

Confidently Confessing Christ

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[0 : 00] If you'd please take your Bibles and open to Hebrews 10. Hebrews 10. A famous Methodist evangelist named Peter Cartwright was known for his uncompromising preaching.

However, one day when the President of the United States, Andrew Jackson, came to Cartwright's church, the elders warned the pastor not to offend the President.

When Cartwright got up to speak, the first words out of his mouth were, I understand that President Andrew Jackson is here this morning. I have been requested to be very guarded in my remarks.

Let me say this. First, Andrew Jackson will go to hell if he doesn't repent of his sin. The entire congregation gasped with shock at Cartwright's boldness.

How could this young preacher dare to offend the President of the United States in public? After the service, when Andrew Jackson met the preacher at the door, he looked at him in the eye and said, Sir, if I had a regiment of men like you, I could conquer the world.

[1 : 29] For hundreds of years, the Jewish people followed the dictates of the laws handed down by Moses. They commemorated different events with feasts and festivals.

They journeyed to the temple for various sacrifices with the greatest being the Day of Atonement. For hundreds of years, the Jewish people lived in fear and uncertainty.

They did not perfectly keep the law. When they were unfaithful to it, God punished them. And when they did it, they did keep it, their heart was far from the Lord.

Their boldness was not really existent for them as it was for this preacher. They followed it as, if the preacher was following the words and suggestions of the congregation, it would have been mere ritual.

It would have been mere, we just show up to hear the Word of God, but not all of the Word of God. Only those things that make us feel good. Only things that make us feel comfortable.

[2 : 35] But, and we then become like the Israelites who had the law and did it, but then got complacent and far from God, and it became a ritual to them.

In Jeremiah 2.5, the Lord says, What injustice did your fathers find in me, that they went from me, and walked after emptiness, and became empty.

God, recognizing that his people were far from him, they had left him. In Jeremiah 3.10, he mentions that, Judah did not return to me with all her heart, but rather in deception, declares the Lord.

Recognizing that even those who seemed to come back to God, those who seemed to be serving him, were doing so deceptively, were doing so as a show.

Then after hundreds of years, God took on human flesh and was born in Bethlehem. Jesus the Christ, the light of the world, the bread of life, the good shepherd, the one and only to keep the entirety of the law in perfect obedience.

[3 : 46] The one given a body to be the final sacrifice for the sins of the world. I'd like to read Hebrews 10, verses 14 through 18. It's what we covered last week, just as a reminder.

For by a single offering, he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us. For after saying, this is the covenant that I will make with them, after those days, declares the Lord.

I will put my laws on their hearts and write them on their minds. Then he adds, I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more. Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

As I mentioned last week, some individuals have sought to rid Christianity of blood language. Speaking only about Jesus' love instead. But the blood of Christ is integral to Christian theology.

His blood divides the sheep from the goats, but it unites those that it is saving. And if we lose the language of blood, we lose the gospel. In the hymn, There's a Fountain Filled with Blood, William Cowper states it beautifully, There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Emmanuel's veins, and sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.

[5 : 11] It's exactly what the author of Hebrews was communicating in chapter 10, verse 18. When he says, Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

The stain of sin has been removed because of the blood of Jesus. And it's this fact that ought to bring boldness to our preaching. It is this fact that caused Peter Cartwright to say so boldly to the President of the United States, Unless you repent, you are going to hell.

And it's this fact that ought to cause us to preach Christ crucified. As we continue in chapter 10, we come across three expressions that, If followed, will help us confidently confess Christ.

And that's really what we want to do, right? That should be our aim and our goal is to live in confidence and boldly proclaim the truth of the gospel. To boldly share the love of Jesus.

Each of these expressions is bolstered by what we see in Hebrews 10, verses 19 through 21.

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is through his flesh, and since we have a great high priest over the house of God, That's the introductory statement to these three expressions that we're going to look at.

[6 : 50] The word new in verse 20 is used only one time in the New Testament. And its original meaning alludes to something freshly slaughtered. That would make sense because we're talking about the sacrifice of Jesus.

So Jesus is the new way. He's the freshly slaughtered sacrifice who opens the way to God. And his death conquered death and gives life to those who trust and believe in him.

His death is the only way to life that is everlasting. And since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, and he is our great high priest, let us draw near.

