

**Record of Sermons delivered during the month of**  
**January 2019**  
(added progressively after each Sunday)

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(see following pages)

## **The Effectiveness of Christ's Sacrifice – Pt 2**

per S Olyott

(review so far)

The work of offering one sacrifice for the Old Testament priest wasn't enough. As soon as he finished. The process had to be continually repeated. Showing those sacrifices, simply couldn't take away sin. So we read, verse 11: <sup>11</sup> *And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.*

Verse 12: <sup>12</sup> *But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God,* <sup>13</sup> *waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet.* Clearly the work is completed – for all time – so unlike the priests (who stand daily) He sits down. Waiting for that final event – the judgement. The sacrifice is completely effective. It need not. It must not be repeated. Either by symbol or by inference.

Christ has done it all.. No more temptations to endure; no more Gethsemanes to suffer; no more Golgothas to experience; no more graves to be laid in. The only thing that awaits Him is the day when He comes in great glory – with all the holy angels with Him – when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father.

He is sitting there, waiting for, anticipating, that great day of His triumph and the universal knowledge and acknowledgement of His victory finished once and for all with His crucifixion and resurrection. He has done it all! There is nothing more for Him to do. He simply awaits the day of His final Glory.

Verse 14: His work is over, because by one offering, He has perfected forever, those who are set apart (sanctified) for God. Plainly then: the whole of salvation has been accomplished at Calvary. With nothing to add! Everything that is necessary for a sinner to be accepted by God. Everything! Has been done at Calvary.

How unlike this is from those Old Testament priests! Who as soon as they had finished, had to start all over again. They had never finished.

Verse 15 onwards. “This point,” says the Apostle, “is witnessed to by the Holy Spirit.” By which he means that the Holy Spirit, is the author of the Old Testament. The point he is making is taught on the Pages of the Old Testament. “You'll remember,” he goes on to say, “that Jeremiah wrote about a better Covenant. That Covenant has been brought into operation by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. You'll remember, that that Covenant promised a new heart. But it also promised: (verse 17) *'I will remember their*

*sins and their lawless deeds no more.*' the Covenant which our Lord Jesus Christ brings into operation, actually does deal with sin! So that our sins and iniquities (lawless deeds) are remembered no more. No record of them! No record.

Once there is no record of my sin. Once the removal of my sin has been accomplished, there just cannot be any further offering for sin. Verse 18.

Think of it this way: One of a married couple, may have the task of buying a new 'labour saving' appliance. So they go to the store and hear all the sales talk and settle on a particular vacuum cleaner, say. They pay the full price then and there, but arrange for it to be delivered to the home as part of the price. It's fully and completely paid for. However on the occasion of the delivery, the other partner is the only one home. And not being aware of the full details of the purchase asks, "Is there anything more to pay?" And of course, in a perfect world, the delivery driver is bound to say. "No! Absolutely nothing. Its all been fully paid."

So in God's perfect economy, the message of the Holy Spirit, drawn from the Old Testament is that in the New Covenant there is nothing more to pay – no offering in sacrifice – for the sins of the believer. There is no more to pay! Despite what some human deliverers of God's message, might say or imply.

There can be no further offering through sacrifice of a life required.

So the writer says to the Hebrews, "How can you think about going back to the Old Testament sacrifices. Because they are superfluous. They are unnecessary. They are shadows that point forward to something. But now that something has occurred. So there is no point to them any more."

Let us be clear: With the greatest charity and in love we must observe that the 'Mass' is a blasphemy. Because it does purport to be a sacrifice for sin. It does purport to represent Calvary. That is degrading. It degrades the work of Christ. Teaching, as it is required by Church "tradition" to teach, that the sacrifice of Christ in and of itself is not sufficient. That there must be something more. Such as faith in the Sacraments – penance and various other things – as being necessary – in addition to Christ's sacrifice for your salvation.

Equally blasphemous is the view, that at some future time in the world's History, the Old Testament sacrifices will be revived. Being revived in obedience to God and with God's blessing on them. Even though people who have these views claim that the practice will only have a memorial function, but the Apostle's point here, is that because Christ's sacrifice is a complete sacrifice, there cannot be any other sacrifice – in any form of practice.

That's why it is of course, blasphemy to speak of an altar in a Christian Church.

No blood. No altar now. The sacrifice is completed once for all. No flame. No incense. No smoke ascends on high. The lamb is slain no more. But richer blood has flowed from nobler veins, to purge the soul from guilt, and cleanse the reddest stains.

So the writer has proved his case. And his case is simply this: that the Person who is infinitely superior has done a work which is infinitely superior to anything spoken of in the Old Testament. Anyone, therefore, who turns his back on the Lord Jesus Christ and goes back to Jewish ordinances and ceremonies is going back on the infinitely glorious to the shadowy and the shoddy.

Some, in view of the constant bombardment of local and global 'issues' on TV and the daily concerns of modern life, my say, "What is the relevance of the detail of all this ancient history of the early Hebrew Christians?"

