

Hebrews Lesson 3 Notes

Hold Fast and Apply It

God never proposed that He or His people could find satisfaction in shadows of the good things that were coming. Instead, the requirement of animal sacrifices offered grace to God's covenant people when they sinned. The ceremonial rituals performed in faith made it possible for sinners to remain in community with God and one another. Their faith in God's promises motivated their obedience to these rituals. God, who looks at the heart, approved of their actions. This exchange worked to cover over the sin until it was effectively and forever dealt with on the cross.

Christ's superior new covenant guarantees life's true purpose is fully realized by all believers. In real time and history, Jesus Christ reveals that God's promises are dependable to matter what conditions are at work in our lives. He is the way to increasingly know and glorify God forever. Now, God's good and pure laws dwell inside us through the Holy Spirit. His desires become our own.

Our identities, experiences and relationships as God's children will be enjoyed forever. God's faithfulness to His promises brings the greatest satisfaction, unity and peace that human beings can experience. His character, words and will are trustworthy. The new covenant includes and extends ancient promises to Adam and Eve, Noah, the patriarchs and David. This is a superior covenant, indeed!

Extreme danger exists for those who abandon their profession of faith in Christ. Those who start out in obedience, then deny Christ's power and authority – thus calling into question the sincerity of their profession – are the subjects of these warnings. All believers will suffer when they deny self to obey God's Word. Identifying as God's family is costly in every generation and society. Trying to escape suffering by rejecting the One who gives eternal life is folly. God's Word lovingly warns such believers to repent and cling to God's faithfulness. When many of Jesus' followers turned back over His teaching about the new covenant sacrament, He asked His 12 disciples if they also wanted to leave Him. Peter's words are the right response for every believer facing doubt and difficulty today, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God."

Jesus has opened up a "new and living way" into the presence of God. Tabernacle imagery shows how Christ's sacrifice removed the veil that separated the Most Holy Place from the rest of the tabernacle. In fact, the literal veil was miraculously torn down when Christ was crucified. What is the conclusion? Everyone must leave lesser ceremonies or patterns of religion, spiritual practice, or self-confidence. We must place full faith in Jesus Christ. Have you fully embraced Him as superior to every person or other way? Refusing to draw near insults Christ and His completed work. Are you withholding any part of your life from full worship of God? Will you draw near, even nearer to God today?

If you have placed your trust in Jesus, you have the amazing joy of living in God's presence and peace. Your conscience is cleansed; your hope is secure forever. Your life is part of His purpose. You are part of an eternal family devoted to God, one another and His genuine good purpose in the world. You have every reason to stand strong and firm! Will you hold fast to Him? How might you use personal experiences of God's faithfulness in your former doubts and difficulties to encourage and minister to others?

The co-heirs of God's kingdom need one another to flourish. How else can we faithfully worship or love and serve one another? Some Christians give up on taking part in a church congregation. They did so when Hebrews was written and now. However, God's pattern for the Church is the body of Christ. We are called into unity and fellowship. Bible study and Christian friendships are excellent activities, but how fully have you submitted to the purposes, responsibilities and privileges of church membership? How can you best take action to follow God's Word by "encouraging one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching"?

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