


JESUS OVER EVERYTHING

HEBREWS READING GUIDE

WEEK 17



JESUS OVER EVERYTHING

WEEK 17
SEPTEMBER 25, 2023



CHURCH IN THE SQUARE

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EVERY DAY ...

... A PASSAGE TO READ,

... SOME COMMENTS TO CONSIDER,

... THREE QUESTIONS TO ASK,

... A PRAYER TO PRAY.



WEEK 17

HEBREWS 10:19-31



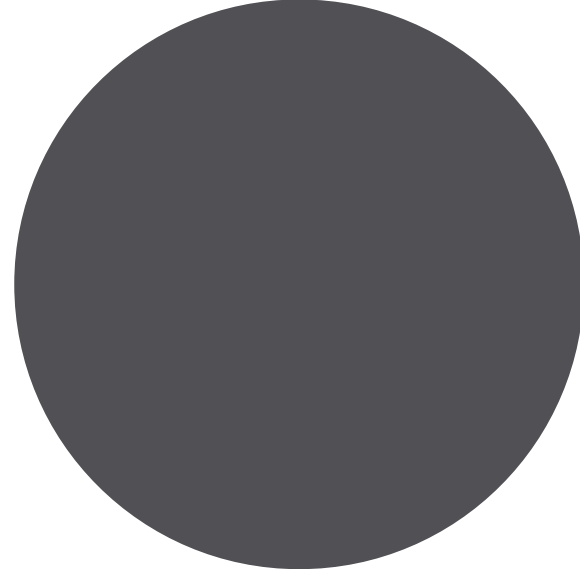
DAY 1
HEBREWS 10:19-22
LET'S DRAW NEAR
5

DAY 2
HEBREWS 10:23-25
LET'S HOLD FAST
7



DAY 3
HEBREWS 10:26-27
LET'S NOT GO ON SINNING
9

DAY 4
HEBREWS 10:28-29
LET'S NOT TRAMPLE ON CHRIST
11



DAY 5
HEBREWS 10:30-31
LET'S NOT FEAR
13

DAY 1 LET'S DRAW NEAR

First read Hebrews 10:19-22.

The virtue of confidence is all about the object of our confidence. Assurance in ourselves leads to pride (or shame). But assurance in the Lord is the essence of biblical faith. That's what the writer of Hebrews is talking about. He wants us to **"have confidence"** and **"draw near ... in full assurance of faith"** because of Jesus, not because of ourselves (v.19,22). He gives us three primary reasons for this confidence in Christ. First of all, Jesus has opened a way for us to be in relationship with our Heavenly Father (v.20). Secondly, he is our **"great priest over the house of God"** (v.21). Finally, Christ has cleansed our conscience (v.22).

Our conscience is all about our moral sensitivity. *Isn't that often the reason for our spiritual confidence or lack thereof? Our perception of our morality?* Some of us have confidence that we'll have a good life and are in good standing with God because, even though we might not be perfect, we're pretty good. We think our conscience is already clean. We can draw near without Christ. Others of us are confident we'll never have a good life or be worthy of divine friendship because, even though we do good from time to time, we've done too much wrong. We believe our conscience is filthy and can't be cleaned. We can never draw near.

Hebrews teaches us we're both wrong and right. The good news, as Dr. Timothy Keller has taught, is that we're far more sinful and morally flawed than we want to believe yet far more loved and accepted than we could possibly imagine. That's our confidence—in pride or shame. Christ invites us to draw near.

DAY 1 LET'S DRAW NEAR

1. Why should we have confidence in Christ?
2. When you think about your morality, are you more prone to shame or pride?
3. How does the gospel address your pride? How about your shame?

Heavenly Father ...

I'm regularly tempted to find my confidence in _____ and not in you. Remind me of the gracious work of your Son and center my affection and confidence on you.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 2 LET'S HOLD FAST

First read Hebrews 10:23-25.

Our faith is really a matter of the faithfulness of God. Notice, the writer says we should ***“hold fast the confession of our hope,”*** but then quickly follows with the power or reason for that faith: ***“for he who promised is faithful”*** (v.23). That’s the beautiful irony of faith. Faith is only as strong as that in which we place our faith. And God is most worthy of our faith.

But our faith isn’t just about God. Our faith might be personal, but it’s not private. Holding fast is also about loving each other, doing good as a community, meeting together, and encouraging each other (v.24-25). Faith is a communal project.

We’re given a vivid picture of what Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. called the “beloved community” from the infancy of the Christian church. Luke describes the first-century church as those who ***“devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers ... all who believed were together and had all things in common”*** (Acts 2:42,44). They held fast to God. They held fast to each other. Or perhaps more precisely, they trusted that the Father was holding on to them through Christ. The faithfulness of God empowers us to hold fast to one another.



DAY 2 LET'S HOLD FAST

1. How have you experienced God holding on to you?
2. Who can you love, serve, or encourage this week?
3. Why is the cross the ultimate picture of God's faithfulness?



Heavenly Father ...

Thank you for never letting me go.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 3 LET'S NOT KEEP SINNING

First read Hebrews 10:26-27.

When children make a mistake, parents instruct their thoughts and actions. When children deliberately defy their parents' instructions, parents must address the heart. Mistakes are about our behaviors. Defiance is about our loves.

