

Sermon Notes of Rev.Dr.I.J.W.Oakley (18-3-1979 Strandtown Baptist Church)

Hebrews 10:19-39
Additional Reading: Mark 15:33-39

Introduction

The writer to the Hebrews has been labouring the point about the inadequacy of the old sacrificial system, and the sufficiency of Christ's atonement, which was once for all. Why does he labour this point? Not just to keep the readers from returning to Judaism, but for another very practical purpose. Now he moves from the theology to very practical exhortations and pastoral care. He does not teach these things for intellectual satisfaction of the readers but out of concern to bring practical blessings into their lives, and also to us.

We are bidden to look up, look on, and look around: to let our faith draw us near to God, let our hope hold on to our testimony, and let our love stimulate service. Or put another way, we are to go for new nearness to God, new clearness before men, and new dearness among ourselves.

A look up

Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith (Hebrews 10:22). Draw near to God, look up, have a new nearness to Him. We can do this confidently, **Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus** (Hebrews 10:19). Because of the Cross, we have boldness. There are no "No admittance" signs between us and God, we have a right of access. The way is open for all believers.

In the Old Testament only the High Priest could enter the Holiest place in the Tabernacle, and that was only once a year. But under the new covenant, all believers have the right of access and direct audience, at any time and in any circumstances, into the very close presence of God. **By a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us** (Hebrews 10:20). The word for "New", προσφατον, means freshly or recently slain way, i.e. recent way. Martin Luther got hold of the idea beautifully when he said, "To me it seems as if Jesus Christ was crucified yesterday, raised again today, and coming again tomorrow", it was as relevant to him as that.

*"Dear dying Lamb, thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power"*

"Living way" – our High Priest is living, He comes with warm hands and warm heart and takes our hand and leads us to the Father. He does not just show us the way. He has consecrated and dedicated it for our use. As High Priest, He is the bridge-builder.

"With true heart" – with complete sincerity, and full assurance of faith. Without any lingering doubts. Let us go right into the Father's presence. **Our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience** (inwardly cleansed by the blood of Jesus) **and our bodies washed with pure water** (Hebrews 10:22). The latter half of this may be a reference

to cleansing by the Spirit of God and His word, or a reference to baptism, which is an outward symbol of that cleansing we have.

Here is our magnificent privilege. Full unrestricted access to the very presence of God – whenever we like, and whatever we need. We can turn aside to Him before the day begins, and again in the evening as the day ends, and often during the course of the day with all its activities. Tragedy that we neglect this so often. God’s staggering provision in Christ, He holds out such wonderful promise. He will be delighted to see us, He will be so pleased to be near us. Even the feeblest believer has as much right to enter His presence as any of the great apostles.

Let us draw near – for the first time, or for the hundred and first time. It is our present privilege. Do not be so preoccupied with what has gone in the past, or what will be in the future, that we forget the present possibilities.

A look on

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering (Hebrews 10:23). Holding on to our testimony, having new clearness before men. Do not lose grip on what we believe. Mockers and cynics will try to take our faith. Events of life may cause us some awkward questions. Hope in Jesus Christ. Remember when we first placed our confidence in Him, when we expressed it openly in baptism, when we confessed Christ publicly when challenged, when we renewed our vows at the Lord’s Table, when we expressed our faith in service and prayer. By memory of these occasions, we hold our faith and hope firm to the end. Shall we desert Him now?

A firm and open avowal helps strengthen our faith. It has a good influence on others. We need to keep up our confession – we made it once, but need to renew it as opportunity comes. How often do we say, “I’m not ashamed to own my Lord”? We are Christians for time and also for eternity. There are times when we are inclined to pull down the flag, and hide the coat of arms – but we must never yield to shameful cowardice. Vital to break through the snare of being worried about being known as a Christian in certain company. Put the case beyond doubt, leave no one in doubt. But be careful never to undo with our hands what we say with our tongues.

Why can we do this confidently? **He is faithful that promised** (Hebrews 10:23). Haven’t we found Him faithful? Has He ever failed us? Has He ever been untrue to His promises? Surely He has kept His word, saved us, helped us in trouble, comforted us in the dark hour of trial, honoured His promises, answered our prayers. Then, deal with Him as He has dealt with us. Do not be a Judas to Him who has been Jesus to us. He gave His all for us, let us give all to Him.

We can desire no better Master. Oh that we were better servants. Let us be joined anew to Him. Take afresh His yoke. Put shoulder to the Cross again. Serve Him afresh and as never before.

A look around

Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works (Hebrews 10:24). “Stimulate” would be more appropriate translation than “provoke”! Elsewhere

in the New Testament, the Greek word that is used here, παροζυσμον, is used in the bad sense, inferring sharp contention (Acts 15:39), being exasperated (Acts 17:16), and Paul urges us not to be easily “provoked” in 1 Corinthians 13:5. But here the sense is definitely favourable. Stimulate others to good works, arouse them to good works, encourage them to do this.

The world is full of discouragers – laughing at ideas, pouring cold water on enthusiasm. Our goal should be to show thanks and appreciation, and thus encourage people in love and good works. There is a Royal Navy regulation: “No officer shall speak discouragingly to another officer in the discharge of his duties.” Florence Nightingale obviously displayed the right attitude in her work. One dying soldier said to her, “You are Christ to me”. Encourage others by promising to pray for them as they go about their tasks. Lend someone or give someone a book to take them on. Set an example of consistent living. Encourage younger Christians to do Christian service, and stand down for them. Share good news of what God is doing in other churches, of people converted there and prayers answered. Even if the news is second hand, it encourages all the brethren.

Then the writer mentions one particular aspect of encouraging. **Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together** (Hebrews 10:25). The Greek word for church, εκκλησια, literally means “called out and called together”. Therein is union and strength. Too often we take it for granted, and are half-hearted in our attendance. We should be anxious to grab every chance to come together. There is no substitute for the church service, the church prayer meeting, the church bible study, and church fellowship. We are a family, we need each other. As we see the day approaching when Christ returns, remember that time is short. Make the most of it. All will come to an end.

Conclusion

Draw near in faith, hold fast our hope, provoke others to love and good works. Be near, clear and dear. Look up, look on, and look around.