To ask this question is to flirt with the proposition that the Gospel is irrelevant to us here and now! It is to miss the real point.

Your greatest need is not reassurance of the future of the economy and a secure livelihood. Not even some deterrent from calamity due the ambitions of competing world 'powers'. Or the 'disaster' of Global Warming (or cooling).

The world will come and the world will go! Mortal life (individually and collectively) will come to an end. The great and last day of the world will come.<sup>1</sup>

Whether man or woman, boy or girl you will stand before your God. The only thing that will matter to you on that day is this question: "Are my sins forgiven?"

Many, many (even Christians) are trying to forgive their own sins. Saying to themselves, "If I try hard enough, I can make it! If I try hard enough, maybe God will have me!"

The message this morning is that your greatest need is the forgiveness of sins. But forgiveness of sins only comes through the way of Christ's Cross. By a body. A body taken to Himself by the eternal Son of God. Which has died. Through blood which has been spilt. All your attention must be focused, off yourself, and onto the Lord Jesus Christ of Calvary. Because your greatest need is met there.

Perhaps even sincere Christian this week have not yet grasped the implications of the Apostle's teaching. In the past week, perhaps you said something that troubled your conscience after you said it. You sinned! And at another time your thoughts were not as they should be. And you were alarmed that such a thought could surface in your mind. You sinned!

But instead of going right back to the Cross – to flee to Christ for pardon – you tried to salve your troubled conscience by trying harder. You had the thought that your acceptance with God depends on the integrity of your Christian life. You'd forgotten

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1 Luke 17: <sup>26</sup> Just as it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the Son of Man. <sup>27</sup> They were eating and drinking and marrying and being given in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.

<sup>28</sup> Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot—they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building, <sup>29</sup> but on the day when Lot went out from Sodom, fire and sulphur rained from heaven and destroyed them all—

Luther's dictum: "Sin boldly!"

What does he mean by that?<sup>2</sup> That Christians should go through life not caring if they sin or not? No, he didn't mean that at all. What he meant was that when you as a Christian sin, don't let that sin rob you of your peace. But remember that, whatever sin (real sin not hypothetical) – even that sin! Has been dealt with at Calvary. And all the deserved penalty that should fall on you – all the hiding of God's face that you deserve – all the pain that should come to you. That sin, even that sin, fell on the Lord Jesus Christ. You can own your sin boldly. Not by striving to 'pull yourself up by your own bootlaces' or to try to cover up the sins of your Christian life. But <sup>6</sup>..., *as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him* (Colossians 2:6)

Here of course is the difficulty: that Luther's Dictum can be taken as a, justification ONLY view of salvation – without the union with Christ and the renewal by the Holy Spirit, which brings about, albeit progressively, the 'setting apart', of the sanctification process – but rather easing us into the lukewarm water of cheap grace.<sup>3</sup>

Keep coming back to that Cross! Saying, "Lord, none other Name. None other Lamb. None other hope in heaven or earth or sea. None other hiding place from guilt and shame. None besides thee.

It's back to the Cross you've got to come. For the cleansing of your sins – even in your Christian life. Otherwise you will know nothing of the great peace of the Gospel. But this passage should surely bring home to us all, what a wonderful thing it is to be a Christian.

Your greatest need is for the forgiveness of sin. The Old Testament persons – apart from those who looked forward, with faith to Christ – knew nothing of the peace of a cleansed conscience. Knew nothing of the promise of verse 17: <sup>17</sup>... "*I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.*" Your greatest need is the forgiveness of sins and in Jesus Christ you have it! In Jesus Christ every barrier between God and

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2 Advice given to an elder 'religious brother who is struggling with the concept of Righteousness by Faith not works (but not said to ordinary parishioners):

If you are a preacher of mercy, do not preach an imaginary but the true mercy. If the mercy is true, you must therefore bear the true, not an imaginary sin. God does not save those who are only imaginary sinners. **Be a sinner, and let your sins be strong [or sin boldly], but let your trust in Christ be stronger, and rejoice in Christ who is the victor over sin, death, and the world.** We will commit sins while we are here, for this life is not a place where justice resides. We, however, says Peter (2. Peter 3:13) are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth where justice will reign. It suffices that through God's glory we have recognized the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. No sin can separate us from Him, even if we were to kill or commit adultery thousands of times each day. Do you think such an exalted Lamb paid merely a small price with a meager sacrifice for our sins? Pray hard for you are quite a sinner. Now to a former Catholic, like Melancthon, he will hammer on them to stop hanging on to the 'cycle of penance' of his youth. Be a sinner! Own it. Understand that even those who are not struggling with serious sins are still covenant breakers in need of the cross.

So the boldness of sin is the boldness that takes us to the cross. It's the boldness to admit we really do need Jesus.

