

Lenten Devotional Reflection **26 March 2020 (Lent Day 26)**

Scripture: Hebrews 10:19-25 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

19 Therefore, my friends, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary 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 approach 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 to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, 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 approaching.

Message

This paragraph (really just one long sentence in the Greek) is the turning point in the letter to the Hebrews from doctrinal teaching to practical application. The “therefore” at the beginning of v19 refers back to all the truths that the author of Hebrews has written already, which he briefly summarises in vv19-21. Then in vv22-25, he calls us (his readers) to respond to that truth in the way that we live.

First, based on the truth of what he wrote in the previous 10 chapters, the author states something amazing as a simple matter of fact - Christians have complete confidence to enter into God’s presence. The Greek word for “confidence” could also be translated as “boldness”. Pause to consider how amazing that is! Do you have ‘confidence’ to ‘boldly’ enter into your boss’s (or professor’s) office without first asking permission by knocking on the door or even first setting up an appointment? And yet every Christian person – male or female, young or old – should have complete confidence to barge into the office of almighty God! What gives us such confidence? The fact that the blood of Jesus (v19) opened the way into God’s presence (v20), where Jesus now mediates for us (v21). Because by his death Jesus has accomplished everything necessary for us to stand before God, we can barge into God’s presence with as much boldness as a small child entering the family home!

Second, since we have such confidence to enter God’s presence, the author says that we should make proper use of it by (1) approaching God with true devotion, (2) holding unwaveringly to faith in Christ, and (3) encouraging one another to love and good deeds.

- 1) Approach God with true devotion (v22). What use is confidence and boldness to enter God’s presence, if we do not actually enter his presence? No good at all. If we believe that Christ has purchased us VIP access to the throne room of heaven by His blood, then we should take advantage of our VIP access! Pray to him alone, with others, and with the entire church. Earnestly repent and eagerly receive His forgiveness. Worship him in moments of silence, and in loudly sung songs. Whatever you do out of devotion to God, do it boldly with full assurance of faith!
- 2) Hold unwaveringly to faith in Christ (v23). The problem for the recipients of the letter was that they were being tempted to push Jesus aside and go back to all their religious

practices that made them feel comfortable. And some Christians today are tempted to push Jesus aside in order to say or do what feels more comfortable for them in modern society. But to push Jesus aside in search of something better, is to walk away from the one who has already opened the gates of heaven to us. There is nothing better! To leave him is to leave his sure and certain promise of access to God.

- 3) Encourage one another to love and good deeds (vv24-25). If Jesus can open the way to the presence of God by His blood, then we should be eager to help others find the same blessings that we now have and to persevere in it. Christianity is a team sport. We need other Christians to encourage and challenge us to live out the faith, and other Christians need us! If we stop meeting together (in person when we are again able, or virtually as we temporarily must do), we will quickly become spiritually sick. Our church family is one of the key ways that God helps us grow and keeps us returning to his presence.

Just like every good preacher, the author of Hebrews wants the truths he has declared about God to completely shape the way we live. That is genuine faith!

Reflection

1. How should the knowledge that you have complete confidence to enter God's presence change the way you pray?
2. Where do you experience temptation to push Jesus and his teaching aside in pursuit of something better?
3. When we are again able to gather as a church, how will you make sure that you are "not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some", but are ready to play your part on the 'team'?

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