

“OK, YOU’VE HEARD THE TRUTH – NOW WHAT?” (10:19-38)

Just so you all know, my plan is to finish up our study in Hebrews in July. Cindy will teach on July 31st while Robin and I take part 2 of our summer vacation. When I get back in August we will begin our journey thru the Bible following the main storyline from Genesis thru Revelation. Also in August is our next class party (Aug 20th at 5:30 PM at the Catt’s).

So here we are back in Hebrews. We are slowly but surely trudging our way thru this interesting but difficult book. This morning we’re going to be in Hebrews Ch 10 continuing where we left off last week in v 19. I’ve entitled this lesson, “OK, You’ve Heard the Truth – Now What?”

When I was 20 years old I had a job selling Cutco knives. One of the first things they taught us new salespeople is that you present the good points of your product; you tell a potential customer all about it and you point out all the wonderful benefits of having it; you explain why this product is better than other brands; and then you close by asking for a response. You make the sale (hopefully). In church talk we call this “the invitation.” That’s what’s happening here in our passage. The Jewish target audience having been presented with the truth and been told why the new covenant in Christ is better than the old – it is time to respond. They are really only one of two responses they can make. They can either (A) V 19, “Enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus,” respond positively and come into God’s presence His way, that is, thru Christ OR (B) V 26, “Go on sinning deliberately.” They can do nothing, they can reject Jesus, a negative response. Obviously the writer wants them to make a positive response and come to Jesus. In this passage that is where he starts.

READ Hebrews 10:19-21

This passage begins with the word “Therefore.” It connects what the author is about to say with what he said previously. “My Jewish brothers and sisters, based on everything I’ve just said about Jesus. Given that Jesus offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice, paid the penalty for our sin,

is a better high priest and paved the way for reconciliation and forgiveness – what is your response? You’ve heard the truth. Now what are you going to do with it?”

Given that the new covenant in Jesus is a better covenant, that He has provided the only way for us to enter God’s presence...

READ Hebrews 10:22

The invitation is “let us draw near,” honestly and confidently trusting that Jesus will do for us what the old covenant could never do. We trust Him by faith. We believe that He can save us.

Our hearts “sprinkled clean from an evil conscience.” We no longer need to carry around a deep sense of guilt. “Our bodies washed with pure water.” The Holy Spirit cleanses us. He changes our whole life, inside and out – the way we think, the way we act. So then, salvation begins with an act of faith. We recognize our need. We’re presented the evidence. We’re shown what Jesus did for us. And then we commit ourselves to follow Him. We believe Him, trust Him. We act in faith. But that’s only the beginning.

READ Hebrews 10:23

Salvation starts out with faith but then it continues with hope. Our hope is in His promises, some for us now like peace, love, joy, fellowship; and some for the future like eternal security, His return, being forever with the Lord. “My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness...” Our hope is in what Jesus did and what He promised us. The writer of Hebrews says here, “He who promised is faithful.” That’s Jesus. A true believer “holds fast” to the hope they confessed “without wavering.” A mark of a true believer is that they stay the course focused on the prize at the end of the race. Hebrews 3:14 says, “We have come to share in Christ if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.” We hold fast to the word that was preached to us (1 Cor 15:2). Jesus said, “If you abide in My word, you are truly my disciples” (John 8:31). But wait. There’s more!

READ Hebrews 10:24-25

Salvation begins with faith, endures with hope and it is exemplified by love. We saw this theme many times in our study of First John. He talked about how belief, obedience and love were tied together (a package deal). Here we see it again. The writer of Hebrews says, "stir up," stimulate "one another to love and good works." The idea here is that we meet together and encourage each other in our Christian walk. The Christian life isn't easy is it? We need each other. We rely upon the strength we draw from members of the body of Christ. That's God's design for the church. He intends us to be in community.

As we see in v 25, the fellowship of believers is very important. It is a spiritual discipline that we must develop and maintain. Church attendance is not a requirement. It is nourishment. That last phrase "as you see the Day drawing near" is a reminder of the coming of Christ. I don't know which will come first, His coming for me or my going to be with Him. But one of them will happen. We're only here for a short time. We need to make the most of the time and resources that we've been given.

Throughout Hebrews the writer has been urging his audience to come to Christ. Don't hold on to the old stuff. It's been replaced with something far better. And many of his Jewish readers had responded in faith to Christ. But, sadly, some Jewish brothers and sisters who had been taught the truth were beginning to turn and head away from Christ. He now warns this group of what will happen to them if they willfully turn their back on Jesus after hearing the good news. Here we see a major shift in his tone. We saw the positive response and now the negative response...

READ Hebrews 10:26-27

Woah!! To hear the truth preached, to have it explained so clearly in this letter – and then to just walk away from it, to reject it, to "go on sinning deliberately" – that's NOT a good thing. It's not going to end well for you if you do that. This is a dire warning!

Two points to note regarding those who willfully reject Christ after hearing the truth. First, v 26, "there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins." In other words, if you reject Jesus (the sacrifice for sins that He made) then there is no other sacrifice for your sins. The old covenant has become obsolete. Those sacrifices won't help you. The only way you can have your sins forgiven is by trusting in the sacrifice that Jesus made for you. If you reject Jesus you'll die in your sins. *[analogy of Coast Guard helicopter]*

The second point, v 27, there is "a fearful expectation of judgment." Back in Hebrews 2:3 the writer asked the question, "How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?" Implied answer: we won't!

