



## Enduring Responses

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We are taking a quick one week break from the book of Exodus today, and we are going to be looking at a great passage in the book of Hebrews. The passage really gets at three enduring responses we have to the gospel. Three things that our salvation allows us to do, and those activities are actually things which enhance the beauty and confidence we have in the gospel.

The truth is, knowing what to do once we are saved is half the battle of living the saved life. I remember when I was in eighth grade I made, by the skin of my teeth a local baseball team. Out of all the sports I am splendidly mediocre at, baseball is probably the worst. I'm terrible at it. But I remember one day Ebola wiped out the majority of my team, and the coach, after having exhausted every other option was forced to start me at third base. I was terrified.

And I remember one specific play. The batter hit a hard driven bouncing ball right at me. And I caught it like I was Wade Boggs. There was much joy. Much fanfare. Until I turned to see my coach. Who was livid. Because while I had caught the ball. I had failed to throw the ball to first, or tag third base to stop the base runner. I caught the ball, but failed to play baseball.

Unfortunately most Christians have the same dilemma of "What do we do now?" We assume our initial moment of salvation is all that is required of us and we live our lives dancing with the ball while the world moves on without us.

But today we are going to see how to respond well. Today we are going to see: **The confidence we have in our salvation allows us to respond in devotional desire, doctrinal zeal and corporate identity.** Pray.

What we want to look at first is what our confidence is in our salvation. If we are going to respond well to the gospel we must see what this gospel is. And it is here where the author of Hebrews begins in **Hebrews 10:19-21**.

Here we begin to see the approach we make to the gospel. And what we just read is really a huge shift from what the readers of this letter new to be true. He is writing primarily to a Hebrew audience, and their relationship with God is really rooted in the OT law, something John outlined for us last week.

And the reality was, any approach to God was terrifying. We have seen, and will see in the book of Exodus the vast purifications and washings which need to happen for people to approach the tabernacle, or to approach God. Furthermore we see in the Old Testament details about the temple, with its outer courts and divisions. And inside the temple there are two important rooms, the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. And those were only to be entered sparingly, the Most Holy Place only to be entered once a year by the High Priest and only then after he had undergone an extreme process of purification, put on all sorts of Holy Garments and lots had been drawn to see who would go in.

And here the author of Hebrews is calling us to enter the Holy Places with confidence. This is a drastic shift because when that High Priest went into the Most Holy Place there was an overwhelming lack of confidence. When he entered the room where the presence of God dwelt they would tie a rope on him, and on that rope they would put bells. And if those bells stopped jingling, they knew they needed to pull out the dead body of that priest because the holy presence of God had killed him due to a lack of purification.

And now the call is, "come on in!" Why? Because of the blood of Jesus the new high priest who went into the holy place with his own blood. Jesus went into God's presence as both the ultimate high priest and the ultimate sacrifice. He went in for the sinner to make atonement with his own innocence. And because of that those who believe in Jesus are able to come to God with confidence. **Heb 7:28**.

So here in this introduction we see a recitation of the gospel event which saves us. And this call to approach God is really similar to what you hear at graduations. I just graduated from seminary this April and I heard something I hadn't

heard before. As the President was pronouncing us as graduates he said: “I now confer these degrees with all the rights and privileges pertaining to their function.”

I had never considered that with my degree came rights and privileges that I was now able to do. I mean we all know that, but I had never heard that language before. And in the book of Hebrews, the author is writing to this people group to live that life. To not fall away, to not draw back, to not neglect these rights that he is talking about in these verses. Therefore because we have this conferral of wonderful access to God through Christ Jesus, therefore since we have a new and living covenant and a great high priest: and now we begin to see the specific responses we have to this conferral of salvation.

We have **The Right to Draw Near to God**. This is kind of what the author just said, but look at how he puts it here: **Heb 10: 22**. There is this phrase you often hear if you are a sports fan, and it typically describes someone who is coming off of injury, or who used to be excellent and who now just doesn’t look right. And the phrase is, “Man, this guy seems to have lost his confidence.”

A player who loses his confidence loses more than a mental reminder, he loses the ability to play the game well. And this right to draw near to God, this command to pursue devotion with the God of the universe is rooted in the confidence we have in the blood of Jesus.

When was the last time you really made a concerted effort to draw near to God? I know even for me that language is something that I often don’t consider. But here we see the wonderful access we have to this God. I think we often neglect this privilege because we fall into one of two wrong camps of thought.

The first is that God won’t accept me. I was actually just talking with a guy who is sharing the gospel with a former friend from work. And that friend knew he needed God, but he was crippled by the fear that God wouldn’t accept him.

For me, this blew my mind. Not because I’m holy, but because I often fall into the other wrong camp. The camp that looks at this command and says, “Eh.”

I mean I’m a Christian, haven’t I already drawn near? Jesus died for me didn’t he? I pray don’t I? A few weekends ago I was hanging out with some friends from Portland, and we came across a deer. I didn’t even give it a second glance, but they stopped the car and gawked at it.

Often our hearts are just as calloused towards this command as Missoulians are to deer, but to be numb towards the intimacy we are provided through Christ neglects the power of the one who we are allowed to approach.

We forget passages like **Ps. 76:7-8**. We forget stories like the priests clinging to a rope in the Holy of Holies, we don’t even remember the story of Uzzah in 2 Samuel 6 who was struck dead when he tried to steady the Ark of the Covenant which held the presence of God. So easily we forgot that to approach God is to approach sure and certain death, as his holiness cannot handle our imperfection.

