

Today's going to be Part A, of a 2-part message. If I had to sum up today's Bible reading in one word, I reckon I'd choose "faithfulness".

We don't know who wrote this letter to the Hebrews, but clearly, it was a person who understood (very well), what a "covenant relationship" is really about. He's already identified that the Old Covenant (the old Jewish sacrificial religious system) failed on two counts. Firstly, it could never give us a clear conscience (animal sacrifices could never take away sins). And the second reason, is because God's people were not faithful to the covenant.

And so, Jesus died on the cross, to establish a **New** Covenant. And the blood of Jesus (unlike the blood of bulls & goats & rams – the blood of Jesus, is **absolutely** able to take away sins. And so, through the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, our consciences can be made clear, and this enables us to enter into in an intimate relationship with God – something that we could **never** do, under the Old Covenant...

Now, in the 2nd half of Chapter 10 (what we've just read), Hebrews clarifies, that with the **New** Covenant (just like the old), with its privileges, comes "responsibilities". And to summarise these responsibilities, I would use the word "faithfulness"... The people of old, were not faithful to the Old Covenant... What about us? Will we be faithful to God – will we be faithful under the New Covenant?

You see, in the light of:

- this wonderful sacrifice Jesus has made

- confidence/assuredness that we have – that the cleansing power of the Blood of Jesus, is so efficient, that we need not cringe when we come into the presence of Almighty God, (He remembers our sins no more);
- this new living way

Now, in the Greek, the word “new”, refers to freshly killed meat... In other words, it’s **not** something that’s been hanging in the meat-house for a week (without refrigeration) – good. Fresh. ... And yet it’s living...

The sacrifice of Jesus was not like any other sacrifice. Yes, He **was** slain (for the forgiveness of our sins), and yet, He rose from the dead. And He now lives...

And that’s why the New Covenant of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, is not only new , it is **living**. It is the living way.

- We do not worship a dead god;
- We do not worship an inanimate object made out wood/gold/stone;
- We are not party to a dead religion, that will take us to a dead end.

Our Lord lives, and the **way** of the Lord, is the way of life.

“The Living Way”, is the way to life; and the way of life. And so, in Christ, we live, as we journey through this life, and enter eternal life....

And in the light of all of this, the writer to the Hebrews gives us 3 “**let us**” statements.

Alright, this isn’t something the preacher tells everybody else to do. This is a word for every Disciple of Jesus (you **and** me),

1.

The first “let us” statement is “let us draw near”.

²² 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.

Drawing near to God... What a wonderful thing... At one time, it was an impossibility. As we saw last week, God said to Moses, “Moses, if you see My face, you would die...” And yet **now**, through Christ – **by the new and living way**, we draw near.

But there are conditions on “drawing near”. To “draw near”, we must come:

- 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 other words, unless God has done His cleansing, purifying work in me, I cannot draw near to Him.

Having a heart that's "true", is about sincerity/faith/faithfulness.

When you get as old as I am, there's something that we old people do. We think back. And, as I think back over the years, one of my greatest sadnesses, is when I think of those who (at some point in their life), made a decision to follow Jesus, but are not following Him today.

They might have:

- *gone forward at the call of an evangelist;*
- *been active in a Youth Group, and been open and real with their faith;*
- *made a commitment at a church camp,,,*
- *... whatever ...*

At one time, they believed, and they acted in faith,,,, but they don't follow Jesus any more.

There are even some who I used to look up to, because their faith was so strong/alive/lead others to Jesus,,,, but not any more...

You see, a true heart, has to remain true. That's what Faithfulness is about.

And as Hebrews describes this faithfulness, oh, there's some gems to be found.

So, what does a true heart look like?

a)

Firstly, a true heart has a full assurance of faith.

Some people will try to tell us, that the New Covenant is **un**conditional. That is simply not true. Scripture is very clear: there is a condition – a very clear condition: faith. We are saved by faith. Without faith, it is impossible to please God...

And it's not a matter of believing today and **not** believing tomorrow. It's about faithfulness. So, for instance:
John 3:16. Say it with me if you know it.

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Now, that word "believes" and the word "have", are in a particular tense. It's what's known as "a Present, active verb"... It's not about an action that happened in the past... It's about what is happening **right now**.

It goes like this:

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever [is believing] in him should not perish but [is having] eternal life.

Alright, a true heart, is a heart that has a full assurance of faith. It is not a faith that I **once** had, but have no longer. It is about faithfulness (believing, today. Believing, and keeping on believing).

b).

Secondly, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience

This was one of the main points from last week. We draw near to God, with pure hearts...

But, how do our hearts become pure? It doesn't just happen (all by itself). When Jesus died for the sins of the world, it doesn't mean that every single person is automatically forgiven. The image of the sprinkling of our hearts, is imagery, of entering into a covenant with God.

