

LET US DRAW NEAR, HOLD FAST, STIR UP

Hebrews 10:19-39

In 65 A.D. the Preacher, the author of Hebrews, wrote to persecuted messianic Jews living in the vicinity of Jerusalem encouraging them to persevere in the Faith. They were severely tempted to recant Christ and return to the Old Covenant in order to relieve their suffering.

But, as the Preacher has explained, the Old Covenant is no longer operative; it served its purpose and has been replaced by the New Covenant (8:6-13; 9:15). In fact, not only is the Old Covenant no longer operative, neither is the Aaronic Priesthood nor the Law of Moses. These, too, have been replaced by the Melchizedekian Priesthood and the Law of Messiah respectively (7:12). These changes, predicted in the Jewish Scriptures, have been fulfilled in Messiah.

In 10:19-39, the Preacher applies, warns and encourages.

To fully understand we need to think about a critical incident in the ministry of our Lord recorded in Matthew 12.

Prior to Matthew 12, Jesus and His disciples traveled from town to town preaching the good news of the Kingdom and appealing to the nation of Israel to “Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand.” On the occasion recorded in Matthew 12:22-45, Jesus cast out a demon. When the people asked if Jesus could be “the Son of David” (v.23), that is, the Messiah, their spiritual leaders responded that Jesus was in league with Satan, not God (12:24). This is the unpardonable sin. This is the moment the nation of Israel rejected Messiah. From that point on, Jesus spoke judgment upon that generation (12:38-45; 21:33-46; 23:1-36). He began speaking in parables to hide the truth as an act of judgment (13:10-17). He and His disciples no longer preached the coming of the Kingdom (16:20). Jesus began preparing His disciples for His crucifixion and resurrection (17:9-13, 22-23; 20:17-19).

Jesus revealed the judgment that would befall that generation.

Matthew 24:1-2 (ESV)

¹ Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. ² But he answered them, “You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.”

And in Luke...

Luke 19:41-44 (ESV)

⁴¹ And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, ⁴² saying, “Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. ⁴³ For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side ⁴⁴ and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation.”

And again...

Luke 21:20-24 (ESV)

²⁰ “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. ²¹ Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it, ²² for these are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written. ²³ Alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! For there will be great distress upon the earth and wrath against this people. ²⁴ They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

Jesus warned His followers to escape Jerusalem and vicinity when the day of judgment came. Only a break in the siege would make escape possible. This is exactly what happened in 66-67 A.D. when the XII Legion from Syria surrounded Jerusalem and then retreated.

Church historian Eusebius records that in obedience to Jesus’ warnings His followers escaped to Pella, Jordan.¹

The Roman legions returned and in 70 A.D. destroyed Jerusalem, the Temple and the nation. Those Jews surviving the massacre were sold as slaves. The nation of Israel was decimated.

The clouds of judgment were gathering over Israel in 65 A.D., the year the Preacher wrote to his persecuted brethren. Over thirty years had passed since Jesus’ pronouncement of judgment on *that generation*. The clock was ticking; they were nearing the time of judgment.

With this historical and prophetic context in mind, let’s think about the Preacher’s application and warning in Hebrews 10:19-39. Having been perfected and sanctified by Christ and in light of the coming judgment the Preacher admonishes them to draw near to God, to hold fast their confession of hope in Christ and to love one another.

Draw Near, Hold Fast, Stir Up (10:19-25)

Hebrews 10:19-25 (ESV)

¹⁹ Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 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. ²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet

¹ “But the people of the church in Jerusalem had been commanded by a revelation, vouchsafed to approved men there before the war, to leave the city and to dwell in a certain town of Perea called Pella.”¹¹ And when those that believed in Christ had come thither from Jerusalem, then, as if the royal city of the Jews and the whole land of Judea were entirely destitute of holy men, the judgment of God at length overtook those who had committed such outrages against Christ and his apostles, and totally destroyed that generation of impious men.” (Eusebius of Caesaria. “The Church History of Eusebius.” In *Eusebius: Church History, Life of Constantine the Great, and Oration in Praise of Constantine*, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, translated by Arthur Cushman McGiffert, Vol. 1. A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series. New York: Christian Literature Company, 1890.

together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

The first application is to draw near to God. Sprinkling and washing is imagery of purification and sanctification by Christ (10:14). Because He has and continues to purify and sanctify, we can draw near to God in worship, meditation, prayer and service.

I hope you have daily time with God. Jesus has won this privilege for all of us. In the footnotes is a link with practical ideas to help you draw near to God.² Parents, teach your children how to draw near to God in a time of worship, meditation, prayer and service. Disciplemakers, make sure you are helping your brother or sister to draw near to God in worship and service.

The second application is to *hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering* (v.23). Though holding fast to Jesus brings suffering it will ultimately be worth it when they/we receive the inheritance; an inheritance that is certain because *He who promised* (the inheritance) *is faithful* (to fulfill His promises).

The third application is to *consider how to stir up one another to love and good works*. Some had stopped meeting with fellow believers. This is an exhortation not to just meet, but to give careful thought as to how to encourage fellow believers to love God, love others and make disciples. This applies to us. We should be intentional in our time together on Sundays and throughout the week in our Bible studies and Home Fellowships to reach out to one another and encourage each other in our walks with the Lord.

They need to meet, stir up and encourage *all the more as you see the day drawing near*.

Why the urgency?

