

Hebrews 10:19-24
May 15, 2016

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: Picture a stretch of time in which life was very difficult for you. Maybe you felt nothing ever went right for you. During those times, were you drawn to church, or were you distancing yourself from the church? Why? [Listen to various reactions]

Does it (or would it) surprise you when you hear that some people distance themselves from the church when life gets too painful?

Hopefully it doesn't. We have been reading about a group of Hebrew Christians who early on in their newfound relationship to Christ was sold out for Jesus, but when the persecutions and sufferings started to take its toll, they desired to distance themselves from the church. So we have a strong biblical example of this, but let me share a professional observation.

Many of you know that I ran a Christian counseling ministry while I served in two Kansas churches. If there is one thing I have observed, it is this: Those who suffer depression find it very difficult to draw near to God, near the Bible, near a church. It seems counterintuitive. But their life through their lens looks so dark, that they question if God cares about them to help them. Because their spirit is so dampened, some even close to "broken," they can't see or feel the loving hand of God, who is sustaining them when they most need Him.

Transition: This author understood this because he was seeing this first hand! He feared that many of these Hebrew Christians would turn back to their old sacrificial system. If you've been studying this letter with us, you know that this writer has pounded the many ways that Christ is superior. He has been trying to convince them with logic why they shouldn't go back to their old ways. But he's also going to give them some ideas on how to overcome their discouragement so they can turn the corner. As we read this passage, I believe **all of us CAN encourage our brothers and sisters in Christ who have distanced themselves from God BY implementing the IDEAS the writer gives in this passage.** So I want us to look for these IDEAS so we can apply them in our church body. Let's begin.

BOOK (NIV 1984):

V.19:

- Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus,

V.20:

- by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body,

V.21:

- and since we have a great priest over the house of God,

V.22:

- let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

V.23:

- Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

V.24:

- And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q v.19: This verse alone introduces us to a major benefit that Christ made available to us under the New Covenant that is a game-changer. What is it? [Because Christ shed His blood for us, we can come with confidence before His throne with **boldness** into the Most Holy Place!]

Remember (v.20): Only the death of Christ could tear the veil (Mark 15:38) and open the way into the *heavenly* sanctuary where God dwells.

Q v.19-25: Do a quick scan of v.19-25, do you see some IDEAS to help others? [DEB – Hint at the phrase “Let us...”]

- ***Let us*** draw near
- ***Let us*** hold fast
- ***Let us*** consider one another
- ***Let us*** not give up meeting together

Q v.22: What does it mean to you to be able to “draw near” to God? [He is never far away. He has NOT distanced Himself from me, but rather made sure that I could approach Him with confidence anytime I want to or need to. This is like a child who always feels comfortable being able to approach his parent. He/she knows you’re always available to help and spend time with them.]

Q v.23: What does it mean to you to “hold unswervingly” to the hope we profess? [My hope can always be fixed on Christ because He is always faithful and trustworthy. To place my hope in anything or anyone else would never satisfy and ultimately draw me away from Christ.]

Q v.24: What does it mean to you to “consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds?” [Being in the family of God means we are to cultivate our relationship with our sisters and brothers. God never intended us to live on an island by ourselves. Nor is there any such thing as a “lone ranger Christian.” We are here to support one another, encourage one another to give our best to the Lord.]

LOOK:

Rhetorical Q: Has the Lord given you a name by chance who has distanced themselves from God and the church? ***Let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.***

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Vol. 2, pg. 315). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Christ's Sacrifice Opens the Way to God (Heb. 10:19–39)

No Old Covenant worshiper would have been bold enough to try to enter the holy of holies in the tabernacle. Even the high priest entered the holy of holies only once a year. The thick veil that separated the holy place from the holy of holies was a barrier between people and God. Only the death of Christ could tear that veil (Mark 15:38) and open the way into the *heavenly* sanctuary where God dwells.

A gracious invitation (vv. 19–23). “Let us draw near ... Let us hold fast ... Let us consider one another.” This threefold invitation hinges on our boldness to enter into the holiest. And this boldness (“freedom of speech”) rests on the finished work of the Saviour. On the Day of Atonement, the high priest could not enter the holy of holies unless he had the blood of the sacrifice (Heb. 9:7). But our entrance into God’s presence is not because of an animal’s blood, but because of Christ’s shed blood.

