

I first preached this sermon on Sunday, February 5th 2006 when we first presented our revised church covenant and were reforming the church in faith and practice and ready to present a revised church constitution.

Our text this morning is Hebrews 10

Our purpose is not to do a verse by verse study of this passage that we read earlier, but to highlight the verses that will help us to see what it means to be in covenant relationship with Christ and therefore if we are in covenant relationship with Christ we are in covenant relationship with each other.

I will summarize the context of a number of verses and then spend some time on particular verses that help to illustrate our covenant relationship with Christ and with each other. I will use some other passages of Scripture as illustrations and applications of the covenant relationship.

First to summarize our text: follow with me

Heb 10:1-4 The sacrifices of the law, being often repeated, could not take away sins.

Heb 10:5-9 The elimination of them, and substitution of Christ's body in their place, foretold by the psalmist,

Heb 10:10-18 by the offering of Christ's body once for all we obtain perfect remission of sin.

Heb 10:19-25 An exhortation to steadfastness in the faith, and to love and good works.

Heb 10:26-31 The danger of a willful relapse to false worship or lack of living the Christian norms (characterized for example by the let us verses in Hebrews) after having received the knowledge of the truth, which can be applied in many ways. Here it is in relation to some who were Jewish reverting back to Temple worship and forsaking the church because of persecution. Today that could apply to a Jewish person, a Catholic, a Muslim, an alcoholic, a drug addict or anyone who makes some kind of a

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profession of faith in Christ and when the road gets a bit hard to travel turns back to their old ways of worship and lifestyle.

Heb 10:32-39 and of forfeiting the reward of a good beginning for a lack of perseverance.

Our first focus verses are vs. 15-18.

And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us; for after saying,

16* "THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THEM AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD: I WILL PUT MY LAWS UPON THEIR HEART, AND ON THEIR MIND I WILL WRITE THEM," He then says,17* "AND THEIR SINS AND THEIR LAWLESS DEEDS I WILL REMEMBER NO MORE."18* Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin.

The writer of Hebrews is quoting from Jeremiah 31:33-34

Jer 31:33 "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.Jer 31:34 "They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the LORD, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

This is the New Covenant that will come through the blood of Christ. This New

Covenant is Christ Himself and by the Spirit of Christ, His people will be transformed. It will begin in the heart of Jews when the church is established and then will continue to be written in the hearts of all who will be true Israel, Jew and Gentile, who will be God's chosen people in the New Covenant.

The results of this covenant is that God's kingdom people will be the salt of the earth and the light of the world because He is working to will and to do of His good pleasure in them and they will be participants in the Covenant in that they must show the evidence of the changed heart first through repentance and faith and then by being what the Scripture tells us we are to be as we see ourselves first in Him and then in the commands of Christ as we obey the Law of Christ. Christ's New covenant people will be able to do this because God has written the Law not on Tablets of Stone but on the hearts of His people and has enabled and empowered them by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to obey and to endure to the end.

God has marked us out and there must be evidence that we are members of His New Covenant church - His bride. Mt.5:16* "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

And this brings us to vs. 19-22

19* ¶ Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus,20* by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh,21* and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22* let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

Because we are God's New Covenant people through the blood of Jesus we have the confidence to come where only the Old Covenant High Priest could come, once a year, on the day of atonement. Our high priest of the New Covenant, Jesus our Redeemer, represents us at the throne of God because we are in Him and are already seated in the heavenly places.

Paul in his letter to the Corinthians refers to what Jesus taught the disciples of the significance of His blood in relationship to the New Covenant. I Cor.23-26

23* ¶ For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; 24* and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me."25* In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." 26* For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

In light of the New Covenant of His blood we are to observe the Lord's

Supper or Communion as some would call it. But what are we really doing when we do it.

Let's remind ourselves of what we will do in our gathering after our study.

1. We proclaim Jesus' death until His return by participating in the Lord's Supper.
2. We remember Christ in this ordinance.
3. We meditate, or at least we should, on the New Covenant which the cup signifies. Specifically what the New Covenant is, and that is that the Lord would forgive my sins, He would write the law of God in my heart, that I would KNOW the Lord, and that He will be my God and I will belong to Him forever.
- 4.

