

Christian Study

Lesson 264

Be Light

Focusing on Church beyond Sunday

A Closer Look at the New Covenant

Obstacles of Faith

Faith is the belief that God is, and an obstacle is a thing that blocks one's way or prevents or hinders progress. So, today, we are going to take a closer look at some of the things that sometimes blocks, hinders or prevents the believer from believing that God is: The passages in the book of Hebrews that most people are familiar with are **Hebrews 6:4-6** "It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit,⁵ who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, **6** if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace." And **Hebrews 10:26-31** "If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, **27** but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. **28** Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.²⁹ How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?³⁰ For we know him who said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge his people."³¹ It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God"

These sections contain phrases like:

"It is impossible...to be brought back to repentance..."

"If we deliberately keep on sinning, only a fearful expectation of judgment and of a raging fire will consume the enemies of God."

These two passages have been used for years to pound the fear of losing salvation onto people. This has resulted in one of two responses. Either people live in constant fear, doing whatever they can to keep their slates clean before God, or they reject a God they see as fickle, unreasonable, and impossible to please. Here is the bottom line: these passages are intended for the lost, NOT the saved. They are reminders that God is not playing games with us. He is serious. Either Jesus provided complete cleansing for sin and offer eternal life, or He did not. Our choice is to believe Him or to reject Him. If you have not believed, now is a good time to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior. If you are confused, now is the time to settle the issue once and for all. Through careful study of these passages, you will discover there is nothing to fear. In fact, these passages confirm that your salvation is secure and you can trust Jesus with your life.

Key verses: Hebrews 11:1 & 6

"Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. **6** And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him"

As mentioned earlier, faith is belief in God and without that belief it is impossible to please Him. A lot of Christians do a lot of other man made things in the name of God but do not have faith in Him. As a result they are pleasing themselves and those around them and not pleasing God. Here is a question for you, are you sure of what you hope for and certain for what you do not see? This might sound like an easy question to answer, but think about it carefully and give an honest answer. Humans are not listening but God knows.

Here is a friendly reminder of what the New Covenant is in a nut shell. If you have read this somewhere else or we have mentioned it before, I want to say, "we cannot get enough of the simplicity of it." It goes like this;

Someone asked, "We know that the new covenant brought an end to various old covenant rituals. But what is the new covenant itself? Can you put the new covenant in a nutshell?"

Good question — and I will respond in a nutshell. Then I will expand it, because the central truth can be developed in many ways as we study this in the Bible.

In simple terms, a covenant is *an agreement* between two parties. It can be an agreement between a husband and wife, a friendship pact between two people, an alliance between two nations, or an agreement between God and humans. The new covenant is an agreement between God and humans. God sets the terms, he makes the offer, and we respond to it with either cooperation or resistance.

How can we have a relationship with God? How can we become his friends? How can we become citizens of his holy nation? Sinful humans aren't in a position to make deals with

their Creator. As sinners, we are alienated from him, estranged from him. Sin and corruption cannot enjoy his presence. But because he is good, because he loves us, God has acted decisively to end our alienation and restore us to his household.

God sets the terms

God is the one who sets the terms of this relationship. He tells us in advance what he will do. He calls the shots, and makes us free to respond to his terms.

The terms God has set are these: Jesus died for our sins. In a financial metaphor, he has paid for them. There is no more debt. We have been forgiven. Our works cannot add anything to it. God has in Christ acted unilaterally, reconciling all things to himself (Colossians 1:20). At its core, the new covenant is *Jesus Christ*. He embodies everything the new covenant is. He is the Word of God and the Son of God, made human for us. He is the Message of God, the Mind of God, the meaning of God, made flesh for us to see and know and love. In himself, he enables us to be friends with God. In Jesus Christ, God has given us a new basis for our relationship with Him. This is the covenant He has given; we respond to Christ with either yes or no.

Our salvation — being rescued from destruction and restored as favored friends and children of God — depends entirely on Jesus Christ. He is the basis of this great rescue. Accepting him is the one requirement that God makes as the basis of this magnificent agreement we call the new covenant.

