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**April 5, 2015 — No. 3770**

**April 26, 2015 — No. 3773**

**THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR***April 5, 2015  
No. 3770**Burning Hearts and Opened Eyes  
Rev. Rodney Kley*

Dear Radio Friends,

**T**he Gospel of Matthew, chapter 28, tells us that Jesus arose on the first day of the week, that is, on Sunday. The Christian church remembers this great event every week by setting Sunday aside as a day of worship to God. At the center of the worship of the church is the preaching of the gospel. And central to the message of the gospel is the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

On Friday, early in the morning, Jesus was put on trial and crucified. His death was the sacrifice for sin. On Sunday, early in the morning, He arose victorious from the grave. We preach today the gospel of the resurrected Lord.

Today, we are going to look at this great event from the Gospel of Luke 24:13-35. Please refer to this passage in your Bibles. In this passage of Scripture there is recorded one of the appearances of the risen Jesus to two of His disciples as they walk along the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus. It was the day of Jesus' resurrection. We do not know anything about these two disciples except that

one of them was named Cleopas. They are not prominent among the followers of Jesus. Probably they had mingled with the multitudes that followed Jesus and heard His teaching. This particular weekend, these two had gone up to Jerusalem for the Passover Feast, hoping to hear Jesus teaching again. But how disastrously wrong things had seemed to go. Instead of seeing and hearing Jesus teach the multitudes, they saw Him on trial; they heard the multitudes crying, "Away with Him, crucify Him"; and they witnessed His crucifixion.

That was on Friday. Now it is Sunday. They had intentions to get home today. But this morning, as they were preparing to leave, rumors started coming in that astonished them (v. 22). A group of women had gone to the sepulcher and found that the stone had been rolled away from the door and the body of Jesus was missing. And these ladies said that they had seen an angel who said that Jesus was risen. And, of course, that was so unbelievable that Peter and John, the apostles, went to check on it. And they said the

same things. And they added some more details about the linen clothes.

And so these two hung around in Jerusalem for more reports. And there were more. There was a report from Mary and a report from the women that they had seen Jesus. Then there also came an official report from the Sanhedrin and the Romans that some of His disciples had come at night and had stolen Jesus' body away.

These were the things that they were hearing. But they had to start going home to make it by dark. So they set off for Emmaus. And as they go, verse 14 tells us, "they talked together of all these things which had happened." They tried to make sense of them, to put them all together. What a conversation that must have been. They are sad, stunned with grief, that Jesus had been killed. But now, what about these amazing reports of the empty tomb? They must have been saying, "How do we make sense of all this?"

It is to these two travelers, heavily engaged in this lively conversation, that Jesus appears. And they do not recognize Him. To understand this, we should remember that in His appearances after His resurrection, Jesus did not always appear in the same form. He appeared always in a form suited to the specific situation.

For example, when He appears to Mary, He says, "Touch me not." But to Thomas, He says, "Behold, my hands and my feet." And He asks Thomas to touch Him. In another appearance He eats to show that He is really, physically risen from the dead. But then, on a different occasion, He goes through closed doors as a spirit. To Mary He appears to be a gardener. But to His disciples in the upper room, He appears as their Lord. He can be recognized by them.

Now here, in Luke 24, He appears as a stranger. In verse 16, "Their eyes were holden that they should not know him." Mark 16:12 says that He appeared to them in another form as they walked. He does this here with a purpose suited to this situation. Here He does not come to prove that He is risen, but to answer their questions about the suffering of Jesus Christ. Had they recognized Him, the whole subject would have changed, and their conversation would not have gotten to their perplexing question.

So He appears to them as a sympathetic, naïve stranger who is ready to talk with them and to help them with their problem. They are so engrossed in their conversation that, at first, they do not even notice this stranger. Perhaps He was following them closely or, perhaps, He overtakes them. In any case,

into our flesh and gave His life on the cross for His people. That loving sacrifice of Jesus on the cross was so powerful that it guarantees the salvation of everyone for whom He died. Jesus says that of all those whom the Father

has given to Him, not one will be lost. Romans 8 assures us that nothing

can ever separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Then third, I direct you to God the Holy Spirit, who comes in a powerful and irreversible work to bring salvation into the hearts of all the elect, all those whom the Father has chosen and for whom the Son has died. So, in Philippians 1:6, we read this concerning the work of the Holy Spirit: “That he that hath begun a good work in you will perform it till the day of Jesus Christ.” What does that mean? It means this, that in every heart to which the Holy Spirit has brought new life, so that that sinner loves God, confesses his sins, struggles against sin, lives

by faith, hopes in God’s promises, loves his neighbor, in every heart where the Holy Spirit has begun that work, He will continue that work until the day of Jesus Christ. Why? Because the people who have God’s Spirit

and the new life in them are the same ones that God eternally loved and chose.

And they are the same ones for whom Jesus Christ gave His life. So, in God triune, their salvation is guaranteed.

There is the faithfulness of God. He preserves His own. And so, looking to God, the One who is faithful to His promise, let us persevere and let us hold fast to the profession of our faith without wavering.

Let us pray.

Father, we thank Thee for Thy faithfulness. And we pray for the grace and the strength to persevere, to hold fast, and not to waver. We ask it for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

*The Father’s love,  
eternal love in election,  
guarantees our salvation.*

He overhears their conversation and, in verse 17, asks a question: “What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?” He notices that they are sad. This is why He comes to them—not only to answer an intellectual problem, but to cheer them. Their question touches their souls. It weighs heavy on them. It makes them sad.

For His sympathetic question, Jesus is rebuked by Cleopas (v. 18): “Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?” Cleopas is saying, “Where have you been, man? Everyone knows about this. This is so important to me that I expect that everyone else should be talking about it, too. And you don’t know anything about it?”

Jesus is not deterred. He presses them. “What things?” He asks. He draws them out. He lets them talk. How helpful that can be sometimes, just to listen, to let others with their problems talk and pour out their hearts. They give you all the pieces. And you have only to show them how they fit together. That is what is going on here. These men have a handful of puzzle pieces and they do not know how to put them together. And Jesus finds for them, as it were, the key piece. And all the

other pieces fall into place.

Let us look a minute at their puzzle pieces.

Probably they said much more than what is here in this passage. They walked more than two hours. But here you have the gist of it. In verse 19 they tell this stranger, “We’re talking about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people.” With those few words they express all their happy experiences of the past three years. They had been witnesses to His power: the dead were raised; the sick were healed; the poor and the hungry were fed; the wind and the waves obeyed Him. And to hear Him teach—oh, what a treat. He was “mighty in word.” There was never a prophet like Him. In verse 21, they say, “We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel.” We were sure that He was the Messiah.

