

A Fearful Expectation
Hebrews 10:26-39

Matthew 13:1-23

Matthew 7:15-27

Responsive: Losing my Religion by REM.

Real Responsive: Psalm 125

This morning I had initially planned to finish up this chapter, but as I was going through and preparing the message for this morning I ended up not getting past verse 26 and 27. So today, I want to read this morning in Hebrews chapter 10, verses, 19-27.

So in our passage this morning starting out right in verse 26 it starts to jump in to some heavier stuff, implying that there is no remission of sin if the sin is committed willfully, I mean really it doesn't imply, it out right says that if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sin. There no longer is a remission, there is no longer a pardon, or a forgiveness of sin.

In light of everything that has lead up to this point, this seems to be an odd statement to make does it not? The Author here has instructed his readers about the holy priesthood, and superior sacrifice of Christ, how his sacrifice has paid the price for our sins once and for all. But not only that, as it says in verse 17 here, "Their sins and lawless deeds I will remember no more." and in verse 18, he says, "where there is a remission of these, there is no longer a sacrifice for sin." Meaning that now sin has been paid for on the cross, there is now no longer a need for continual sacrifices for in Christ there is the remission of sin. Then we jump over just a few verses here to today, saying that if we sin willfully there is no sacrifice.

So let me ask this question...have you sinned willfully? This is of course a rhetorical question, because if we are to be honest the answer would be yes. There are times when we all have harbored a thought that we should not, or maybe said things we knew we shouldn't...or did things knowing full well it was a sin. So, in light of this verse does that mean that our salvation is lost? That Christ's sacrifice is ineffective? Let me answer that question with another question. Would you say that King David would be one counted as justified in Christ? Did not King David sin willfully with Bathsheeba? Would you say that he lost his salvation?

So there must be more here then what appears at face value. To help get an understanding of this verse which at face value seems contradictory to well, pretty much the rest of scripture it will maybe help if we go read a few more verses. Turn with me to 2nd Peter, chapter 2, verse 18. To put this in context, we should read verse 1 and 2 first to understand what is being said here. "But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who brought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of the truth will be blasphemed.

Now verse 18, speaking of these false teachers, "For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption, for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage. For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Chrsit, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them then the beginning."

So, we are starting to get a picture of this willing sin that the Author of Hebrews is talking about, lets go over to Matthew 12:43 “ When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest and finds none. Then he says, I will return to my house from which I came, and when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first, so shall it be with this wicked generation.”

Now even more telling, and gives us a clearer picture of what the Author here in Hebrews is talking about is the parable of the Sower that we read this morning. So if we are to look at the parable of the sower, it is quite obvious that what the Author here is talking about are those seeds which fell upon the stony ground, having the appearance of salvation, but no true root. IF we go back to Hebrews again, and look at verse 26 with the understanding that it is these who are like the seeds which fell upon the stony ground, they have received the knowledge of the truth, and spring up quickly but it isn't long and they are taken by temptation and snares and return again to the sin which they had for a time left. It is like the parable of the man with the demon, who cleaned up his life for a time..only to have the demon return even stronger than before.

This is exactly what the book of James is talking about when he is talking about perseverance, and faith which is proved out by our works. In time, a false believer shall be exposed, for their works do not match their claims of faith. So it is not as if the author here is saying that we are in danger of losing our salvation, for all of scripture attests to the opposite, that once we are in Christ he will never leave nor forsake us, our salvation is sure for it is bound in the promises of the sovereign Lord, the creator, the author and finisher of our faith. There is no way that the author here would have spent the time just a few verses previously rejoicing in the fact that we have a high priest in the true temple making intercession for us, and as he says in verse 23 “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.

Remember he who promised is also he who knew you before the foundation of the world. If you are Christians, he chose you before you were born, not having done any good, or evil but purely by his own sovereign will. Just as Paul wrote in Roman's 9:9, “For this is the word of promise, at this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son. And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac, (for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of him who calls) it was said to her, the older shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob I have loved, Esau I have hated.”

So this being true, it is not only unlikely, but it is impossible that once the new birth has been worked within you, that there is even a chance that you would still be lost. Or that your sin would make Christ's atoning work on the cross null and void. For your salvation, for the remission of your sins is the very reason he died. Yes, even those sins that we commit willfully. If God loved us while we were yet sinners, while we were yet his enemy, he will not stop loving us when we so foolishly fall to the temptation of sin.

