

COMMITTED: Convictional Decisions for the New Year: Part 2
Hebrews 10:19-26

“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith...”

Introduction: A running joke every new year is how long it takes someone to quit the resolution they made at the turn of the calendar. People that spend time and money on things like this (and if it's on the internet, it must be true!) have concluded that only 9% of people that make resolutions complete them, nearly a quarter end it by the end of the week, and almost half by the end of January. Be it losing weight, getting back to the gym, or for believer's, reading their Bible through in a year. ***What separates a successful resolution from a leaving it by the wayside, dealing with the short term taste of failure and guilt?*** I believe the foundational difference has to do with **commitment** – a convictional decision that leads to discipline, choice, and ultimately, results.

We started last week with the premise that we are called to both ***making and maturing disciples***. A disciple is one who has come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, where they recognize their own sin compared to the holiness of God, acknowledge or confess that sin, asking for forgiveness, turning from their selfish life and recognizing that Jesus is now Lord, and living life to the **glory of God by seeking to please Him in every way**. A disciple is by definition a *learner*, and after being forgiven and reconciled to God, we embark on a life of maturity, becoming more and more like Jesus, deepening our love and trust in Him as we revel in the joy that comes from Christ alone. This kind of maturity demands **commitment**. Hoping to see new physical results in life while maintaining the same choices as last year is either ignorant or deceptively foolish. But either way, there will be no change. The same goes for everyone that claims to know Christ as their Lord and Savior: a lack of commitment will leave you joyless at best and perhaps reveals that you are not Christ's child at worst. A true believer WILL be committed to what Christ has called them to, since Christ said “Follow me”, and leads us down a path of self-denial, cross bearing, losing our life in this world, replaced with the joyful hope of Christ (see Luke 9:23-24; John 15:11).

Next week we will look at some *practical commitments* we make together, with each other, in the church. But those commitments come OUT OF foundational realities of God's commitment to us. Without understanding these, talking about practices in the church are a vain exercise. Maturing disciples WILL have distinctive commitments AND the ability to do them. So let's look at those this morning.

Commitments of the Godhead in the Gospel

Forgiveness is one of the sweetest, unexpected, and counterintuitive realities that is offered by God to mankind. In the book of Hebrews, the argument builds and is laid out that **Jesus is better:** Jesus Christ ***“offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins...sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.”*** (Heb. 10:12-13) His sacrifice, once for all, was sufficient, accepted by the Father, to **pay for** the sins of those who believe. How did He do that? He gave new hearts to those who believe – *“I will put my law on their hearts and write them on their hands”* – which was exactly what Jer. 31:33 said and Ezekiel 36:26 prophesied about moving us from a heart of stone to a heart of flesh. But then he goes further: ***I will remember their sins and their lawlessness no more”***. *Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin”*

This forgiveness: 1) **Is complete** – Christ has died for all our sin, past, present, and future, and sacrifices no longer have to be made for each sin committed since Christ’s singular one paid for them all 2) **Is REMEMBERED no more** – God cannot forget, just like we cannot, but “remembering no more” is proactive, a choice and decision to do away with it, as far as the east is from the west (Ps. 103:12). Practically, this means we do not and cannot pay for our own sins but rest completely on the work of Jesus alone, and gives us the means by which we can forgive one another, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave us (Eph. 4:32). This sets the table for the text we’ll consider:

Commitments of Christ as Messiah and Priest

*Therefore, brothers, **since we have confidence** to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, 20 by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, 21 and **since we have a great priest over the house of God***
Hebrews 10:19-21

Look in your Bibles and we want to point out a couple of points from the passage. 1) Notice the progression of thought, from **faith** in vv. 19-22, **hope** in verse 23, and **love** in vv. 24-25. The first two directed toward God and the last on each other. This means that we must have clarity about the first two to be able to play out the third, meaning a robust faith and hope in the gospel is the only way to play out a loving reality to others in the church. 2) Notice **two “since’s”** in vv. 19-21, which talk about clear realities, which lead to **three “let us’s”**. The realities lead to action, so understanding the realities SHOULD shape the actions. So let’s start with these realities:

- **Boldness in our newfound access to God**

No Jewish person living during the time of Jesus would have confidence or boldness in entering the holy of holies in the Temple, the place of God’s presence. In fact, only once a year would the High Priest enter behind the curtain, but he would do so only after making sure he had made specific sacrifices and atoning for his own sin before seeking to do so for all the people. The curtain that divided the people from the presence of God was both **protective** – since no man could see God and live (Ex. 33:20) – but also **vivid** – it reminded the people that their sin had cut them off from access. A verse like *“Let us then with confidence (boldness) draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace in our time of need”* (Heb. 4:16) would have been foreign and unthinkable to the Jewish mind. So Christ offered something revolutionary, distinct, and glorious.