I cannot be saved by the New Covenant, unless I enter into the New Covenant, and make the commitments of the New Covenant.

In Exodus 24, as the people of Israel entered into the (Old) Covenant with God, Moses read to them, the book of the covenant. And the people said: **Exodus 24:7 (ESV) ⁷**
"All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient."

And Moses took the blood of the sacrifice, and he threw it out over the people...

The sprinkling of blood, is a sign of the commitment, of entering into the covenant.

And you and I, are sprinkled with the blood of Jesus – our sins are atoned for, when we enter into covenant with Him. He shall be our God. We shall be His people... He is our Lord; We are His servants.

And so, by the blood of Jesus, our consciences are cleansed of evil...

BTW, this is a thing of faith in itself. The Devil, he's going to keep accusing you, "You're not worthy to be a Christian. Remember all the evil you've done... How could you possibly think that you could mix it with the holiness of God..." That's what the Devil does – he accuses. But by faith, we know that the blood of Jesus has cleansed us, and by faith, our conscience is pure.

c)

Thirdly, and our bodies washed with pure water.

Under the Old Covenant, there were various ceremonial washings, where the priests and the participants in worship, would be washed, to have a ceremonial cleansing, in order to be ready to meet with God...

But Jesus makes it very clear, that the washing that He desires, is a spiritual purity – not a washing away of dirt.

And for us, as Disciples of Jesus, when we think of being washed (for a spiritual purity), it's a reminder of our Baptism... When it comes to Baptism, nothing magical

happens in Baptism. It is an outward sign of what God is doing within.

When a person is being baptised, they go down under the water. It's a sign of the old person, being put to death – we die with Christ.... And as we come up out of the water, that's a sign of being raised to life, in Christ... We leave the old life behind, and begin the new. **the new and living way**

And “baptism”, is also an image of washing. We enter into the water, and our sins are washed away... And because it's a sign of what is **spiritually** happening, the fact that we baptise people in the dirty waters of the Balonne, doesn't matter, because even though one has been baptised in the brown water of the Balonne, the spiritual reality is, that our bodies have been washed with **pure** water – the water that takes away sins (the blood of Jesus).

BTW, if you have become a Christian – if you have given your life to Jesus, and have committed to **the new and living way**, but have not yet been baptised, why not? It's pretty important. Jesus said (**Mark 16**), **Whoever believes and is baptised, will be saved.**

And if you would like to know more about baptism, let me know, and we'll have a talk about it.

So, the first “let us” statement, was ²² **let us draw near with a true heart.**

And so far, we've focused mainly on the “true heart” bit, but the main point is ²² **let us draw near**

Our Lord, is our Heavenly Father. What does a **good** father want more than anything else in the whole wide world? It is for His children to draw near...

Our Heavenly Father doesn't only want us to know about Him. He wants us to know Him. And those who have a true heart, don't withdraw. With a true heart, we draw near.

Once again, as this old man thinks back over the past, there have been times when I have noticed people beginning to withdraw...

They:

- become less regular at worship;
- drop out of Bible Studies;
- have all of these other “important” things to do
 - Things that tend to keep them from:
 - Fellowship;
 - worship;
 - serving;
 - witnessing;
 - giving;
 - praying;
 - reading their bible;
 - simply enjoying drawing near and being in relationship with God...

Whatever it is that they're doing, it seems to take precedence.

The truth of the matter is, when we have a true heart, we **won't** withdraw. With a true heart, we draw near.

- Worship;
- Fellowship;
- prayer;
- serving our Lord;
- loving others,,,

becomes an absolute priority...

So, let us draw near.

And the remaining “let us” statements, **build** on “drawing near”.

2.

The second one is: **Let us hold fast**

²³ **Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.**

In other words, “keep the main thing, the main thing.” Let us hold fast to what we really believe.

When we get to Chapter 12, we’re going to hear another “let us” statement. And it’s going to say something similar.

Hebrews 12:2 (NIV84) **Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its**

shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

What do we hold fast to? We hold fast the confession of our hope

Let me clarify here, the concept of “hope”. The word “hope” (as it’s used here), doesn’t mean “possibility”/ “maybe”/ “wishful thinking”. The hope we have, is sure and certain. God has promised it, and God is faithful. Therefore, it will happen.

That’s what “covenant” is about.
If:

- we **are** believing in Him;
- we **are** holding fast to the confession of our hope;
- The Lord, **is** genuinely **our** Lord;
- our hearts **are** true

We have an assurance/certainty, because God is faithful. He does not go back on His word.

Alright, so our “**hope**” is a certainty, because God is faithful.,
But what is our hope?

Well, back in chapter 6, it spoke of our hope as “a **sure and steadfast anchor of the soul**” – “a hope that enters into the inner place, behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf...”