See whole article: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/ryan-reeves/did-luther-really-tell-us-to-love-god-and-sin-boldly/>

3 In the correspondence between Luther and Erasmus, while they agreed in some respects, Erasmus' concern was that if the 'masses' had the threat of sin removed and the motivation of relieving works abolished there would be nothing to keep 'good order' in peasant society. 'Union with Christ and the renewal by the Holy Spirit' then assumes paramount importance in the realising of a true Christian life.

you has been removed. In Jesus Christ everything that should fall on you has fallen on Him. In Jesus Christ the life that you could never live, He's lived and by faith it's reckoned to your account. You may live and eventually die, forgiven.

Wonderful thing to be a Christian.

Verse 13 talks about the 'last day'.<sup>4</sup> It talks about the fact that at the last day, that some people will be Christ's enemies. But the great glory of the Christian life is that we can even look forward to the last day and to know that on the last day, because of free love shown to us at the Cross, Jesus will say, "You are my friend."

There's nobody like our Lord Jesus Christ! Nobody: either in His Person or in His work. When we get to the shore of heaven and we've been there only a few seconds – if seconds exist in heaven – we shall soon see that the great theme of heaven is the theme of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The whole theme of eternity will be: the greatness of Christ.

So instead of letting your mind be conquered by all the materialistic notions that are surrounding you day by day. So that you have been persuaded and conned into thinking that those are the real issues, five seconds in heaven will show you what the real issue has been all along.

You'll be glad that you heard about the cleansing of sin. And think back to having been glad that even here on earth you were able to think on that theme: which is the greatness of Christ.

What an awful thing it would be to face your judge and maker afraid.

A wonderful thing to face Him with all the benefits of the New Covenant. To have heard the promise of verse 17 and to know that it is a promise to you. How marvellous to enter into heaven as a pardoned sinner, and there to sing the praises of a crucified Lamb, who is the King of kings and Lord of lords, for ever and ever.

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**May it please God that all present, through Jesus Christ, shall have life through His Name.**

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<sup>4</sup> <sup>13</sup> *waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet.*

## **The Importance of Continuing in the Faith**

per S Olyott

(review so far)

Throughout this letter the writer is writing to Jews: Jews who had become Christians. They were still Jews none-the-less. They were seriously thinking of giving up their Christianity and going back to Judaism. They hadn't done it yet, but as far as they were concerned it was a serious option. They were so close to making up their minds to do just that!

And we can recognise that there comes times when in many Christians' lives where they seriously consider giving it all up and going back to what they were before. So this letter is most appropriate for them then and us now.

The way the Apostle has dealt with this problem is that he has paraded, before them, the greatness of Christ. There is nobody like our Lord Jesus Christ. For seven chapters he's said, "Look at **who** He is!" and then from 8:1 to 10:18, he has said, "Look at **what** He's done! There's nobody like Him.

The Covenant which His death brings into operation, is the Covenant that actual does bring the sinner into pardon – into forgiveness of sins. The sacrifice of Christ on the Cross; His present intercession in heaven – by His merely being there before the 'face' of God – actually does mean that sinners have access into the presence of God. There are wonderful blessings, which flow to men and women through Jesus Christ. These have been listed in several parts of the letter: you can go through life as a pardoned sinner – a sinner none-the-less, but a pardoned one; you can go from this day to the grave in fellowship with the invisible God; you can walk through this life, with a conscience which is entirely at peace – because your sins don't condemn you any more; you can go through life as a mortal man or woman, knowing God. All this through Jesus Christ.

That's where the epistle has brought us: to Chapter 10 verse 18. So we now take it up from verse 19.

The reading we have had today divides into three:

- Verses 19-25: where he tells us what to do in the light of the truth that we've been hearing. In the light of the fact that there is nobody like Christ. In light of the fact that all these blessings flow to sinners through Christ. What are we to do? Here then are six verses of **exhortation**.  
"Let's reflect", he says, "for a few minutes about the facts of the matter as I have already explained."  
Verse 19: "We are brothers and sisters in Christ. And as being in Christ we have liberty. We have boldness – confidence – to go into the holiest." We are able as Christian men and women to go into the very presence of God. The High

Priest, in the Old Testament situation, could only go, once a year, into a 'picture' of the presence of God. That's not the way it is with us! God's holiness no longer excludes me as a sinner. I don't have to cringe on the outside any more. I may go right in and have fellowship with the absent, invisible Lord. Because all the penalty that I deserve to bear, which should keep me outside has been carried away. By the blood of Jesus I have confidence to enter into the holiest. I have access.. It is my great privilege as a Christian.

"It's your privilege as a Christian", he says in verse 19. "Indeed", he says, verse 20, "a new way has been consecrated for us into God's presence. It's not a way of ritual – a way of ceremony – not of candles; or of liturgy. It's not of 'dressing up' – dramas. It's a new way-- a living way. It's a way by a Person. The old 'veil' – the curtain – used to block out the High Priest from the Holy of Holies is gone. When our Lord Jesus Christ died – at the moment of His death, as you know – the veil in the Temple was torn down." <sup>51</sup> *And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split.* (Matthew 27:51)

"The death of Christ has torn down the veil. The barrier that kept sinners outside the presence of God, has been taken away. Just as His body was torn on the Cross, so the veil between God and man has been torn down. As Christians", he says, "We have immediate access into the presence of God." Sinners may go in!

