

Let Us – Hebrews 10:19-25

I am sure you have heard about a style of writing used regularly in the NT in which the indicative precedes the imperative. Now, despite being a pastor who studies and preaches, I am terrible with grammar, never mind the English language. I try to be proud of my grade of 51 in high school English, most of that low mark was due to my struggle with grammar ... well and spelling ... and at the time I hated to read. Let's just say, I had issues. Even though I still struggle with grammar, I now love it and appreciate the importance of it. In studying the Bible, we need to know why the indicative precedes the imperative. The indicative mood in Greek, is a verb which "presents the action or the event as something real or certain, in other words as an objective fact." So a statement of fact, this is the truth, reality, what you need to know. An imperative is a command, something given to us that we must do.

Now this is why the order matters, why it is important that the indicative precedes the imperative. The statement of fact of what God has already done for me and you always precedes what He commands us to do. We can do what we are commanded us to do, because of what He has already done for and in us. I want to show you this today, turn to the book of Hebrews, we will look at 10:19-25 in a sermon entitled 'Let Us', which comes right from the text, the commands to us. READ. PRAY.

For you note takers, we have two main points today, each having three sub-points, so let's jump in.

1. The completed work of salvation in Christ:

This passage has long been a favorite of mine, as it has such rich, encouraging, affirming theology in it, none more than in this our first point – the completed work of salvation in Christ. There are three sub-points here, given by the writer, to solidify the blessing of our salvation and all that God has done in and through Jesus Christ, before he then calls us to our part. Now having talked in my intro about indicatives and imperatives, I must say, the grammar used here in our passage, does not actually use the indicative mood nor the imperative mood, but I am not misleading you, as the way the writer structures this, the emphasis is the same, as he gives a clear statement of what God has already done for us in Christ Jesus, in our salvation, before he calls us to three injunctions to obey.

a. Since God has perfected us in Christ – 10:1-18

Our passage begins with the word 'therefore', and as a well taught congregation you know what we always ask when we see the word therefore in Scripture ... what is it ... there for? 'Therefore brothers', because of all that I just wrote to you in verses 1-18 and prior, because these things are true, then you must walk in a certain manner. Because of the fact, given in verses 1-18, all that God has done in you and to you and for you, by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ we can obey His commands. Just quickly let's skim through 1-18, vs. 4, the blood of bulls and goats in the OT never actually took away sin, this is why they were needed to be offered over and over without end. Vs 11, repeatedly the priests had to offer sacrifices, which never actually took away sin. But Jesus Christ, the true Lamb of God, the ultimate sacrifice and the ultimate high priest, He has made the once and for all sacrifice, so that sins are then fully and forever forgiven. Verse 14, "For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified." Praise God, by the blood of Jesus, His death on the cross, sins are forever paid for, perfecting you and me, the guilty, vile, rotten sinner, forever as saints. Verse 17, "I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more." Isn't that amazing news? God has already perfected you and I IF we are in Christ Jesus, saved by repentance and belief in Jesus.

‘Therefore’, or keeping with our next two sub-points, we could say ‘since’, since God has perfected us in Christ Jesus, we can obey what He will command us in verses 22-25.

b. Since we have confidence through Christ – 10:19-20

Since God has perfected us already in Christ Jesus, since that is true, and secondly, since we have confidence through Christ. Oh this is so wonderful, amazing. You and me, sinners, those who have chosen to sin, over and over and over, those who were born sinners, inheriting sin from our first father, Adam. We can do something no believer in the OT could do, no thing any Jew would ever even contemplate doing – we can have “confidence to enter the holy places”. If you know of the OT temple laws, there was the outer court of the temple, then the inner court, then the holy place, and finally through the thick curtain was the holy of holies, where the ark and the carvings of angels stood. Only once a year on the Day of Atonement could one priest, after extensive purification and sacrifices go into the holy of holies to offer a blood sacrifice for sins. And in the holy place, outside the holy of holies only the priests, cleansed and holy, could go in and worship and serve God. No Jew other than these few could ever go in there, look in there, even think of going in there.