Our hope, they say, was that He would help us. And He played into that thinking. Why, only a week ago He rode into Jerusalem at the shouts of the crowds: Hosanna to the Son of David; Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord. Everything about Him told us that He was the Messiah. But, and here’s the piece of the puzzle that does not fit (v. 20), the chief priests and our rulers (that word *our* is important) handed

Him over to the Romans to be condemned to death. He could have been Israel's deliverer. He could have saved us from the wretched political tyranny of the Romans. But our leaders handed Him over. He was crucified. And He Himself seemed to want this. At least, He went willingly. We've heard reports that He told His disciples not to fight in His defense. When He was on trial and there were all kinds of false accusations, He didn't say a word. He was silent before His accusers. And His death? It just doesn't make sense to us. And now, they tell the Stranger, to add to all this confusion, there are these reports from the women—the tomb is supposedly empty. Supposedly there was an angel. And John and Peter have also seen the same things.

So this was their conversation. And they tell the Stranger: "There's one thing here that really doesn't fit. That's the cross. Why should He suffer?" In verse 21 they say, "We wanted to trust that this was the Christ. It's the third day since these things were done. And we remember that He did say something about the third day. But His death, the crucifixion, it just doesn't fit." These two stumble at the cross.

The sympathetic Stranger walking with them listens. And then all of a sudden He speaks. In verses 25-27, you have Jesus'

answer, a sermon, to these men. In verse 25, His introduction, Jesus says, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken." Now, Jesus does not mean that these men are fools like the ungodly fool of Psalm 14 who says in his heart: "There is no God," and who does not want to know truth. No, these men want to understand these things. But their folly is their slowness in understanding, and especially that they do not understand the prophets and the suffering of Christ.

Verse 27 gives us the content of Jesus' sermon: "Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." He opened up to them the Old Testament to show them what it was all about. That must have been quite a sermon. They had not seen it all—only parts of it. And so Jesus shows all of it to them. He began with Moses. That means that He began with the books of Moses—the first five books of the Bible. He must have spoken of the promise of Genesis 3:15, the Seed of the woman that would crush the head of the serpent. He must have spoken of the shedding of the blood of animals to cover the nakedness of Adam and Eve; of Abel's sacrifice of a lamb; of the sign of circumcision, in which there was shedding of blood. He must have spoken of Israel in

stand with God's people in the history of Christianity, faithful to God's Word. Stand with other believers. This is what we need in order to hold fast. It is in the plural—let *us* hold fast to the profession of our faith. So, the apostle here is talking about the Christian. The Christian is one who perseveres, who goes on, who holds fast.

Why does he? The answer is given at the end of the verse here when it says: "For he [that is, God] is faithful that promised." That means that, because God is faithful, He will keep you in your faith. I Thessalonians 5:24 puts it this way: "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." The strength of our perseverance is God. Our capacity to go on as Christians is not in ourselves. We do not hold on to our hope by our own strength.

But, remember, faith/hope has an object: God, who is the source of all our strength. We look at His promises and His character that stand behind all of those promises.

You see, we are not just called, here, to hope or to believe, because there is some power in hoping or believing itself. This is not just psychology—because if that is all that you have, then what if the thing in which you place your hope or faith fails?

Then you go on to disappointment. No, the God in whom we put our hope and in whom we believe is faithful. The power of our hope, the power of our persevering, comes from the One who is the object of our faith—God. He will never disappoint. And what will strengthen you to persevere is that you come back again and again to God and to His promises and to His character. This is the importance of theology. This is the importance of doctrine. It is not an irrelevant, academic exercise for a few. But this is the stuff of which the Christian faith is made of. This is the foundation of our faith: God Himself and knowing Him.

So, I am going to close by directing your attention to God,

*The strength  
of our perseverance  
is God.*

recting your attention to God,  
God triune: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost as the One who

keeps us. God the Father, the Bible tells us, has chosen to Himself out of the whole human race an elect people whom He has willed to save and who are committed by Him to the Son. God's eternal electing love cannot be reversed. It is not in any way conditioned on some good in the creature. The Father's love, eternal love in election, guarantees our salvation.

Second, I direct you to God the Son, Jesus Christ, who came

believer, is one who holds fast to his profession without wavering. There is a lifelong commitment and profession of faith. That is the calling here. That is the important question for you if you profess your faith: “Do you hold fast to that profession?”

How can we hold fast? I want to answer that from a practical point of view, by pointing very briefly to three things. We hold fast by not forgetting the things that we have learned, by remembering the Word of God, by reminding ourselves of God’s Word. This is what Paul says to Timothy in II Timothy 3:10-15—quite a section. He tells Timothy to remember the instruction that he received from a child in the Word of God. Or, as Jesus says to the church in Revelation 2, the church at Ephesus that had left her first love: “Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent and do the first works.” That is, remember God’s Word.

Secondly, we hold fast by continuing to learn. The Christian can never stand still. Either he is progressing forward in sanctification or he is going backward. So, as a Christian, you must continue to learn, you

must avail yourself of the means that God has given for us to grow in grace. And that begins by commitment to the church and worship with God’s people and hearing the preaching of the Word of God that God has appointed not only as the means to be

saved, but the means to persevere in salvation. That is what the apostle will get to here in the following verses—not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together. What is remarkable today is that so many who call themselves Christians come so infrequently to worship. Or they come and they sleep, or they have some other apathetic attitude towards God’s Word. Is there nothing more for you to learn? Do you not need the gospel still in your life? So, do not forget the things that you have learned. Continue to learn.

Then, third, stand with other believers. This is how we hold fast. Be found in the church of God. God has given His Holy Spirit to the church to lead her into truths. Stand with the church of God that is faithful to God’s Word, that confesses God’s Word in the historic tradition of the church, not a church that comes with something new and some new idea of what God’s Word is teaching or saying. But,

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Egypt, and of the Passover lamb; of the Levitical laws; of sacrifice for sin; of the scape-goat that carried the sins of the people into the wilderness. He must have related to them the history of Israel, the conquest of Canaan, the judges, David, Solomon, the kings, and all the blood that was shed in sacrifice; all the suffering of God’s people. And all the while, He was showing to them that the Old Testament spoke about Himself.

In verse 26, we have the theme of His sermon in this rhetorical question that He puts to them. He says, “Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?” A powerful rhetorical question, the force of which was: Yes! Christ must have suffered all these things. He had to. This was the point of everything that Jesus said to them. This is the way God always intended it to be—the way of *sin*, and through sin—*grace*. The way of the Fall and man’s guilt, and the cross to pay for sin. Sin and its results must be dealt with. And the only way is payment for sin—the suffering of the Mediator.