That we are not to go to the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner. This examination that we are to do before partaking goes far beyond a self-examination of sinfulness. Since in and of ourselves, we are unworthy to partake of the Supper apart from faith in Christ. So perhaps this self-examination is in part, meditating on the promises of God in relation to the New Covenant. Paul in addition outlines explicitly that we are care for people and not let them go to the Supper hungry. 5. Finally, the Lord's Supper is spiritual food. It is a means of grace, not an agent of grace, it does not bring us grace as Catholics teach, but it a means, a way of reminding us how great is the grace of God, when by doing and meditating in the things we have mentioned the Holy Spirit acts in spiritually feeding our souls when we approach the table carefully and in a worthy manner with a heart full of thoughts of Christ..

These five things represent more than just a memorial. We do it to remind ourselves of the New Covenant and that we are partakers of it through the blood of Jesus.

That brings us to vs. 22* let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

This is one of the things that we do as members of the New Covenant and it involves all of us as a local body of believers who are a part of the larger universal church.

As we are privileged to be members of the New Covenant we have a duty, a Covenant duty to draw near to God in all the ways that we can.

These ways include prayer, worship with believers, fellowship with one another and sharing in the Lord's Supper. We are to do it with sincerity, for blessed are they who are pure in heart for they shall see God.

And we do it in full assurance of faith, believing in, and being fully assured and confident of Christ's merits and God's promises, which are true, faithful, and

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immutable-unchangable, to all who perform the duty required by the New Covenant
and not forgetting that He is ever faithful even when we are not.

Our hearts have been cleansed by the Word just like Jesus told the disciples in the
upper room, Jn.15:3* "You are already clean because of the Word which I have spoken
to you."

And because of that our conscience can no longer condemn us because we are glad to
confess our sin and be cleansed from any present unrighteousness that affects our
walking in a manner that is worthy of Christ.

And our bodies are cleansed, not ceremonially like the priests of the Old covenant but
because we are sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Remember that water is one of the
metaphors for the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures.

John 7:37* ¶ Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried
out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink.38* "He who believes in
Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living
water.'"39* But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to
receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

So we are cleansed in body, we are sanctified by the Spirit and we have put off the old
man and put on the new, positionally, in a once and for all manner and also in an
ongoing manner in the process of sanctification as Christ transforms us from glory to
glory.

The following verses continue to call us into covenant relationship with each other, we
have covenant responsibilities to and for one another. Verse 23 says :

23* Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised
is faithful;24* and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good
deeds,
25* not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but
encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.26* For if
we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer
remains a sacrifice for sins,27* but a terrifying expectation of judgment and THE FURY
OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES.

As a local body of believers we hold firmly to our confession of hope. This is a

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corporate activity. This is you and me confessing together what our hope is. This is the church covenanting together about who and what our hope or faith is- that which Christ did for us through the New Covenant of His blood and the promises that are attached to it. Furthermore holding each other accountable to demonstrate this to the world.

We hold to this confession without wavering, we don't back off, for blessed are those who are persecuted for My names sake and that needs the body supporting one another in the faith for Christ alone is our blessed hope. We do this without wavering because He who promised us the benefits of the New Covenant is faithful. God is faithful and unchangeable in His purpose and His promise to bring all those He has chosen to their perfection in Christ. He hath promised to reward those who persevere and continue to the end true to the Redeemer, and to give them grace and assistance that they may continue, so they need not fear the power of their enemies, nor their own weakness, for He will enable them to perform the duty, endure the afflictions and then reach the final blessing of being with Christ.

But there is more obligation on our part to each other in Christ as we covenant together.

Vs 24 says that we need to consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds. We are to stimulate one another to love because it says in 1 Jn. 4:7-11

¶ Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.8* The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.9* By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him.10* In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.11* Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. NASB

We are to stimulate one another to live out the norms of the Christian life, we are to stimulate one another to hunger and thirst after righteousness and to show mercy and to be pure in heart and to be peacemakers and to support one another in times of persecution and to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

These are all part of covenanting together as God's people because we recognize the

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awesome work of grace that has been provided for us through Christ our Lord.