This open way into God’s presence is “new” (recent, fresh) and not a part of the Old Covenant that “waxeth [grows] old [and] is ready to vanish away” (Heb. 8:13). It is “living” because Christ “ever liveth to make intercession” for us (Heb. 7:25). Christ is the new and living way! We come to God through Him, our High Priest over the house of God (the church, see Heb. 3:6). When His flesh was torn on the cross, and His life sacrificed, God tore the veil in the temple. This symbolized the new and living way now opened for all who believe.

On the basis of these assurances—that we have boldness to enter because we have a living High Priest—we have an “open invitation” to enter the presence of God. The Old Covenant high priest *visited* the holy of holies once a year, but we are invited to *dwell in the presence of God* every moment of each day. What a tremendous privilege! Consider what is involved in this threefold invitation.

Let us draw near (v. 22). Of course, we must prepare ourselves spiritually to fellowship with God. The Old Testament priest had to go through various washings and the applying of blood on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16). Also, during the regular daily ministry, the priests had to wash at the laver before they entered the holy place (Ex. 30:18–21). The New Testament Christian must come to God with a pure heart and a clean conscience. Fellowship with God demands purity (1 John 1:5–2:2).

Let us hold fast (v. 23). The readers of this epistle were being tempted to forsake their confession of Jesus Christ by going back to the Old Covenant worship. The writer did not exhort them to hold on to their salvation, because their security was in Christ and not in themselves (Heb. 7:25). Rather, he invited them to hold fast “the profession [confession] of ... hope.” (There is no manuscript evidence for the word “faith.” The Greek word is “hope.”)

We have noted in our study of Hebrews that there is an emphasis on the glorious hope of the believer. God is “bringing many sons unto glory” (Heb. 2:10). Believers are “partakers of the heavenly calling” (Heb. 3:1) and therefore can rejoice in hope (Heb. 3:6). *Hope* is one of the main themes of Hebrews 6 (vv. 11–12, 18–20). We are looking for Christ to return (Heb. 9:28) and we are seeking that city that is yet to come (Heb. 13:14).

When a believer has his hope fixed on Christ, and relies on the faithfulness of God, then he will not waver. Instead of looking back (as the Jews so often did), we should look ahead to the coming of the Lord.

Pentecost, J. D. (1985). Daniel. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Vol. 2, pp. 804-805). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

D. The fourth warning (10:19–24)

In some ways this warning section is the most pointed and stern of all. It is also climactic. It follows the completion of the epistle's exposition of the high priestly role and service of Jesus Christ, so it gathers up the implications of these truths and drives them home with full force. But as usual, the writer mingled a solemn warning with his words of consolation and encouragement.

1. THE BASIC ADMONITION (10:19–25)

10:19–22. The central assertion of these verses is in the words, **Therefore, brothers** (cf. 3:1, 12) ... **let us draw near to God**. The intervening material, beginning with the word **since**, gives the basis for the author's call to approach God. The readers are New-Covenant people ("brothers") who should **have confidence** (*parrēsian*; cf. 3:6; 4:16; 10:35) to come into the very presence of God. This idea is enriched by the use of Old-Covenant imagery. God's presence in **the most holy place** and **the curtain** that once was a barrier to man is now no longer so. It symbolized Christ's **body**, so the writer may have had in mind the rending of the temple curtain at the time of Christ's death (Matt. 27:51). At any rate His death gave believers the needed access and route to God, aptly described as **new** (*prosphaton*, "recent," occurring only here in the NT) **and living**, that is, partaking of the fresh and vitalizing realities of the New Covenant.

But in addition, the call to draw near is appropriate **since we have a great Priest over the house of God** with all that this entails in the light of the writer's previous discussion. So the approach of believers should be **with a sincere** (*alēthinēs*, "true, dependable," from *aletheia*, "truth") **heart in full assurance of faith**. There ought to be no wavering in regard to these superlative realities. Rather each New-Covenant worshiper should approach God in the conscious enjoyment of freedom from guilt (**having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience**) and with a sense of the personal holiness that Christ's sacrifice makes possible (**having our bodies washed with pure water**). The writer's words are probably an exhortation to lay hold consciously of the cleansing benefits of Christ's Cross and to draw near to God in enjoying them, putting away inward guilt and outward impurity. These verses approximate 1 John 1:9.

10:23–24. This kind of confident access to God necessarily entails that believers **hold unswervingly to the hope we profess** with full confidence in the reliability of God's promises. The writer revealed in these verses that his concern for fidelity to the faith is not an abstraction, but a confrontation with real danger. There was an urgent need for mutual concern and exhortation (**toward love and good deeds**) within the church he wrote to.