

Hold onto the Faith We Profess in Christ

Hebrews 10:19-25

Text: Hebrews 10:19-25

Context: The Prayer Room at Calvary, Thursday morning IP, 6/1/17

During intercession, we were praying into the topic of hope. One of the passages that grabbed my attention was Hebrews 10:19-25.

*Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 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. 23 **Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess,** for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. 25 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.*

Thesis: Hold onto the hope we profess in Christ.

Here's the question: What do we profess? I wonder how many of us know what we believe and confess. **The invitation for us today is to keep a firm grip on the promises that keep us going (Hebrews 10:23 MSG).** We want to know what we profess and we want to get in active obedience to what the Lord says. It is not enough simply to believe; our beliefs call us to action.

Biblical context: Hebrews 10

In his introduction to the book of Hebrews in the Message, Eugene Peterson writes:

It seems odd to have to say so, but too much religion is a bad thing. We can't get too much of God, can't get too much faith and obedience, can't get too much love and worship. But religion—the well-intentioned efforts we make to “get it all together” for God—can very well get in the way of what God is doing for us. The main and central action is everywhere and always what God has done, is doing, and will do for us. Jesus is the revelation of that action. Our main and central task is to live in responsive obedience to God's action revealed in Jesus. Our part in the action is the act of faith.

But more often than not we become impatiently self-important along the way and decide to improve matters with our two cents' worth. We add on, we supplement, we embellish. But instead of improving on the purity and simplicity of Jesus, we dilute the purity, clutter the simplicity. We become fussily religious, or anxiously religious. We get in the way.

That's when it's time to read and pray our way through the letter to the Hebrews again, written for "too religious" Christians, for "Jesus-and" Christians. In the letter, it is Jesus-and-angels, or Jesus-and-Moses, or Jesus-and-priesthood. In our time it is more likely to be Jesus-and-politics, or Jesus-and-education, or even Jesus-and-Buddha. This letter deletes the hyphens, the add-ons. The focus becomes clear and sharp again: God's action in Jesus. And we are free once more for the act of faith, the one human action in which we don't get in the way but on the Way.

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God... (Hebrews 10:19-22).

1. **Let us draw near to God (22).**
 - a. *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... (22).*
 - b. We come "with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith,"
 - c. We come "having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience"
 - d. And we come "having our bodies washed with pure water."
 - e. This is an invitation to intimacy with the Living God.
 - f. Intimacy with God is not merely a good idea. It is the only worthy response to the Lord who has made a living, current way for us to come near.
 - g. Drawing near to God is faith in action, taking the Lord at his word and sincerely responding to what the Lord has done for us through Jesus.
 - h. Every Christian now has the privilege that was once reserved for the high priest. Each Christian can do, at any time, what the high priest could do only once a year. Each Christian can come again and again into the very presence of God by the blood of Jesus.
 - i. We can come near to God because the Lord has made us presentable inside and out.

2. ***Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful (23).***
 - a. We keep going because he keeps his promises. That is our confession.
 - i. Some people make negative confessions: God doesn't love me. God won't take care of me. God will let me down.
 - ii. Or, I am too far gone. I am going to disqualify myself. I will let God down. I am a failure. I am no good. What's the use?
 - iii. Those negative confessions are strongholds or vows that need to be disempowered and pulled down. We are learning skills regarding how to tear down demonic structures and to build godly strongholds.
 - b. God keeps his promises. Let this be our confession: Lord, you keep your promises.
 - c. Action: hold onto your hope in the Lord because he keeps his promises.
 - i. He will never fail you, nor will he ever let you down.

3. **Let us consider how we may provoke one another to love and good deeds (24).**
- a. *Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds (24).*
 - b. *Let's see how inventive we can be in encouraging love and helping out (MSG).*
 - c. Can you imagine what it would be like, in our families, in our churches, in our schools, and in our work places, if we spent time inventing ways to stir up people to love more and to do more deeds?
 - d. And, can you imagine if we took the next step of intentionally practicing creative ways to encourage people to love and to do good deeds?
4. **Let us prioritize meeting together to worship the Lord, to minister to and serve one another, and to get equipped and resourced (25).**
- a. *Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing... (25).*
 - b. We need holy habits.
 - c. In our individualistic culture, we can easily buy into the need for personal spiritual habits. Yep. I want a better life; I want a happier life.
 - d. But what about community spiritual habits?
 - i. You weren't designed to do life alone, in isolation, by yourself.
 - ii. You were created to flourish in community.
 - iii. In our culture, you have to make intentional efforts and to mark your calendar to worship with others and to meet with others, or else it won't happen.
 - e. **Think about it: Some of us have fallen into habitual disobedience in the areas of worshiping together and meeting with other believers.**
 - f. **I think one of the reasons we neglect meeting together is because we have mis-prioritized our purposes for gathering.**
 - i. First, I believe that we gather corporately to worship and minister to the Lord as kings and priests who serve our God (Revelation 5:10; 2 Chronicles 29:11).
 - (1) He placed us here for his purposes. We respond by worshiping, praying, and serving him (Romans 12:1).
 - (2) He places each one of us in the body just as he desires (1 Corinthians 12:18).
 - (3) We *"like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices [worship, praise, thanks, prayer, surrender, etc.] acceptable to God through Jesus Christ"* (1 Peter 2:5).
 - ii. Second, I believe that we gather to serve the purposes of God in one another: to minister to and serve one another.
 - (1) *From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work* (Ephesians 4:15).
 - (2) *Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms* (1 Peter 4:10).

- (3) That is true for worship services, small groups, equipping events, and other times we gather.
- iii. Third, I believe that meeting together is for the sake of our personal growth, equipping, and transformation. We meet together to get equipped and resourced.
 - (1) *And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-12 NASB).*
 - (2) *I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong (Romans 1:11).*
- iv. **Point: In our consumer driven culture, many people turn those priorities upside down.** In our culture, people often evaluate everything based on their personal desires, preferences, and needs.
 - (1) Yes. The Lord wants to meet our needs, to touch the needs of our family, and to help each of us to grow and become.
 - (2) And, we go against the current of culture when we choose to focus first on the Lord and others first instead of on ourselves individually.

5. **Let us intentionally encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching (25).**

- a. *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 (Hebrews 10:25).*
- b. We need to cheer on each other.
- c. Illustration: Every one who has been a part of a team knows the importance and synergy of each one showing up and doing his or her part (military, band, sports, debate, choir, work). And, every one who has been a part of the team knows how discouraging it is when someone fails to show up, shows up late, shows up unprepared, or fails to do their part. It discourages and affects the whole team.
- d. Today, it is easier to point out the bad and the dark, rather than pointing out the good and the light.
 - i. A lot of people focus on what they don't like and what they disagree with.
- e. Here is our challenge: Let us choose to encourage and build up one another.
 - i. Let us not intentionally sow doubt, discord, divisiveness, discouragement, and dissension.
 - ii. Let us be a part of the solution as we work together to be the community of faith the Lord has called us to be.
 - iii. Let us encourage one another by playing full out, showing up, and doing our part for the purposes of the Lord in and through this body of believers.

Challenges

1. Make time to draw near to God through spiritual practices on a regular basis. What are your regular spiritual practices?
2. Choose to confess and hold onto your hope in the Lord because he keeps his promises. What are you confessing and believing? What is the Lord asking you to live into?
3. Find ways to provoke one another on toward love and good deeds. In what ways are you provoking others to love well and to serve faithfully?
4. Prioritize meeting together to worship the Lord, to equip one another, and to minister to one another. What are you prioritizing on your calendar?
5. Choose to encourage and build up one another. What are you saying and doing to promote others?