

Group Study Outline

LAUNCHING

Imagine someone said to you one Sunday, "I hate this heavy theology. All that stuff about priests and temples in Hebrews makes no difference to my life."

How would you respond? *(This section finally gets to the "so what" stuff!)*

QUESTIONS

What is the basis for all the things we're told to do in this section? (19-21)

What are the three things we're told to do, aka the 3 "let us"s?

Let us draw near

What does it mean to draw near to God?

How is it possible?

What should be the state of our heart as we do this? (22)

Practically speaking, when in our day-to-day life do we "draw near" to God?

In what ways are we tempted to neglect this?

How can this help us to keep doing it?

Let us hold fast

What are we meant to "hold fast" onto?

What reason is there for holding fast "without wavering"? (23b)

How does that help us not to waver?

Looking ahead to 32-34, where can we see examples of "not wavering"?

What might "wavering" look like? How would that play out in *our* lives?

How were they able to keep going? (34b) Does that encourage *us*?

Let us... stir up

How should we relate to one another?

What are we wanting to see in each other's lives, what are we "stirring" for?

What might be our temptation? (25) Why is that tempting sometimes?

Instead of neglecting it, what should we do? And why?

How might we summarise what these 3 "let us"s are telling us to do?

What are we told will happen if we don't do these things?

What does it mean to "go on sinning deliberately"?

Is it the Christian who sometimes sins? Or something more? Why?

How do the three things in 29 (spurning, profaning, outraging...) explain it?

What's the surprising contrast between the old and new covenants in 28-29?

How does that make you feel? Is 31 something you're aware of personally?

Their track record of faith in 32-34 gives the writer confidence that this terrible judgement won't happen to them (39). So why warn us about it?

How does this fear actually help us draw near rather than run away?!

CONCLUSION / APPLICATION

What are the two types of people in 39? Which type are we?

In our lives, where are we experiencing the "need of endurance"? (36)

24 says to "consider how to stir one another up..." What could others in the group do which you would find an encouragement to keep believing each day?

How could you stir others up as part of your regular routine?

Hebrews 10:19-39



Theme of Hebrews

Hebrews is written because of an urgent problem: the readers are on the verge of apostasy. Apostasy is the opposite of conversion; it is 'falling away from' or 'throwing away' Christ (3:12; 4:11; 5:6; 10:35). That is the 'sin' in Hebrews, and the 'temptation' they face is 'drift' (2:1). But their drifting is surprisingly not into irreligion, but back into the Jewish faith from which they had converted.

The main argument (to warn them against this drift) is that in Jesus God has spoken his **final word** (chs 1-4) and completed a **finished work** (chs 5-9/10): why go back to the 'shadow' (cf 10:1)? All of *Hebrews*' dense theology is included to serve the main application of this 'word of exhortation' (13:22).

Theme Sentence for 10:19-39

Because of all Jesus our High Priest has done, keep coming to God in faith, even when times are hard, and encourage others to do the same.

How this passage fits in

Since the readers were tempted back into Judaism and religion, the writer of Hebrews has spent a few chapters since 4:14 explaining how Jesus has replaced the old system of tabernacles, temples, priests and sacrifices. His blood shed on the cross is enough to deal with our sin, clean up our consciences and bring us to God. Job done.

Our passage picks up on those arguments and drives home their application: keep on believing. Jesus has brought us near, so draw near! It's all been completely finished to give us a sure hope (6:19), so hold fast to that hope! And since those things are true yet we're tempted to leave them behind, urge each other to stick with it to the end!

The required response from us is ongoing faith (10:38). Chapter 11 spells out what faith looks like in order to urge us to imitate those great Old Testament believers. The idea of drawing near and having faith in the midst of troubles is underlined in 10:32-34, and this will become a recurring theme in chapter 11. 12:4 might imply that there is worse persecution on the way. They need endurance now (10:35) to make it to the end.

Application

- keep on drawing near to God, because Jesus has made it possible
- keep on having faith, even when it's hard
- keep on helping one another to keep going
 - Give plenty of time to "consider how" this will work in your group.
- all the above are just saying: be a believer today!