This is the first of the three expressions that he gives us. Let us draw near, verse 22, 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.

Unlike those who partook in the tabernacle and temple rituals of the law, we who are in Christ can boldly come near to God. I should have been better prepared and had that picture up of the tabernacle.

[8 : 06] But you remember there are different areas. There's the courtyard, there's the holy place, and there's the holy of holies. And the holy of holies, only one person could go in. One time a year on the day of atonement.

And in the holy place, only those Levitical priests who were given the priesthood through their birthright could enter in that place. Then you have the courtyard, where everyone could come, and they brought their offering, and they offered it up on that altar there.

But it was like the closer they got to God, the more limited people were. But here in the new covenant, under Jesus, we all have bold access to God.

We can come near to Him because of the blood of Jesus. Yet we can only do so with a true heart and full assurance of faith.

That is to have a bold confidence that God has provided full access to His presence through Christ alone. It's a type of faith that's genuine.

[9 : 12] It's without hypocrisy or ulterior motive. That means we don't just confess to believe for the sake of fire insurance or to get our get-out-of-hell-free card.

There's no prayer of words that you can repeat that activates this ability in your life. There are no words you can say that make you go from being unsaved to saved or from being in your sin to being in Christ.

Rather, it's about believing and confessing. In Romans 10.9, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is the Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

The thing that you confess with your mouth, it's not a repetition of words. It's not the sinner's prayer that you pull out and you read it and repeat it. But it's about what you truly believe in your heart about Jesus that comes out of your mouth.

And yeah, when somebody is at that point and they've come to the realization that Jesus is the Messiah and He's the one in whom we need to put our faith and trust in, yeah, some people need

some guidance on how to pray.

[10:33] You know, how do I pray? What do I pray? And what a study that is in Scripture. Study all the prayers in Scripture and you'll see that there is no form to prayer.

There's no one way that it's done. But ultimately it comes from the heart of belief and trust to the one in whom you trust and believe. So we have confidence to approach the Lord because of what we believe in and in whom we trust.

When we come to God in faith, our hearts should not only be sincere but should also be sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. This imagery is taken from the sacrificial ceremonies of the Old Covenant.

The priests were continually washing themselves in the sacred vessels in the basins of clear water and blood was continually being sprinkled as a sign of cleansing.

But all the cleansing, whether with water or blood, was external. Everything they did was a shadow of something greater. And only Jesus can cleanse a man's heart.

[11:44] By His Spirit, He cleanses the innermost thoughts and desires. He, only He can do what needs to be done for man.

Only He can forgive and remove sin from the life of an individual. Only He can change the heart of an individual. Only He can bring about the proper change in somebody's life.

And James 4.8 tells us to draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

James recognized people. You're sinners. You're double-minded. You're not fully committed. But draw near to God and He will draw near to you and these things can happen.

The cleansing can take place. I like what Spurgeon said in his commentary in this section. I'll put it up there as I read it. Spurgeon says, Is this not a delightful thought?

[12:52] That when I come before the throne of God, I feel myself a sinner, but God does not look upon me as one? When I approach Him to offer my thanksgiving, I feel that I am unworthy in myself, but I am not unworthy in that official standing in which He has placed me.

As a sanctified and perfect thing in Christ, I have the blood upon me. God regards me in my sacrifice, in my worship, and in myself as being perfect.

Not because Spurgeon thought anything special about himself, but he recognizes the blood of Christ applied to him that Jesus, or the blood of Christ that's applied to him that God sees him through.

And that's where his perfection comes. Spurgeon understood he was a sinner. But he also understood he was saved by grace through the blood of Christ. The second expression given to us here in Hebrews 10, so first, let us draw near to God.

Second is, let us hold fast. Let us hold fast. Verse 23. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.

[14:08] To hold fast the confession of our hope, it's the human side of salvation and sanctification. It's not something we do to keep ourselves saved, but it's evidence that we are saved.

We are to lay hold of Christ and never to let go, even in the slightest. No persecution, whether it's real or perceived or feared, ought to cause our passion in Christ to digress or to lessen.

God is faithful to provide strength and stamina for endurance. We looked at that in James when we were studying that last year. God is faithful to provide the strength and stamina in order to endure the hardships and the trials and the persecution and the ridicule and whatever it is you receive for being a Christian who boldly proclaims the truth of the gospel.