The verses we looked at this morning in 2nd Peter, and in Matthew said that it was better that they had never gained the knowledge, for now what has come after is worse than before, which aligns with verse 27 here in chapter 10. If one who had received the knowledge of truth, in turn rejects it, having no root, having no true salvation then there is nothing but a fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. In other words, the fate of such is the fate of all who are not washed by the blood of Christ. Despite having knowledge of the truth, yet having no true faith working in them, the outcome is the same.

That is quite a sobering thought is it not? And it begs the question, how many people even in our own circles do we know who claim a belief in God...but there is no true root? It is a cultural, or nominal faith, not a personal, vibrant faith. It is these who when standing before the throne of God will say, "Lord, having we not prophesied in your name, cast out demons in your name and done many wonders in your name?" And the answer they will hear is, I never knew you, depart from me you who practice lawlessness." I have often said that I think this is one of the scariest passages of scripture. You have these individuals who have gone their entire life with the knowledge of God, believing that they are acting on behalf of God, doing God's work...but in the end God says, your works were not works of righteousness, but works of sin, you are not one of my children.

This should cause a bit of trembling, and should cause us to reflect upon our own salvation, for the outcome of those deceived into believing such lies is worse in the sense that they had such a great expectations of being rewarded for their work, yet their work was done in iniquity, it was pride, self serving, self pleasing and based upon their own merit. Pointing to their own works as a justification, instead of the recognition that it is only by the mercy and grace of God that one enters into the kingdom.

This also plays into how we witness does it not? We must be wary that we are not creating an army of the damned by our witness. By that I mean, we must not witness in such a way to produce such a false faith. And in that lies the danger of much of what we see in evangelism, and our churches today. It is a front, or a face of Christianity, but as Jesus said to the Pharisee's, they are white washed tombs, full of dead mens bones. I am afraid that this also explains many of our churches, who instead of promoting the necessity of God, and the severity of sin, they encourage one to clean their own house, instead of repentance, they teach resolution. This creates people with the knowledge of truth, but no root, no real and true faith looking to their own merits, their own actions as their justification.

And sadly, what awaits is a fearful expectation of the judgment, and the reason that this is so dangerous is the deceitfulness of such a ministry being convinced in their own minds of their righteousness, being callous to their own sinfulness, making them resistant, and unwilling to listen to the gospel for even if you are able to identify such a person, if you were to confront them on their faith they usually will respond in anger, that you would dare judge them such. They have been duped, and have believed the lie.

So, I guess this then brings up the question.. are these people lost for good? Is there no hope for them? Well the answer is... we don't know, and really it isn't for us to know it is only for us to be a witness to the truth of scripture. That very person who responds to you in anger when you start to question their faith, may one day have the work of the spirit and be able to see the deception in which they have believed. We don't know, and while in these verses here it may look impossible for that to happen.. we know that through God all things are possible. For the reality is, that even our very own salvation is impossible, there is no way that any of us would ever turn to God, unless, he in his mercy and grace draws us to him. For man, it is impossible, there is no way for mankind to stand before such a holy and just God, but for God all things are possible, for it is he who orchestrated, and created his plan of salvation so that he can reconcile his people back to himself.

It took a work of God to send his Son as the only true and sufficient sacrifice for our sins, and it took a work of God to apply the blood of that sacrifice to our lives, making us a new creature, a new creation, being reborn as his children of mercy instead of the children of wrath we once were. So now being his children, the ones whom he loved and adopted, the ones in whom he promised not only forgiveness, but that he will no longer remember our sin, should we have a fearful expectation of judgment?

My point here being, look at all that the Author here was saying leading up to this point, Verse 8 “Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin you did not desire, nor had pleasure in them, then he said, “Behold I have come to do your will, O God, he takes away the first so that he may establish the second.....and by THAT will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ...once, and, for all! There is no waiting fearfully for the judgment for those who are truly in Christ, for if you are Christs, it is more than a mere knowledge of God, or his Son, but an application of Christ's righteousness on your very soul.

See how this would have an effect, can you see the difference between one who simply claims Christ, and one who lives Christ? It can be difficult to tell the difference, and sometimes we can't, but the warning here stands all the same, that some who believe that they know the truth, will instead find themselves not to be children of mercy, but instead children of wrath. Condemned by the very law they claim to abide in, seeking to be found righteous by their works, or their knowledge, or their very own will. In the end it all proves empty, void and without substance for they never truly believed. And instead hold on to a form of self righteousness, which is exactly the righteousness that God hates, for self-righteousness at its core, is mankind flaunting his own merit before the just, and holy God.

