Responding to the New Covenant
Scripture: Hebrews 10:19-25
Code: 1623

Hebrews, chapter 10, verses 19 to 25, is our text for tonight in our continuing study of Hebrews, and we're fast coming to a conclusion in this book, and what a blessing it's been to be here and to share and to learn what God has for us.

When a man hears the gospel, the good news of salvation from sin through Jesus Christ, and when that man understands the gospel, and when that man believes that the gospel is true, and when he, to some extent, commits himself to that understanding, then he will, from that point, either go on to be a true believer or fall back to be an apostate.

You see, there are only two possible responses to the knowledge of the gospel. When an individual knows the truth of the gospel, he either goes on to believe, or he falls back into apostasy, and an apostate is one who rejects the truth, having known it. That's different from somebody who maybe rejects only knowing a portion of it.

There are only, then, two possible responses to the individual who intellectually understands the truth of the gospel, and that is to go on to faith or to fall back into a state of apostasy, which deserves, as the Bible tells us, the severest kind of punishment.

Now, tonight, we're going to consider the first of those two possibilities, and that is the positive response to the new covenant, or salvation, the positive response. A man knows the truth. He understands the truth. To a certain measure in his mind, he acquiesces to the truth. And at that point, if he goes forward and commits his life to Christ, he has taken a positive response to the truth. If he falls back, it's a negative response.

Now, next week, or if we don't get done tonight, in two weeks, we will consider the negative response, and we'll study the horrible tragedy, beginning in verse 26, of willful apostasy, and what happens when a man willingly has a negative response to the gospel. But tonight it's going to be positive.

Now, as have been studying in the Book of Hebrews, we have been plumbing the depths of this very deep book. It began, you'll remember, as we were introduced to the absolute superiority and sovereignty and supremacy of Jesus Christ. We found Him in the very first verses of the first chapter of Hebrews to be the all-sufficient one.

And then the writer of Hebrews begins to compare Jesus Christ with all of the features of the Old Testament, or the old covenant, because He's writing to Jews, and He wants to show them that Christ is the answer and they can drop everything else. And so He shows how Christ is better than Moses, and Christ is better than angels, and Christ is better than all the prophets, and Christ is better than Joshua, and implies that Christ is better than David, and Christ is better than Aaron, and Christ is better than all the priests.

And Christ offered a better sacrifice than the other ones. He is a better priest of a better priesthood than the other one. And He offers a new covenant better than the other one. And so all the way through chapter 10, clear to verse 18, from 1:1 to 10:18, is a presentation of the superiority of Jesus Christ. And we've been seeing it all the way through.

And now, as we come to 19, we find that He asks for a response. Now, periodically, up through chapter 10, verse 18, He has been giving warnings. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" in chapter 2. Later on in 4, more warnings. Later on in 5, more warnings. In 6, more warnings. "If we know these things and we fall away, it's impossible to be renewed to repentance." So warning has interspersed these presentations of the superiority of Christ.

But now He's going to ask for a full response, beginning in verse 19. And you'll notice that 19 begins, "Having therefore," and the therefores are always there for a good reason. They always point backwards. "On the basis of what I've said for 10 chapters and 18 verses, you must respond."

If you know the gospel of Jesus Christ, you either then take a positive response and boldly, verse 19, "enter into the holiest, or you take a negative response, verse 26, you sin willfully after you knew the truth, and you fall away, and judgment comes about. Only two responses. And that's what He's asking for beginning in chapter 10, verse 19, in response to all of the presentation of Christ up through verse 18 of chapter 10.

And it's an appeal for men to come to Christ is what it is, on the basis of doctrine. You see, no Biblical appeal is ever really made apart from a solid foundation in doctrine. That's true all the way through Scripture. All solid appeals are based on doctrine. And so ten chapters of basic doctrine about the identity of Christ, and, finally, He says, "Now here's the opportunity for you to respond."

And the first, then, is a positive response, and would to God that this would be the response that all men would have, that you tonight who don't know Christ would have even tonight. The positive response is salvation. Now, salvation is made up of three features, and these are common in our understanding throughout the Scripture: faith, hope, and what's the third? Love. Faith, hope, love.

Now, if you'll notice the text, first of all is faith. "Let us draw near," verse 19. Secondly is hope, verse 22. Pardon me, verse 23. Verse 22 really says, "Let us draw near." Verse 23, "Let us hold fast." And then there's love, verse 24, "Let us consider one another."

Three statements beginning with "Let us," one having to do with faith, one having to do with hope and one having to do with love. And they really kind of separate into three features the experience of salvation. Salvation is drawing near, holding fast and loving each other. That's the fullness of salvation.

Somebody who draws near and falls away, that's not salvation. Somebody who draws near, sticks around a while but doesn't love his brother falls under the qualifications of I John, in which it says, "If any man say he love God and love not his brother," he's what? "He's a liar."

And so salvation could be kind of dissected into faith, hope and love, faith in God, holding fast to our hope and loving each other. That indicates a true believer.

And so He's talking about a real response. "Come on," He says, "draw near, hold fast and love each other." And what He's really saying, pushed into one statement, is, "Take a positive response to the gospel."

Now, let's begin with faith. In verse 19 to 22, the key here, of course, being verse 22, which says, "Let us draw near with a true heart and full assurance of," what? "Faith." All right? That's the key. We're going to draw near through faith.

But building to this positive response is verse 19 and 20 and 21, so let's begin at verse 19. On what basis can we draw near? Here it comes. "Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." Now, He begins by saying, "We can enter into God's presence."