READ 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 and Matthew 13:49-50 (Parable of Net)

Here in our passage, v 27, the writer warns that "a fury of fire will consume the adversaries." In these passages the adversaries, the evil people are those who fail to respond in faith and obey the good news about Jesus, those who reject the truth.

It is not going to end well. Hey, those of you who reject Christ might want to re-think your decision! Just saying.

READ Hebrews 10:28

You Jews (the audience) know all about God's harsh judgment from the O.T. Here he is alluding to Deut 17 where someone could be put to death (stoned with stones) for certain violations of the Law on the evidence of 2 or 3 witnesses.

READ Hebrews 10:29

The writer asks "How much worse punishment will be deserved by the person who rejects Jesus, who turns their back on the new covenant?" Why would it be worse for THEM? Because, unlike their O.T. brothers, they have full revelation.

Rejecting Jesus shows complete and utter contempt for the Son of God. They're saying in essence, "I don't care what Jesus did. It is meaningless to me." What blasphemy! They're insulting and outraging the Holy Spirit. This is very, very serious!

READ Hebrews 30-31 (quotes O.T.)

You thought the wrath of God in the O.T. was harsh. Wait until you see what He's going to do with those who reject His dear Son. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." The NASB says, "It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God." One commentary made a sobering point. I'm paraphrasing. He said that we view God as a God of grace and mercy. And He is. But there is coming a day when God's mercy runs out.

Look, there is only one of two choices a person can make regarding Jesus. They had better make the right choice because it has eternal consequences!

Again, moving on to v 32, the writer of Hebrews once again changes his tone. His attention now shifts to a different group. I've mentioned this before in our study of Hebrews. This letter was written to a community of Jews. But even though they were culturally and religiously tied together and enjoyed fellowship w/ each other, they were at different places in their spiritual lives. The writer has just addressed those who heard the truth but willfully rejected Christ. Now he's going to address believing Jews. We know this from the context of the passage. This next group has a different issue. It isn't unbelief. This group has faith. They're saved. Look at the writer's message to them...

READ Hebrews 10:32-34

He tells them, "You've faced severe persecution for your faith and you've done well so far. You've endured harsh treatment. You've been publicly humiliated and slandered. Yet to your credit you stood beside each other and encouraged each other in the midst of persecution. You even

went to visit those in prison. They even seized your property but, v 34, you “joyfully accepted the plundering of your property.” How could they do that? Because they knew that they had something far better that was not tied to this old sinful world. Clearly he’s talking to believers here.

READ Hebrews 10:35-36

Their problem wasn’t a lack of faith. They needed endurance. Many had become discouraged due to persecution. So the writer offers advice in the form of encouragement. He says, “Don’t quit now. You’re almost there! Keep moving forward to the great reward which lies ahead.” Paul put it so well as he reached the end of his life in that Roman prison and things looked so bleak for him. He tells his good friend Timothy, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness... which the Lord Himself will award to me on that Day.” (2 Tim 4:7-8) And what applied to Paul applies to all the faithful followers of Jesus Christ. Life’s tough. Sometimes we just need a little encouragement.

[Analogy of climbing a mountain]

The writer closes the chapter with a paraphrase from Isaiah and Habakkuk about salvation and faith...

READ Hebrews 10:37-38

We begin our Christian journey by faith. We continue each and every day by faith with hope. To the end we endure, we persevere, we live by faith based on our hope in Christ. We do not “shrink back.” We don’t quit. My motivation is to please the Lord. I don’t want Him to be disappointed in me. I want to hear Him say when I finally reach the end, “Well done good and faithful servant.”

The chapter ends with a final exam, v 39. Here it is...

READ Hebrews 10:39

Real faith produces action. And that is the whole point of chapter 11. The writer of Hebrews will illustrate thru many of the examples of the O.T. heroes how they showed by what they did that they truly had faith in God.

Let me close with this illustration. You're in a hotel on vacation and staying on the 5th floor. In the middle of the night you are awakened by the sound of sirens and smell of smoke. You realize the situation and hurriedly get dressed so that you can evacuate the hotel, which is on fire. Flames are in the hallway and smoke is pouring in under your door. There is no way to escape. In desperation you go to the window and break out the glass. It is very dark outside and you can see some firemen moving around down below, but not much else. The fire begins to engulf your room and you lean out the window gasping for fresh, cooler air. All of a sudden a voice below over a loud speaker says, "This is Major Jones with the City Fire Department. We have a net to catch you. Go ahead and jump." You can't see a net. It's too dark. The smoke is thick. The emergency vehicle's flashing lights blind you. How can you be sure that the voice you heard was talking to YOU and not to someone else? You look around for any other options but there are none. You can stay where you are and hope they put the fire out soon OR you can jump. You can convince yourself all you want that there really IS a net down there and that those firemen WILL catch you. You can believe that with all your heart but end up dying. At some point you have to jump. Only then are you exercising faith. You place all your hope in those firemen and that net and you jump. If they don't catch you then you'll die. And so it is with our salvation.