When you talk about Jesus and his death and his love for people and their need to be saved, their need for their sin to be forgiven, people are not going to like it.

They hate to hear that. And that's why over and over and over again, you hear about people who are ridiculed or mocked, or you can even go on Facebook if you're still on that platform.

[15:33] I'm thankful I got off that months ago. But you go on Facebook, anybody who is seemingly, you know, putting out their faith and trust in Jesus and putting out scripture verses, if they have any friends who are not saved, are probably going to have some reactions that are negative, maybe awkward.

Or if you go to boonies, or you go to some local establishment, and you're talking about, you know, Jesus' love for an individual, or you ask if you could pray for somebody, they might give you a funny

look.

And you have this perceived persecution, or ridicule, or whatever you want to call it. God provides the strength to get through that, and the stamina to endure it.

And then you pick up a voice of the martyr's magazine. And then you read about real persecution. Not to say what we have here isn't a type of persecution. But chances are you're probably not threatened.

Your life is probably not threatened. Your livelihood is probably not taken. Your business is probably not burned down. Your home is probably not destroyed. If you talk about Jesus and the cross, we see these persecutions in Middle Eastern countries, North African countries, all these countries run by Muslim law, where they are interested in killing Christians.

[17:00] I have a book on my shelf. If anyone is interested in taking it and reading through it, the book is called I Am N. And it is one account after another of this severe persecution in the lives of Christians who dare to proclaim the truth of the gospel and the love of Christ in countries where they hate Jesus and they hate those who proclaim him.

In his strength, we hold fast. Hebrews 10, verse 23, in the Amplified, I wanted to read this for you. I thought it was very thorough.

Verse 23 in the Amplified Bible says, So let us seize and hold fast and retain without wavering the hope we cherish and confess and our acknowledgement of it.

For he who promised is reliable. He's sure and faithful to his word. One way that we can hold fast well is to keep in mind what Jeremiah writes in the book of Lamentations.

Lamentations 3, verses 22 through 24. The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases. His mercies never come to an end. They are new every morning.

[18:16] Great is your faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, says my soul. Therefore, I will hope in him.

When we recognize that God's mercies are new every morning, that he is faithful to us, that he is our portion, then we can, every moment, at every step, at every stage, and every trial, say, I hope in him.

The Christian holds on, not by his own tenacity, but by God's faithfulness. We will persevere until the end because God does not abandon his children. And God has proved faithful to his promises throughout Scripture.

The final expression here in Hebrews 10, verses 24 and 25, let us build up. Now that term, build up, is not in the verse.

It was the best way I could summarize it and keep the let us's short for you to remember later on, hopefully. Let us build up. Let's read verses 24 and 25.

[19:24] And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 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. I kept this section short, but my thoughts on it are not.

So I'll try to stick with what I've got and not go off too much. We cannot have confidence and full assurance of faith apart from the church.

We cannot endure in isolation. Each Christian desperately needs the body of believers for encouragement. Every opportunity of coming together and enjoying fellowship and faith and hope must be welcomed and used for mutual encouragement.

Unfortunately, sinful tendencies have infiltrated the walls of the church building. Every Sunday morning, the gossip train chugs in, delivering its passengers for the wave of judgmental glances and opinions and faithfully delivers them home or to the next stop for further evaluation of those thoughts.

[20:42] Many churches, many churches, many people in many churches walk through the door are not seeking to come humbly before God and give Him praise and worship, but are looking around at the individuals in the pews and making judgmental thoughts.

I can't believe they're wearing that. That person looks like they were here or there, that they're on drugs or whatever. Whatever the judgmental thoughts are that enter the minds of an individual.

And then through that, hurtful attitudes and words, sometimes in the name of being well-intentioned, come out.

And people are hurt. Some people, it's their first experience in church, and they feel it and know it, and they leave never to return, never to darken the door of a church building, never seeking to, or seeking never to be in the company of church people because of their experiences.

It's interesting. So I was going through a trial one time in life, and I was given a book to read. And it helped me through it a lot.

[22 : 11] I learned, again, a lot of wisdom from the book. The name of the book is called Well-Intentioned Dragons. It must have been written in the 70s or 80s or something.