"Indeed," he says, verse 21, "the One who was sacrificed for us is also our High Priest. We are the 'house', the household, over which He is High Priest". The Old Testament high priest went into the Holy of Holies only to come out almost immediately. Our High Priest, as we have seen, has gone into the Holiest of all (heaven) to stay there. Meaning that the way of access is always open, for people who appeal to Jesus Christ's blood and righteousness.

The fact that my Lord is in heaven, means that the way in, is always secure. There is never a time when I can be turned away or refused, because the One to Whom I am united is there all the time.

"Now." he says, verse 22, coming to the point of his exhortation, "Since the way is freely open, let's avail ourselves of it. Since we do have immediate access into the presence of God, let us go in, to the presence of God. Seeing we no longer have to stand afar off, and cringe on the outside, let us draw near." But he's telling us this not just as a privilege but as a duty.

The Christian who does not pray, despises Christ's Cross! Jesus Christ was crucified that I might go in. He's resurrected and in heaven with the marks of His crucifixion, that I might go in. If I don't go in, I have spat on His Cross. I've as good as said that there is no point in it all. "Lord you were crucified, you bled and died; you've risen again; gone it, that I might go in, and now I refuse to go in!"

Therefore drawing near to God, is not only our supreme privilege, but drawing near to God is our duty. Because not to draw near, shows contempt for the

crucifixion and suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So he tells us in verse 22: "Let us draw near." There's nothing to keep you out. In the Old Testament days someone could say, "Well I can't draw near, because my conscience is too defiled."

"That's not the way it is with you," he says in verse 22, "you've got your *hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience.*"

In the Old Testament people would say, "I can't come near. I haven't been through the right ceremonies. Haven't been 'washed' properly."

"That's not the way it is with you," says the Apostle, "Your bodies are washed *with pure water.* Those ceremonies don't apply any more. There is nothing to keep you out. You've been purified! "Draw near," he says, "with a fully formed assurance in your heart, that the way to God really is open." It really is open.

"This isn't time," he says, verse 23, "to loosen our grip on the Christian Faith. This isn't time to waver in our allegiance to Christ. Having the privilege of being able to draw near to God means, that this isn't the time to go back to Old Testament shadows, which speak of much but don't give you anything. This is time," he says, "to hold fast, to *the confession of our hope without wavering.* The Old Testament ceremonies let you down, promising much giving nothing. The promises of the New Covenant won't let you down because He who gave those promises, cannot lie."

"It's time to draw near, not the time to turn your back on it all."

Verse 24 & 25: "This isn't the time to be sowing doubts in each others mind. Not the time to be thinking of going back to Judaism. This is the time to be stirring one another up! To a greater Christian commitment. This is the time to be working out ways to encourage each other in the Christian life. This is the time to see if we can increase each other's love. This is the time when we can see if we can increase a practical outworking of the Christian Faith in each other's lives. We will never do that," he says in verse 25, "if we absent ourselves from the fellowship! As some people (even in the early Church) already have the habit of doing."

It's a common experience in our time, that when zeal flags. When Faith weakens. One of the first signs is that Christians begin dropping off from fellowship. Not necessarily from attendance of formal meetings, but from fellowship. They don't mind being in the same room passively, but they do mind when they assemble with other Christians and exhort one another in the Faith. Where there is interplay of lives.

This is what the Apostle is talking about here. It isn't time to walk out, but to draw near. To try to encourage everybody else to do the same. This isn't time to go back to Old Testament shadows. It's the time to work on each other. To stir each other up in the Christian Faith. To provoke one another, *to love and good works.*

“We should be recognising”, he is saying, “We can’t live the Christian Life on our own. It’s folly to try. It’s time to meet more often with each other. To exhort one another. To exhort – to encourage one another. Here we are in the ‘night’, but THE day will soon be here. Every day brings us nearer to that day. So every day – every night – should be a time of stirring each other up to greater Christian zeal than the day before.”

Whatever your theories about the Lord’s return, the New Testament’s emphasis is that today may be the day, when my Lord comes! How ashamed I will be if I have not tried to live this one day well. How ashamed I will be if I have not tried to help you to live this one day well. How ashamed I will be if the way has been open, but I have lived as though it wasn’t. Looking over my shoulder at what I was before and hankered after that again.

“The only reaction to the truths that I have been expounding to you,” he says, “is to give yourself to prayer. Give yourself to fellowship and so much the more as you see the day approaching.”

That’s the first section of this fortnight’s passage.

Next He’s going to tell us where the road backward leads. He’s just told us what to do in the light of all we’ve been hearing: draw near.

But next week the word of **warning** if we contemplate the road backward.

Later on he will show us the road forward: which is a word of **encouragement**.

