

The Book of Hebrews

מְאֹנְשׁ מִנְמָה דָא מִנְהָת אַקְלָא
צְמַאַלְלָא נְתַחְצְרָה דְרַחְסָנָה סָקָה
אַחֲ פְּקָלָא תְּסִנְ סְרְבָּאַלְלָה
רַרְתָּא סָקָה תְּאַקְסָנָה דְמַמְצָה
תְּאַתְּפָלָשָׁה נְתַרְדְּנָה הַרְפָּרָה נְרַלְדָה
תְּאַגְּשָׁה רַלְדָה מְלַלְצָה סָסָה תְּלָשָׁה



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Outline of Hebrews

“Jesus is Better”

- I. Jesus Is Better Than the OT Prophets (1:1-4)
- II. Jesus Is Better Than the Angels (1:5-2:18)
- III. Jesus Is Better Than Moses (3:1-4:13)
- IV. Jesus’ Priesthood Is Better Than the Levitical Priesthood (4:14-10:18)
- V. Concluding Exhortations and Warnings (10:19-12:29)
- VI. Epilogue: Final Exhortations (13:1-25)

Outline of Hebrews

V. Concluding Exhortations and Warnings (10:19-12:29)

- A. Exhortation to Draw Near, Hold Fast, and Encourage One Another (10:19-25)
- B. *Warning*: No Hope of Forgiveness for Those Who Turn from Christ (10:26-31)
- C. Call to Persevere in Faith (10:32-12:3)
- D. Exhortations to Readers to Endure (12:4-29)

Exhortation to Draw Near, Hold Fast, and Encourage One Another (10:19-25)

¹⁹ *Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us **draw near** with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³ Let us **hold fast** the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but **encouraging one another**, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*

Hebrews 10:19-25 Introduction

- In the previous section, the author brought to a close a lengthy contrast between Jesus' ***new covenant***, Melchizedekian priesthood and the ***old covenant*** levitical priesthood.
- The section we will be looking at this morning functions as both as the **capstone** of that previous section and a ***transition*** into a series of exhortations that will take us to the end of the book.
- The author crafts this section around ***three*** exhortations:
 - *Let us draw near to God* (10:22)
 - *Let us hold fast to the hope we profess* (10:23)
 - *Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds... encouraging one another* (10:24-25).
- In this way, the author uses Jesus' new covenant priesthood as the foundation for motivating his hearers to action, while at the same time accomplishing a smooth transition to the practical exhortations found in Heb 10:26 and following.

¹⁹ **Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus...**

- “*Therefore*” indicates that the author is beginning a new section that is built on what has been said up to this point.
- The exhortations that begin later in this section (starting with “*let us draw near*” – verse 22) are grounded in Jesus’ priesthood and sacrifice.
- In fact, those realities are ***so important*** that the author pauses to rehearse them again before exhorting the readers.
- The readers here are addressed as “*brothers*”, a term of affection used by the author (cf. 3:1, 12; 13:22).
- They are not ***merely*** readers or recipients, or even friends. They are ***family*** – brothers and sisters of the author.

¹⁹ *Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus...*

- The readers “*have confidence*” – and it is a *particular kind* of confidence: a confidence to enter “*the holy places by the blood of Jesus.*”
- The word translated “*confidence*” could also be translated “*authorization*,” which emphasizes that we as new covenant believers have the right of access to God because of what Christ has done.
- The word translated “*holy places*” here refers to the *Most Holy Place* in the Jewish tabernacle which symbolized and pointed to the *heavenly* tabernacle – that is, to the very presence of God.

¹⁹ *Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus...*

- Under the **old** covenant, going into the presence of God in the Most Holy Place was **terrifying**.
- Nadab and Abihu were consumed by fire while offering incense (Lev 10:2), and ever since that time it had become a custom for the high priest **not to linger** in the Most Holy Place on the Day of Atonement because they feared for their lives.
- Indeed, as the author will later remind his readers, ***“our God is a consuming fire”*** (Heb 12:29)
- But **new covenant** Christians can approach God with ***“confidence”*** and be completely at home because of the situation created by Christ’s saving work.

¹⁹ *Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by **the blood of Jesus**...*

- Believers enter God's presence **only** through the “*blood of Jesus*”, as the author has argued earlier in some detail in Heb 7:1-10:18.
- Jesus is a Melchizedekian priest and far better than the Levitical priests, for his blood **actually secures** forgiveness of sins **once for all** and brings people into God's presence.
- Notice that confidence and boldness to enter God's presence does **not** stem from human virtue, but from God's grace.

²⁰ ...by the ***new and living way*** that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh...