They listened. And their hearts burned within them. They hung onto His every word. How well this Stranger understood the Scriptures. How well He explained passages that they never understood, drawing from the Scriptures all kinds of things

that they had never associated with their Messiah. The suffering of Christ in the book the Psalms; the cross of Christ in the prophet Isaiah; and so on.

And Jesus spoke with them also of the glory of Christ as the goal of His suffering. This glory was not a national glory as they expected. But He took them back to the Fall and to their great enemies—the devil and sin—to show them that the Messiah would come not to conquer a political enemy but to defeat sin. He brought them through the victories of the Flood, of Israel in Egypt, of David over his enemies. And He showed them that these were all victories over sin and the power of darkness. The glory that followed came always through victory over Satan and sin.

And as they listened, they began to understand the glory of Christ as spiritual and not earthly. They began to see that, yes, the cross was necessary as a battle over sin and Satan. And that the cross and the suffering of Christ was victorious—His way to glory. They began to remember some of the words of Jesus concerning His own suffering.

And so Christ, in this sermon, shows to them the unity of the Scriptures. He shows to them that the cross at which they stumbled was the key to it all. In verse 32, their hearts

burned within them as they listened. That is, they believed what He was saying. They believed the Scriptures concerning Christ and His suffering. They saw the necessity of the cross.

And then, so quickly, they were home in Emmaus. How disappointing. They could have walked on

and continued listening to this man all night long. But they are home. And it is late. So they compel this stranger to stay the night with them. After all, He will need to find somewhere to stay. Verse 29 tells us “they constrained him,” that is, they pressured Him to stay. And He consented. He came into their home.

Verse 30 tells us that He sits down to eat with them. He takes bread and He blesses it and breaks it and gives it to them. There is something very familiar here. They remember the feeding of the multitudes, the report of the disciples about the last Supper, and suddenly their eyes are opened. They know who this is. And we can see Cleopas opening his mouth to say something like: “My Lord, and my God!” Or we can picture him or his friend reaching out to embrace this Stranger. But

He is gone. He vanishes out of their sight.

Are they downcast? Are they sad now that He is gone? No, no. They are overjoyed. Their

eyes are opened. Now they understand it all. The suffering, the cross, but also the resur-

rection and glory. It all fits together now in their minds. It had to be this way.

And now watch them. That same hour they hurry back to Jerusalem to add to the joy of the disciples. Listen to them exclaim: “He’s risen,” and relate verse 35, what things had happened along the way and how He was known of them in the breaking of bread. What a joy. They had seen the risen Lord!

And now they understood His suffering. They had witnessed His glory.

Is this not a marvelous passage? I pray that the Holy Spirit has carried you along through it, too.

Let us finish now with a couple of points of application.

First, if you see and understand the Scriptures as Christ explained them here; if you see Christ and His suffering as the

tion of the initial reception of the Word by this fourth kind of soil, this prepared soil, is almost identical to the second and the third kinds of soil—the rocky and the thorny. The Word is received with joy. But then Jesus describes what happens after that. He says, “in an honest and good heart, having heard the Word, they keep it and bring forth fruit with patience.” Patience is perseverance. Jesus is saying here in this parable that the true believer receives the Word and goes on in his faith, he keeps on in the Word of God, he holds fast. In his struggle he holds on to the Word of God. As James puts it, “He is not a forgetful hearer, but also a doer of the Word.” You see, this is faith. This is true faith. Faith is not a flash in a frypan. The important question is not, “When did I once believe on Jesus,” but “Do I now believe on Jesus. Am I hold-

ing fast, am I going forward in the Christian life?” The important question for the church is not, “How many people have believed, how many people

have accepted Jesus?” But the important question is, “Are those who profess faith perse-

vering in that faith today?”

That is so different from the question that is asked by modern evangelicalism. Today, modern evangelism is this: get a stadium filled with people; get a moving speaker; and then see how many souls we can get saved for Jesus Christ in one night; how many people to say a prayer. And at the end of the night we say, “Six hundred people were saved.” The problem is, a year later, you can find barely one of them in the church. Do you know what would happen if there were six hundred people saved and added to the church in one night? The church would be overwhelmed. But we do not see this. So, there is a new category for Christians created, which absolutely has no foundation in the Word of God. We are told that there is such a thing as a “carnal” Christian. This is

supposed to describe a person who at one point said he was a Christian, who professed his faith, but now he lives like the world, he is carnal. How different and

how contrary that is to the Word of God. We see here in Hebrews 10 that the Christian, the true

*The important question for the church is not, “How many people have believed, how many people have accepted Jesus?” But the important question is, “Are those who profess faith persevering in that faith today?”*

Satan tempts us into thinking that God is not really real, that being a Christian and living the Christian life is a waste of time and effort, that we would be better off in some other religion or with some other company. Then we are wavering. This is our temptation—a constant part of our struggle as Christians.

Then God's Word comes to us and it says in our wavering: "Hold fast." Other believers will gather around us and, like the writer to the Hebrews, will say to us: "Let us hold fast. Don't waver. Don't let go. Let us persevere. Let us go on. We have something to hold onto—Jesus Christ. He's the Rock in the storm. He's the King in the heavens over all. He's the High Priest who has gone on behind the veil. He's the Lamb that has paid the price for our sins. Hold on. Hold fast. Don't let go." This is the Christian life—a lifelong calling, a persevering to the end.

To help us understand this, we have in the Gospels, in Jesus' first parable, an illustration. This first parable we usually refer to as the Parable of the Sower. While it is, indeed, a parable of the sower and of the seed, the sower being Jesus and the seed the Word of God, it is also a parable of four different soils that represent four different responses to the Word of God in the gospel. This is the

emphasis we find especially in Luke's account of this parable in Luke 8. There is first, the seed that falls on the wayside. Wayside is hard-packed soil, dirt paths. The birds of the air devour the seed that falls on it. Jesus says in Luke 8:12, "These are they that hear, and then cometh the devil and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved." There is a hearing with the ears but there is no measurable or noticeable response to the Word of God at all. There is an indifference in the heart. The heart is hard and the Word is snatched away.

Then we notice, in the second and third kinds of soil, in contrast, that there is, at least initially, some response to the gospel. In Luke 8:13 Jesus says, "They [on the rock] are they which, when they hear, receive the word with joy. But these have no root, which for awhile believe and in time of temptation fall away." They do not hold fast. And then the seed among the thorns is described similarly. "They," Jesus says, "when they have heard, go forth and are choked with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and they bring forth no fruit to perfection."