For now, let’s not lose sight of the fact that it is a wonderful thing to be a Christian. A wonderful thing to go through life, enjoying the blessings of the New Covenant. Marvellous that peace with God is preached in the world and people can actually enjoy it. To have peace of conscience. Although our sins cry out against us and we fail every day. We can live every day with peace of conscience, because Jesus’ blood has dealt with it all. No matter how often we fail we can go to the Saviour for mercy every time; as well as for grace to help in our time of need.

[1976]

**May it please God that all present, through Jesus Christ, shall have life through His Name.**

## The Importance of Continuing in the Faith – Pt 2

per S Olyott

(review so far)

Now we make a start on verse 26 – 31, which is a second section:

- He's now going to tell us where the road backward leads. He's just told us what to do in the light of all we've been hearing: draw near. But now the word of warning if we contemplate the road backward.

Later on he will show us the road forward: which is a word of encouragement.

Verse 26: This is the start of the warning. It's actually the fourth warning in the letter. Once again he stops in his normal progress, to speak as it were 'face to face' and 'eye to eye' with His readers. He says:

"If you go back, it's all up with you!" Each time he does it in a different way. But each time equally solemnly – seriously. Here it is again.

"Don't make any mistake what I am saying to you, my friend. If (when you have a true understanding of the Gospel and you embrace the Gospel, fully knowing and conscious of what you are doing and knowing the truth) you wilfully turn back – turn away. Fail to heed the exhortation of the earlier verses to draw near, but deliberately turn away. Then *there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, that is able to be applied to you.*"

Let's be very clear. He's told us earlier in the letter that if you are a weak Christian and you fail. You can always go to the Lord Jesus Christ, your High Priest, and find mercy! You can always go to the Lord Jesus Christ to find grace to help in time of need. He is a tender High Priest. He doesn't break the bruised reed. He doesn't quench the smoking flax. There's always mercy in Christ. For those who will go to Christ! There's always help there for those who will approach Him in prayer – draw near. He's not talking about that.

He's talking about those who have embraced the Gospel. Now they sin wilfully! They trample on what they know to be true. They treat the truth of God as a lie. They walk out on it. These are not the Christians who are filled with a sense of weakness and are crying for help. These are people who know the truth, but want nothing more to do with it. This will become even more clear as we continue in this section.

For now it is sufficient to say, that he is telling them who deliberately reject the Cross – in the full knowledge and understanding of what this means. Those who deliberately walk out on the Christ. In such a case then don't think that atonement for your sins can be found anywhere else. This is what verse 26 is

saying. Don't think that your sins can be covered anywhere else. If you walk out on the light of God's glory – as seen in the 'face of Jesus Christ'. There is no other place that you can go – except 'outer darkness'.

Verse 27: *27 but a fearful expectation of judgement, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.* Let's put it like this: There is no way to peace with God except through the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. So if you turn your back on the only way to peace with God. The only thing that can await you is *a fearful expectation of judgement*. If you will not be God's friend, then you must be treated as His enemy! His adversary.

He underlines this in verses 28 and 29. He says, “You'll remember that in the Old Testament, to reject the Law was bad enough: When a man despised God's Law – provided there were two or three witnesses – he was put to death. If to reject the Law – given through Moses – is bad enough? How much worse is it, to show contempt for Christ? And to tread underfoot the Son of God. To trample on Him! To reject the blood bought Covenant, as if it were an unholy thing! To despise the Person and Work of the Spirit of Grace.

If it is serious to oppose Moses' Law, how much more serious is it to reject God's Son? If it's serious to reject the Old Covenant, how much more serious is it to reject the 'blood bought' Covenant? If it is serious enough to reject the 'letter' how much more serious is it to reject the 'Spirit'.”

He is saying, that Apostasy must meet with punishment. You can't walk out on the Christian Faith and return to as you were. To remain neutral or untouched.

He goes on to tell us in verses 30 and 31: “That for the condition of Apostasy there is no cure. From the punishment of Apostasy, there is no escape. All that awaits people who 'walk out on mercy' is God's vengeance. All that awaits people who fail to continue to embrace the Saviour is the prospect of falling into the hands of the living God.”

It's a terrifying prospect! To fall into the hands of a holy God – unpardoned! Despising Him!

Let's not overlook the fact that it is a wonderful thing to be a Christian. It's a wonderful thing to go through life enjoying the blessings of the New Covenant. It's marvellous that 'peace with God' is preached in the world. And that people can actually enjoy it. Marvellous to have 'peace of conscience'. Although our sins cry out against us and we fail every day, we can walk through life with peace of conscience. Because Jesus' blood has dealt with it all. A wonderful thing to know that even if we fall 10 million times today we can go 10 million times back to our Saviour and find mercy every time. And grace to help in our time of need! He's not talking about that.

He's saying this: “If you know that truth and embrace it, but then you slip away from it, until you say good bye to it, then Apostasy must merit God's judgement.

The mark of a healthy Christian is one who prays and fellowships with fellow Christians. The 'mark', therefore of the Apostate must be: that he ceases to pray and he ceases to fellowship.

That's where the 'way backward' leads. Those were words of warning.

