

## THE EPISTLES TO THE HEBREWS

### HEBREWS 10:19-13:19, THE SUPERIORITY OF FAITH IN CHRIST

#### INTRODUCTION

- A. An outline of Hebrews
1. The superiority of the person of Christ (1:1-4:13)
  2. The superiority of the work of Christ (4:14-10:18)
  3. The superiority of faith in Christ (10:19-13:19)
    - a. The assurance of faith (10:19-39)
    - b. The demonstration of faith (11:1-40)
    - c. The endurance of faith (12:1-29)
    - d. The outworking of faith (13:1-19)
  4. Conclusion (13:20-25)
    - a. Benediction (13:20-21)
    - b. Final greetings (13:22-25)
- B. Introductory comments on Hebrews 10:19-39
1. Raymond Brown, *From this point on, the writer builds on the rich doctrinal teaching of the earlier chapters, pressing it home by exhortation, encouragement, illustration and warning.*
  2. William Barclay, *The writer to the Hebrews now comes to the practical implication of all that he has been saying. From theology, he turns to practical exhortation. He is one of the most profound theologians in the New Testament, but all his theology is governed by the pastoral instinct. He does not think merely for the thrill of intellectual satisfaction, but only that he may more forcibly appeal to men and women to enter into the presence of God.*

### HEBREWS 10:19-39, THE ASSURANCE OF FAITH

- A. A call to draw near to God (19-25)
1. Notes
    - a. Raymond Brown, *He knows only too well that his exposition of these impressive themes in the earlier chapters is not likely to achieve a great deal if it is to remain unrelated to their everyday lives.*
    - b. Zane Hodges, *The central assertion of these verses is in the words, Therefore, brothers . . . let us draw near to God.*
    - c. As noted before, *brothers* may be best translated *brothers and sisters*.
  2. The basis for confidence in drawing near to God (19-21) ***Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God,***
    - a. Notes
      - 1) *Our confidence to enter the holy places* speaks of our *drawing near to God* in verse 22. The *holy places* refers to the presence of God in the true heavenly sanctuary.
      - 2) *Confidence* according to William L. Lane *implies a certainty created by Christ's definitive sacrifice.*
      - 3) David Brown, *confidence is grounded on the consciousness that our sins have been forgiven.*
      - 4) Raymond Brown, *Our approach to God is confident and joyous; theirs was tentative and fearful. We are urged always to 'draw near;' they were frequently exhorted to keep their distance (12:20).*
      - 5) R. Kent Hughes, *Their confidence was certainly not a swaggering thing, but it was a real confidence in permanent access.*
    - b. A Christian's confidence must be in Jesus.
      - 1) *by the blood of Jesus*
        - a) Hebrews 9:25, *Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own,*
        - b) Jesus' sacrifice was Himself.

- c) William L. Lane, *The emphasis in the use of the personal name “Jesus” is on the full humanity of Christ, and thus on the validity of his redemptive sacrifice on behalf of the human family. It is striking that whenever the writer makes his most emphatic assertions concerning the saving work of Christ, he makes an explicit reference to the blood of Jesus (9:12, 14; 10:19, 29; 12:24; 13:12, 20).*
- d) Raymond Brown, *He shed his blood that the approach to God might not be barred as in earlier centuries, but open to all; through Christ’s death the way is no longer obscured, but visible.*

2) *by the new and living way . . . through his flesh*

- a) Matthew 27:51, *And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split.*
- b) There is now direct access into God’s presence.
- c) Thomas Constable, *We can enter God’s presence through Jesus’ crucified flesh as though we entered the holy of holies through the torn temple veil . . . His sacrifice provided a new and living way compared with the old dead way of the Old Covenant.*
- d) Raymond Brown, *Just as the heavy temple curtain was torn from top to bottom on that first Good Friday, so that pure and spotless body of Christ was rent for us.*
- e) Zane Hodges, . . . *His death gave believers the needed access and route to God, aptly described as new . . . and living, that is, partaking of the fresh and vitalizing realities of the New Covenant.*
- f) William Barclay, *As the tearing of the tabernacle veil opened the way to the presence of God, so the tearing of the flesh of Christ revealed the full greatness of his love and opened up the way to him.*