That way was through His blood. As Jesus gave up His last breath on the cross, the “curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom” (Matt. 27:51), vividly declaring that there was a new way to the Father other than the sacrifices of animals. It says that this was a **new and living way**. The word “new” here is unique, and only used in this passage. It means **fresh**. *“It expresses the incorruptible freshness of the new revelation, so that the abandoned rites and ceremonies seem like dead works in comparison with the service of the living God. The new way no longer leads through the old offerings, i.e. through the veil of the Temple. It is thorough the event of redemption in the person and death of Jesus, through his flesh.”*¹ One time sacrifice that never gets old and always accomplishes what it set out to do: pay the price of redemption and satisfy the stored up wrath of God. Here the author also points out that the curtain was by comparison Jesus’ flesh, so that once Jesus’ body was broken, the veil had to be. Jesus had to die to be able to offer forgiveness, which allowed us access to God that we have **confidently and boldly**.

¹ TDNT, volume 7, p. 136.

Sometimes we frame the gospel differently than this. We think of it in terms of getting away from sin and punishment, and maybe even the opportunity to be obedient and holy. But that is only part of it. The purpose of salvation was to **reconcile us to the Father in a pure and new relationship with Him**. He gives us access because HE WANTS us there. There is a picture from October, 1963 that captures this idea of access to our Father, and it comes from a time when the US Presidency was held in high regard and the Oval office a place to be revered. A *LOOK* magazine photographer captured a photo of JFK jr. playing under the Resolute desk while his father tried to conduct business. It is a picture of power and intimacy, of political might and family care. This is how we gain access to God as His kids. This is the confidence that only a child would have, to burrow in and enjoy the security of a relationship built on faith.

- **Boldness in our Great Priest**

But notice that is not all. Jesus' death gave us access, but He also is our Great Priest, who *"sympathizes with our weakness, who was tempted in every way yet without sin"* (Heb. 4:15). Jesus as our Priest did not merely **show** us the way to God, or even just **provide** the way to Him, He **takes us with Him to God and ministers for us in heaven**. The one who was raised from the dead and seated at the right hand of God, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and above every name (Eph. 1:20-21), is the one who makes us alive and raised us up with him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places (Eph. 2:5-6). Not only do we have access, but the one who brings us with Him into the presence of God.

We travelled to the White House on Grace Schools HST trip a few years ago, and I got about a 5 iron away from the doors. I'm told that now they are granting access to a few rooms there, but no one can simply traipse into the Oval Office unannounced. It would be like someone coming down to the crowd, grabbing you out, walking you past all security and formality, and walking you in to the chief place of prominence. Jesus brings us to the Father, where He advocates for us (1 John 2:2), intercedes for us (Heb. 7:25), and gives us grace in our time of need (Heb. 4:16).

Commitments of Faith in Response

*"Let us **draw near** with a true heart **in full assurance of faith**, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water" (10:22)*

Having FULL ASSURANCE in any relationship requires both faith and faithfulness. The first trusts that when we draw near, we will not be rejected, and the second that the one receiving desires to be pursued. In our relationship with God, both are true. God amazingly calls us to **draw near** to Him, a relationship that was once cut off, and to do so with FULL ASSURANCE, a confidence that is not prideful but highly dependent.

My dad was always my principal in every year of my first 13 years of education. It created an interesting relationship on campus, requiring him to wear multiple hats and switch them throughout the day (dad, principal, teacher, authority, etc.). But what it created for me was a sense of assurance that if needed, I could approach him at any point of the day and he would welcome me as DAD. He would drop whatever else he was doing and focus on whatever I needed (even when in my youth I would take advantage of it at times).

Why is this so important that God calls us to do this as a result of His gift of salvation? Because Jesus came to this earth so that we would enjoy the effects of this access in **John 15:9-11**:

*“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. **Abide in my love.** 10 If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. 11 These things I have spoken to you, **that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full**”*

This was the playing out the promise that Danny preached on a few weeks ago from Psalm 16:11:

*“You make known to me the path of life; **in your presence is the fullness of joy, at your right hand are pleasures forever**”*

When we enter, fully assured, into the presence of God through Christ, we experience the fullness of joy and pleasure, which means we can stop trying to pursue those things elsewhere, outside of Christ, which only lead to misery. When we are satisfied in Him, we can take everything else by His grace and live selflessly, knowing that this relationship will never change. *Far too many professed Christians never experience joy and pleasures in God so are left with a Christianity of nominal obedience, pithy commitments, and half-hearted engagement.* This leaves two final caveats to this **drawing near**:

- 1) **It requires the commitment of a genuine heart** – God does not delight in nor want half-hearted anything. In fact, it is a continual indictment of OT Israel, where they refused to return to God with a whole heart, but tried to deceive instead (Jer. 3:10). Since He requires obedience from a full heart (Rom. 6:17), He also promises to give us NEW HEARTS as new creations (2 Cor. 5:17). Since salvation IS a New Birth, what God demands from us is COMMITMENT FROM A GENUINE OR TRUE HEART. Again, is this how you approach your relationship with God in Christ each day, to enjoy entering His presence in prayer guided in the Word by His Spirit because He has invited us in to know Him? If this is not our desire in salvation, all the other things we’ll talk about from fellowship, discipleship, outreach, etc. will not truly matter or be effective.
- 2) **It comes out of a clean and washed conscience** – How do we do that? God has cleaned our hearts from guilt and shame, the effects of an evil conscience, so that we can don’t have to approach him like we too often approach each other, holding back the last 10% of who we really are, thinking that if someone knew **that** about us or our past, they would judge us or run away in horror! No, God has cleaned us completely. He also gives us the cleansing of the Word (Eph. 5:26; Titus 3:5) so that we can walk in active obedience, guided and directed from His complete Word that is sharper than any two-edged sword (Heb. 4:12).