But we also need to remember that Hebrews 10:22 promotes a wonderful confidence because of the faith we have in Jesus. A faith which brings us full assurance that Jesus already took our death in the presence of God. A confidence that our hearts have been sprinkled clean through the baptism of conversion, and that we have been washed clean. To those who feel like they can never approach God may I remind you that Jesus grants you access to a God you once stood distant from: **1 John 3:3**.

I remember just this last week, I woke up next to my wife and I was amazed that she married me. She chose to be my wife and my best friend till one of us dies. And it thrilled my heart. Do we have the same idea of intimacy with the God who saved us?

Where in your life do you seek to affirm the relationship you have with God? Where are you taking time out of our day, out of your schedule to draw near to God in prayer, in study, in reflection, or even at church? To approach God is to approach the only one who satisfies us, and through Christ we have that wonderful privilege. So use it.

The second right we have due to our salvation is the **Right to Sound Doctrine**. Let’s look at **Heb. 10:23**.

In high school I remembered someone saying that they could always tell which students on a college campus were freshmen because they were always the ones who looked lost and had to ask people where specific buildings were. So due to my innate self-righteousness and fear of man, I remember staying up super late into the night the day before my freshman year start memorizing the map of campus, the names of the buildings, planning out my path between all my classes.

I didn't want to be caught unaware. But how common is it for us to far more concerned with knowledge about buildings than we are about the doctrine of salvation which saves us.

We love the idea that we are saved, but for the most part there is a great indifference to the details of how we are saved. It is for this very reason that the author of Hebrews urges us to hold fast to our confession. To know with certainty the details that we confess to be true about the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In our world of non-absolutes there is no word more despised than doctrine. Why do we need to have some codified and consistent formula of understanding? Why can't we all just love Jesus and get along? Why should we be concerned with our confession and our hope?

The author of Hebrews already answered this right? **Hebrews 10:23**. Because he who promises is faithful. Don't we want to know what that promise is? Don't we want to be reminded of what the payout is? Don't we want to be certain in every other area of our life what the contract is that we are signing at that current moment so that we can with greater certainty enjoy the benefits of whatever is being promised! Then wouldn't we want to be even more certain in matters of eternal salvation and eternal damnation.

What do you think of when you think of the word "gospel?" You've all heard it thousands of times, but if you had to take a quiz on what the gospel is, how confident would you be? If you had to explain the gospel to a nonbeliever, would the message they receive be accepted by the God who will one day judge that individual.

You see a right understanding of what we confess to be true is the greatest reminder of the salvation which saves us. But so often we have a false confidence that because we are saved we don't really need to know the details. We don't really need to work on understanding the intricacies of our faith because that's for the theologians. But look at the emphasis placed on this in Hebrews: **Heb 2:1, 4:14**

I was recently reading an article about climbing. And in it they talked about the healthy respect and submission climbers must pay to the mountain they are climbing. They say it becomes dangerous when climbers assume that since they are on the mountain, and have climbed mountains before, they know how to climb. One ranger in the Grand Tetons then said this: "So many people just don't respect the mountains. They just don't know they can die out here. Now people go blasting into the mountains lacking not only the most basic skills, but also the right gear. And if they do have the right gear it seems like about half the time they don't know how to use it."

The truth is the greatest gear you have in the climb of life is a right understanding of what we confess to be true in the gospel. And I promise you, you will need to use that. You will need that when the rocks give way on your path, when the storms block your route, and when lightning strikes your camp.

Your confession is more than a theological exam: it's the most practical confidence you will ever have. This is why I love the first Q&A on the Heidelberg Catechism: Q. What is your only comfort in life and in death? A. That I am not my own, but belong—body and soul, in life and in death—to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood, and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil. He also watches over me in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in heaven; in fact, all things must work together for my salvation. Because I belong to him, Christ, by his Holy Spirit, assures me of eternal life and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him. May that confession be also our hope. Because that will endure.

And in closing we see briefly a shift from internal belief to external action. External action which helps us handle the trials of life. The final response this morning is a **Right to Corporate Welfare. Hebrews 10:24-25**.

Here we see a cascade of things our conversion brings upon: it demand continued access to God, a relentless obsession with the truth and hope of our confession, and it requires us to labor for the good of the believers around us.

Scripture makes it clear, there is no place for individualistic Christians. And here we actually see the church defined as a community which gathers together to spur each others to good works. This means that church isn't a screen or a podcast that you attend. It is a real body of believers who gather together to encourage one another in the gospel.

The church isn't for consumers. It's for committed converts to bond together for the good of one another and the glory of Christ. So my question to you, is if you want to be encouraged in such a way, where are you encouraging others? Where are you serving here in this church? And I'm not talking about volunteering, I'm talking about serving in the way the author speaks of it: encouraging one another in light of eternity, until the day of salvation?

This church will be a healthier church as our membership is committed to doing this, if we see ourselves as bonded together under the new high priest and a proper confession to labor alongside one another in hope and encouragement. This is not a duty, but it is a blessed right and privilege given to us upon salvation.

To respond well to the gospel is to draw near to God frequently in joy, to understand our confession thoroughly in hope, and to gather together frequently in eternal perspectives. These are things which will help us savor our salvation. These are responses are the fruit of those who are truly redeemed, because these are the things which most naturally flow out of a new covenant heart.

So I want to invite you to draw encouragement from these things. To change your life to match up with these things, because I want you to know what your salvation calls you to do.