3) *since we have a great priest over the house of God*

- a) Hebrews 4:14, *Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.*
- b) William Barclay, *As we have seen so often, the function of the priest was to build a bridge between the people and God. This means that Jesus not only shows us the way to God but also, when we get there, introduces us to his very presence.*
- c) Raymond Brown, *At this moment he intercedes as a great priest over the house of God. Believers are accepted in him, helped by him and belong to him;*
- d) Charles Spurgeon, *Shall we desert Him now that He has gone into heaven to represent us now that He has fought the fight, and won the victory on our behalf, and gone up to heaven as our Representative? God forbid!*
- e) Chrysostom (4<sup>th</sup> C) to the Roman emperor, *You can not banish me for this world is my father’s house. ” “But I will slay you,” said the Emperor. “No, you can not,” said the noble champion of the faith, “for my life is hid with Christ in God.” “I will take away your treasures.” “No, but you can not for my treasure is in heaven and my heart is there.” “But I will drive you away from man and you shall have no friend left.” “No, you can not, for I have a friend in heaven from whom you can not separate me. I defy you, for there is nothing you can do to hurt me.*
- f) Ray Stedman, *Believers have not only a confident spirit, but also a competent advocate. He is continually available, completely aware of our present situation, and vitally involved with us in working all things together for good.*

3. The content of the writer’s appeal (22), ***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.***

a. The exhortation is to *draw near*

- 1) Hebrews 7:19, *(for the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God.*
- 2) Douglas Mangum, *Because of this confidence rooted in Christ, readers are urged to approach God with unwavering assurance, believing fully that they have indeed been cleansed from sin.*
- 3) Thomas Constable, *We should draw near with freedom from guilt and with holy conduct (cf. 4:16).*
- 4) William Barclay, *It is given to everyone to live in two worlds—this world of space and time, and the world of eternal things. Our danger is that we become so involved in this world that we forget the other.*

b. The conditions for drawing near

1) *with a true heart*

- a) *True means dependable, genuine, sincere, in relation to God.*
- b) John 4:23, *But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.*

- c) 1 Peter 1:22, *Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart,*
  - d) Raymond Brown, *When Christian believers come into God's presence it is with a sense of concern not about external washing, but about heart purity. They must come with a true or sincere heart; it must be 'whole-hearted' (Moffatt) and not mechanical.*
  - e) R. Kent Hughes, *There are to be no mixed motives or divided loyalties. There must be pure and unmixed devotion, "sincere" love for God.*
- 2) *in full assurance of faith*
- a) *Assurance means certainty, conviction.*
  - b) Romans 4:21, *fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.*
  - c) *It goes beyond mere belief and centers on trust.*
  - d) Zane Hodges, *There ought to be no wavering in regard to these superlative realities.*
  - e) William Newell, *This does not mean that there will be no consciousness of unworthiness, but rather, a confidence in a faithful God, Who is sure to bless one who is trusting in the shed blood of Christ.*
- 3) *hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience*
- a) Hebrews 9:14, *how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.*
  - b) Donald Hagner, *We have been cleansed internally (having our hearts sprinkled; cf. Ezek. 36:25, in the context of reference to the new covenant), so that we no longer have the guilty conscience (cf. 9:9, 14) from which the old, sacrificial ritual could not free us.*
  - c) William Newell, *There is no other deliverance from an evil conscience (that is, a conscience that is accusing us). God "sprinkles" such believing hearts by reckoning to them the value and power of Christ's shed blood; and the heart has rest.*
  - d) Zane Hodges, *. . . each New-Covenant worshiper should approach God in the conscious enjoyment of freedom from guilt . . . and with a sense of the personal holiness that Christ's sacrifice makes possible.*
- 4) *our bodies washed with pure water*
- a) 1 Peter 3:21, *Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,*
  - b) William Newell, *The body washed with pure water speaks of the sanctifying work of the Spirit in the new birth;*
  - c) Donald Hagner, *It is this new cleansed state enjoyed by Christians, as well as the open way to God's presence, that results from the sacrifice of Christ.*
  - d) Ray Stedman, *As the wick of a lamp continually draws oil for the light, so let us continually draw from God the strength and grace we need to function. This must be done (a) sincerely, without religious pretense; (b) believingly, in simple faith that God means what he says; © without guilt, having cleansed the conscience by reliance on the sprinkled blood of Jesus; and (d) with integrity, in line with our public profession of commitment to Christ expressed in our baptism.*
4. Words of exhortation (23-25)
- a. To stay faithful to our faithful God (23), ***Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.***
- 1) *Let us hold fast the confession of our hope*
- a) Hebrews 4:14, *Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.*
  - b) *The writer emphasizes hope in this verse, faith in verse 22 and love in verse 24.*
  - c) Raymond Brown, *Once again, as earlier, the readers are exhorted to hold on resolutely to their initial confession of faith in Christ. This is a call not only to perseverance, but also to witness.*
  - d) R. Kent Hughes, *So many people live on so little, surviving in this world, just putting one foot in front of the other as they depend on unsubstantiated, ungrounded "hope." . . . But the Christian's hope has substance! The hope that our text commends here in verse 23 is a conscious reference back to the writer's statement in 6:19, 20—"We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf."*
  - e) Warren Wiersbe, *The readers of this epistle were being tempted to forsake their confession of Jesus Christ by going back to the Old Covenant worship. The writer did not exhort them to hold on to their salvation, because their security was in Christ and not in themselves (Heb. 7:25). Rather, he invited them to hold fast "the profession [confession] of ... hope."*

