

“Prepare Your Heart”

11-15-15

The Old Testament seems to have been filled with rules. The leaders of the church felt they needed to explain everything to the ‘enth degree. In their eyes, everything man needed to do to be right with God revolved around rituals and procedures.

Open to Romans 5. When Jesus came, it showed that all the old rituals, were unnecessary, He fulfilled them. This was a big shift from what was, because this says that everything that needed to be done for man to be right with God, to stand before Him justified, was accomplished through the work of Christ on the Cross.

Verses 6-8, *“For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*

Open to Hebrews 10. The entire book of Hebrews reminds us of the fact of the sacrifice Christ made for us and also what God expects from us to do in response. Verse 10, *“And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”*

It’s because of the cross that we’re assembled here today. It’s because of the cross that we can have the assurance of eternal life. It’s because of the cross we celebrate around His table as we receive His body and blood given and shed for us. As 1 Corinthians 1:18 put it, *“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”* We need to **Believe Jesus made the Ultimate Sacrifice for Sins!**

Look at verses 19-20, *“Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh.”* Christ has purchased for us *“a new and living way”* into the very presence of Almighty God. His resurrection has made this new way, a living and enduring thing. This stands in marked contrast with the former animal sacrifices under the Old Covenant. The animal sacrifices made by the priest remained dead, they only temporarily covered sin. We’re able, and indeed are invited to walk into the presence of Almighty God on the merit of the risen, and living Christ!

Look at verses 21-22, *“and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 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.”*

In verse 22, we’re told we’re to enter into the presence of God with a clear conscience. For the first time in our lives our guilt is completely gone. **We’re to Draw Near in Faith.** When we do enter by faith, we need to enter into God’s presence with a *“true heart.”* A true heart is sincere! There are no mixed motives or divided loyalties.

It’s the opposite of what we sometimes experience in our everyday lives. We’ve all met people, who when they’re introduced keep talking and smiling at us but all the while their eyes are roaming looking at other people and other things. They really aren’t interested in us at all! That’s exactly the opposite of what we’re told that God does or expects from us!

We’re to Hold Fast in Hope. Verse 23, *“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful”.* So many people in our world today live without any real hope. In fact they really aren’t living so much as just surviving! They manage to put one foot in front of the other by depending on some unfounded worldly “hope.” But their hope isn’t founded on truth, but rather wishful thinking!

But as Christians our hope has substance. When the author here refers to “*the confession of our hope*” he’s referring back to the hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast. We understand that an anchor grabs onto the floor of the ocean and holds the vessel securely. But the shifting sands of this world offer nothing to secure us for eternity. So our anchor doesn’t go down to the ocean below, but upward and is anchored in our Savior’s presence in Heaven!

We’re to Encourage in Love, in Order that we Might Stir Each Other Up.

Verses 24-25, “*And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*” The idea here is that we are “*to spur on or stir up*” one another to good works.

This is helped by Frequent Worship. Verse 25a, “*not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some.*” The emphasis is on your presence! The Hebrew writer’s emphasis isn’t on what a believer GETS FROM the gathering in worship, but rather on what he CONTRIBUTES TO the gathering of worship. Each and every one of you is important to the congregation and whether you realize it or feel it, when you’re not here, you’re missed! Our community is built up and strengthened when we come together to worship and fulfill our mission! Listen to 1 Corinthians 12:27, “*Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.*”

This is all very important because **The Day is Drawing Near.** Jesus is returning! We will be judged! You and I are one day closer to the last day than we were yesterday. Yesterday, we celebrated the life of a fellow Christian whom God called to Himself and now is enjoying heaven for eternity! That’s the blessing each of us will receive as we walk by faith in Jesus Christ!

This is such an important realization that we want to share this with everyone around us. Our goal is to see heaven with the glory of our Savior. Our world doesn’t see life after death as a possibility, but we see it as a reality!

In order to do this work of mission to the world, you need to **Prepare Your Heart!** You need to be in prayer and the study of God’s Word each and every day! Look at the passage from James 5:8 at the bottom of the insert, “*Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. Be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.*” Rejoice! The Day is at Hand! We’re on our way home! Heaven is yours!