But now every believer, every Jewish believer in Jesus, and every one of us who are in Christ Jesus, we can have confidence – word means ‘boldness’ – we can boldly go where almost no man had ever gone before, right into the very presence of Almighty God! How? “by the blood of Jesus”. What does that mean, well verse 20 tells us, “by the new and living way”. This is amazing and graphic wording. “New” = “freshly slaughtered” in the Greek, so we can boldly approach God by a freshly – new – slaughtered way, yet he also tells us this way is the “living way”!! How can a freshly slaughtered way be a living way also? Because Jesus died and rose again. One author wrote, “An uncrucified Savior could not have saved.”

c. Since we have a Great High Priest who is Christ – 10:21

In verse 21, we come to our third ‘since’ – ‘therefore’ representing our first, since we are perfected in Christ, verse 20, 19, since we have confidence through Christ, now in verse 21, since we have a great high priest.

Oh what a wonderful truth to every believer, “and since we have a great priest over the house of God”. The Jews had the Levites, their priests, but no Jew had his own priest, yet here, every single one of us, believers under the New Covenant in Christ Jesus, you have your own ‘great high priest’. ‘Over the house of God’, simply means over every believer. Hebrews 12:24, calls, “Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant”. Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 2:5, “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus”. Each of us sinners, has the perfect Priest, the eternal Great High Priest, Jesus Himself, mediating between us and our Judge. He intercedes for us, offering his blood, His body, His life, as the means to secure our forgiveness, our entrance, our access, our fellowship with God.

2. The on-going commands for every believer:

So since, “a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified” and since, “we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus”, and since, “we have a great priest over the house of God” then, because of these three realities, these three truths which function as indicatives, statements of fact, we know we can and must obey the three injunctions or imperatives which follow. Now, just as we didn’t literally have indicatives in the grammar, but the emphasis was there, so also we don’t have three imperatives in the grammar here. Yet, the way this is written, most commentators agree,

these are functioning as imperatives, commands for me and you to obey. Based on all that God has already done in and for me and you in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, we can and must obey these three 'let us' commands.

Now I should just say, the words 'since in verses 19 and 21 aren't actually in the Greek but are added by translators to help us understand the flow and emphasis, so also here in verses 22, 23, and 24, the words in our English Bibles 'let us' aren't actually in the Greek but have been added to help us understand what is being commanded in us.

a. Let us draw near in faith 10:22

First 'let us', let us draw near in faith, verse 22. Now this is so clearly a call to abide as per Jesus commands in John 15. To be a Christian, if you are claiming this morning that is you, this means He MUST come first, above job, career, money, self, spouse, children, everything and anything, Jesus is Lord, He is your entire life. So abide with Him, dwell with Him, make Him your first priority or "Let us draw near". I wonder, do you make it a priority every day to draw near to Jesus? You are commanded to, because and based on all that He has already done for you.

The writer of Hebrews actually gives us four conditions of how we are to draw near or abide with Jesus. Here they are:

1. 'with a true heart' – meaning real not fake, not pretend. Some of you are only pretending at the Christian life. You pretend to love and serve Jesus, but really you love self, you love your sin, you love this world, you love pleasure.
2. In full assurance of faith – it is by faith that we believe God exists, that He created all, that He sent His Son, Jesus, that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross in my place, rose 3 days later, ascended into heaven and that He and He alone is the way of my salvation. So we must draw near, to the One whom we can't see or touch, by faith.
3. Next condition – we draw near with our "hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience". When we are saved, at the moment of salvation, God gives us a new heart and he washes our conscience. The reference here, the Jews would have got it at they knew their OT and the Levitical system of washings around sacrifices. Aaron and his sons, would sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice on the alter, for forgiveness of sins. But we, we have the blood of Jesus, once for all, shed for our sins.
4. Final condition, "and our bodies washed with pure water". Again this would cause the Christian Jew to think of the OT process where the priest would strip down, wash his body with clean water, put on new clothes, washed in clean water, before going into the presence of God. I think with all the references to the OT here, this is not referring to water baptism as some think, but a reference to the fact that you and I are no longer sinners, but now saints. We are cleansed, washed, forgiven, made righteous in Christ Jesus. He does not look on my sin, but sees me as righteous, so I can draw near, in faith, boldly embracing my Lord and Saviour Jesus.