That is the issue we see in Mathew 7, it is all “I” statements, did I not do this for you, did I not do that for you, look at how righteous I am. It is a faith born of pride and arrogance, containing the knowledge of God, not a faith born of grace and mercy. And it is for this reason that we must be all the more diligent in our ministry. As the Author said in verse 24 and 25, “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works” These are not good works to gain merit before God, but good works because of the love of God working in us to will and to do them, and because the heart that loves God can do no other but to praise and worship him, we should not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, but we should exhort one another and even more so as we see the day approaching.

I think that we are in that day, the truth is, ever believer who ever has been, and ever will be is living in that day. It is not as though the word of God was more necessary or needed previously, or now, or in the future. It is always needed, and is always necessary and that time is today. We see so much false hood, so much false faith and false claims of God, but that isn't anything new, and has existed since the beginning it would seem. And we know it will continue until the day he returns, for it is Satan's deception, it is the great lie in which he is going about and devouring souls.

Deceiving those who are lost, to believe that they are right before God. And the only thing to combat such a deception is to preach the word, faithfully, and truthfully. Striving to be God's tool in reaching the world, and being careful to not be Satan's tool of false belief, and false witness, deceiving and leading people astray. There will come a day when all of this will come to light, when those leaders who lead people astray will be held accountable for the deception. This is why it is so important to be knowledgeable in the word of God, to know what, and why we believe as we do. To check ourselves that we in our ministry are not leading others astray, creating empty shells who appear righteous but have only like the account of the man with the demon, reformed for a time and having no root no real faith in the end reject God and return to their sin and rebellion.

We can see the dangers of this throughout the multiple denominations in the Christian faith. Each one errors depending on their doctrinal belief, there is always the risk of taking what you believe and putting to much emphasis and taking things to the extreme. And in each of these ways there is the risk of these doctrinal practices to create these false believers who believe not because of Christ, but because of the doctrinal practices. I will give a few examples here as to what I mean. First, the easy one, our dispensational, arminian baptist brothers. With their belief and focus upon mans free will in their witness they run the risk of driving one to confession without there being a true work of God in

that persons heart.

The ministry practice of those who follow the free will doctrine is based around the idea of convincing and conjoling someone into the faith. The danger of this is that with its aggressive nature of witness, and focus to drive an individual to make a decision for Christ, is that in doing so it is highly likely that these individuals come out of this ministry with a head knowledge of scripture, but have never truly had a change of heart. Now a disclaimer, of course I am not saying this is the effect of everyone who has been witnessed to under this doctrinal understanding, I am just pointing out the danger of such practice.

It ends up creating a moment in time, or in the individuals life that they look back upon as the day they asked Jesus into their heart, and this ends up being their assurance...no matter what I am doing, no matter if I even doubt my faith its ok because on such a such date I asked Jesus into my heart. So you can see how this belief system can actually be at a high risk of producing exactly the kind of faith the author is talking about here. Who once bearing the knowledge of the truth, turn and reject it, and the later is worse then the first for now they have been calloused to the word believing it to be empty and of no effect.

I know that each of us have these people in our lives, who have had this experience and have gone on to be sort of nominal Christians. They claim it, and point to the experience they had, but in reality, they do not live it, their lives are not defined by their Christian walk, nor is it really effected by it, without their confession of Christ you would not really be able to tell them apart from anyone else. Church attendance becomes less important, they don't really see a need for it, yet the passage last week tells us exactly why, to stir up good works in love, and to exhort one another. A heart filled with Christ, will want to be with others of the faith.

In just the same way our Reformed brethren can fall into a different error but produce the same results. Instead of the error of appealing to man's free will such as the Arminian, and even though it may not be expressly taught in the church there is an assumption that the children born and raised in the church will grow up to be Christians. This belief again produces people who eventually turn away from the faith, having the knowledge of the truth, but not root, no change of heart who continue on believing that they are saved and justified but in reality are not.

So in closing, we can see why it is not only important what you believe, but how you practice such beliefs. We as Christians must be very wary as we are engaging in the world and in our ministry to rightly teach and preach the word, remembering that it is our responsibility to be faithful in the teaching of God's word, but it is not our words or our capabilities which gives such ministry an effect, but rather it is God working upon the heart of the listener. We can not convince someone, nor should we really assume that anyone really is saved because of their background or their claim. For as scripture says, if there is no good fruit to be found in the life of a person, it is safe to say that there is no real life in them. Therefore we must be faithful to share the gospel, to teach and to preach God's word and let God do the work, it is only through God's work on the hearts of mankind that will produce a true and vibrant faith.