Now, the holiest has to do with the holy places. You remember that in the Old Testament, as we've been studying, there was a Tabernacle or a Temple, and inside of the totality of this outer courtyard there was what was called the holy places, the holy place, and inside, separated by a veil, was the Holy of Holies. And in the Holy of Holies, God dwelt. And no man could enter into that place except the high priest once a year to offer atonement for the sins of the nation Israel.

But now He is saying, "You all can enter into God's presence. The veil has been torn down, and you can all enter in, and you can enter in boldly." So we have this new entrance, you see, into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. And, of course, this is a fantastic statement to a Jew, because, to a Jew, entering into the holiest is absolutely forbidden. And if a Jew ever tried to do that under the old economy, he would've been instantly consumed in the flames of the fire of almighty wrath. And no Jew would ever conceive of going into the Holy of Holies.

In fact, it's interesting. If you go to Jerusalem, you'll find out that there's a certain area of the Temple ground where it is forbidden to Jews to ever walk there, because it may be the area where the Holy of Holies once stood, and no Jew would ever put his foot on the Holy of Holies. Therefore, there are big signs outside the gates of the Temple that say, "Orthodox Jews have been forbidden by the rabbi to enter in this place lest they step on the Holy of Holies."

They have a fear, still today, the Orthodox Jews, of ever going into the presence of God. But because of the new covenant, He says we can have boldness. We don't even go in sheepishly, saying, "God, I'm coming, don't step on me," see. We can enter in boldly. It's a fantastic concept for the Jewish mind to understand.

Now, when He uses the term "brethren," just a point of information, when He uses the term "brethren" here as on other occasions in the Book of Hebrews and also in the Book of Romans, He's talking to Jewish brethren, not Christians. "Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus" I think has primary reference to the Jews, to the brotherhood of Jews as it is so used elsewhere in Hebrews and, as I said, in Romans.

On the basis of all that you've learned, therefore, on the basis of everything I've said in chapter 7, 8, 9 and 10 about the openness, about the fact that Jesus made the perfect sacrifice, that Jesus provided access, that Jesus provided entrance, on the fact of all of that, you have boldness to go on in and meet God person to person.

The blood of Jesus has opened the way. You see, in the Old Testament there was a lot of blood being shed, but none of it ever opened up the veil, did it? All of the blood of all of the animals never did it. It couldn't open the way. It couldn't do it. In chapter 9, we'll remember our study, in verse 22 said, "Almost all things are by the law purged with blood, and without the shedding of blood is no remission." No way to forgive sin apart from bloodshed, but the bloodshed of the animals didn't do it.

Verse 3 in chapter 10 says, "In those sacrifices there is a remembrance of sin." Not a forgiving, but just to help you to remember sin. Verse 4 even says, "It is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin." Verse 6 says God doesn't have any pleasure in those things, because they don't do the job. Verse 8 says the very same thing.

And so there was no way that the blood of the animals could take away sin. But the blood of Jesus Christ, there it is in verse 19, "We have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." His perfect sacrifice, which we've studied in great detail, opened the way.

If a man was to go into God's presence, or try to go, he couldn't even get there, but if a man was to try to go into God's presence based on his own character or based on his own works or based on his

own religious affiliation, he would find no access. None at all.

In Matthew chapter 7, verses 21 to 23, there are many people who gather around the Lord, and they say, "Lord, we've done many wonderful works in your name and cast out devils and done miracles. And we want to now come into your kingdom." And He says to them, "Depart from me. I never knew you." And He cast them out.

They had all the right religious affiliations. They had a lot of the right connections. They had a lot of the right attitudes in terms of their character and their good works. But they didn't know Jesus Christ. Therefore, they were unqualified to enter the presence of God. That's the only way. But when we enter by the blood of Jesus Christ, we find access, fear vanishes and God sees us as clean and welcomes us in the blood of Christ.

Now, notice, He says we can have boldness. We don't need to go into God's presence trembling. We can go in without any fear. Back in chapter 4, verse 16, this thought was introduced to us, when He said, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain," what? Mercy. We can go in boldly, because we know that God is not going to give us justice.

If we went in there and He gave us justice, He'd destroy us, because we deserve punishment. Right? What did He do with His justice? He laid it on Jesus Christ and paid for sin, and therefore he can give us mercy, and so we can go boldly, saying, "I'm coming. Because you've already spent your justice on Christ, your mercy remains for me." And so we enter boldly. In fact, we go into His presence, the apostle Paul says, "crying Abba, Father," which means papa. It's intimate, even.

I love the story in Luke 15 of the prodigal son. There's two stories there of the prodigals, one that went away and one that stayed home, but that's another sermon. But the prodigal who went away came to himself, realizing he's having...he'd spent all of his means, and he wound up in a pigpen slopping pigs. "And he said to himself, 'I will arise and go to my father.'" You say, "Well, that's real good. Who wouldn't in your situation?" But that isn't how God sees it. God takes a man when he comes, whatever his reason.

"And he arose and he went." And you find him...when he gets back, and you find him in his father's house. You don't find him outside the door. You don't find him peeking through the portholes or the windows or whatever. He's in the house. Sovereign grace has given him boldness to enter the house.

Why not? He confessed his sin. He received the kiss of reconciliation. The father put on him the best robe, gave him a ring for his finger. He was fitted to enter the father's house, and that's where you find him, not outside looking in. Boldness.

And so in the passage of the prodigal, we are told the prodigal had been, in a sense, perfected. He had been made fit to enter the father's house. And so it is in the experience of one who comes to God. Jesus Christ puts the right robe on, the right ring on his finger, and gives him the right things so that he may enter the Father's house and not be in the wrong place. He can go in boldly.