Vs 25 tells us not to forsake gathering together with the brethren as part of the continued - let us. Forsake means to desert and to leave others in distress who need help.

This was not the custom of the early church as it was birthed on Pentecost.

41* So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.42* ¶ They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread (the Lords Supper) and to prayer.43* Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.44* And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common;45* and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.46* Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart,47* praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved. Acts 2:41-47 NASB

No signs of desertion here. This was a glowing church, a growing church, a going church and a God glorifying church. This was a church that grew warmer thru fellowship, deeper thru discipleship, stronger thru worship, broader thru ministry and larger thru evangelism.

It was a church that exalted God, expounded the Word and evangelized the sinners.

Why? They were a New Covenant church that by God's grace obeyed the Great Commandment and pursued the Great Commission.

But even skeptics in the church today, most of whom have a great misunderstanding of grace, will say this is not possible any more. And I say it is the Normal church and we are so used to being the abnormal church, especially in this country, that maybe we have never been normal enough to desire to be normal.

That is why these Hebrews are being rebuked and corrected, because some were straying away from normalcy as New Covenant believers.

Gathering and giving encouragement to one another is the normal thing to do. Not gossiping and arguing and closing yourself off from others and not participating

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because of arrogance and pride and hurt feelings and a desire to follow the traditions of men rather than the Word of God.

This encouragement is to be done with the fact in mind that we are waiting for the Blessed Hope and each day brings us nearer to the appearing of Christ and we will be judged for how we lived as New Covenant people.

Vs. 26 26* For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,^{27*} but a terrifying expectation of judgment and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES.

Those who forsake the gathering of the brethren are being warned that they are probably false and will face a terrible judgment if that is true. The specific context here is sinning by going back to temple worship and denying the single sacrifice of Christ as the sacrifice Lamb.

But it applies to any who would claim to be believers and who forsake the gathering for whatever reasons. It is abnormal, it is not obedience to Christ.

To continue to live an abnormal Christian life when one has been instructed in the truth of salvation and what it means to live the norms of the Christian life in Covenant with God and His kingdom people says that Christ has not died for you. You will receive the judgment of the enemies of God because you have trampled under foot the precious blood of Christ. Not that it was shed for you but because you have mocked His blood and His New Covenant by proving false. Christ died for His people and they will all be with Christ on the day of His appearing. To pretend to be true and prove to be false exacts a fiery judgment because there is no more sacrifice for your sin.

Then the writer encourages them to remember how they endured when first converted and what they suffered and how they helped others who were mistreated because they became Christians and then beginning in vs 35 he writes

35* Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.

36* For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.^{37*} FOR YET IN A VERY LITTLE WHILE, HE WHO IS COMING WILL COME, AND WILL NOT DELAY.^{38*} BUT MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY FAITH; AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK, MY SOUL HAS NO PLEASURE IN HIM.^{39*} But we are

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not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.

The false cannot live by faith nor can they endure. But those for whom Christ died, His New Covenant people will not shrink back to destruction. Some may stray a bit, be weak in faith at times, may be tempted sorely and even question their faith sometime but the chosen of God will endure to the end, they will be convicted by the Holy Spirit, they will repent, they will not forsake God's New Covenant people, they will seek to live for God's glory and trust that He will cause them to endure until the end because God has promised to do so for His names sake - who is Christ, our New Covenant

This is why we had/have a Covenant Sunday.

It is necessary and it is vital to reclaiming our character as a New Covenant church.

It is being willing to say we are not as normal as we should be but we are ready to strive for that normal Christian life in our lives, in our families and in our church.

We covenant before God and with each other today because it is the right thing to do.

It is saying that we desire to glorify God in our church. It is saying we will not let ourselves be hypocrites and be more loyal to the traditions of men rather than to Christ our Lord.

What we have studied today is only the heart of what needs to be done. There is so much more that could be said but it gives us a wonderful starting place and more to look forward to in glorifying our Savior and serving one another.

So, let's pray:

14* ¶ For this reason I bow my knees before the Father,15* from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name,16* that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, 17* so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love,18* may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,19* and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.20* Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us,21* to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen. Eph. 3:14-21 NASB