

**Text: Heb 10.22**

Today we move to the three key applications of the book of Hebrews. They come to us in the form of “let us” statements, or exhortations.

I’ll give us the grammar lesson right away, so we can get that over with.

One commentary refers to these statements as “commands,” but they don’t come to us in the imperative mood. An imperative is authoritative and demanding.

- Pick up that ball
- Take out the trash
- Be home by 10 pm

Commands have an implied “you” at the start ... “(you) pick up that ball”

Commands are different from requests. (indicative mood, asking a question)

- Could you pick up that ball
- Could you take out the trash
- Could you be home by 10 pm

Our verbs here are in the *subjunctive mood*, not the imperative or indicative.

- Let us pick up that ball
- Let us take out the trash
- Let us be home by 10 pm

David Allen says these “commands” (exhortations) “are one step removed from a direct imperative.”<sup>1</sup>

There is force to them, but the force is more winsome and inclusive, “Let’s you and me do this...”

The exhortations rest on the foundation for application we talked about last week:

- Since we have confident access to the holies by the work of Christ
- Since we have such a high priest as Jesus (the person of Christ)

Let us then make these choices in our life...

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<sup>1</sup> David Allen, *Hebrews*, The New American Commentary 35 (Nashville, Tenn: B & H Publ. Group, 2010), 514 n. 29.

Let's read our passage (hortatory subjunctive) and we will see the three exhortations laid out.

Read Heb 10.19-25

This is a key passage for the message of Hebrews. Verses 19-21 sum up the message of Hebrews: the person and work of Christ give us access to God.

Therefore, let us...

1. Let us draw near (22)
2. Let us hold fast (23)
3. Let us consider one another (24-25)

Now, of course, there is too much here to think about for me to do it all in one message. Today it is,

### Let Us Draw Near

**Proposition:** The first application of Hebrews is for you to develop a deep personal relationship with your God.

## I. The natural life of the redeemed soul (having hearts sprinkled, bodies washed)

We will work our way backward through the verse because the force of the verse is in its exhortation.

### A. Two perfect tense participles close the verse

1. Past action, continuing effect
  - a. Having our hearts sprinkled
  - b. Having our bodies washed
2. At some past point, an action produced a continuing effect in the spiritual life

### B. The sprinkled heart

1. The phrase recalls Heb 9.13-14

Heb 9.13-14 For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh,<sup>14</sup> how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

2. The ashes of the heifer refers to the offering of the red heifer, mentioned in Numbers 19
  - a. Unblemished red heifer, never under the yoke, slaughtered outside the camp
  - b. Priest to take the blood, sprinkle seven times in front of tabernacle
  - c. The carcass to be completely burned, along with hyssop and a scarlet thread, in a cedar wood fire
  - d. Ashes collected, kept outside the camp

“Anyone who contracted ceremonial defilement through touching or approaching a dead body was to be cleansed by being sprinkled with water containing some of the ashes of the heifer.”<sup>2</sup>

3. The believer has a better sprinkling in Christ, cleansing our conscience (both Heb 9 and here)
  - a. The sprinkled heart is a past event
  - b. The continuing cleansed conscience is the Christian’s reality

Spiritually, believers are considered *clean* by God because they are in Christ.

## C. The washed body

1. Surprising controversy over this phrase
  - a. The most natural understanding is as a reference to baptism
  - b. Yet John Calvin (and some others) make it a parallel reference to the sprinkling, connecting it to the cleansing of the Holy Spirit

Surprisingly, one of my Baptist commentaries agrees with Calvin here!

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<sup>2</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Rev. ed., The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 214–15.

## 2. Yet repeatedly commentaries affirm this is a reference to water baptism

“the present reality which he has in mind is most probably Christian baptism”<sup>3</sup>

“The reference in v 22b is almost certainly to Christian baptism, which replaces all previous cleansing rites...”<sup>4</sup>

Lane cites Windisch, Moffatt, Kuss, Spicq, F. F. Bruce [above], Strathmann, Dahl, and Pelser on this.

Many of these names are not Baptists — one would think any Baptist would not miss this one!

## 3. Baptism is the assumed state of a believer in the NT

- a. In the book of Acts, we see new believers baptized right away
- b. Later, as the church matured, baptismal classes put some distance between profession and baptism
  - 1) Perhaps to guard against a superficial understanding and a weak profession
  - 2) We require our little children to wait until they can express clear understanding of salvation and baptism
- c. Nevertheless, the NT doesn't really know of an unbaptized Christian

If you are a believer, and have not been baptized, you need to be!