And, of course, those in Judaism were afraid. This whole concept was so revolutionary to them. There was no way they were going to understand it in the first...the first time it was indicated. That's why it's been repeated so many times in the Book of Hebrews.

But as faith begins to dawn in the believing heart, faith then begins to perceive that we may come to God, that God is not some cosmic indifference, that God is not some cosmic killjoy who wants to stomp on everybody and crush them in the fire of His wrath, but that God is a loving God who already spent His wrath on Jesus Christ for those who believe and has nothing left but mercy. And there's no reason to hesitate, only to run into the arms of God.

You remember that no sooner had Adam sinned than the door to access to God was slammed shut, as soon as Adam sinned, and Adam no longer had access to God. And God shot him out of the Garden and put an angel with a flaming sword so he couldn't get back into His presence. But now you know what? The blood of Jesus Christ quenched the fiery sword. And the believing man can enter boldly into the presence of God. The door has been opened again.

Verse 20, "By a new and living way." What? There's a new way. Well, the old way didn't get us in anyway, did it? There better be a new route. The old didn't make it. "By a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh." It's not the old way. The old way was done away. 8:13, "In that He saith a new covenant, He hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and growth old is ready to vanish away." The old covenant fades.

And, incidentally, the old covenant could only bring a man partially into the presence of God anyway. It only just barely got him into that relationship, not the fullness of dwelling in the presence of God. And we know it's a new way not only because it gets you to God and the old way didn't, but we know it's a new way because it's by the blood of Jesus and not the blood of animals anymore, and that's new. And so the Spirit calls it a new and living way. What a great statement.

I want you to see some things here that are just rich. The word "new" is a very rare word in the New Testament. It is not the typical word for "new," neos, kinas, none of those words. It is this word: prospheton. You know what it means? Freshly slaughtered. That's the literal meaning.

What it says is, "We have boldness to enter into the holiness by the blood of Jesus by a freshly slaughtered and living way." How vivid. How vivid. Who was it that was freshly slaughtered that opened the way? Jesus Christ, a freshly slain road to God. All the old sacrifices didn't make it.

The old road was a dead road. It wasn't a new and living way. It was an old dead one. There wasn't any life there. The old way was only an index finger pointing to the new road, in Christ. And I love the fact that it's been at least 30 years since Jesus died when this was written, but it's still fresh. It's still a freshly slaughtered way. Isn't that terrific?

You know, under the old economy, you had to sacrifice an animal all the time, every day, every day, every day, every day, and every year through the Yom Kippur ceremony, all the time, over, and over, and over, and over. Jesus Christ was slain once, and His slaying is fresh and still just as fresh today, 2,000 years later, as it was the day it happened.

His sacrifice is effectual for all of time, and thus it is spoken of as fresh. It's ever fresh because He's really the Lamb slain from before the foundations of the world. His sacrifice is always fresh. And for the man who comes to Jesus Christ tonight, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is fresh. Because the Bible says, through the apostle Paul, that the moment you're saved you die with Christ. "You are crucified with Christ, nevertheless you live." And so in a very real sense, Christ's crucifixion is just as fresh as the moment that you experience Him. It's a fresh way.

Not only that, it's a living way. Oh, that's exciting. And that talks about resurrection. How can you have a slain and a living sacrifice? It never worked in the Old Testament. You had a dead one, and that was it. None of those animals bounced back to come alive again. None of those pieces joined back together. But here it's a living way. Jesus isn't even a dead sacrifice. He's alive. He's risen. And he's seated at the right hand of the Father, making intercession for us. And so it's a living way because the sacrifice is alive.

More than that, it's a living way because we're alive. When you came to Jesus Christ, what did He do? Ephesians, chapter 2, verse 4, "But God, who is rich in mercy, wherewith He loved us...great love, by which He loved us with great love, hath made us alive or quickened us in Christ Jesus." What does it mean to quicken? To make us alive.

You see, men in this world are spiritually dead. You know that, don't you? We've talked about that. You know what spiritual death is? It's an inability to respond to a spiritual stimulus. It's like physical death. Physical death means you can't react to physical stimulus.

I guess it's been about a year ago that I was in my office on a Saturday morning and a little boy ran in and he said, "Could you come down the street? Right down Roscoe here, there's a baby that's dying." And I'll never forget, on Saturday morning I ran out and I ran down the street and I went in the house, and there was a little baby, must have been three, four months old, just one of those little precious lives. And it was on the bed, and it was blue, and it was turning cold, and it was dead.

And there was a mother there, weeping as only a mother could weep for the loss of that thing which she loved so much, and endeavoring as only a mother would to give it life by kissing it and by doing every single thing she could conceive of, and not even believing that this was so. And I stood there as absolutely helpless. With all of the knowledge I had of the Word of God and all the things I knew about God, I couldn't do one thing.

And it didn't matter what the stimulus was, the baby couldn't react, you see. Even that stimulus...there must be no greater stimulus than the love of a mother for an infant and vice versa, but it didn't work. Because physical death means you can't react. It doesn't matter what the stimulus is.

Well, spiritual death's the same thing in the spiritual realm. It means that no matter what happens in a divine sense, no matter what happens in the revelation of God, no matter what God says, you don't understand it because you're not receiving those impulses. And you're dead to God. And so you live in line, and you bang around against the flow all the time, but you really can't be helped, because you can't sense God anyway.

