

Three Believing Requirements from Two Basic Facts

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[0 : 01] Let's turn this evening to the passage in Hebrews that we read, Hebrews 10, and tonight we're going to look at verses 19 to 25.

As we prepare our minds for the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, next Lord's Day and the related services, we want to begin this evening by looking at this passage as it sets out some of the main concepts of our approach to God and of the Christian life itself as it is lived.

The exhortations that we find in Hebrews, as you know, as we've seen quite often, are exhortations that are interspersed throughout the letter with the doctrinal passages.

And there's a tremendous benefit in just studying how the writer to the Hebrews combined the doctrine and its application in this great letter.

Because the doctrine, as you know, is mostly about the Lord Jesus Christ as our high priest, but also as our sacrifice. Remember that he is both the offering and the one who offered it.

[1 : 12] They are combined in himself as in his person. He went in before God with his own blood, as it's put.

In other words, in his own death, he exercised the office of a high priest, but also was the sacrifice that he willingly offered when he offered himself.

And as these great truths are set before us in different ways in the letter to the Hebrews, you find such passages as this between them, very often beginning with therefore.

And that really tells you that here's the writer coming now to draw practical Christian conclusions from these great doctrines that he's been setting out about Jesus, about his sacrifice.

These are the things that it is applied to. These are the practical outcomes or the requirement, as we'll see tonight on our part, in response to what God has already done in him.

[2 : 13] We could say that this passage is about three believing requirements from two basic facts. Three believing requirements from two basic facts.

You begin with the two basic facts. The fact of our confidence in approaching God. We have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus.

That's the first basic fact. The second basic fact is that since we have a great high priest over the house of God, and it's from these two basic facts, and they are facts, things which have already been established, which are already true, completed.

Therefore, he's saying, having these, seeing these exist, the three believing requirements are that we draw near, let us draw near with our true heart, in full assurance of faith.

Secondly, let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering. And thirdly, let us consider one another to stir up to love and to good works.

[3 : 28] Three believing requirements from two basic facts. Let's look at the two basic facts, first of all, in verses 19 to 21.

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus. Now, of course, that takes you back to the Old Testament, doesn't it? It takes you back to the way in which the priesthood was exclusively those who went in before God with sacrificial offerings on behalf of the people.

And, of course, the high priest, as far as the Holy of Holies was concerned, the very innermost part of the sanctuary or the temple, as it became as well, as God had patterned it for them, as God had instructed how they were to build the sanctuary, the tabernacle firstly, and then the temple was very much in the same image as that.

The inner part, as you know, was the Holy of Holies, where on the Day of Atonement, once a year, the high priest alone went into that place with the offering of blood to make an atonement for the people.

He offered for himself firstly, but he also especially offered for the people. He was going in there with a sacrifice that was to make an atonement for the people.

[4 : 54] It was itself a type of a greater sacrifice. It was an illustration. It was something that was done, actually, but their minds by faith were lifted up to something that God was going to provide that fulfilled these things.

These were just the anticipatory things. And as we read there in the earlier part of the chapter, these sacrifices themselves could never do away with sin.

They could never deal with sin adequately. They were just a representation of how sin was going to be dealt with when that moment came in the person of Jesus Christ.

But he says, now, that has happened. We have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus. And you notice how he's putting it.

It's not simply that certain people are allowed to go into the holy places, even the holy of holies, the very presence of God. We have.

[5 : 58] We who are believers have. We who trust in this blood, in this Christ. We have confidence or we have boldness to enter into the holy places.

What was it that prevented the people? Why were they not allowed to come into the holy of holies or into the place where sacrifices were made in the Old Testament, all the days of the Old Testament?

What was it that prevented that? What stood in the way? It was sin. That's what always stands between us and coming before God with confidence.

And if you tried in the Old Testament to come before God in a presumptuous way, in a way that was challenging the way that God himself had chosen, then sometimes God actually exercised his anger and exercised his displeasure by even killing such people.