Commitment to Hold Fast

*“Let us **hold fast** the confession of **our hope** without wavering, for He who promised is faithful” (v. 23)*

Hope is both life-giving and dangerous. A hope of something better in the future can motivate in the present, gaining perspective and offering the impetus to continue moving forward, regardless of circumstances. But hope for a prisoner without opportunity for parole can be dangerous and lead one to insanity. Hope must be placed in the proper source to be effective.

When we say **“hope”** as a Christian, we are banking on the fact that we have a God who keeps His promises and ALWAYS does what He says. That is why the author of Hebrews built the argument for **hope** out of the realities of the faithfulness of Jesus Christ as our High Priest and faithful Savior. Hope in something that cannot deliver would be insane, and promises made by someone who cannot actually

deliver only contribute to the insanity. In a time where politicians promise the moon and cannot deliver the simplest of directives, we look to our Savior who is both Faithful and True.

Because God can be trusted, we are called **to HOLD FAST**. This is our responsibility of faithful obedience in light of God's work. Just like Philippians 2:12-13 calls us to *work out our salvation*, the salvation that God has willed to work in us, so we hold fast to the promises that we are SURE God will deliver. Here is how the rest of **Hebrews** describes it:

3:5-6 - *Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, **6 but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house, if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope***

4:14 - *Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, **let us hold fast our confession***

6: 18-19 - *so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement **to hold fast to the hope** set before us. 19 We have this as a **sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain***

We hold fast to our confession, which means the **security we have in our salvation** through Jesus Christ. Salvation granted to us will never be taken away since He will hold me fast, and no one can separate us from His love (Rom. 8:38-39), can take us out of Christ's hand (John 10:28) or the Father's hand (John 10:29). **Philippians 1:6** says, "*And I am sure (convinced, persuaded), of this, that he who began a good work in you WILL bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*"

Why is this so important to our commitments to both the Lord and each other?

It gives us a grid to see all of life through. David wrote about the assurance of hope he had in spite or in light of his struggles: "***I cry out to God Most High, to God who fulfills His purpose in me***" (Ps. 57:2; 138:8). Life for David was not about *finding purpose* but rather in resting in the God who was fulfilling His intentions and purposes in David. David could face times of circumstantial struggle out of his control or consequential pain brought about by his sinful choices and know that God was still working out all that he wanted for David.

Hope should drive us. Security in our salvation does not elicit pride or license to sin, but should bring out a courageous boldness to proclaim Christ, a dedicated commitment to serve sacrificially, and joyful willingness to die to self. I'm finishing up a book called "*Survival and Resistance in Evangelical America*" which takes a look at a movement of Christians in the Pacific Northwest that believe in Christian reconstruction of the government, believing that government will one day be ruled by the OT law, and Christians responsibility is to show a better way. This takes resistance to government now and surviving the inevitable collapse of the current system. Now, I disagree (vehemently) in their conclusions and goals, but what is clear: *they are driven by hope that this is what God has for them and that He will actually do. They have given up everything to pursue what they believe to be true, and though I believe they are off, the hopeful pursuit is admirable.*

What are we holding fast to? NOT that this world will somehow right itself or that the government will come around. We bank on the fact that on the other side of our faith in Jesus, He has secured our soul to be with Him forever (1 Pet. 1:3-5) by the power of His blood and sacrifice. Does this mean we simply

check out and not care about life today or simply engage in a holy huddle? By no means. In fact, it gives us the confidence that He WILL deliver a kingdom one day, will rule forever, and we will be with Him. That gives us the motivation to not only keep going, but move forward **boldly and confidently into the future.**

Concluding Implications:

- **The call of faith is one of complete commitment, in faith, to draw near with full assurance to God.**
- **The mission of the church is to make and mature disciples**
- **Because we have been cleansed from the inside out, and because our guilt and shame has been dealt with, we can approach each other in love in full, not fearing judgment or rejection.**
- **We HOLD FAST, confidently, knowing that He who began this work in us will complete it.**

Have you tasted salvation this way, or has it been a series of nominal decisions and activities? Today, God has provided salvation to you, by faith, through the finished work of Jesus Christ, who lived perfectly and died completely, so that His blood shed would be counted to us, making full payment for our sin. Today, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, repent or turn from your sin, ask for forgiveness, and draw near with full assurance to the Father. This is the only pathway to the full joy and assurance we crave, and is exactly what God desires for us out of His great love.