The same is true for God's children. The Father has given his sons and daughters **"the knowledge of the truth"** (v.26). Before we received this truth we may have pleaded ignorance or immaturity. However, "the seriousness of ... an offense lies in the fact that it occurs after we have received the knowledge" (*The Letter to the Hebrews*, 375).

Specifically, we've received the gospel. We've received Jesus, who is the truth (see John 14:6). And so when we sin, we are loving something else more than God. German theologian and pastor Martin Luther believed every sin was breaking the first commandment—*you shall have no other gods* (Exodus 20:3). **"Sinning deliberately"** is choosing a life without God, that is a life without his **"sacrifice for sins"** (v.26). Hebrews says, it's all judgment and fire after that.

It's common in our day to think we can have benefits without covenants; blessings without faith; gifts without relationship. But that's not true in biblical theology. It's not true in any healthy relationship. All the benefits of God, come in relationship with God. Eternal life, joy, faith, redemption, the Spirit himself, and so on aren't spiritual commodities God doles out to anyone and everyone. Rather, each and every blessing of God is the inheritance of his family. That's why children should not go on sinning. We should return to the relational care of our Heavenly Father, because with him we have all we need.

DAY 3

LET'S NOT KEEP SINNING

1. Does this principle—*benefits are reserved for covenants*—seem fair to you? Why or why not?
2. What sin do you need to confess or stop today?
3. How does the gospel give us assurance that God welcomes home children who have deliberately sinned?

Heavenly Father ...

I'm often convinced the good life and real happiness come apart from your family. And so I deliberately leave your care and joy. Forgive me. Welcome me home by the grace of your Son, Jesus.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 4 LET'S NOT TRAMPLE THE SON

First read Hebrews 10:28-29.

Faith's foe isn't doubt. Doubt actually nurtures intimacy with the Lord through honest inquiry. "The opposite of faith is not doubt," observes writer Ann Lamott, "but certainty." Certainty breeds entitlement and self-sufficiency. This might seem contrary to what Hebrews has been teaching us thus far. However, remember, the virtue of certainty is all about the object.

The object of biblical faith is God.

The object of certainty, or the opposite of biblical faith, is ourselves.

This is why Hebrews uses such graphic language, cautioning us about rejecting the new covenant. While disobeying God's law is the loss of mercy, rejecting the gospel renders a **"much worse punishment"** (v.28). *Why?* Because of all that's been revealed through Christ. Because of all the reasons we've been given to trust in God and not ourselves. Through Christ, we've witnessed so much more about God than previous generations of believers could have possibly imagined (see 1 Peter 1:10-11).

Placing our certainty in anyone other than Christ bears serious ramifications. Being self-assured is like trampling on the Son of God (v.29a). Trying to clean ourselves is profaning Jesus' blood (v.29b). Acting like we don't need grace outrages God's Spirit (v.29c).

Hebrews continues to invite us to trust the Lord, not ourselves. And the good news continues to remind us that if we have **"set aside the law"** or trampled, profaned, or outraged God, in Christ we can be transformed. By grace, we can and should change the object of our certainty.



DAY 4 LET'S NOT TRAMPLE THE SON

1. What do consequences tell us about God?
2. In what ways are you self-assured?
3. How is the Lord calling you to trust yourselves less and trust him more this week?



Heavenly Father ...

I don't want to trample on your Son, profane his sacrifice, or outrage your Spirit. Humble me and help me. Create in me a heart that finds full certainty in you.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.



DAY 5 LET'S NOT FEAR

First read Hebrews 10:30-31.

Most of us are uncomfortable with divine punishment (vv.28-29). We're unsettled by simply reading about the consequences and even death that come from God's own hand. But fewer still have a category for a God who exclaims, "**Vengeance is mine**" (v.30). It seems erratic, angry ... extreme. This ostensible threat rubs like sandpaper against the preferred affection of "**you are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you**" (Isaiah 43:4). We don't like warnings. We want comfort. Ironically though, God's warning is a comfort.

To be sure divine promises to repay and judge are meant to sound an alarm, cautioning us of what's to come if we don't repent and obey. However, they're also deeply comforting. You see, "**It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,**" when you're living for yourself (v.31). But if we "**hold fast the confession of our hope,**" then knowing that the Lord will be repaying evil, judging all injustice, and "**making all things new**" is deeply comforting (Hebrews 10:23 and Revelation 21:5). The warning becomes a comfort because Jesus has endured the Father's vengeance.

As our propitiation, Jesus Christ falls into the hands of the living God so we don't have to (see 1 John 2:2). As a result, theologian Ligon Duran explains that "those who trust in Christ are not frozen or paralyzed in the admission of their sin or hopeless in the fight against it" (*Concise Theology Series: Propitiation*). In other words, we can live with hope not fear.

DAY 5 LET'S NOT FEAR

1. How does God's justice and wrath reveal his love?
2. In what ways does God's vengeance and judgment make you uncomfortable?
3. What about the death of Christ is justice? What about the cross is grace?

Heavenly Father ...

Your holiness and glory are overwhelming. Without your Son, they are my ruin and death. Yet in him, they are a comfort, peace, and remedy to all that is broken and unjust and sad.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.



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