The sons of Aaron, in fact, were one example. Because God taught the people all the way through the Old Testament that sin needed to be dealt with his way if people were going to have it removed and be able then to come into his presence.

[7 : 13] Well, he's saying we have the confidence. We have no boldness. We have not only a facility and an opening into the presence of God, but we have the boldness to do.

We have confidence that when we come, God is not going to hold our sin against us and say, you can't come in here until this sin has been dealt with. That sin has been dealt with by the blood of Jesus, by the death of Jesus.

We have confidence to enter by the blood of Jesus. That's why when we come to remember the Lord's death, that's one of the primary things we remember.

As we gather at his table, we come to remember this blood of Christ, this death of Christ, that has facilitated our coming, our entrance, our approach to God right into the presence of God because of him and through him.

And of course, that means that we come on the basis of Christ's own acceptance. Cast your mind back to chapter 9, briefly in verse 23. You'll find that it was necessary, he says, for the copies of the heavenly things, that's including the Old Testament sacrifices, to be purified with these rites.

[8 : 31] The tabernacle is itself a copy or an image of God's residence in heaven. It was necessary that they be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

For Christ has entered not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.

Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly as the high priest, but as it is, he has offered, appeared once for all, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

In other words, Christ's entrance into the Holy of Holies is itself indicative of God's acceptance of him as the great offering for sin that was necessary for our entrance.

And when we come before God, and when we draw near to God, when we approach God, when we have our fellowship with God, when we pray to God, when we worship God, when we are conscious that we're drawing into the presence of this holy God, we're conscious that we're not coming because of anything that we are in ourselves, otherwise we'd be banned.

[9 : 46] And we would be overtaken by the fire of his wrath before we got very far. We're coming on the basis of Christ's acceptance to God.

And because we're in him, as we come to God, we come by his blood, therefore his acceptance becomes our acceptance. And his acceptance becomes our boldness in drawing near.

We don't come wondering if we're going to be received. We don't come wondering if we're going to be sent away. We don't come fearing that somehow God is not going to approve of us and not going to accept us as we come.

We come with confidence. Why do we have confidence? We have confidence because of all that we see and have and possess in the blood of Christ, in the death that atoned for our sin.

Now notice how he's putting it here, by this new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain. Again, you see the Old Testament imagery is there. The priest went in, the high priest, through the curtain that entered into, by which he entered into the Holy of Holies.

[10 : 58] As he went through that curtain, so he was in the presence of God, figuratively but spiritually too, in a way that represented Jesus going in with his blood into the very presence of God by his death.

And until that high priest came out and was seen again by the people, they could not assume that God had accepted the sacrifice.

It was his reappearance. It was being again revealed to the people as he came forth. Not out of the Holy of Holies, but out of the whole of the ambience of the sacrifices as he came to the place where the people would be.

Then the people could say, the Lord has accepted the sacrifice of atonement. We have been represented. And again, we are approved of through what this represents.

And when Jesus died, you remember what happened. The curtain in the temple, this heavy curtain that no human hands could tear apart, this curtain just as Jesus died, the gospel writers tell us that it was torn from top to bottom.

[12 : 24] Wasn't somebody coming or a number of people from the bottom of the curtain and rending it so that this rent then went all the way up to the top? It was went from the top. It began at the top of the curtain.

The hand of God, if you like. The effect of Christ's death was to open up the way into the presence of God. And it's put here in a remarkable way, through the curtain, this new and living way, he says, that he opened for us through the curtain, that is to say, through his flesh.

Now we could press that too far, but it is saying to us that the way into God's presence for us was through what happened in God's Son in our nature.

It's the incarnational death of Christ. Death as it took place in the experience of the Son of God in our human nature.

It's not simply a matter of his body only or his human nature only. He died. This Son of God in our nature experienced death.

[13 : 39] He gave himself through that nature. Through this offering of himself in our nature, we have had that way opened for us into the presence of God.