- The entrance into God's presence that new covenant believers enjoy is a "***new and living way***."
- The "***new... way***" here is probably a reference to the ***new*** covenant.
- Jesus is the mediator of a new covenant which is better than the old one because it secures the forgiveness of sins.
- The word "***living***" probably refers to Jesus' ***resurrection*** and all that goes with that.
- Jesus is a Melchizedekian priest and a better priest because he is priest "***forever***" (Psalm 110:4).
- Jesus "***always lives***" (Heb 7:25) and has an "***indestructible life***" (Heb 7:16).
- Believers enjoy fellowship with God because Jesus has ***conquered death*** (Heb 2:14-15), and because he is the ever living one.

²⁰ ...by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through **his flesh**...

- This new way goes through “*the curtain*” that divided the **Holy of Holies** from **the rest** of the Holy Place or sanctuary.
- And now the author finds a rich symbolism in this reference to the curtain by identifying it with Christ’s **body** (literally, “*his flesh*”).
- The author is probably alluding here to the tearing in two of the curtain in the temple at the time of the Jesus’ crucifixion – an event recorded in **all three** Synoptic Gospels. (Matt. 27:51 and Mark 15:38 specify that it was torn from top to bottom, that is, by an act of God rather than men; cf. Luke 23:45.)

²⁰ ...by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through **his flesh**...

- The tearing of the curtain symbolized the opening of direct access to God's presence accomplished by Christ's sacrificial death on the cross.
- Thus, for our author, although he does not explicitly say so, the “tearing” of the Christ’s “*flesh*” in the crucifixion may be analogous to the tearing of the curtain in the temple.
- Because through his death, Christ opened the way to God's presence!

²¹ ...and since we have *a great priest over the house of God...*

- Our confidence in entering the presence of God should be enhanced by the fact that it is *there* where Jesus fulfils his ministry as “*a great priest over the house of God.*”
- The expression “*great priest*” is the literal rendering of the most common Hebrew title for the high priest; “*great*” is a comparative word, denoting “*the priest that is greater than his brothers*” (cf. Lev. 21:10).
- “*the house of God*” over which Christ exercises his high priesthood is, of course, the community of God's people (cf. Heb. 3:6).

²² ...let us draw near ***with a true heart*** in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

- The writer goes on to present two thoughts concerning the manner with which we are to draw near to God.
- First, we must come “***with a true heart***”.
- In the Scriptures the heart often represents the inner life of a person, which may involve one’s thoughts, will, emotions, or character.
- Therefore it is ***significant*** that the new covenant, with which our author has been greatly occupied, involves the writing of God’s laws on the human heart (Heb 8:10).

²² ...let us **draw near with a true heart** in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

- As the reservoir of inner resources (e.g., Prov. 4:23), the heart determines outward behavior.
- God sees the motivations and commitments of the human heart and requires that the worshiper's heart be in the right condition.
- So, we must “*draw near*” to God with a “*true*” heart – the word “*true*” connotes the idea of being “real, genuine, loyal.”
- Therefore, if we are to “*draw near*” to God, we must do so with hearts genuinely committed to him.

²² ...let us draw near with a true heart **in full assurance of faith**, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

- This genuine commitment is closely associated in this passage with a **second** thought on how we are to approach God: “*in full assurance of faith*” (cf. Heb 6:11), a phrase that can also be translated “conviction” or “certainty of faith.”
- “*Full assurance*” describes the clear-headed confidence and stability generated in true believers as a result of Christ’s work on their behalf.
- To many in modern culture the concepts of “*faith*” and “*full assurance*” **seem contradictory** since faith, **especially** in the context of religion, communicates a **blind leap**.
- But in the Bible, faith suggests a **firm trust** placed in God, who has shown himself faithful in his dealings with his people.

²² ...let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our **hearts sprinkled clean** from an evil conscience and our **bodies washed with pure water**.

- The discussion now follows with the **means** by which the heart is prepared and, consequently, the believer receives confidence to draw near to God.¹
- The two concepts of “**hearts sprinkled**” and “**bodies washed**” must be understood against the backdrop of the old covenant purification rituals.¹
- Saying that the body is “**washed with pure water**” is another way of describing the cleansing that comes through Jesus’ offering of himself.²
- The language of “washing” goes back to the OT where washings were required for cleanliness (Ex 29:4; 40:12; Lev 8:6; 11:40; 14:8-9; 15:5-6; 16:4, 24, 26; 17:5;22:6; Num 19:7-8; Deut 23:12).²
- These washings pointed to a more significant washing: the cleansing of sin accomplished through Jesus Christ.²

¹Guthrie, George H. *Hebrews* (The NIV Application Commentary Book 15) (pp. 445-446).