And then all of a sudden Jesus Christ reaches down and makes you alive, and you begin to sense God. All of a sudden God is alive, and you're alive. And things begin to make sense. And you begin to see what God wants and to think with the thoughts of God. And all of a sudden a whole new dimension opens up to you, and it's life, and you're alive, for the first time, which means you're sensitive to God.

And that's what Christian liberty is, you know. Christian liberty isn't doing what you want. Christian liberty isn't doing wrong because you're going to go to heaven. Christian liberty is the ability to do right for the first time in your life. Because you're alive to God, you can sense what He's saying and be obedient.

And so it's a living way because it makes us alive. The day I met Jesus Christ, I came alive, in the truest sense. John said in John, chapter 1, "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." In Him was life. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and," what? "The life." He said to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he," what? "Live. And he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die." Oh, the body may drop off, but he's alive to God, and he'll stay that way forever.

And the Old Testament couldn't give that kind of sensitivity. The old covenant couldn't promise that kind of real, intimate life, where you sense God. But we have it, don't we? And we walk and talk with Him every day. And we're alive to Him, and we feel Him. It's a new and living way.

Notice verse 20. It says, "A new and living way which He hath consecrated for us," set apart for us, "through the veil. That is to say, His flesh." How did He dedicate this to us? How did He make this available? Through His flesh. And here His flesh is called a veil.

This is interesting. The inner Holy of Holies was separated from the Holy Place by this heavy veil. That was to keep anybody out that wanted to get in. You just couldn't get in there. This great veil was there. It barred, watch this, it barred man's access to God, you see.

And when the high priest in Israel went into the Holy of Holies on that one day, he just brushed the veil aside and went in. When Christ died, He didn't brush the veil aside. He split it from top to bottom, and left it wide open.

But there's even a deeper thought than that here. The writer says the veil is Christ's flesh. Fantastic thought. What's He saying? He's saying this. As long as Christ stayed alive, and as long as He was living, the way to God was barred, even though He was telling us about God.

Christ came into the world and said this and this and so about God, and if He remained alive, and if His flesh was never torn on the cross, then the way was never open. But when the flesh of Jesus Christ was ripped asunder at the cross, the way to God was open. And so Christ's flesh, in a very real sense, veiled off God until it was rent. Do you see? Until Christ's flesh was split, the way to God was barred, even though He was here.

An uncrucified Savior is no savior at all. If Jesus just came into the world, talked a lot, said what He wanted us to do and left, the way would still be barred. Wouldn't it? He had to die and rise again, so that we could die to sin and live to God. So as long as in the flesh He was alive, it was a veil. When He died, the veil of His flesh was rent, and the way to God was open. And it was symbolized as the veil in the Temple was split, and access to God was provided.

And so the Messiah had provided actual entrance into the presence of God. The reality had come. And all the Old Testament things could fall away. They were no longer needed. He opened the way.

But not only did He open it. Look at verse 21. "Having a high priest over the house of God." He not only opened it up, but He became the high priest in the presence of God. He not only showed us the way. He took us in there with Him. It's a fabulous thought.

The term "high priest" here is really translated "great priest." And it is used, perhaps, in ancient Hebrew to speak of the high priest. But it is accurately the great priest. And He, the great priest, is there in God's presence mediating for us. You see?

And the term "the house of God" has to do with all believers. All believers. Peter uses it thusly in I Peter 4:17, and Paul in Ephesians 2:21 and 22. All believers are seen, then, in a sense, as the house of God, the habitation of God.

And so Jesus Christ opened the way, a new and living way, but He didn't only open it. He took us in there with Him. You know, I might go to Washington, D.C. and arrive there and jump in a taxicab and say, "Hey, could you show me the White House?" And some cab driver might say, "Yeah, I'll take you by." And we drive by, and he says, "That's the White House." Now, that's one thing, to point the White House out to me. It's another thing to take me in there and introduce me to the president for a private audience. That's a little different.

Jesus Christ not only pointed out the access to God, but He took me by the arm and ushered me into His presence, and He sits there with me. In Revelation, chapter 3, it says that I sit on the throne with Jesus, who sits on the Father's throne. It's a beautiful thought.

And so He's the great priest in the presence of God, living to intercede for me. His life is there, and He is there. And Romans 5:10 says if His death could do so much to save me, oh, what His life must be doing in the presence of God to keep me, as He's there, securing my place in the presence of God.

I'm anchored there by His presence, because I'm inseparably and eternally connected to Him. Do you see? He that is joined to the Lord is what? One spirit. And the Lord is in there, in the throne of God, seated at the right hand of God, in His presence. And if He's there, I'm there with Him, because we're one.

And so it's on the basis of this, you see. It's on the basis that there is a new way, that it can be opened by the death of Christ, that we can go in, that Christ goes in with us, that He takes a place there and mediates for us. It is on the basis that access is provided that verse 22 says this. "Let us draw near." Come on, it's open. Come to Christ. I mean, the way is open. You can come in boldly into the presence of God, because of what Christ has done.

And then He says, "Here's how to come." "Come with a true heart." That's a beautiful thought. True is alethenas. It means true in the sense of genuine, with no ulterior motives, no hypocrisy, no superficiality. Genuinely. Proverbs, I love Proverbs 23:26. God says, "Son, give me thine heart," see. This is coming to God with a total commitment in your heart.

In Jeremiah 3, just to give you a couple of verses that might open this thought to you, Jeremiah 3:10 says this. "And yet for all this, her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but faintedly," hypocritically, but I never had her whole heart, God says.

Over in chapter 24 of the same Jeremiah, it says, in verse 7, "And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the Lord and they shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return unto me with their whole heart." You see?