b. Let us hold fast in hope 10:23

Let us draw near in faith and then, let us hold fast in hope, verse 23! Draw near in faith and after you have drawn near, hold fast to Jesus with great hope. Oh beloved, do you see our Saviour's heart, draw near and hold fast to Jesus. When he writes about holding fast to the, "confession of our hope" this means to the hold fast to the truth of God, His Word, this Book, His revelation. To hold fast to Him, by holding fast to His Word in hope, when problems happen, when trials come, when suffering is our daily experience, when loss is crippling, we

can and must hold fast, cling to Jesus loved one. Do not let go, do not doubt, keep your hope, your confidence, your trust in Him and His Word strong.

The writer says to hold fast to this hope, “without wavering” = only used here, but pictures a pole or a statue, standing straight and tall, not bending or even swaying despite a heavy wind blowing. Oh that our faith would be such, not because of us, but because of who our faith is in, He is trustworthy, so we can hold fast to Him, to His Word, to His promises, to our hope, without swaying, without wavering. Why, “for He who promised is faithful”! 2 Timothy 2:13, “If we are faithless, he remains faithful— for he cannot deny himself.” 2 Thessalonians 3:3, “But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one.”

c. Let us stir one another in love 10:24-25

The third injunction functioning as an imperative is ‘let us stir one another in love’, verse 24. Now the wording used here by the writer is very common in the NT, ‘one another’. There are actually, from my research, 59 times those words are used in the NT, but there is some repeat, such as in John’s gospel, where 5 times he repeats ‘love one another’. There are, I think, 49 unique one another injunctions in the NT, to us as God’s children, to us as fellow family members. Each of these is an instruction, a command, of how we are to interact as family members, how we are to connect with one another in love. There is certainly no lack of Biblical instruction about how the family of God is to connect and treat each other and what our obligations are to one another. You cannot be a lone wolf, just doing your Christian life on your own, we are called to abide and to connect.

Here the writer uses the word ‘stir’. This is a strong word meaning = provoked. Often has a negative meaning as provoke does for us like – heated conflict, sharp disagreement, irritation. So taken positively, it is a strong word, involves deliberate action, doing something, pressing, strongly urging, not taking no for an answer. So stirring up one another for what? Two things, love – agape, the love of choice, of the will, not so much the feelings. So stirring them to love God and to love others and to ‘good works’ = good in appearance, as having an attractive quality about them. So a heart attitude of love, but not stopping there, flowing out of them into action, doing something, saying something. In other words, helping each other, when feeling down, discouraged, like quitting, exhausted, confused, helping one another to press on, not quit, not give up, to love God, love the family of God, and express that by doing good, real, practical, kind, helpful, generous deeds for others.

And he adds some help, as it seems many of his readers were quitting, where giving up, where discouraged. They were staying home, not talking to each other, not stirring one another up, not connecting, just leave me alone and I’ll leave you alone. So he adds verse 25, “not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, all the more as you see the day drawing near”. Some are in the habit of not coming to small group, to church, to get-togethers, they are not connecting anymore. They have a habit of disappearing, not good. This isn’t so much a command to meet every Sunday morning for church, but the focus is verse 24 where the injunction is, to understand our obligation to stir one another to love and good works.

The indicative before the imperative. My friends, you and I, we the church, can obey God in faith, in hope, and in love, because of what He has already done for us in Christ Jesus, in our salvation. So I encourage you today, draw near to Him in faith, hold fast to Him in hope, and stir one another in love. God will enable and empower us as we do this, so His church grows and thrives all for His glory.