Then there is a fourth kind of soil, a fourth response to the gospel. What is fascinating in the Gospels is that the descrip-

central theme of the Word of God; if you understand the necessity of the cross as payment for your sins and see the glory of Christ as heavenly and not earthly—then praise God for your opened eyes. How we would all like to have heard the sermon of Jesus. But today, God has opened our eyes to these things. And He speaks to us in the true preaching of the gospel. Christ is risen. Praise God for opened eyes.

Second, may this live, not just in our minds, but in our hearts. Like these disciples, we can often be so confused by our earthly circumstances. Especially by the pain and the grief and the suffering that sometimes come in life. Then may the cross and the suffering of Christ live in our hearts. Suffering is necessary not only for Christ, but also for us. In Matthew 16 Jesus tells His disciples that He must suffer and die and that discipleship means denying ourselves, taking up our cross, and following Him on the path of suffering. This was His way to glory. And for us it is the same. If we suffer with Him, we shall also be glorified together (Rom. 8:17). Believe this. The cross was Christ's way to glory. And suffering, for every child of God, is the God-ordained way to glory.

Third, we have here an encouragement to prayer. Are

you confused? Are you troubled? Then take it to the Lord in prayer. As the psalmist says, pour out your heart, pour out your complaint, to Him. He will hear. He sympathizes with His people. "Why are you so sad?" He asks these travelers. Today we have a High Priest touched with the feeling of our infirmities, tempted and tried in all points like we are, risen victorious in glory, receiving the prayers of His people. Let us listen to Him. Let us not wrestle with the Word of God, but let us hear it and put our faith in the Christ that God has revealed in all of the Scriptures.

Let us pray.

Lord, we thank Thee for the Scriptures, which are a beautiful revelation, from beginning to end, of the suffering Savior, who is our substitute. And today, we rejoice in His glory. He is risen, and He is ascended, and He sits at Thy right hand. This gives us great hope and great confidence as Thy people in this world. Lord, we pray that He may come again. Come, Lord Jesus, yea, come quickly. For Jesus' sake we pray, Amen.

## THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

April 12, 2015

No. 3771

Our Greatest Privilege

Rev. Rodney Kleyn

Dear Radio Friends,

The portion of God's Word that we will consider today is Hebrews 10:19-21. It is my plan to follow this message in the next four weeks with a message on each of the following verses through verse 25.

I want to begin today by reading this entire passage: Hebrews 19-25. This is God's Word:

Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God;

Those are the verses that we will consider today. Then the writer continues in verse 22:

Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling

of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

In these verses we have what I will call a New Testament call to worship. It is a stirring call. After in the first three verses, which we will consider today, the writer lays the foundation for worship and the privilege and the possibility of worship, he continues by saying, "Let us draw near...let us hold fast...let us consider one another...and let us not forsake the assembling of ourselves together."

Before we get to the verses that we look at today, I want to say a few things about the book of Hebrews. This epistle is written to Hebrew, or Jewish, Christians who are facing persecution and wondering why Jesus Christ has not yet returned. So they are tempted by the false teaching of Judaism to turn away from Jesus Christ and the gospel and to go back to their Jewish ways and practices. The temptation is to deny Christ and to recant their confession in

Savior who died on the cross to pay the price for your sins. It is to admit humbly that you are a sinner who needs Jesus.

Second, to profess your faith is to tell others about the work of God's grace in your life, in your salvation. Not only did Jesus die for you as a sinner to spare you the judgment of hell, but Jesus has come, by His Holy Spirit, into your heart to give you a love for Him, a hatred for all sin, and to make you heavenly-minded, to make you a creature of hope. And others can see this in you. They see that you struggle with sin. They see that you strive to live in godliness. They see that heaven is your home and your destiny—not the earth.

Third, to profess your faith is to live a life of obedience to God's Word before the world, so that others can see what being a Christian is simply from watching how you live. The gospel is something that permeates every aspect of your life—how you relate to and deal with others, how you handle stressful situations, how you live in your family and personal life, the ways that you speak, what you do for fun and entertainment, your approach to work and your boss, and so on. Your life agrees with your

profession. You practice what you preach.

Fourth, to profess your faith is to be ready to tell others *what* you believe. There is substance and content to the Christian faith. There are absolute truths and absolute morals. The Bible is the standard for what you believe and how you live. It gives the content of your faith. And, as one who possesses faith, you are ready to speak of this openly to others because you believe that

...others can see this in you....  
They see that heaven  
is your home and your destiny—  
not the earth.

God's Word is powerful, that, as you bring God's Word to others and speak to them from God's Word,

God may well use that word for their salvation.

Now, this profession is not something that you do just once in your life. To profess faith is a lifelong calling for every believer. That comes out in the verse here in both the positive and the negative—the positive call to "hold fast," and the negative warning to do this without wavering. Living the Christian life is a constant struggle between those two things. To waver is to be unsure. It is to falter and to hesitate. When the Christian life gets difficult, when we face resistance, when we have to bear a burden, when responsibilities press on us, then

keeps us in our salvation does not mean that we are passive, that we do nothing as Christians. Rather, the primary way that I know I am a genuine believer is that

I persevere in my faith. This is the clearest indication to you in your experience that you are a child

of God. God, by His grace, gives you the strength to persevere.

So, in the text, we have an urgent call to perseverance. “Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.” I say, that is an urgent call. The urgent call is this, or the urgency is this, that unless we have something to hold on to, we have nothing to worship. Unless we hold fast to our profession, we have no God to worship, we have no Jesus Christ to go through to God.

This book was written to early Jewish Christians who, under the pressure of persecution, were tempted to go back to Judaism. And the writer is saying to them, “No, we have something far superior. We have access to God through the blood of Jesus. We have Jesus as our permanent High Priest in God’s presence. So, let us hold fast to that profession. Let us persevere. Let us do that even in the face of persecution.”

And, as Christians, we need the same encouragement. In the Christian life there are disappointments, there are burdens. There is the threat of persecu-

tion. It is not popular to make a biblical confession of Jesus. So, in the same way, we are

tempted to draw back, perhaps to hide our identity, to forsake Jesus Christ. And God’s Word is: “Go on, endure, persevere in your faith. Hold fast.”

Now we see in the text that the writer assumes something of his audience. He assumes that he is writing to people who have made a profession of their faith. He is writing to people who call themselves Christian, who said at some point, “I do believe in Jesus Christ.” Maybe this describes you. You have made a profession but, like these early Christians, you are tempted to give up on that confession. You find being a Christian too difficult, too demanding. Then God’s Word comes to you and says, “Hold fast and don’t waver.”

What is it to profess your faith? First, it is to tell others, Christians as well as unbelievers, that you believe in Jesus Christ. You profess Him. It is to tell others about Jesus Christ, to tell them that He is your

...the primary way  
that I know I am  
a genuine believer  
is that I persevere in my faith.

the face of persecution.

