about the blessing of encouragement. In 3:12 he said,

*<sup>12</sup> See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. <sup>13</sup> But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.*

The remedy for sin and a hard heart is the blessing of encouragement. We're commanded to do that aren't we? Is that difficult? No? So then let's be a blessing to each other and we will all be recipients of that blessing as well.

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