- Now the passage closes from verses 32 to 39: He's told us in the first section: what to do, in the light of everything he has told us. Pray; draw near; worship with Christians. Those were words of exhortation. He's given 'words of warning': Where the road backwards leads. He's now going to close with words of encouragement. Where the 'road forward' leads.

Verse 32: "Think back," he says, "to the old days." By this he means the earliest days of your Christian Life. "There you were in Spiritual darkness. Then you were enlightened. The light of the Gospel burst into your mind, like a great, shining light." That's what it was to become a Christian!

"Those days of illumination when you suddenly, 'saw the light'! They weren't easy days. Great days but not easy ones. They were days of trouble. <sup>32</sup> ... *a hard struggle with sufferings*, which they had to endure. You Hebrews went through times of conflict. You went through times of suffering." He reminds them in verse 33, what some of the sufferings were. "In those early days everyone's eyes were on you. Some were making you physically suffer. Some made you suffer with the words they spoke. And when you weren't actually suffering yourself, you were identifying with those who were actually suffering. You stood 'shoulder to shoulder' with them!"

It would have been on the mind of the writer and his readers the various incidents of 'imprisonment for the Faith' that are recorded in Acts and elsewhere. So he shares his compassion for those in prison.<sup>5</sup>

Examples of property being seized by persecutors occurred. And this was accepted joyfully.

"Go back to these early days," he says, "and ask yourself this question: How was it that you put up with all that? Persecution, mocking, trial and even the seizing of your property. How was it that you put up with it all?"

You were inwardly convinced that what ever you lost on earth and what ever happened to you on earth, you had a better possession and an enduring

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5 The KJV, working from a limited set of manuscripts, follows the addition of 'μου' in verse 34, thus making it appear that the writer is referring to his own experience rather than experiences in general:

For τοῖς δεσμίοις, the Receptus has τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου, which the A.V., so as to avoid the impropriety of expressing sympathy with the bonds themselves, renders "me in my bonds." Even apart from manuscript authority, δεσμίοις is evidently to be preferred, both as suiting the verb συνεπαθήσατε and as being more likely to have been altered to the common Pauline expression, δεσμοῖς μου, than vice versa, especially on the supposition of the writer being St. Paul himself.

<https://biblehub.com/commentaries/hebrews/10-34.htm>

possession in heaven. <sup>34</sup> ...*since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one.*

### *Pilgrim's Progress*<sup>6</sup>

Here the Apostle also says, that what kept you going in the early days of your Christian Life, was that you knew you were going to heaven. That's where the road forward leads!

Verse 35, now brings these considerations up to the present: <sup>35</sup> *Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. <sup>36</sup> For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.* "Don't throw away this settled faith of yours, which leads to such a glorious destination and outcome. Such a great reward. What you need," he says, verse 36, "is not something better – which you foolishly believe you can get by going back to the Old Testament ordinances – what you need is patience."

Verse 36 needs a renewed emphasis in modern-day Christianity. Many Christians are being taught that what you really need is something different from what you've got. You need something extra – something special. You wouldn't use the word but what you want is something magic. Perhaps a special emotional experience just for you or strange utterances that nobody understands. But this is not what you need.

Your great need is patience. Your great need is endurance. Perseverance. (look again at the Pilgrim Progress diagram) The ability to keep going on the road forward. Because if you keep going – when you have done God's will and continued to do what God wants, you will at last enter into the promise.

Your ruling desire should not be to go back to an easier or magical way. Not to seek an 'experience' that makes things easier for you – something you can boast about that those around you don't have. Your ruling desire should be to do what God wants.

If you stick to the right road the reward at the end of that road will be yours. And you haven't got long to wait." Verse 37. *"Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; ..."*  
"Hold out a little longer. Don't pack-in now. Don't throw it all up at this stage. Don't opt out of the race at this point. Just keep going. If you keep going you'll get 'home' safely."

So he closes, by summarising, in verses 38 and 39, "The men and women who are justified in the sight of God – those who are 'right' in the sight of God – are

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<sup>6</sup> is inspired by the letter to the Hebrews. There we find that Christian, often has his hopes revived, because in the distance he catches a glimpse of the Celestial City. Or he hears about it again. What ever the trouble or whatever the difficulty – even when his friend is dying in Vanity Fair. He keeps going because he knows that his road leads to heaven.

men and woman of Faith. People who get to heaven are the people who live by faith and die in faith. They certainly enter into the Salvation purchased by Christ.

But,” he says, “Those who shrink back, retreat out of God’s favour, there is nowhere for them to go, except into perdition.<sup>7</sup> Into a lost condition. We,” he says, writing to the Hebrews, “we are not in that category. We are not of them who ‘draw-back’, shrink back into perdition. We are those who believe and keep on believing. Who embrace the Christian Faith and keep on embracing it. We keep on in the life of Faith. We enter into eternity as saved souls.”

You can quickly see that the writer to the Hebrews is a genius. Stating next week we will have that great Chapter 11. The most famous chapter of Hebrews. About the ‘Life of Faith’. He’s going to tell us what true faith is and how it displays itself. Who had it and how it showed itself in their lives. Together with what are the rewards of faith.