The author’s main point in this epistle is to say to them, “No, don’t do that. Stay with Jesus Christ, because He is superior to all those Old Testament practices to which you want to return.” That is the whole message of this book—a comparison between the prophets and the angels and the priests and the sacrifices and Jesus Christ—and saying “Jesus is superior to all of these. He is the fulfillment of them.” So, this book is a beautiful description of the fullness of Jesus Christ.

That comparison is here in the verses that we consider today as well. In worship, we New Testament believers have an immense privilege that the Old Testament believers could only imagine. They could only imagine going into the holiest of holies. But we, we have access.

What is worship? We could define worship this way, as the fellowship of God with His people in Jesus Christ. From God’s point of view, worship is His work of gathering His people together so that they can enjoy His presence and so that He can find delight in them. So worship is the miracle of God bringing sinners into His holy presence. From our point of view, worship is the activity of drawing near to God as it is described in verse 22, and of assembling ourselves together as that is described in

verse 25. Worship is our greatest privilege as New Testament believers. The Hebrews, to whom this book is written, were tempted to forsake worship, to draw back from this great privilege. So when the writer says, “Having therefore, brethren,” he means his spiritual brothers and sisters, the family of God. Worship is the gathering of God’s family, God’s children coming together because the way is open for them to have this privileged access into the house of God.

Worship is described in the text in these words: boldness to enter into the holiest. Boldness is confidence, to come without hesitation. If you are a visitor or stranger coming to a house, you knock and you hesitate. If you are a little closer—a friend or a brother—maybe you knock and then you invite yourself in. But if it is your home, you just walk in. You do not even think about knocking or announcing your entrance. That is the boldness. As children of God, we have this boldness: we know that we are welcomed into God’s presence. We are comfortable to come to Him.

The word “boldness” here in the text does not really capture the entire meaning of the original word. Boldness puts the emphasis on how we feel. We feel bold. We do not fear. We do not have inhibitions. And that is certainly part of the meaning,

but the emphasis in the original is on the authorization, the right that we have, the reality of our being welcomed into God's house. We can have confidence and boldness only because we have the authorization. It has been given to us. We have a ticket, as it were, to come into the presence of God. We did not sneak in some back way. We fit. We belong. We are not out of place in God's presence.

That idea is developed in the illusion here in the verse to the inner sanctuary of the temple: the Holiest of Holies, the Most Holy Place. Having boldness to enter into the Holiest.

What was the Holiest? And what was in there? The Holiest was the place where God dwelt with His people in the tabernacle and later in the temple. In the Holiest was the ark of the covenant, which symbolized the presence of God with His people. And the Old Testament saints did not have access into the Holiest. There were consequences for those who dared to try to go behind the veil. You remember Uzzah, who touched the Ark as it shook on the ox cart, the Ark that belonged in the Most Holy Place. Or, you remember Uzziah, the king who usurped the work of the priests and tried to go in and offer incense in the Holy Place and he was smitten with leprosy.

As I prepared this message,

I read, about the temple ruins, that the place where the Holiest was is marked out with paint. And there is a sign: "Orthodox Jews, do not step here." The Old Testament saints did not have access, they did not have personal access. They feared to come into the Most Holy Place. And the only way for them to have any access was by a representative, a surrogate, a priest, a substitute. And only once a year, on the great Day of Atonement, after the high priest had made sacrifices for himself as a sinner and for the people, with the linen ephod on his shoulder that carried the names of the tribes of Israel, for a few heart-stopping moments, he would enter into the Most Holy Place, shielding his eyes from the glory of God. He would quickly do his work of pouring out the blood and he would get out of the Most Holy Place as quickly as he could. That was all the access the Old Testament saints had—through the priest, and only after a sacrifice, and only once a year.

And it is with that in mind that we have to read verse 19. We have boldness, we have authorization, to enter into the Holiest. That is astounding! The door is open into the presence of God. New Testament believers have free and open access into the Most Holy Place. Not, now, into a holy place made with hands in a tabernacle or

### THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

April 26, 2015  
No. 3773

*Encouraged to Persevere*  
*Rev. Rodney Kleyn*

Dear Radio Friends,

Several weeks ago we began looking at a section in the book of Hebrews 10:19-25. This is a section in God's Word to encourage New Testament believers in worship. In the first three verses (19-21), the writer lays the foundation for worship. On account of the death of Jesus Christ, he says, we have access to God. In verses 19-20: We have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." On account of the blood of Christ we can come to God.

Then, also, in verse 21 we have the privilege of having Jesus Christ as our Advocate, we have Him as our High Priest continually in God's presence. And on that foundation, there are three exhortations that follow. The first one is in verse 22. We considered that last time: "Let us draw near to God, that is, let us worship."

Today we look at the next one in verse 23, which is: "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised)."

In this verse we have, right alongside each other, complementary and corresponding truths of the preservation and perseverance of the saints. Perseverance is steadfastness and constancy. It is to continue in our faith through difficulty unto the end, to endure through trouble and trial. Every believer is called to persevere. That is here in the text in the words "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering."

Preservation is God's work of keeping us by His grace in our salvation until the day of Jesus Christ. It is God holding unto us, not letting us go—God seeing to it that nothing ever separates us from His love. And that is here in the text in the words "he is faithful that promised."

You see, these are not contradictory truths. The call to perseverance does not mean that our salvation depends on us, that somehow we have to keep ourselves in grace, that we have to be trying continually to keep God's favor. No, we are preserved by God in His grace.

But on the other hand, the fact that God preserves and

enter into the presence of God, not now with the cleansing of external washings but, as Ezekiel 36:25 puts it, this is God's Word in the new covenant: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you." What is that purification? The text mentions the purification both of heart (or conscience) and of body. The sprinkling of our heart from an evil conscience is knowing the forgiveness of our sins and pardon of our sins through the blood of Jesus Christ. Then our conscience is cleared. Then it no longer accuses us of sins. Having our bodies washed with pure water refers to the washing of our lives—something that we need repeatedly and daily, without which we cannot come to God. In Psalm 24: "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart." Only then can we worship. And this reiterates the sincerity that is needed as we come and worship—a conscience forgiven so that we can come in full assurance; a life of godliness and holiness. You cannot come from a life of unholiness and wickedness and sin and hypocrisy without repentance and expect that God will receive you in worship.

This, of course, takes us back to the foundations for worship in the previous verses. The

washing of our conscience, the washing away of our sins, the sanctifying of our lives is based on the foundation of the blood and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Our High Priest, who is pure, has made a sacrifice, and it is His holiness and His sacrifice that make possible our coming in worship. We come washed in the blood of Jesus.