## 4. Note the difference between sprinkled and washed

- a. The heart is sprinkled by the blood of Christ
- b. The body is washed with the pure water of baptism

Washing is not sprinkling!

<sup>3</sup> Bruce, 255.

<sup>4</sup> William L. Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, vol. 47B, Word Biblical Commentary (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1991), 287.

5. Note the unity of sprinkling and washing: the fulness of a Christian testimony
  - a. The two go together, a baptism without a sprinkled heart is not a baptism
  - b. Both are part of the natural life of the Christian, called by our exhortation

## II. The open life of the devoted soul (sincere hearts in full assurance)

The middle phrases refer to the way we respond to the exhortation.

### A. With a sincere heart

1. The word here is ἀληθινῆς, “genuine” (vocab card definition)
  - a. The lexicons give this sense
    - 1) “pert. to being in accord with what is true, *true, trustworthy*”<sup>5</sup>
    - 2) “pertaining to being what something should be”<sup>6</sup>
  - b. Not sincere as in earnest, but sincere as in real
2. Confusion about sincerity

Westcott: “a heart which fulfils the ideal office of the heart, the seat of the individual character, towards God”<sup>7</sup>

- a. The exhortation urges us to approach God: “let us draw near”
- b. Sincerity isn’t the basis of the response; it is the form of the response (“with a sincere heart”)
- c. Consequently, I take it to mean with an open heart, with a genuine desire, with an open face to God

The next phrase bears this out

<sup>5</sup> Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

<sup>6</sup> Johannes E. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 674.

<sup>7</sup> Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 3rd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1903), 324.

## B. In full assurance of faith

1. This phrase is parallel to “with a sincere heart”
  - a. Bauer: “state of complete certainty, *full assurance, certainty*”<sup>8</sup>
  - b. Danker: “‘state or condition of nothing lacking’, fullness”<sup>9</sup>
2. The idea is this, fully trust the sprinkling and the baptism
  - a. The sprinkling and the baptism are the basis for responding
  - b. The sincerity and faith are the way you respond: no shrinking back

We’ve talked before about the great privilege of access to the holy of holies if you are a believer: you can enter the very presence of God.

Here we find the way we walk into the sanctuary — not in shame, but sincerely and boldly

- When I was a boy, I was a bit timid when we would walk into restaurants. My dad noticed, and said to me, “Walk in like you own the place.”

We don’t own the sanctuary but we have every right to enter

## III. The corporate life of the worshiping soul (let us draw near)

### A. The object of drawing near is understood: draw near to God

1. The wording recalls the OT priests approaching God
2. The NT application refers to our own personal devotion

“This first admonition refers to personal devotion to God. Because Christ’s self-sacrifice has made full atonement for the sins of His people (v. 19), we can and should draw near to God.”<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Bauer, *BDAG*.

<sup>9</sup> Frederick William Danker and Kathryn Krug, *The Concise Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 2009).

<sup>10</sup> Tom Constable, *Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Heb 10.21.

## B. It is natural (and biblical) to think of drawing near in prayer

Heb 4.16 Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Heb 7.25 Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

Heb 11.6 And without faith it is impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and *that* He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

Heb 12.18 ¶ For you have not come to *a mountain* that can be touched and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind,

Heb 12.22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels,

## C. However, we draw near to God in more than just prayer

“It is, of course, unnecessary to limit the reference in v 22a to prayer; it is undoubtedly inclusive of every expression of worship in the life of a congregation...”<sup>11</sup>

1. Notice that the exhortation is plural: Let **us** draw near
2. The drawing near is something we do together

“The first of the writer’s coordinated appeals calls the community to that personal and congregational ‘drawing near’ to God through Christ which is the essence of being a Christian. This is the only appropriate response to the benefits described in vv 19–21”<sup>12</sup>

- When we gather to worship in song, we are drawing near
- When we gather in prayer, we are drawing near

<sup>11</sup> Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 47B:286.

<sup>12</sup> Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 47B:286.

- When we gather to collectively support the work of God in the offering, we are drawing near
- When we gather to hear the preached word, we are drawing near

3. The drawing near is constant: present tense... it is the life of the Christian

### Conclusion:

**Proposition:** The first application of Hebrews is for you to develop a deep personal relationship with your God.

We do this on a personal level, to be sure...

But we also do this on a collective level, every week, several times a week.

This week Debbi and I attended the funeral service for our good friend, Gordon Conner. His sons and daughter all got up to speak a good word for their dad. One thing that struck me was this repeated testimony:

“We knew that at 6 AM every morning our dad was on the couch with a coffee and his Bible.”

Walking with God. That’s what we want for each of you, and all of us.