He says, "Come on, draw near, but do it genuinely, with a whole heart." And we talked a little about this this morning, didn't we? About coming to God with real commitment. Oh, there have been an awful lot of people who've just come, and it's been shallow.

Even in that beautiful, pure church in the Book of Acts, there was a guy like that. In Acts, chapter 8, he showed up, a man named Simon. He thought this would be a good thing to get into, so he jumped in, tried to buy the Holy Spirit with money, so that he could market the miracle ability and all of that. He didn't have a pure heart.

Ephesians 6:5 talks to employees and says they ought to serve their employers with singleness of heart, as unto Christ, which implies that we come to Christ with only a pure heart. And there's a beautiful verse that maybe gives you the key to this whole thought in Deuteronomy 4:29. Listen to it. "But if, from there, thou shalt seek the Lord thy God," listen, "thou shalt find Him if thou seek Him," what? "With all thy heart."

The people who find God are the people who seek Him with their whole heart, total genuineness, the honest, wholehearted seeker. So He says, "Let us draw near honestly," now, watch this, "in full assurance of," what? "Faith." "In full assurance of faith." He must come to God in faith. Not works, not self-righteousness. Faith. And not doubting, but believing God. "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that," what? "Diligently seek Him."

You must believe to come to God, and that's really all God asks, is that you believe. Believing is so important. Verse 6 of chapter 11 in Hebrews says this, "But without faith, it is impossible to please Him." "Without faith, it is impossible to please Him." And then it goes on to say, as I quoted, "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."

You can't please God apart from faith. All your little works and everything else, only faith pleases God. Only faith. Somebody asked the question to me this morning, "What about faith? Does everybody have faith?" Sure, everybody lives by faith. There's a certain amount of faith that's just built into human nature.

I mean, you eat certain food and you don't even ask any questions. You go to the store and you buy a can of food, take the top of the can off and eat it. And then the next day you read in the paper about botulism found in somebody's string beans, you know. Or you've got to watch the tuna, because there's mercury in it. Or whatever.

And, you know, even though the performance of certain things isn't really accurate, we're so trusting. We live by so much faith. We just take everything for granted. We turn on our faucet and we drink it, and we don't know what's playing in the pipes, you know. We just take it for granted. I always tell the kids, "Who knows what really goes on behind the golden arches?"

But, I mean, we live by faith. Everybody has a certain commodity. If we didn't have faith, we couldn't exist in the world. I mean, that money you have in your pocket is only faith, because that money's not worth anything by itself. You're assuming the government has something behind it. Which, on the basis of past performance, may or may not be true.

We all live by faith, and faith is a commodity that every man has to a certain limited degree, but when a man comes to Jesus Christ, he comes with a faith that is more than just the natural man has. The Bible says in Ephesians 2:8 and 9, "For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves." What not of yourselves? "Faith. It is a gift of God."

Saving faith is a gift of God, just like everything else. It's when God plants within your heart the ability to believe, and gives you the faith to respond, when your heart is open and ready. And no man really comes to God unless he believes. Don't fool God. If you don't really believe, you're not ready.

And verse 22, "Come with full assurance of faith, having our hearts," and here's what happens when we come, "our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." When you come to God through Jesus Christ, something begins to happen.

Now, you remember that this is, of course, a picture of the Old Testament ritual. The priest would wash himself. The holy things were cleansed. And everything was sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifice. And all through all of this sprinkling of blood and everything, the priest was constantly bathing and cleansing himself in the laver, which was the basin of clear water.

But it was all external, you see. You see, it was the body and everything else sprinkled. And it was the body washed with water. It never got inside. Only Jesus can really cleanse a man's heart. His is no external purification, but by His Spirit He cleanses the inmost thoughts and desires of a man.

Now, notice the statement "having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience." This is a beautiful picture of deliverance. The same kind of deliverance in chapter 9, verse 14, where it says, "He purges our conscience." Conscience condemns. Conscience brings guilt. And the guilt can never be removed until the sin is removed. And when Jesus died, His blood removed our sins, and thus our conscience becomes free from guilt.

When Jesus' blood is shed and we believe, our sins are forgiven. And when the burden of a guilt-ridden conscience is removed, we've been cleansed from an evil conscience. The precious blood of Jesus Christ removes the evil conscience, that condemning, guilty feeling. And we don't condemn ourselves anymore.

Now, that has to do with God's side. You see, when you're saved, sin is forgiven. Sin is forgiven. You're sprinkled, as it were. Like on the Passover, the blood was sprinkled. The angel of death passed by. You're sprinkled and clean. That's satisfaction toward God, or expiation, if you want a theological word. It's the cleansing that applies toward God. In other words, sin is removed.

But, secondly, there is something that has to do with you. Our bodies are washed with pure water. And here we have simply the idea that there is a cleansing that goes on within us by the Spirit of God. First of all, blood is sprinkled to satisfy God. Then you and I are cleansed on the inside by water.

Now, some people say that's baptism, but it can't be baptism. That's not the point there. In John, chapter 3, verse 5, it talks about being washed by the water and the Spirit, or being born again by the water and the Spirit. And the water there is really the water of the Word that cleanses us.

In Titus, chapter 3, verse 5, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us by the washing of regeneration." And there you have a spiritual metaphor, the washing of regeneration. In Ephesians, chapter 5, you have a similar statement in verse 26, or at least one that can apply, "that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word."

You see, this is talking about a spiritual cleansing. So you have two things when you're saved. Number one, God is satisfied, and two, you're changed. You see? First of all, your sins are covered in the blood, and, secondly, your life is transformed. And there must be both parts. Both parts make up salvation.