- 2) *without wavering*
- a) The word literally means, *does not bend, straight, stable, unmoving, steadfast to the end.*
  - b) It is only used here in the New Testament but found in extra-biblical writings with emphasis on immutability (not changing).
  - c) William Barclay, . . . *let us never lose our grip of what we believe . . . we must have a grip on the faith that nothing can loosen.*
  - d) Warren Wiersbe, *When a believer has his hope fixed on Christ, and relies on the faithfulness of God, then he will not waver. Instead of looking back (as the Jews so often did), we should look ahead to the coming of the Lord.*
- 3) *for he who promised is faithful*
- a) Hebrews 11:11, *By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised.*
  - b) Our faithfulness to God depends on our confidence in His faithfulness to us.
  - c) Douglas Mangum, *This reference to God's faithfulness with regard to his promises recalls this theme from earlier in the letter (e.g., 6:12–17).*
  - d) Donald Hagner, *What Christians believe, and the hope that is a part of that belief, may be trusted fully and held firmly, because God's faithful character is beyond questioning.*
  - e) William Newell, *Our hope is built upon the faithfulness of God, and not . . . upon anything in ourselves.*
- b. To encourage one another in the faith (24-25), ***And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 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.***
- 1) Promote love and good works.
    - a) *let us consider how to stir up*
      - 1] The writer includes himself in this responsibility.
      - 2] Thomas Constable, *The third admonition (v. 24) moves from the vertical to the horizontal dimension of Christian living.*
      - 3] Christians are to look for ways to serve others; to make that a priority.
    - b) *to love*
      - 1] Thomas Constable, *This admonition to love one another was also necessary since some were abandoning the faith. The readers needed to stimulate one another to remain faithful to the Lord. This type of love is the product of communal activity; we cannot practice it in isolation from other believers.*
      - 2] Raymond Brown, *Many early nonconformist congregations included these words in the covenant which members were required to sign on joining the local church: 'We engage to watch over one another in love.'*
      - 3] Ray Stedman, *The supportive love of Christians for one another is a powerful factor in maintaining spiritual vigor. It needs to be awakened in both ourselves and others. That does not envision finger-shaking and lecturing, but encouraging words and good example.*
    - c) *good works*
      - 1] Raymond Brown, *In the teaching of this passage, the exhortation is not simply to the exercise of fellowship, but to the stimulation of compassionate activity in the work of Christ.*
      - 2] H. D. M. Spence, . . . *to visit the neglected, the sick, and the dying; to comfort some troubled heart or cheer some depressed spirit; to perform common duties with diligence and fidelity, or irksome duties with cheerfulness; to bear physical pain or social trial patiently; to suffer long by reason of the faults of others, and still be kind to them;—these are "good works," beautiful works.*
      - 3] William L. Lane, *Active support and concern for the welfare of one another are matters of critical urgency in the life of a community exposed to testing and disappointment . . .*
      - 4] William Newell, *We provoke others to good works by constant good works toward them. As I look back through the years, my heart lights upon one and another, and another, whose tender love and constant goodness "provoked" me, "provoked" everyone to imitate them.*