Accepting Jesus is not a work that we perform in order to meet the conditions of the contract, so to speak—it is simply an important part of enjoying what God is giving us. In one respect, we have already been brought into a new relationship with God—our choice is whether to enjoy it, or resist it. When we enjoy a beautiful sunset, our joy has nothing to do with our skill, and we certainly have not earned the joy—that is simply the appropriate response.

If we believe the good news and trust in Jesus, then we are experiencing a right relationship with God (and all the responsibilities and privileges that go with that right relationship). Jesus Christ is the core of the new covenant. That is why he must always be the center of our church, our preaching, our proclamation and our personal lives.

Now that we have these facts, we need to consider the wider context of the following passage, what the writer says before after in these verses. Let us turn to **Hebrews 10:19-25** "Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, **20** by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, **21** and since we have a great priest over the house of God, **22** let us draw near to

God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.**23** Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. **24** And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. **25** Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another-- and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

What gives us confidence to enter the Most Holy Place is the fact that God remembers our sins and lawless acts no more and now there is no longer any more sacrifice for sin. The entrance to the Most Holy Place is now by the blood of Jesus Christ opened for us through the His body. Now we do have a different kind of priest than the Israelites did under the Old Covenant. We have a High Priest forever. As a result of what has been done for us by Jesus, here are four things we should do. Draw near to God on faith, focus on the hope we confess, get together with other believers, and encourage each other, because He who has started a good work in us is faithful and will complete it and that is a promise. We should not have anything to fear if we are in Christ Jesus.

THINK ABOUT IT...

Important tools for effective Bible study

- **Facts:** Getting the facts about who, what where and why of the passage, allows the passage to speak for itself
- **Context:** Determine how a particular verse or passage relates to passages around it and to passages in other parts of the Bible.
- **Careful Interpretation:** Check out the footnotes. Quite often, there is no direct English translation of a given Hebrew, Greek or Aramaic word or phrase in the Bible. Interpreters give alternative translations in the footnotes of versions like the NIV, NASB and New King James. These footnotes can be very helpful to your study. In addition, taking advantage of a good concordance, especially an exhaustive one, can help you see how a word is used throughout the Bible, which improves your knowledge of the facts and context.

On top of all this is our need for the Holy Spirit to reveal the true meaning of the Bible to us. Facts, context and careful interpretation give us pieces of the puzzle, but the Holy Spirit can put the puzzle together to reveal the picture God intends for us to see. Read through the book of Hebrews and you will see explanations of Jesus' superiority in various contexts of the New Covenant with calls to persevere. These two passages are representative of the author's concern for his fellow Jews. He is concerned that some of them do not believe. He is concerned that some of them have been "playing church." He

wants them to understand the complete assurance of salvation in Jesus Christ, and he wants them to choose eternal life.

Is it a terrible thing to fall in the hands of the living God? Yes, if you have refused to accept Jesus. But if you know that you are saved (1 John 5:9-12 "We accept man's testimony, but God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son. **10** Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son. **11** And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. **12** He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.") then you are able to come boldly into His presence, crying "Abba Father", and receive mercy and find grace to help you in time of need. **Hebrews 4:16** "Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

It is no secret, what God can do. What He's done for others, He'll do for you.

Our mission is to help people find strength and security on the foundation that can never be shaken, cracked or shattered. This foundation is the remarkable truth of God's unconditional love and His indisputable grace experienced in a relationship with Jesus Christ. The critics of Christianity have launched a full attack to discredit the person and works of Jesus Christ and the reliability of His word. We cannot be silent anymore. Let us as children of light, stand firm in the faith, because He who has taken us this far will never forsake us. You are called Christians, be careful of that name. Let not our Lord Jesus Christ be blasphemed on your account

Believe this, "Jesus did not come to make bad people good, He came to make dead people live."

Keep It Simple

Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so.

If you have any questions, comments or you know anybody else who will benefit from this study please feel free to give us their email address and they will be added to our mailing list to receive weekly lessons. The email address is santigiemando1@yahoo.com,

Remember: A candle loses nothing by lighting another candle (Ephesians 5:8)

Let's go light another candle!