You might say that the first is positional satisfaction and the second is practical sanctification. God is satisfied with the sprinkling of the blood of Christ, and sin is removed, and thus your conscience is free. And, secondly, you're changed on the inside, as you're washed by the Word and born again.

Now, these are inseparable. When a man comes to Christ, they both take place. The legal act of Christ's death is applied on His behalf, and God is satisfied. And the cleansing act of the Holy Spirit changes him on the inside, and he is satisfied. And all this comes when a man boldly enters by faith.

So the first response, then, that the Word of God is calling for to the new covenant is the response of faith. He says, "Let us draw near." You say, "Now, I'd like to know more about faith. I want to have faith in God. How does faith work?"

Well, let me give you an illustration. Three points. First of all, faith begins with a felt need. It begins when you sense a need. For example, Paul, on the road to Damascus, was just shaking in his tracks, stunned, and he said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" That's a need. He felt a need.

Whether it's a need for forgiveness, whether it's a need for purpose in life, whether it's a need for fellowship with God, whether it's a need for somebody to love you, whether it's a need to get rid of guilt, whether it's a need for peace in your heart, whatever the need is, the real kind of faith begins only when you feel a need. And I say that because if you don't feel a need for God, and if you don't feel any needs in your life, then you're nowhere near faith, at least faith toward God. It begins with a felt need.

Secondly, it continues with collecting evidence. If you have a need, you want to look around and find out how that can be supplied. Right? The Bible presents the evidence that Jesus Christ is the only worthy object for faith. In Romans 10:17, it says, "Faith coming by hearing, and hearing by a speech about Jesus." Hearing by a speech about Jesus. So you collect the evidence, and maybe you examine the person of Jesus Christ, and you say, "Oh, maybe He's the one that can fulfill my need."

There was an article by Dan Polling of an experience that he had with Channing Pollock, who was a pretty well-known playwright. And he related the story this way. He said, "Mr. Pollock was collaborating with another author in writing a play. They were working late one night in Pollock's New York apartment."

"Something in the work that they were doing caused the friend to say to Pollock, 'Have you ever read the New Testament?' He admitted that he had never read the New Testament, and he went on working. After that, the men worked into the night, and, finally, in the wee hours of the morning, they parted."

"Pollock went, assuming that he could sleep, to bed. But he couldn't sleep. And he was haunted by the question, 'Have you ever read the New Testament?' Finally, he got out of bed, searched all over the place and found a New Testament, sat down and read it. He read straight through the Gospel of Mark. After he had finished reading the Gospel of Mark, he put his clothes on, and he walked the streets of Manhattan until dawn."

"When he returned to his apartment exhausted, he said this, relating the story to his friend, 'I found myself on my knees, passionately in love with Jesus Christ.'" And, you see, that's the process of collecting the evidence and making a decision.

Faith begins with a felt need, continues in collecting evidence. Thirdly, it climaxes in commitment. You can say, "I believe," but it doesn't mean anything until you commit yourself to it.

My dad always used to tell a story about a man named Blondin who used to walk a tightrope across Niagara Falls. And he had a habit of wanting to carry somebody on his back when he did it. Now, there were a whole lot of people standing on one bank, saying, "Oh, we believe you can do it." But he had a terrible time getting a volunteer.

There are a lot of people who say, "Oh, yes, I believe. Yes, I believe." But they're not willing to commit themselves to that. John Payton, in the New Hebrides, was trying to search for a word for faith, and the natives didn't have one. And one day a native came into his house, whom he'd been working with, and he was just exhausted, and he just flaked out in a big chair, just flopped in this big chair.

And Payton said to him, "What is the word for what you just did?" And the man told him, and that's the word he put in their New Testament for the word "faith," to just drop your whole weight on it. That's faith. That's real faith. And that's faith that is saving faith. A felt need, collect the evidence, commit yourself. And this is what God wants, is that kind of faith.

Second thing in our study in the Book of Hebrews in this passage is hope. Let's look at it, in verse 23. He not only says we need to have faith in a positive response, but we need to have hope. Faith says, "Let us draw near with a true heart and full assurance of faith," and be having God satisfied and ourselves cleansed. Then let us have hope. "Let us hold fast the profession of our hope."

If your text has "faith," the best manuscripts have the word elpidos, which means hope, not faith. There are some manuscripts that had faith, but apparently the older ones that they have found in recent years indicate that the word should be hope. So we say, "Let us hold fast the profession of our hope without wavering." Why? "For He is faithful that promised."

Now, what is He saying here? He's saying this. You may come up here and you may believe, but the validity of your faith will be revealed if you continue. Now, we have said this so many times, and it keeps coming up in the text. Praise the Lord.

He says, "Hold fast the confession." Now, there are a lot of people who are going around confessing Christ, and the devil is willing to have people confess Christianity as long as they don't practice it. But there are a lot of people going around saying, "I believe. I confess Christ as Lord," etc., etc.

There was an individual here in our own congregation that confessed Christ as Lord in my own presence and was baptized, and now runs a topless, bottomless bar. He made a confession. But, you see, there wasn't anything there. And he said he believed.

And here He says, "Let us hold fast the profession of our hope." Hold on. That's evidence that you're...this is the human side of eternal security. Now, we know the Bible teaches that if we're God's,

He holds us. But yet there's a human side of the paradox, and it's the same paradox you find in the doctrine of election or anywhere else. God chooses us to be saved, and yet there's a sense in which we choose out of our own will. Right? It's the same paradox, and here it is again.