² Schreiner, Thomas R. – *Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary - Hebrews*; p. 318-319

²² ...let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our **hearts sprinkled clean** from an evil conscience and our **bodies washed with pure water**.

- Many commentators think there is a reference here to water **baptism** that symbolizes cleansing from sin.
- Others maintain that baptism shouldn't be read into the text here, claiming that the writer draws on Ezek 36:25-26 which speaks of the cleansing believers enjoy through the death of Jesus.
- But it seems natural that believers would think of baptism when the washing of the body is mentioned.
- Perhaps **both** ideas are included, for baptism as an initiation rite reminds believers of the cleansing received through the cross.

²² ...let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our **hearts** sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our **bodies** washed with pure water.

- The term “*bodies*” doesn’t mean baptism cleanses people **physically**.
- The physical washing of the body that takes place in baptism **symbolizes** the cleansing of the heart mentioned in the first part of the verse, which takes place when believer’s sins are forgiven.
- The “body,” then, stands for the whole person who stands before God clean because of the cleansing work accomplished in the cross.
- The author is hopeful that his readers will be confident and bold in God’s presence, knowing that their sins have been forgiven through Jesus Christ.

²⁴ *And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,* ²⁵ *not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*

- Finally, believers must “*consider*” one another for the purpose of stirring up, or “provoking,” each other to love and good works.
- The noun rendered “*stir up*” also appears with reference to Paul and Barnabas’s “*sharp disagreement*” over John Mark (Acts 15:39).
- The same verb is used to describe Paul’s outrage over idolatry (Acts 17:16).
- Our author’s choice of this term, expressing stimulus to the point of discomfort, is *itself* provocative!

²⁴ *And let us **consider** how to stir up one another to love and good works,* ²⁵ *not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but **encouraging one another**, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*

- “*Consider*” here has a personal object: we must direct our attention to fellow believers, who need encouragement in showing love through good deeds.
- Previously the readers had demonstrated love in serving others’ needs (Heb 6:10).
- Such compassionate care in action is the sort of sacrificial offering that all believers, as priests consecrated by Christ’s blood, must offer for the pleasure of God (Heb 13:16).

²⁴ *And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,* ²⁵ ***not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.***

- Community encouragement and love and good works can scarcely occur if believers cease to meet with one another.
- The fear of discrimination and persecution explains, at least in part, why some believers were inclined to abandon their meetings.
- Refusing to meet with other believers in this context signifies ***apostasy***, the renunciation of the Christian faith!

²⁴ *And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,* ²⁵ ***not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.***

- If believers stop meeting with other Christians, especially because they fear discrimination and mistreatment, they are, in effect turning against Christ.
- Apparently some were following this course of action, for they had made it a habit of not attending church.
- For the author of Hebrews, this isn't a light matter.
- Forsaking such meetings signaled great danger, for if they did not return to the assembly of fellow believers, they would face final judgment and destruction.
- Meeting together with other believers on earth anticipates the *final* gathering of God's people when we get to heaven.

²⁴ *And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,* ²⁵ *not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*

- A ***final*** motivation supports the call to encourage one another in our local gatherings: “*the Day*” is drawing near (10:25).
- “*The Day*” here depicts a coming day of ***judgment***.
- God often brings days of judgment in this life for nations and peoples, but God’s **ultimate** judgment comes on the ***final day of judgment*** when he will judge all mankind (Rev 20:12ff).
- The OT prophets frequently warned that “*the day of the LORD is near*,” often portraying this day as one of judgment to be dreaded (Isa. 13:6-9; cf. Jer. 46:10; Joel 1:15; 2:1; Zeph. 1:14-15).

²⁴ *And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,* ²⁵ *not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*

- NT authors also predict the coming of “*the Day*” of the Lord, now identified as the “*day of Jesus Christ*,” when he will reappear from heaven (Phil. 1:6; cf. 1 Cor 1:8; Phil 1:10; 2:16; Heb 9:28).
- This day will bring both judgment and salvation (1 Cor 3:13; 5:5; 2 Tim 1:12; 4:8).
- Therefore, its approach ***simultaneously*** sustains hope in suffering believers (Heb 10:34; 11:35-38) and issues a terrifying warning to those tempted to abandon Christ and his congregation (Heb 10:26-31).

Class Discussion Time



*Class Discussion Time

- Undoubtedly we have all met those who profess to be religious, or even a Christian, who will say that they don't need to attend church in order to have a good relationship with God. Based on what we saw in our passage today, what do you think the writer of Hebrews would say to those making this claim?
- Those who **do** attend church regularly may attend for any number of reasons. What reasons for attending church do you see explicitly or implicitly stated in the last portion of today's text (Heb 10:24-25)?
- ²⁴ *And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,* ²⁵ *not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*