That's why it's called a new way and a living way. It's new because it's no longer a thing like a curtain. It's a person. And it's living because it's the person of Christ.

The person of Jesus, now risen from the dead, but the Jesus who went into the presence of God with his own blood and lived and came out with all these benefits for his people.

Now he says, therefore, having confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus.

That's the first basic fact. We have confidence. You see, he's not saying we're going to have confidence one day. He's not saying we won't have confidence to come before God until we get to heaven and reach a state of perfection.

[14 : 48] What he's saying is having this confidence. We have this confidence. God has given us this confidence. It's not confidence in yourself. It's not as if all of a sudden you were worthy of what Christ did for you.

That's not what your confidence is. It's not self-confidence. It's not confidence in our own ability. It's not confidence in the strength of our faith. It's not confidence in any of those things.

But it is confidence in the blood itself. We have confidence to enter by the blood of Christ. That's why we come as he's going to say to us in a minute.

First, that's the first basic fact. The second one is having, since we have, a great high priest over the house of God. Remember back in chapter 3 of Hebrews that Moses and Jesus are compared and contrasted.

And as Moses was said there to be faithful in all things in the house of God. The house is God's people. In Moses' day, the people of Israel were the house of God.

[15:56] Moses, he says, was faithful in all his house. but Jesus is also, also, not just also faithful, but as he puts it there, is more so faithful.

Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, as much more glory as the builder of the house has more honor than the house itself.

Just as Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, and so Christ is faithful over God's house as a son. Now you notice the difference. Moses was faithful in God's house, although there's a certain sense in which Moses was a leader and therefore had charge over the people by God's instructions.

Nevertheless, the writer is drawing a difference between Moses and Jesus so that Jesus is seen to be superior because it's not just Jesus in the house of God but over the house of God.

Something similar to what we actually saw on Sabbath in the Lord's Day in Revelation chapter 5.

The one who took the scroll from the hand of him who sat upon the throne, the supremacy of Jesus.

[17:13] Jesus as the uniquely qualified one to take this book of the destiny of the universe and open it and break its seals and be in charge of the unfolding of the history of the universe, right down to his own return.

Well, it's a similar emphasis that you find there. We have a great high priest over the house of God. Who is it that administers the church's privileges, benefits, present, future?

It is this high priest. And it is interesting too, isn't it, that it's in regard to his being a high priest or the high priest that he speaks about having charge over the house of God.

We have a great high priest over the house of God. It's not as king, though Jesus is that too, of course. But follow out in your own mind as you think about this afterwards when you have more time of the importance that it is a priesthood in Jesus, the priesthood of Christ that is actually in charge of God's church.

It's not simply as king, not as prophet, but it's especially here as priest, as our great high priest. In other words, your future, the future of the church, the development of the church, the certain protective and developing care of God over his church.

[18:48] It's in the hands of the high priest and that fits in with what Jesus is now doing. What is he now doing? He is making intercession for his people.

He's making an intercession in representing them in the presence of God. He intercedes for them. He presents their case. He enters arguments on their behalf.

And the argument is primarily himself and his death and his resurrection and how adequate all of that is for them. Well, he is a great high priest and he is over the house of God.

That's why when we take office in the church, one of the things that we are required to do is to promise that we will acknowledge Christ's lordship or headship over the church.

That we are in fact answerable to him primarily and that we will not allow as office bearers in his church, as elders and ministers of the church, in terms of that ruling office, that we will not allow that headship of Christ to be usurped by, for example, the powers of the state.

[20:07] Christ alone is the head of the church and he is the head of the church as its priest, as he is, as its king and as its prophet as well.

And having such a great high priest over the house of God, as well as this confidence, what three requirements are then following on from that? These are the two basic facts.

Here are the three believing requirements. 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.

Now there's a lot of Old Testament symbolism in that as well, because as you know, the high priest himself had to wash and the priest had to bathe prior to serving God in the offerings of the tabernacle and of the temple as well, so that imagery of washing, the imagery of being clean, that's all here built into what has resulted from the death of Christ.