But when I read through that book, there was just so much wisdom I gleaned from it, and so much I was like, wow. It's not just a one church, one person experience.

But it's all around. Well-intentioned dragons, people who think they know better and can tell you, you know, how to do things better and to be better and how to be a true Christian.

Well-intentioned in their own minds, but really hurtful and destructive in the way they go about it.

Have you considered the testimony that this church has?

Have you thought about it? Have you prayed through it? Have you inquired with people the testimony that First Baptist Church of Shapley has in Shapley, Maine?

[23 : 23] If you haven't, I encourage you to seek it out. Talk to people in the community. Ask them, what do you think of that church down the street?

Now, if you're from around here and you've lived here your whole life, they may know that you go there and may say, hey, you know, we love that church. It's great, you know, and all that stuff.

But tell them to be honest with you. Yeah, I mean, I will be honest. If Clinton came to me as a business owner and asked me what I thought of the church down the street, I know he attends that church and he is bigger than I am.

I am probably going to be intimidated to say, oh, I love that church. It's so wonderful. But I also know he is a gentle individual who wants honesty.

And so if he says, no, Ken, you're safe. What do you really think of the church? Or what type of testimony does that church have in the community?

[24 : 31] It's something we should be cognizant of. We should really be checking out. Like I said, I have a lot of thoughts on this. I'm going to continue on. So the reality is that we're called to be the hands and feet of Jesus.

We're to visit orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

We need to choose to be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you.

The way that we do this is both by assembling together and encouraging one another in our testimony to the world. So let's gather on Sunday morning. Let's meet together at Aroma Joe's or local 130.

Let's talk to or text one another for mutual encouragement and affirmation. Our communication as the body of Christ should not begin and end right here, right now.

But it should go beyond these walls and beyond this people. We should be encouraging one another, loving one another, affirming one another, checking out, hey, what's going on?

[25 : 38] Finding out what's going on in people's lives, one another's lives and how are they impacting the community. I found out a couple days ago through a text message that Daniel is no longer working at the shipyard.

I had no clue that was coming. So I took the time when I saw him yesterday. I had a chance to talk to him briefly about what's going on, what's the plans and he told me what was happening and I'm really excited. Now I can pray for Daniel and his family in the situation they're at because I recognized there was a change and there was something going on and I wanted to see what my brother was up to.

Yes, he's family and I love him for that but he's also part of this family and I love him for that too. So as you hear about people's changes and things going on in their lives, encourage them, pray for them, be there for them.

Those who neglect assembling together cut themselves off from the very means whereby Christ feeds, assures, and protects his people. To say that I can do this alone is to defy the very command of Christ to gather.

So in conclusion, we have confidence to approach God through Jesus Christ's priestly work and because of this confidence, we can encourage one another to grow in assurance as we anticipate

Christ's return.

[27 : 02] Let us draw near to God and be cleansed. Let us hold fast to our confession of faith. Let us build up each other through our gathering. I end with reading 2 Peter chapter 3 verses 8 through 11.

But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years is one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief and the heavens will pass away with a roar and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved and the earth and the works that are done in it or done on it will be exposed.

Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness? Father God, I thank you for your word.

I thank you for the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I thank you for the love that you share and show through your word that you equip us and enable us to go and share that love and the message of hope to a lost and dying world.

[28 : 25] Lord, you do not call us together to be judgmental and pick on and nitpicky about each other's lives, but Lord, you draw us together as broken, hurting, discouraged, depressed individuals, living in a sin-cursed world in need of your love and forgiveness and grace.

And Lord, I pray that as we gather together, as we have opportunity to do so, that we would encourage one another. We would be kind to one another. Lord, that together we would seek to visit the orphans and widows in their distress, but we'd also seek to be unstained by the world. Lord, I pray that as we contemplate these things, Lord, as we think on these things, Lord, as we engage in our community, help us to be careful of our testimony, but to be aware of the testimony that this church body has.

And Lord, if it's anything less than loving, caring, and showing your love to people in this community, then Lord, forgive us for that.

And help us to be faithful, to share your love, to show it, to encourage and engage with people, Lord, that maybe we feel a little uncomfortable about, but you died for them, and you love them, and you're calling them to yourself.

[29 : 59] How about to start here, and go from these walls, out into the community, for your glory. Amen. Amen.