And so, let us draw near, let us draw near to God, let us draw near to God in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Then we can be sure that God will receive us in mercy.

Let us pray.

Father, we thank Thee for the ability that we have to worship Thee as well as the right that we have to worship Thee. And we thank Thee that these are given to us through the blood of Thy Son Jesus Christ. We pray, Lord, that Thou wilt give us sincerity of heart as we draw near to Thee so that we seek Thy glory and Thy majesty in worship first of all, and find our delight in Thee, and in this way be lifted on high to Jesus Christ at Thy right hand in praise and worship. We ask it for Jesus' sake. Amen.

temple, but, as Hebrews 9:24 puts it: into heaven itself, the throne room of God, the very presence of God. That is our privilege in worship. We have access to God Himself.

Now, what does that mean for us in worship? It means, first of all, that when we worship, God comes and He meets with us. When we do this privately, when we read the Word of God on our own or with our families, when we pray to God—we come into the very presence of God.

And God comes and meets with us. We have unhindered, free, constant access. We do not wait for a priest to do it for us once a year. But we can pray without ceasing.

And that worship, that privilege, comes to its highest expression when we gather in corporate worship with other believers on the Lord's Day. That is what the writer to the Hebrews is aiming at in these verses. Worship is not only, and not primarily, something that we do as individuals. It is not just a personal thing between me and God. But it is something that we do with other believers—not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together. And the wonder is that in the

New Testament this does not have anything to do with the place (Jerusalem), or a temple, but we come as those who worship God in Spirit and in truth, as a body of believers. And God seeks such to worship Him. God invites them into His presence, and He speaks with them.

And this means that as we come in worship before God, we do not need to be fearful and timid, but confident and bold. A guilty, timid Christian should never think that God will not receive

him. Yes, we must come in repentance and humility. Having boldness and access does not mean that we come with arrogance and pride and self-confidence. The way to come into the presence of God is the way of repentance. But as we come in repentance, we can be sure God will certainly receive us. Jesus makes a beautiful illustration of this in the parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15. We are told in verse 17 that, as he was feeding the pigs in his rebellion, "he came to himself," that is, he came to an awareness of who he was as a rebellious sinner. And then he thought about his father's house and he thought about the love of his father and the good care that his father gave, even to his servants.

...as we come  
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but confident and bold.

And he went back home. As he went back, did he come looking in the windows? Did he come beating on the door? No, he came back home with this knowledge of himself and of his father's love. And his father received him. He was watching for him. He met him. He gave him the kiss of reconciliation. He put on him the best robes. He was welcomed as a repentant sinner into father's house.

And this is our great privilege as believers. The Old Testament saints, too, worshiped God. But God was behind a veil. It was as though God held them back, held them at arm's length. But now the door is opened. And we, as God's family are brought into His presence and there is intimacy and communion and fellowship and closeness.

How is this worship possible? The possibility and foundation for worship is described for us in three ways in verses 19, 20, and 21, all of them descriptions of the work of Jesus Christ and what He has done. And, again, in contrast to the types of the Old Testament. How do we gain access to God?

First, in verse 19, by the blood of Jesus. Having boldness

to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus. Blood here refers to death, to sacrifice. This was very familiar to the Hebrew Christians to whom this epistle is written. They were used to seeing sacrifices and this was always the necessary thing for coming into the presence of God. This was always a reminder to them that a price had to be paid for sin, that God was a God of justice. In the very beginning, when Adam and Eve sinned, what did God do? He drove them out of His presence and He placed a flaming cherub with a sword that flashed back and forth signaling not only that entrance was forbidden into the garden, but also that the way of entrance was through death. So the Old Testament saints made sacrifices of blood.

But Christ's blood was different than all of them. His sacrifice was superior. It was blood that could atone for sin. It was the blood through which they could gain access to God. When

*When the flaming sword  
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the flaming sword of God's wrath and justice was thrust into Christ's side on Calvary, that sword was quenched. This was the sacrifice that paid for sin. And by the blood of Jesus Christ, the wrath of God is turned away and we have access to God.

and who engages in conversation and friendship with her, but, as soon as he leaves the house, he is on the phone with another woman, he is involved in an extra-marital affair? This man does not have a true heart. So with us. Our worship must involve the whole man and our whole lives. And that sincerity is explained in the rest of the verse.

In the second place, as regards the manner of our approach to God in worship, we are to draw near to Him in full assurance of faith. That means, first, that we come by faith, not by works, not by self-righteousness, not by the worthiness of our strength or our works or even the worthiness of our faith; but we come by faith in the work of Jesus Christ alone and trusting the promises of God's Word. Faith looks away from self to God. We look to Jesus (Heb. 12), the author and finisher of our faith.

Then we can come in full assurance. What is that? That is absolute confidence, confidence not only in the truth of God's Word and the reality of God, but confidence concerning our own salvation and that God receives me as I come. This is what God wills for His people. A doubting heart is not a sincere heart. James says, "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God and let him ask in faith,

nothing wavering, because a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." When we have doubt as we come before God, then we question the power of the blood of Christ. Doubting is challenging the sufficiency of the cross and death of Jesus Christ.

So, we should come in full assurance of faith, looking to Jesus. Then we can truly worship God in gratitude.

Now, this is not to say that the insincere and the doubting Christian should not come, that the timid Christian should turn away. No, this is an encouragement to come more earnestly in the worship, to come in repentance and sincerity, and to come trusting Christ and the promises of God's Word.

Then, third, as regard to manner of our approach, the writer says here in Hebrews 10:22 that we should come as those who are washed and clean. Here the writer has in mind the Old Testament ceremonial washings that were familiar to the Hebrew Christians. Before the priest could come into the Holy Place, he had to wash himself with water, he had to wash his clothes, and then he would be sprinkled with blood and cleansed with the blood of a substitutionary sacrifice. And then he could come.

We are a priesthood. We

portant is that we worship the right God, the right way, with all our hearts.

And that is what is addressed in the rest of the verse—the *manner* of our approach to God, our preparation of heart and life. There are three things that are mentioned here.

First, we should draw near to God with a true heart, that is, with a sincere heart. Worship is not simply something that we come to do. Worship is not just a physical act. It is not sufficient to be at worship or to assume a reverent posture for worship as we come with fellow believers. It is not enough to worship simply with our lips, to go through the motions and the actions of worship. True worship involves the whole person—the heart as well as the mind, the soul as well as the body, what is internal as well as what is external. God can only be worshiped by us when our worship comes from the heart. Again, as Jesus said, “This people draweth near to me with their lips but their heart is far from me.” And that worship is vain.