We are secure by the power of God, and yet that doesn't mean that we can just do anything we want to do. There's a sense in which there's a human responsibility to security, too. And the greatest of Calvinistic teachers and Reform theologians who teach the absolute sovereignty of God also will say, in the very same breath, that there is also laid upon the believer in the Word of God the fact that he must validate his security by holding Christ fast. So there's a human side.

And I believe a true believer will hold. Don't you? That's a sign of his belief. "If you continue in my Word, then are you my disciple for real." But that's what he's saying. Be for real. Don't just come up and believe, but hold fast. Because some of these Jews were getting up there, and they were getting shaky. And they were starting to go back to Judaism. And He says, "Come on. Hold on. You've come this far. Don't forsake it."

They probably had said they would come to Christ, and they had avowed Christ, and they had turned their back on everything else. But they were in danger of falling away. And this was something very serious. And so He says, "Hang on. Hang on. Hold fast to your hope."

And, you know, that wasn't easy for them, because they were persecuted. Like Paul said in Romans, though, chapter 8, he said, "The things you're going to suffer in this world aren't worthy to be compared with what shall be yours hereafter. Just hang on. You'll get there. Don't give up hope." Some people say, "Oh, it's so rough. I can't make it. Phooey on this deal." No. Hold on. God's best is yet to come.

How sad it is that many come to Christ and say they believe, and they're gone so very soon. In Luke 8, it says, in verse 4 through 15, words very familiar to us. "And when many people were gathered together, and were come unto him out of every city, He spoke a parable. A sower went to sow his seed, and he sowed. Some fell by the wayside. It was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it." That's a person who doesn't even hear. It doesn't even register. The gospel means nothing.

"Some fell upon a rock, and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture." Just kind of an initial understanding, but nothing ever happened. "And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked it." Persecution. Some people under persecution fall away, because they never come all the way to Christ. They get right up to the edge, and stuff gets kind of tough, and they just kind of give up. And He goes on to explain that only those that fell on good soil brought forth fruits.

And in John, chapter 8, those half-converts were hanging in the same balance. They were believing, and yet He said, "If you continue, you're my disciples indeed." And He said that in the same kind of a context in John, chapter 2, verse 23. It says, "Now, when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover in the Feast Day, many believed in His name when they saw the miracles which He did." And then this shocking statement. "Many believed, but Jesus didn't commit Himself unto them." Why? Because He knew them. And He knew the character of their faith wasn't saving faith. So He never even committed Himself unto them.

In John, chapter 12, in verse 42, it says this. "Nevertheless, among the chief rulers, many believed on Him." You say, "Terrific. A revival." "But because of the Pharisees, they didn't confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue, for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." And Jesus says that doesn't make it.

Oh, there are all kinds of people who say they believe, but it isn't real, because they don't hold fast. In John, chapter 6, you've got a multitude following Him. They thought it was the greatest thing that was going on. Free food. Oh, they believed, as long as the meals kept coming.

Chapter 6, verse 14, they wanted to make Him a king. "This is the prophet that should come into the world," 15, "Let's make him a king." Then you go over to verse 66 and you read this. Or, pardon me, verse...let's see which one. 64. 64, yes. First of all, "But there are some of you that believe not, for Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not and who should betray Him. And He said, 'Therefore said I unto you that no man can come unto me except it were given Him of my Father.'" Verse 66, "From that time, many of His disciples went back and walked no more with him. They'd come all the way up, but they turned their backs. Sad thing. It's a sad thing.

James says, in chapter 1, verse 22, essentially the very same thing. "Be doers of the word, not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." It's so easy to come all the way up and be a hearer and never really make it your own.

Colossians 1:21, again, repeats the same principle. It says it this way. "And you, who were once alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, He's reconciled," etc., etc., "if you continue in the faith." You can always tell a true believer, because he's around at the end.

And these are the warnings that repeat themselves all through the Book of Hebrews. Hold on to your hope. Hold on to your hope. What is hope? Hope is simply the trust that God'll keep His promise and do what He said in the end. That's what it is. Hold fast to your guarantee.

Is God going to keep His promises? Oh, look at chapter 10. What does it say in our verse? It says simply this, in the parentheses, "For He is faithful that promised." God keeps His Word. Paul said in I

Thessalonians 5:24, "Faithful is He who calls you, who will also," what? "Do it." "Do it."

So the second positive response, then, is hope. My dad always used to say that, I think, I don't even know if it was myself or somebody that he knew, but a father took a little boy and he left him on a corner and said, "I'm going to go to a meeting. Be back in a half an hour." And his car broke down somewhere and he couldn't get to the boy and he couldn't get to a phone and didn't know how he could call the boy. And three, four, five hours went by.

And the little boy was on a corner in front of a dime store. And his father came back in a state of panic, finally, five hours later, after his car had been repaired. And the little fellow was just standing there kind of rocking back and forth on his heels, looking in the window of the dime store.

His dad ran out and threw his arms around him and kissed him and kissed him and said, "Oh, weren't you worried? Weren't you worried? Did you think I was never coming?" And the little guy looked him in the eye and said, "No, dad. I knew you were coming. You said you were." That's...dads, I hope your kids feel that way about you keeping your word.

But, you see, that's how God is. You know what? It may seem like a long time, and it may seem painful in the meantime, but He'll be here. And it'll all be just like He said it would. Won't it? Because He's faithful. He promised.

And so if you believe and your faith is real, you'll hold on. That's what He's saying. Faith and hope. The third thing is simply love. "Let us consider one another," verse 24. "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works."