- 2) Importance of meeting together
  - a) Acts 2:42, *And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.*
  - b) William L. Lane, *Whatever the motivation, the writer regarded the desertion of the communal meetings as utterly serious. It threatened the corporate life of the congregation and almost certainly was a prelude to apostasy on the part of those who were separating themselves from the assembly.*
  - c) John Calvin, . . . *we should be encouraged to love rather than hate and that we should not separate ourselves from those ... who are joined to us by a common faith.*
  - d) Donald Hagner, *The way in which the readers can manifest their concern for one another is through active participation in fellowship, on the one hand, and through mutual encouragement, on the other. Christians need each other, and especially in trying circumstances.*
  
- 3) Benefits of meeting together
  - a) To encourage and be encouraged.
    - 1] Zane Hodges, *The writer revealed in these verses that his concern for fidelity to the faith is not an abstraction, but a confrontation with real danger. There was an urgent need for mutual concern and exhortation . . .*
    - 2] William L. Lane, *The reason the meetings of the assembly are not to be neglected is that they provide a communal setting where mutual encouragement and admonition may occur . . . The urgency for encouragement and reproof is that the community experiences an unresolved tension between peril and promise so long as it lives in the world.*
    - 3] R. Kent Hughes, *It is a fact that loving God and man and doing good deeds are more readily caught than taught. To provoke others upward by example is the high road, indeed.*
    - 4] William Barclay, . . . *let us remember that we are Christians not only for our own sake but also for the sake of others . . . It is easy to drift into a kind of selfish Christianity; but a selfish Christianity is a contradiction in terms.*
  
  - b) To anticipate the Lord's return.
    - 1] *Day is the return of the Lord Jesus Christ when we will give account of ourselves to God, 1 Corinthians 3:13, each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done.*
    - 2] William Barclay . . . *He is thinking of the second coming of Christ when things as we know them will be ended . . . In the time we have, it is our duty to do all the good we can to all the people we can in all the ways we can.*
    - 3] Ray Stedman, *The empire seethed with unrest and premonitions of disaster. These frightening omens were not viewed as signs of God's inability to control his world, as many interpret similar events today. Rather, they were indications that God was working out his predicted purposes just as Jesus, the prophets and the apostles had foretold . . . It is now apparent as we look back over the centuries that it has been the will of God to have each generation feel that it is living in the very last days of civilization. Each century has found the church fearing the cataclysms of its own time as the last to come. Yet, inexorably, each passing century has moved the world nearer the final end. This sense of imminence is God's device to keep believers expectant and full of hope in the midst of the world's darkness.*

**TO BE CONTINUED, LORD WILLING**

- B. A warning to not fall away (26-31)
1. It concerns willful sinning (26-27), *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.*
  2. Judgment is greater than under the Mosaic Covenant (28-29), *Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace?*
  3. A citation from the Old Testament proves the severity of judgment on willful sin (30-31), *For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*
- C. An encouragement to keep the faith (32-39)
1. A reminder of past faithfulness (32-34), *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, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one.*
  2. A call to stay faithful (35), *Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.*
  3. The importance of endurance (36-38), *For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. For, "Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him."*
  4. A note of confidence in perseverance (39), *But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.*