That means for us that when we gather with God’s people in worship on the Lord’s Day and in the church, we have to be engaged in worship. We have to be thinking about what is going on. We have to work to avoid being distracted either by the things that are going on around

us or the things that are going on in our minds. Are we listening to the words of worship, or are we simply mouthing them, or hearing them as sounds? Young people, children, think about this. Are you simply sitting through church to endure it? Are you simply singing words without thinking about them when you gather with God’s people in worship? If that is so, that is not true worship of God. Jesus says in John 4 that God seeks such to worship Him who worship Him in spirit and in truth. To worship God in truth is to worship the true God as He has made Himself known in the Scriptures through His Son Jesus Christ. To worship God in spirit means that your spirit is moved by the Spirit of God so that it is drawn towards God and engaged. There is something mysterious that goes on in worship. Our hearts are engaged and knit together with the heart and mind of God. They are lifted in faith.

So, our heart must be sincere. It must be honest. There must be a genuineness and truth as we come to God. We can trick ourselves by being engaged in worship, but compartmentalizing our lives, having a heart that is not true to God, a life that is hypocritical, and then going through the motions of worship. That is not true worship. What would you say of a man who says to his wife, “I love you,”

The second foundation is given in verse 20, “by a new and living way, which he [that is, Christ] hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh.” And, again, this is the language of the Old Testament. The veil was a heavy curtain that closed off the Most Holy Place. The way was through the flesh of Jesus Christ, again, a reference to the cross. What beautiful words here. The death of Jesus Christ is described as the new and living way. A new way? In this sense, that it was far superior to the old way to come into the presence of God.

Yes, the Old Testament saints came in to God, but it was in His prescribed way through shadows and sacrifices and priests and incense. There were so many hurtles and obstacles. But now there is a new way, a way that was not possible before.

The word “new” here is literally, newly slain. It has the idea of a fresh sacrifice, a new kind of sacrifice. The old sacrifices, Hebrews 10:4 tell us, never took away sin. They always reminded the people of sin. But this new way, this way of the blood of Jesus Christ, has paid the price for sin—once and for all—and is ever effectual. And this is not only a new way, but a living way. That talks not only about the death of Jesus Christ, but also about the resurrection. The slain sacrifice is a living

sacrifice. Our way to God is not through dead sacrifices, but through a person who, once sacrificed, now lives again. Christ has overcome the payment, the punishment for sin. There was victory in this new sacrifice.

What a beautiful thought for these Old Testament saints in contrast to their dead animals. They thought, as they looked at the dead animal, another one tomorrow. Always a reminder that they had to look forward to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ who was to come. And now He has come as fulfillment. There is a new and a living way.

It is also a living way because, by this sacrifice, we too are made alive. A new living way. Spiritually, we are dead. We cannot respond to the spiritual stimulus of God’s Word. But God has come by His Spirit and given to us the life of Jesus Christ so that we have been made alive and respond to the gospel in faith and come to God. So there is a new and a living way.

Then we notice in verse 20 the word “consecrated.” He consecrated this way through His flesh. That is, He inaugurated it, He initiated it, He opened it up by His death on the cross. We are all familiar with the ribbon-cutting ceremony that opens a new way. By His flesh, Jesus Christ cut the ribbon, He tore, He rent the veil of the temple, He opened the doors of

heaven for us to come by this new and living way into God's presence. What a foundation for worship—through the newly slain and living sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we have the privilege to come in worship.

Then there is one more foundation, one more possibility mentioned in verse 21 when the writer says, we have a "high priest over the house of God." The idea added here is that we have a high priest still today. He continues as our high priest over the house of God. The most important part of the priest's work, especially on the great day of atonement, was not the sacrifice. That was the foundation. But the sacrifice was made so that the priest could go into the Most Holy Place. And it was there, in his work in the Most Holy Place, that he did the most important part of his work. He took the names of God's people on his shoulders and he offered incense as a symbol of prayer in the presence of God on behalf of the people. This was God's people being brought into the presence of God. The point is here, in verse 21, that Christ is our ever-living High Priest. He is in heaven today to make intercession for us. Sin in our lives always puts up a barrier to our coming to God. We close the door to fellowship with God. But when we sin, we have an Advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the righteous. And He

is there continually, interceding for us, opening, as it were, and holding open as it were, the gates of heaven to take us right into God's presence.

And we have this Priest over the house of God. The house is the place where a family lives. Jesus Christ is the Priest of the family of God and brings His people into the family-life of God. This is worship—God gathering His family, His children, into fellowship with Himself.

These are the beautiful foundations for worship here. We have access. We have authorization. The way is opened. Jesus Christ has paid the price. The barrier for sin is removed. We are alive and He takes us with Himself into Father's house.

How shall we respond? That is really the point of this section. What will we do with these wonderful privileges? In the following verses there is an incitement and an encouragement to use these privileges, to take advantage of them. Let us draw near, having this access to God. Let us hold fast, let us consider one another, let us not forsake the gathering of ourselves together. We are going to look more closely at those in the coming weeks. But the point here is that our great privilege, our right to come into the presence of God, should incite us to worship. Jesus Christ has

way to the heart is through the head, through knowing God, through knowing what He has said and revealed. And for our worship to be true, we do not go with how we feel or what we want, but what God has said.

Yes, feelings are important. But they follow. And it is as we delight ourselves in God as He has revealed Himself in His Word, that we will find our joy in Him. As the psalmist says in Psalm 34: "Taste and see that the Lord is good. Blessed is the man that trusteth in Him."

Our ability to worship God is dependent on what God has revealed of Himself. You cannot declare God's worthiness if you do not know Him and what it is that makes Him worthy of praise. So, God's Word should be central in all our worship.

Then the fourth principle is this: For our worship to be true, it must follow God's will for worship and not our own will. God is the one who prescribes the means and the method of how He is to be worshiped by man. Today, for many, worship has become a matter of preference. Human will decides how one will worship God or how the church will worship God. And different people have different things that they like. So, you are told, find a worship style that satisfies you. The problem with that, well, then worship is simply dictated by the will of man.

Then we can think of the words of Jesus in Matthew 15:8, 9. He says, "This people draweth nigh to me with their mouth and honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." That is astounding. Jesus said that they were worshiping, but it was vain—not because they were worshiping the wrong God, but because they were worshiping the right God in the wrong way. They did it according to their own dictates and desires—the commandments of men. And when He says their worship is vain, He means that it is empty and worthless, that they are wasting their time. We should think about that. God regards certain expressions of worship as vain and empty. Today, too often, the assumption is that if we offer something to God, He will accept it, especially if we do it with feeling. But the Scripture says, "No, He won't." We are not the ones who get to decide on worship, the criteria for worship is defined by God Himself. So, let us draw near to God.