Now, these Jewish readers were having a hard time breaking with the old covenant. They were having a hard time coming all the way. And they were still holding on to legalism and all this other stuff, and they were still wanting to go back to the Temple and go back to the priest and back to the sacrifice, and it was so hard to make the break.

And so He says, "Come on and get in the fellowship." Verse 25, "Don't forsake the assembling of yourselves together," and be there provoking each other to love and good works. And I think this is an admonition to Christians as well. We need to be here. You know, there are people in our midst who are on the edge of a commitment to Jesus Christ, and we need to be here working with them and loving them and so forth and so on, so that they might come all the way to Christ, because some of them are making some pretty big breaks in their life.

This is not an easy passage to interpret, but let's take it in its broadest sense and say that what it refers to not only is the fellowship of believers among each other, but the stimulation of those right on the edge of faith in Christ, whom only God knows if their faith is real, that we get with them and that

we be with them and we not forsake the fellowship there.

And also, He's speaking to them and saying, "Don't forsake this fellowship and go back to the Temple." Take it in its broadest scope. They were all having a hard time making the break, those who were intellectually convinced and those who were really saved.

They were all in danger of falling back, and He's saying, "Keep that fellowship going. Don't go back. You need each other. You need to love each other. You need to kind of irritate." The word "provoke" literally is irritate. It's a negative word. "Irritate each other into good works." Paroxymos. Stimulate good works, and stimulate love. These are the things that go together in the Christian experience, love and good works.

"Not forsaking," verse 25, "the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is." Apparently, some were just falling out of the assembly and going back to the old Judaism. "Don't do that," He says, "but get together and exhort one another," encourage one another, "and so much more, as you see the day approaching."

What day? Well, I think He's talking here, first of all, about the destruction of Jerusalem. Your whole system's coming to an end anyway. But more than that, the coming of Jesus Christ. Stimulate each other to godliness, and don't forsake the assembling of yourselves together.

You know, people say, "Well, I don't need to go to church. I'm already saved, and I can miss a few here and there." We need each other to be together. We need to be in fellowship with other as mutually we strengthen each other, and we encourage each other to remain steadfast. As I say, this is the human side of security. And we show the validity of our faith by abiding.

I told some of you on Wednesday night, and I'll just kind of wrap it up with this little thought and a couple of Scriptures tied with it, but that I met a guy on the airplane coming out who happened to be here in our service this morning also. A real joy to my heart. But sat next...sat by myself on the airplane in St. Louis because I wanted to get some work done. And this fellow sat next to me.

So I began to talk to him, and I said, "What do you do?" And he says, "I'm coming to California to work for Equity Funding Corporation," and which the vice president of the Western states is in our church, Bud Jolly, so I thought, "Well, isn't that terrific?" I told him I knew Bud, and he said, "Yes, I've heard the name, Mr. Jolly," and so forth and so on.

So he said, "What do you do?" I said, "I'm a minister." And he said, "Oh, that's terrific." He was a young fellow, sharp fellow. He was an outstanding football player for the University of Kentucky and a coach there, only 24 years old. And so I said...he said to me, "You know," he said, "I used to be a Catholic." "But," he said, "don't you feel that a relationship to Christ should be personal rather than

institutional?"

And I said, "Well, thank you, Lord," in my heart, that's great. I said, "I sure do." And then he looked me right in the eye and he said, "You wouldn't happen to know how I could have that personal relationship, would you?" And, you know, I thought to myself, "There's a man who has a felt need." And then he said to me this. He said, "I need something desperately." He had a need.

And I said, "Have you examined the evidence, and do you believe in Jesus Christ?" He said, "Yes, I just don't know how to get to Him." I said, "Do you want to commit yourself to Him?" He said, "Yes." So, as I told him today, somewhere over the Grand Canyon, we prayed, and he committed himself to Christ.

And you say, "Are you sure that he's saved?" No, I'm not. Because, you see, I know the faith is there, as best I can see it. I don't know if the hold fast is there. I don't know yet whether the faith was genuine so that it will continue. But if it is, it will, and it'll also continue to the fellowship of the believers.

Just as we were parting today, he said to me, he lives in Huntington Beach, he said, "Do you have anything going on during the week?" Which may be a good hint that not only the hold fast is there but the love and the desire to be in the fellowship is there.

You see, these are the three things that bring salvation into total focus. And that's what He's saying. "And so much the more, as we see the coming of Jesus Christ." Even as then they were aware that their whole system was going to fall apart when Jerusalem was destroyed.

And so what is the writer saying to us? Very simply, and we can't overcomplicate His words, He's simply saying, "Come on. The door is open. Believe God. Enter His presence. Stay there. And commune as believers." That's a positive response to the new covenant. Let's pray.

Father, we thank you tonight that you've given us these truths. We've stumbled around a little bit tonight, Lord, but I pray that you'll kind of filter out the things that you want us to learn. Help us to understand what it is that you're teaching us.

God, we know that you want legitimacy in our faith, and that you want us to hold fast to the things that we have. You want our faith to be real, and not that sham kind of faith that stays a little while and then fades, but the kind that holds fast, and the kind that is seen in those who are here and faithful in the fellowship and the assembly.

And, oh, God, even more so should we be faithful to stimulate each other as times get more difficult, as we look to the coming of Jesus Christ. God, help us to be together, fellowshipping, loving each

other, provoking each other to good works, so much so as we see your soon coming. That by our testimony and by our fellowship others might be brought to you before you arrive and it's too late.

Thank you for our time tonight around the Word. In Jesus' name, amen.

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