Yet this great forthcoming Chapter is preceded by today’s passage. It is men and women who live in faith and die in faith who enter into the promised reward. It’s those who shrink back, who are, without exception, lost.

We must continue to catch this perspective: the destination for the Christian is heaven. Every tear you shed will be wiped out of your eye. Every pain you’ve known will be a thing of the past. Every separation from fellow believers, will be ended because we will be together again. All the dimness of vision regarding the Lord Jesus Christ, that will be just a memory, because we will see Him as He is.

Death which terrifies, through normal human life, is no more to fear. Every fear is gone. There is nothing but perfect holiness. Perfect righteousness. Total Christian fellowship. The experience of being in the dwelling place of the Great God.

Heaven is the outcome of walking the right road. Nothing can keep you from heaven as a professing believer, except your failure to persevere. Nothing can keep you from heaven, except the fact that you have not determined to live this one day well.

“Now,” he says, earlier in the letter, “the way to persevere is to open your mind to God’s Word. And to plead (in prayer) with your High Priest. The way to persevere is by prayer. And to fellowship with Christians.” He’s told us little more than is found in Acts 2:42<sup>8</sup> That’s how Christian progress is made. We know what to do. Will we do it?

[2274]

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<sup>7</sup> (in Christian theology) a state of eternal punishment and damnation into which a sinful and unrepentant person passes after death.

<sup>8</sup> **The Fellowship of the Believers** <sup>42</sup> And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

**May it please God that all present, through Jesus Christ, shall have life through His Name.**

**Delivered Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> January 2019**

*Hebrews 11:1-16*

## **What is Faith and How Does Faith Behave?**

per S Olyott

(review so far)

Last week we saw that a true Christian is a person, who having come to Christ – the way to God. Never finally walks out on Christ.

A Christian may have many falls. He may have many failures, going to bed every single day filled with regrets that he hasn't lived the Christian Life as he should. But the true Christian never finally turns his back on Christ. He may wander – but never finally wanders away. He believes: and keeps believing. He lives in faith and he dies in faith.

Last week then, because he lives in faith and dies in faith he never finally takes his eyes off Jesus Christ. He faithfully arrives in heaven.

But we now face the question: what is faith? What does it really mean: to believe? What is a man of faith like? How would you recognise a woman of faith in the modern world? How can you tell if a teenager really has faith? How does faith display itself? What really is the difference between faith and counterfeit faith?

If we can answer all that, then we can answer the most important question: Do I have faith? Do I have real faith? Do I have faith which will last me throughout my life? Do I have faith which will carry me safely into heaven? Do I have faith that will uphold me in death? Do I have faith that will cause heaven's doors to swing open for me?

Once we can answer the question: what is faith? We can also answer the question: do I have it?

Let us refer, now to this most famous chapter of Hebrews, chapter 11 and we will begin with the first 16 verses, dividing the passage into two:

- Faith Defined – the first 3 verses. They will answer the question: what is faith?
- Faith Illustrated – verses 4 -16. They will answer the question how does faith behave?

Faith Defined, What is Faith?

Faith is a sixth sense. By the use of my five senses I am certain of the reality of this physical world.<sup>9</sup> I can see a flower. Touch it and in the case of a natural rose enjoy its fragrance no matter by what name it is called (apologies to Shakespeare) and then if a breeze is blowing – its leaves rustle. Some are even known who will taste the petals – fresh or dried.

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<sup>9</sup> In some sense of science (albeit bordering on meta-science) the physical world as we perceive it with our 5 senses is more ethereal than we observe. What is a solid? At the atomic level it is more 'space' than matter, and so on.

These are the senses we have by which we are certain – we're sure of the reality of – the physical world around us.

Verse 1: Faith is a sixth sense. Faith is being sure of the unseen. But note: unseen: NOT unknown! Faith is being certain – being sure – of the unseen.

Some things are unseen because they haven't arrived yet. God has promised me certain things, but they are not mine yet. But I am certain that I shall receive them. I'm certain on no other ground than the fact that God has said so.

So – *faith is the assurance of things hoped for.*

But some things are unseen because they are un-seeable. God is invisible. The spiritual world is invisible. But I am convinced of God and of the spiritual world. Ultimately I am convinced in this on no other grounds than the fact that God has said so.

So faith is *the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction (of the evidence) of things not seen.* Faith is believing what God has said. On no other ground, other than the fact that He has said it! So I believe His promises; what He says about His own existence and the reality of the invisible world. I go through life being sure. Being sure: it affects the way I act.

So I always have to take the reality of the invisible world into account when I act. I always have to take into account the truth of God's promises when I act.

So **faith is *the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*** On no other ground than God has said so!<sup>10</sup>

In its essence then a man or woman of faith is one who is totally convinced of the reality of the spiritual on no other grounds than that the fact that God has said so.

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“Now,” says the writer, in verse 2 “in a few moments I'm going to take you on a tour of the 'hall' of faith. Past the tombs of the great men and women of faith in the past. I'll pause at the site of each and explain that each of them had something in common.”