It’s a certainty of, not only admission to heavenly places – it’s a certainty, that we **belong**. We enter into fellowship with the

Lord God Almighty, and we **belong** in fellowship with Him. And it's not going to be like having a 1.5 minute audience with the King. It's eternity with our Heavenly Father in glory....

This is our hope. This is our confession...

Now, we need to understand this: Confession, isn't only what we believe/know... Confession, (obviously) is what we confess. It is to express openly, our allegiance to Jesus. It is to express openly, what we truly believe.

Even when it isn't popular; Even when we're being persecuted for our faith...

During the week, I got an email from "Open Doors". It's an organisation that supports Christians who are suffering persecution. ...

And the email asked us to pray for 8 Christian youths, who were arrested in Chad. Their crime? Evangelising (being witnesses for Jesus – confessing their faith, and not doing it secretly)

Their parents have received no news (since their arrest), and their whereabouts is currently unknown.

That is an example of holding **fast the confession of our hope without wavering**. They knew it was dangerous, to share the Gospel of Jesus, in a country where they are surrounded by Muslims, but they did it, without wavering.

You see, being a Christian, isn't something we only do, when we are with like-minded people. Even in Australia, there are elements of the Christian faith, and attributes of God's righteous character, that some **un**believers find repulsive. But as Disciples of Jesus, ²³ **Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.**

What can the world do to you? The worst the world can do, is kill. But that's OK, because our hope is beyond this life, and God is faithful.

And to hold fast to what we confess, – that in itself, is an act of faith... It is not saying one thing, and believing another. It is not saying one thing, and acting completely contrary to what we've said... To hold fast to what we confess, is faith (faithfulness)...

3.

Thirdly, Let us stir one another up.

V²⁴ **And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ 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.**

Living the Christian life, is not something we do in isolation. I am responsible for you. You are responsible for me. We all, are responsible for one another.

And there's an intentionality about this. We are to use our noggins, to think about/**consider**, how to best stir up one another...

Sometimes I think our children do that. Brothers/Brothers & sisters thinking, "How can I stir that one up?" And they nigger and nigger and nigger each other...

Only, this is stirring up in a good way. There is an intentionality about how you and I, can best stir each other up, into love, and good works...

And I do hope you notice, that this is not something to be left for the Pastor... Some preachers are looked to as the motivational speaker – he's the one who's going to light the fire under the crowd/encourage me to keep going for another day...

When did the church ever become the place where we have the motivation done to us???

You are to be a motivator, as much as what I am, as we encourage one another on, **to love and good works**. Good works (BTW), is love in action.

And here's the thing:

With a true heart, we draw near to God. And as I draw near to my Heavenly Father, and as you draw near to your Heavenly

Father, we're not only drawing near to our Heavenly Father.
We're drawing near to one another.

You see, being a disciple of Jesus – **the new and living way**,
isn't a path we walk on our own. It's a path we walk,
together.

And a sure sign, that a person is becoming more and more
distant from God, is when they withdraw from
worship/fellowship...

Over the years, I have had so many people tell me, "I don't
have to go to church to be a Christian..."

Do you know how I answer that these days, is:

- No, you don't have to go to church, to be a Christian; but
- If you are a Christian, no one could keep you away from:
 - fellowship
 - worship
 - your brothers and sisters in Christ.

What kind of pride/shallowness of faith/self-centred madness
could possible make a person believe that withdrawing from
fellowship is going to be good for their walk with God???

You see, even in today's reading, we're told to stir one
another up. How can I do that, if I'm not meeting with other
Christians?

And in case we still don't get it, V25 is very explicit ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another

Do you get this? The opposite of encouraging, is to not bother meeting together...

My heart grieves, for the Christians in this town, who don't regularly attend any church... As the people of God, what are we being told, to **do** about that?

Well, let's consider that.

let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ 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 day is drawing near. The day of Jesus' return, is now 2000 years closer, than when He ascended into Heaven. He can come any day. And when He does, what will He find us doing?

He's coming for a people whose hearts are true.
And I pray that He will find us:

- drawing near to God;
- holding fast to the confession of our faith;
- stirring one another up to love and good works;
- encouraging/exhorting those who are falling away, and are neglecting one of the basic aspects of being a Disciple of Jesus – meeting together, for fellowship, prayer and

worship.

- as a people, whose hearts are true.

Next week will be Part B.

Let’s pray.

Heavenly Father,
we are mindful of Your great love.
A love so great, that Your Son, would give His live,
that we might have life.

We praise You, for this New and Living Way.

Lord, we pray that our hearts would be true.

By Your Spirit, may we draw near,
And give us a love.
A love for You,
and a love for our Brothers and Sisters in Christ,
so great, that we delight in each other’s company,
so great, that we consider (that our minds are on)
how we can stir one another up to love and good works.

Lord, may our hearts be true.

in Jesus' Name,

amen.