Commentary

- 19-21 Starting off with "Therefore" shows we're entering a new section of Hebrews. We are starting to apply the truths we've seen so far. These opening 3 verses are a good recap of 4:14-10:18, dealing with the temple and the priests. The summary is that because of Jesus shedding His blood for us, we have access into the true Holy Place in heaven where Jesus is now interceding for us as our High Priest. It's on the basis of these truths that we do what comes next...
- 22 There are 3 applications of the temple/priestly truths we've learnt, each beginning with, "Let us..." The first application is to draw near to God because we can! As we've seen before, drawing near is something priests did and Jesus has done for us so we can now do ourselves. It's no longer physically going to a place (like the temple) but it is a posture of the heart. In faith we 'come towards' God, speaking to Him in prayer and singing, listening to Him as we trust what He says in His Word, and living life in the awareness that we are in right relationship to Him. As the passage goes on, the opposite of drawing near appears to be "shrinking back", which this section illustrates as returning to sin and religion rather than having faith. We are told to make the most of the access to God which Jesus has made possible. We do this confidently "in full assurance of faith" as those who have been made clean before God.
- 23 The next "let us" is a call to keep having faith in God, to "hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering." The rest of the passage implies that times have been tough for these Christians in the past and that this might cause them to stop fully believing or living out their faith by slipping back into Judaism or into sin. We can keep confessing our faith in Christ without wavering because God's character is faithful and trustworthy.
- 24-25 The final "let us" reminds us of our need to help one another to keep going in this. Just as 3:13 told us to "exhort one another every day", so we need to think about how we could best stir each other up to love and good works. One temptation will be to stop meeting up with other Christians, either through apathy or for fear of persecution. As 36 says, Jesus is coming back soon, so as that final destination gets closer ("the Day drawing near") keep encouraging one another to believe.
- All three of these "let us" applications are really getting at the same thing: keep being a believer today, and make sure others are too.
- 26-27 The reason given for keeping on drawing near, holding fast our confession and stirring each other up is because of what happens if we stop. To "go on sinning deliberately" is more than just to slip up and sin after we become Christians; we know our high priest Jesus has dealt with the punishment for our sins past, present and future. This is talking about a more decisive break away from Christ. It is to stop drawing near to God through Jesus and to stop holding onto the confession of our hope. If we've turned away from Jesus our high

priest and sacrifice, we have no-one to stand between us and the furious judgement of God.

- 28-31 There have been many comparisons so far between the old and new covenants, all showing how much better the new system with Jesus is. It's a natural corollary of this that the penalty for abandoning the new covenant is worse. But it still sounds shocking!
- The description of "going on sinning deliberately" in these verses shows how serious it is. It is to "spurn" or reject Jesus. It is to "profane" or defile Jesus' blood – another translation of this could be treat Jesus' blood as having been defiled, so it's dirty and you don't want anything to do with it. It is to "outrage the Spirit of grace" – a phrase worth pondering. Yes, the Lord is gracious, but He is furious when His mercy is thrown back in His face. We need to keep drawing near to God, because it is a terrifying thing to be on the wrong side of Him.
- 32-34 Here the readers are reminded of how it was when they first became Christians; it was really hard! But they boldly stuck with Jesus without wavering. They were persecuted, seemingly through some kind of official opposition (since some were in jail), as well as verbal "reproach" from people, and mob violence. Their property was "plundered" and yet they could rejoice because of the hope they had. In Christ they had better and lasting property so could hold onto their stuff now with a loose grip, being happy to lose it for the sake of Jesus. This kind of faith in God for a better and lasting hope will be expanded in chapter 11.
- See also connections to the command from 24 to keep stirring each other up. Back in those trials they "partnered" with the suffering rather than leaving them alone. To visit people in prison for being Christians was putting yourself at risk of being arrested too in case they suspected that you were a Christian as well. But, regardless, they stuck together.
- 35-36 In view of their good track record, they are urged not to give up now. This is similar to the reminder in chapter 4 not to just set out for the Promised Land, but to make it all the way there! It will be worth it. A bit of endurance and they will receive those better and lasting possessions, the fulfilment of God's promises.
- 37-38 It's the coming of Jesus ("the Day", 25) which they are waiting for and it won't be long. As such, they should have faith. The opposite of living by faith is to "shrink back"; to stop meeting with other Christians (25) and ultimately to withdraw from God Himself by stopping believing. The one who shrinks back rather than draws near faces God's displeasure.
- 39 However, the writer is sure of better things for them (cf 6:9). They are "draw-near-ers" rather than "shrink-back-ers". And so they'll be saved rather than destroyed. Despite all the warnings and urgings, this is aimed at the real Christian believer, calling them to keep on believing today, and every day, until *the* Day. We all need to hear these calls to draw near in faith because Jesus has made access to God possible.