What was the common feature of each that brought the 'smile of God' on their lives?

Faith! <sup>2</sup> *For by it the people of old received their commendation.* Faith. That's how they met with the approval of God. They were men and women of Faith.

Here we are this morning at verse 3: Almost all the inhabitants of this world, believe that this world just happened. Almost all the men and women whom you meet and amongst whom you live, believe that the world either just happened or came from

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<sup>10</sup> “This invisible world,” said AW Tozer, “is more real than the world I can see. You can tell the man of faith, because, the man of unbelief acts as though this lectern is more real than the invisible. Whereas the man of faith acts and behaves as if the unseen – the invisible – is more real than the things he can touch and feel and handle. Because the things that are seen are temporal – they are passing away. The things that are unseen are eternal.

some pre-existent matter. Here we are this morning and we know better!

We know that this world was framed by the 'Word of God'. As was every world (the universe). We know that everything we see and have ever seen was made out of nothing. By an act of almighty power. That governs our whole approach to life. We are 'creatures' living in the world of our Creator. To whom (at the last) we are answerable. That conviction runs through all our thinking; speaking; deciding and doing.

We are totally convinced that we live in a created world and that we are answerable to the Creator. How come we are so sure? So sure that we never doubt it. By faith!

<sup>3</sup>*By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.*

So the Apostle has defined for us: what is faith. So now we are in the position to be able to answer the question; Do I have faith? Do I live confident that what God has promised will be mine. Do I live certain that the invisible world is the real one? Do I take this into account: *the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.* Whatever I act or decide.

So we know what faith is.

Now the Apostle has already told us that only those who live by faith and die in faith come safely to their heavenly reward. Very well dear Apostle: Is this just theory? Have there been any real men and women of faith, who ever walked the world? You've said that the elders – *the people of old* – obtained a commendation from God by faith, but were you just speaking in general terms, can you point to any particular individuals who lived and died in faith? Who in particular did you have in mind?

So we come to verses 4 to 16: here is a list of people who had faith. Faith in the sense that he is defining it.

By reference then to these Old Testament heroes he shows to us how faith behaves. How will faith behave in your life? How does true faith behave?

So far then the first section verses 1-3: Faith Defined – what is faith? Now we come to Faith Illustrated – how those of faith behave (verses 4-16).

The first person he uses to illustrate the behaviour of faith is in verse 4 – Abel.

The invisible God was a reality to Abel! That's why Abel desired to approach Him. God was no more visible to Abel as He is to you. But Abel desired to approach Him. Now Abel knew from instructions – which aren't recorded in the Scriptures, but which were obviously given. He knew from the instructions God had given him, that he could not come to God as he was. He could only come to God in the way that God appointed. Do Christian Churches today know that?

He knew that the way to approach God was the way of blood and sacrifice. Because that was going to typify the coming sacrifice (of Christ). Nobody in the history of the world had ever approached God before. So all Abel had to go on was the bare word of God. He couldn't point to the example of other people. So on the ground of the bare word of God, he approached God in the way that God had appointed. This invisible God who none-the-less was a reality to him.

He was accepted, while Cain – who thought he knew better – ignoring God's instructions, thinking he could make his own way to God, was refused.

Abel proves to you that those who come to God by way of faith are accepted. Those who don't come to God by way of faith, they are turned away. And so through this example Abel still speaks to us although he is dead.<sup>4</sup> *By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks.*

Encouraging isn't it that right at this first 'hour' of the world's history, there was a man of faith.

So we move on a few years now to verses 5 and 6: Now to Enoch. He lived at a time when everybody was intent in pleasing himself. As they are today! In an atmosphere where the current philosophy was – number one counts! To please yourself is what you live for. In that atmosphere the invisible God was a reality to Enoch. While everybody else was trying to please themselves, He was intent on pleasing God.

The invisible God was a reality. So he walked with God. He talked with God. And usually on such occasions they came back to his house. But one day when they walked it ended at God's house. Enoch didn't come back that day! No evidence of death. No body left behind. He leaves a testimony: *Now before he was taken he was commended as having pleased God.*

The invisible God was a reality to him. The invisible world was a reality to Him. So the Apostle in verse 6, says, "If you would please God – that's the way its still got to be. You've got to be certain that God is and you've got to be certain that it is worth walking with Him."

That's what faith is.

It's obvious. Once a person is convinced of the reality of the unseen world on the ground of God's Word, such a person can only have one ambition in life: to please God.

The reason that so many are intent on pleasing men; pleasing their wives; pleasing their husbands; pleasing their children – **first**, is because those things are more real to them than the invisible God. So they are more persuaded of the worth of pleasing their fellow man, than they are persuaded of the worth of pleasing God.

So their faith is not a true faith. They don't have *the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen*. But beware! Nothing else is pleasing to God, because without faith (so defined) it is impossible to please Him.

[1907]

**May it please God that all present, through Jesus Christ, shall have life through His Name.**