



SPECIAL OBSERVANCE SUNDAY

“AN ENDURANCE RACE”

JUNIOR SOLDIER SUNDAY

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WAITING FOR THE DAY [HEBREWS 10:19-25]

The build-up of Christ's sacrificial work, even the entire teaching about his new priesthood and new covenant leads up to the application points in 10:19-25. If you pay special attention to the verbs being used, the author is directing his readers with commands:

- Let us draw near.
- Let us hold fast the confession.
- Let us consider how to “stir up” one another to love and good works.
- Encourage each other.

In verse 25 the author focuses on “the Day” drawing near. This is probably the Day of Christ's return OR the day one enters the presence of God. The author is showing us that this is the way to live daily life, in the expectation of heaven/the Kingdom of God. Christ has made a path, and one day we will go down that path to our destination, the “holy place” of heaven.

In family groups or with friends nearby, identify a way Christians “draw near” to God, “hold fast” their confession of faith, “stir up” another believer for good works, or encourage each other?

Since these are metaphors or illustrations for practical things, let's figure out what it means and what it might look like today.

APOSTASY REVISITED [HEBREWS 10:26-31]

This section appears to be a very harsh passage about sin in the life of the Christian. While it can be a reminder to Christians about the seriousness of sin and not to settle for cheapening grace, it seems that this warning is connected to the concept of apostasy (that means “abandoning the faith”). This was brought up in chapter 6 and the author appears to warn about it again here. His example of someone who “puts aside” the law of Moses implies an individual who has rejected that covenant. This helps us understand what the author may mean by his use of “sinning deliberately.” If it were merely a sin one chooses to commit after coming to faith, we'd all be out of the Kingdom, so it seems he's thinking of something specific. Furthermore, in the Old Testament system, the sacrifices were there because of sin. Most sins did not come along with capital punishment, but abandoning the covenant would have been one of those (See Deuteronomy 13:6-11.) The author is explaining his idea of “sinning deliberately” in terms of covenant abandonment. We don't have to be afraid that a mistake after faith is going to give us the boot out of God's salvation. We didn't earn our salvation by doing good things, and we don't lose our salvation by doing bad things.

While our sin is a grave issue, the warning is again against leaving the faith. Abandoning the faith is presumably what the author means by “trampling underfoot the Son of God” and “profaning the blood of the covenant.” Verses 30-31 are a reminder that there is a judgment coming. We can't forget this as Christians! It's just that for us, Christ has purified us and cleansed us from our sins. His grace is not ignorant of justice or judgment. Grace made a way for us to be found innocent in His sight. The author is essentially saying that if we give up that grace we give up the way Christ made for us; we give up the cleansing He worked in us. When this happens,



then all that's left is the judgment without the cleansing of His grace. Earlier I said we don't lose our salvation by doing bad things. It can be lost however, by giving up our trust and belief in God. This can come about through giving into sins over and over and over. As Christians, we need to be careful that we don't let sins go on uncontrolled in our lives. If we do, we risk becoming numb to sin. Before you know it, your sins will have you questioning what you believe and that is how sins can lead you to give up what you believe!

In groups again, identify 2-3 ways that the warning of apostasy relates to the commands in verses 19-25:

- Let us draw near.
- Let us hold fast the confession.
- Let us consider how to "stir up" one another to love and good works.
- Encourage each other.

The connection is in how the plural terms are used here. We help each other stick to what we believe!

Note for Youth: For the young people here and for the junior soldiers also – there are different points in life when your faith becomes more of your own choice. The junior soldiers who made their promise today were taking a new step towards making their faith their own. It won't always be your parents bringing you to church. Later in life other things may influence you to this or that. When it comes to what we believe, we need to know what the Bible says to us about Jesus. Then we need to live like Jesus lived. As you grow up, keep an eye out for those moments when you can step up to take ownership of what you believe. It might look like reading the Bible for yourself. Starting your own morning devotions. It might look like a new commitment to memorize Scripture. Or maybe you want to step up and assist with a program like Junior Church. Taking ownership of what you believe means you are seeking to be like Jesus because you want to be like Him, not because anyone else told you to. I'll tell you today, His way of life is not always easy to me, but His peace and life is the very best thing you could hope for as you grow up.

THE TESTIMONY OF ENDURANCE [HEBREWS 10:32-39]

Now, if you read down in verse 32, you'll see that it's a contrast to verse 26. The phrasing is different, but the meaning is the same. In verse 26 the author describes coming to faith as "receiving knowledge of the truth," and in verse 32 he describes it as being "enlightened." For the author's audience, he reminds them of their endurance. Not only does he remind them, he commands them to bring to mind again their endurance in what they believed.

The author reminds of them of a time when several bad things happened:

- They were publicly exposed to reproach and affliction.
- They were sometimes partners with those who endured these things also.
- They had their property plundered.

It seems that in the end of verse 34, their knowledge of the "better possession" goes along with the idea of their property being plundered. But it may be that their overall knowledge of what was coming in the Kingdom of God was what helped them persist in the way of Jesus. That is what verses 35-36 speak about.

Because they had endured, the author teaches them not to throw away their confidence. The reward is coming. This is not a prosperity message though. The reward and the "promise" spoken of in the passage is almost certainly the heavenly, Kingdom reward. But this also doesn't mean the reward is only for some time far off. Since the Kingdom of God is in our midst, it's fitting that the blessings of Kingdom life are, in some ways,

present with us in the here and now. Ephesians 1:3 speaks about God blessing us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

APPLICATION

The application of Hebrew 10:19-39 is in line with much of the rest of the book, but it expands a few concepts as well.

- Holding to the faith happens when we hold together. The encouragements in 10:19-25 speak about “us” drawing near, holding fast, and stirring each other up. Don’t try to go it alone. Don’t let others try to go it alone. Hold fast to Christ and put someone else’s hand on Christ while you’re at it too.
- Today we noted the special celebration of our junior soldiers. This is a commitment to follow the Lord. As the church body, it’s our responsibility to help these young people to stick to the Lord and to grow up in His Word. How can you get to know the youth of the corps? And how can you help them in the difficulties of life?
- Reflect on your past and what God has brought you through. The Psalms and the history of Israel are full of reminders about what God had done for His people. It was a regular part of worship. When we reflect on our endurance in the faith, it reminds us and motivates us to continue in faithfulness to the Lord. As Christians, we can have a spiritual sense of where we’ve been and what God has done, and where we’re going and the Kingdom that’s coming. These two visions give us strength for what’s in front of us. This is what frames our life: the faithfulness of God and the coming promise. Because of these things, let’s live faithfully today.