What *day* is drawing near?

The *day* is the day of judgment coming upon the nation of Israel. It is the judgment against that generation that had rejected Messiah.

The year is 65 A.D. The Preacher knows it's been over thirty years since Jesus' pronouncement of judgment on that generation. The duration of that generation is nearly expired. Judgment is at hand. The destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple is at hand. The believers need to band together, love one another and help one another through the catastrophe that is soon coming. They will need to gather their things and help each other escape Jerusalem and resettle. They will need each other desperately in the days to come.

This is also why they need to hold fast their confession/confidence in Messiah because if they recant and return to the Old Covenant they will be swept away in the judgment coming upon that generation. The "deliberate" sin of 10:26 is that of rejecting Christ once again (6:6 ...crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm). If they reject Christ and return to the Old Covenant they will remain in Jerusalem/Judea and not escape with the believers. If they recant and return to the Old Covenant they will be

² http://www.gracepointsd.com/images/pdf/time_with_god.pdf

trapped in Jerusalem and either die of starvation, die by the sword or be sold into slavery. This is the judgment/punishment of 10:26-31.

To Recant Is To Be Destroyed in the Day of Judgment³ (10:26-31)

Hebrews 10:26-31 (ESV)

²⁶ For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. ²⁸ Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. ²⁹ 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? ³⁰ For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." ³¹ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

The deliberate sin of verse 26 is to recant their faith in Christ and return to the Old Covenant. It is deliberate because they know the truth about Christ and the New Covenant and yet choose the false. *There no longer remains a sacrifice for sins* may refer to the fact that even this sin of rejecting Christ again was paid for by the blood of Christ. It may also refer to the fact that contrary to their belief the sacrifices they will once again offer under the Old Covenant will be of no spiritual value whatsoever. They will be returning to a system that is spiritually null and void. What a foolish thing to do!

The example given of judgment under the Mosaic Covenant is one of physical death; it is a physical judgment. The previous example of divine judgment upon the Exodus Generation for their unbelief at Kadesh Barnea is of physical death (Numbers 14:28-29; Heb. 3:16-19). If they return to the Old Covenant they will suffer physical death.

The day drawing near is the day of judgment predicted by Jesus against that generation of Israel that rejected Him. Believers, sanctified by the blood of the New Covenant, who crucify Christ again (reject Him) and return to the Old Covenant will physically suffer in the impending judgment. This explains the urgency in the previous paragraph and the severity of the warning in this paragraph.

To know the glorious, graceful truth of all God has done for us in Christ and then reject Him is serious affront to God. The Preacher is angry even contemplating a believer doing such a thing. Notice the language of verse 29 – *trampled, profaned, outraged*. You don't want to go there.

In verses 32-39 the Preacher softens his tone and encourages them to continue to endure as they have in the past.

Endure and Receive (10:32-39)

Hebrews 10:32-39 (ESV)

³² But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, ³³ sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. ³⁴ For you had compassion on

³ Roman Holocaust of 69-70 A.D.

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.³⁵ Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.³⁶ For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.³⁷ For,

“Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay;³⁸ but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.”

³⁹ But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.

Here is the clearest description of their suffering in the entire book. We should be humbled. They may have hit the wall at the twenty mile mark and fallen off pace, but they’ve run the twenty. They need encouragement, an extra push, to get them to the line. But they’re the real deal – heroes of the faith.

They don’t need to get saved again – they’re born again believers.

They need to keep doing what they’ve been doing; they need to keep enduring. If they keep enduring they’ll receive the promised inheritance. This is the *rest* spoken of in 4:9-13; those who do the works of God in this life will receive the promises of God in the next.

Having warned the Preacher now cheers them on.

Reflections

It is a serious thing even for a believer to *fall into the hands of the living God*, that is, to incur divine judgment. If you are contemplating turning from Christ to embrace Mormonism or atheism or Islam, or any number of things be warned. Though you are not in danger of the Roman holocaust of 70 A.D. God will still deal with you and it won’t be pleasant. To know and embrace the truth and then later reject Christ is to trample on Him like He’s a piece of dirt. It is to profane His blood, to treat it like the blood we wash down the drain after prepping meat. It is to outrage the Holy Spirit, the Agent of this incredible grace God has given us in Christ. If God did not spare from judgment these believers who had endured persecution but fell away, why would we think we can spit on Christ without consequence?

No, as one of our Elders responded, “You don’t want to go there!”

If we know a brother or sister who is drifting away from Christ towards unbelief we need to love them enough to warn them using this passage. Of course, we need to be thoughtful in our approach and motivated by love. But we must trust in the power of God’s Word and the power of God’s Spirit to convict and produce repentance.

But to minister to each other at such a level of spiritual warfare and relational commitment we must obey verses 19-25. We need to be drawing near to God in personal worship; regularly meditating on His Word, praying and being still in His presence. We need to hold firm our convictions, our faith in the Lord Jesus. And we need to be considering, thinking about, how to stir up love and good deeds in each others’ lives. When we gather, we can’t be coming as passive observers. You and I

need to come on Sundays, to any gathering of believers, with the goal of connecting with one another and encouraging one another in our Christian faith. We are in the *birth pains* (Matt. 24:8). It is getting harder and harder to be a follower of Christ. We need each other. In light of all that Christ our High Priest has done for us let us *draw near*, *hold fast* and *stir up*!