Yet, we can get all that straight, so that we are worshiping the proper God with the proper elements, and still not worship Him. You could worship the right God, the right way, but merely be involved in external worship. What is im-

want or desire. Worship is not something that we can treat like a television program and we can turn it on when we want to or put it down like we would put down a book. But worship should be a preoccupation with God and His Word, with His gospel and with His glory. Worship is aimed first at God's pleasure and not man's pleasure. That is the key principle. When we leave worship, the question should not be: "Was I satisfied, did I like it?" But, "Was God magnified in the worship that we brought to Him? Was God magnified in the word that was proclaimed in the preaching of the gospel in worship?"

The second principle is this, that our worship is a response to God. That is the essence of worship. In worship, there is a holy conversation—God speaking to us, God speaking to us first, that is primary. And our active worship, our drawing near, is our side of the conversation in reply to God's speech to us. If I stand on the edge of the Grand Canyon or I stand by the Niagara Falls or I drive through a beautiful mountain range on a clear day, that arouses a response. Worship is something like that. We are stimulated and compelled by the beauty and the worth of God to worship Him. And do

we not see this over and over in Scripture. When God appears to Abraham or Moses or Joshua or Isaiah, when Peter is in the ship and Jesus stills the storm, or when John sees Jesus in Revelation 1—they fall down and they worship. Worship is a response to the glory of God.

And that fits the flow of the passage here. God, by the blood of Jesus Christ, has opened the way for us to come to Him. And so, in response, let us draw near to Him.

If our worship is a response, that means that we must know something first about the being of God that compels us to respond. So, the third principle is this, that God has spoken and what He has said needs to be central in the worship of the church. God has revealed Himself, and it is His greatness that makes us respond. In worship, we acknowledge what He has said and we praise Him. That is why God's Word and the preaching of God's Word should be central in the worship of the New Testament church. Without that, we cannot even worship. Without the truth and the gospel, there is nothing for us to respond to. So, human feelings and human opinions should take second place. The

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opened the way. Will we draw near (v. 22), or will we draw back, as it says in verse 38 later in the chapter?

When the writer to the Hebrews asks those questions, he has in mind the public worship of God's people. The gospel of what Jesus Christ has done for us has a way of elevating what the church does in public worship on the Lord's Day above everything else that we do in our lives. This is the central event of the Christian life. This should take priority over everything else that we do. And we worship God then, not out of a sense of duty, but in gratitude, filled with a grateful heart. This should be the chief delight of the Christian. Why did God create us in the beginning? He created us to glorify Him and to enjoy Him forever. And when we finally get to heaven, that is what we will be doing. But here is the

thing—we do not have to wait. Because of the blood of Jesus Christ, and because He is our heavenly High Priest, the way is open for us to worship God now.

May God deliver us believers from all apathy and so fill us with the knowledge of what Jesus Christ has done and the privileges that He has given to us so that we are moved, for His glory and for our enjoyment, to worship Him.

Let us pray.

Father, we thank Thee for the work of Thy Son Jesus Christ, for the way that He has opened, for the price that He has paid, and for the rich privileges that He brings to us as our Savior. Draw us, we pray, to Thyself, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

*...our right to come  
into the presence of God,  
should incite us to worship.*

**THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR**

April 19, 2015  
No. 3772

*Draw Near to God*  
*Rev. Rodney Kley*

Dear radio friends,

In our last message we began a series of messages on Hebrews 10:19-25. We looked at verses 19-21. The book of Hebrews is written to Jewish Christians who, in the face of persecution, were tempted to recant their confession and to go back to Judaism.

This epistle is written to encourage them not to draw back from Christ and the gospel, but to persevere in the Christian faith. In this section we see the superiority of worship for New Testament saints over the Old Testament. Whereas the Old Testament saints could not enter the Most Holy Place, we have boldness and authorization to enter into the holiest. Whereas the Old Testament saints had to come by a repeated dead sacrifice that could never take away sin, we have a new and living way through Jesus Christ. Whereas the Old Testament priest prayed in the innermost sanctuary built with human hands only once a year, our High Priest, Jesus Christ, ever lives in heaven to make intercession for us. And because of all of this, we have a privilege that the Old

Testament believers could only imagine—the privilege to come into the very presence of God. We are not held back at arms' length.

And it is with that privilege in mind that we consider today Hebrews 10:22: "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."

This verse begins with the words: "Let us draw near." This is an exhortation, a call to activity. But the writer does not stand outside and goad on those whom he calls to worship, but he calls them to join with him. "Let us draw near," he is saying. "I don't want to miss out on this either." There is a willingness, something like Psalm 122: "Let us go into the house of the LORD." You see, we need to be urged to worship. There are hindrances to our worship. Sometimes those things are external. We let external things get in the way of our worship: our work, our busyness, our pleasures, our delights, or maybe sin in our lives.

But the biggest hindrances to worship are not external, but they are internal. We have, by nature, a coldness in our heart towards God. And the Word of God here calls us to fight against that inward apathy to worship.

What is it to draw near to God? It is to approach to God, it is to go closer to and to meet with God. That is the biblical language for worship. In the Old Testament, the priests drew near to the tabernacle. In Psalm 73:28 the psalmist says: "It is good for me to draw near to God." In the New Testament, drawing near is used of prayer. In James 4:8: "Draw nigh to God and he will draw nigh to you." Or, in Hebrews 4:16: "Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace."

But here in Hebrews 10:22 and 25, drawing near is not just prayer but public worship—Let us draw near in worship with other believers, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together. What a beautiful description of worship—to draw near to God, to approach to Him, to come close. This describes an intimacy, a familiarity, a freedom, an openness as we come to God in worship. The openness of close friends, the openness of a child with his loving parents.

What is it to be near God? It is to know His love, to know forgiveness, to know that I am His child, to experience the priceless blessing of peace with

God, to have a peace within, to have peace with other believers. When we are near God, there is a joy in our soul that the world does not know and cannot give or take away.

But now, if there is one subject that divides the church today, it is the subject of worship. There is dispute over the elements of worship. There is personal preference that people have as they come in worship—should we worship traditionally or in contemporary style? People's feelings are on the foreground, so that worship is focused on desires and felt needs and we are told that we should be seeker-sensitive in our worship. Some view worship in the church as a performance, something that someone else does in front of a spectator audience, and so, as a worshiper, you watch, you are entertained. And all these are addressed in the words of the text here: "Let us draw near."

Draw near to whom? Draw near to God. I want to draw from this phrase four principles for worship, to direct us and to explain why, as a Protestant Reformed church, and as Reformed churches, we worship the way that we do.

First. Worship should be God-centered. It should be a preoccupation with God. Worship is not first for man's pleasure. It is not what we might