Let us draw near, let's come near to God, let's approach into the presence of God, he's saying, with a true heart, not without sincerity, not with a heart that's hypocritical, but with a true heart, a heart

that is really, truly, honestly, sincerely set upon the honor of God, upon his worship, but he's saying, in full assurance of faith.

[21 : 41] Now, that's not in full assurance of how strong our faith is. It's not in full assurance that our faith is saving faith. It's not in full assurance of anything about our faith in itself.

what he means by in full assurance of faith is full assurance about what our faith rests upon. Full assurance of him, of his blood, of his sufficiency, of his ability, of his acceptance with God, of all the facts that are in the doctrinal passages leading up to this that speak of the blood of Christ, of its being once offered, and that's adequate forever more, of him being at the right hand of God, of having gone into the holy of holies in heaven to represent us in his blood, in full assurance of faith means that you accept that absolutely everything that's required of you to draw near to God is already there.

You come in full assurance of faith in that sense. You come with your weak faith. You come with hesitancy. You come with complaint about your own shortcomings.

You come with this realization that there's sin still in your life to be confessed, to be overcome. But you come in full assurance of faith as it rests in him, in full assurance of his completeness, his suitability to all your needs and all your needs in the presence of God.

You come to the Lord's table, you see, that's really what you're focusing on, isn't it? It's not how great your faith is or how small your faith is, how weak your faith is or how strong your faith is, how your faith is in comparison to somebody else's faith.

[23 : 36] It's what you find in him to give you confidence and to enable you to draw near in that full assurance that this is everything you need.

God's taken care of it, God has dealt with it. Nothing to do with your sin remains yet to be done, to be atoned for, it's already been completely attended to by Christ and his death.

And that's really what gives us both the desire, the willingness, and the boldness to come to the Lord's table.

It is in a sense itself an imagery of coming into the presence of God in heaven. We're coming to be together at the Lord's table since we have a great high priest over the house of God and since we have confidence by his blood to enter into the holy places.

faith. Therefore, let us draw near with a true heart and full assurance of faith. And as it follows on, as we've said from that, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

[25 : 04] death. In other words, the knowledge that Christ's death has had that effect for us in the presence of God, that as we have received him, we have received cleanness.

Our sins have been washed away. We are holy in the presence of God in him. right through to our conscience.

Because the blood of bulls and goats could never deal with the conscience, whereas the blood of Christ does. In your conscience, which is really in a sense the sheriff court of your soul, there is a pronouncement made, when you come by faith in the blood of Christ, there is a pronouncement made saying, no sin to be seen on your record, nothing but righteousness.

You are clean, you are acceptable, you are approved of by God. That's why we come to his table. That's why we count it a privilege, because it's really saying to us, I fully accept, accept that I'm fully accepted in Christ.

I fully accept that his acceptance means my full acceptance. I leave everything about myself, I cast myself upon this fullness.

[26 : 46] And as I cast myself on this fullness, I am assured that God requires nothing else of me. let us draw near in full assurance of faith.

Let us secondly, the second requirement, let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering. Now it's not the confession of our faith, literally it's saying the confession of our hope, as it's here translated in ESV.

and that really brings us to think of that what we're required to do is to, on the basis of these two great facts, we can hold fast the confidence about hope.

What is your hope in the sense of this context? Well it's your desire forwards and your looking forwards to God's promise being fulfilled.

The promise that you will be with him in glory forever. That's the promise, that's what God's heart and God's activity is set upon, that's why Christ died, so that you would share heaven along with

God's people, with God himself.

[27 : 58] And this is a context, as well as of these great assurances, it's a context, a context of suffering, of temptation, of trials for these people.

Look at how the chapter near the end calls them to recall the former days after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with suffering, sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction and sometimes being partners with or so treated.

Therefore he says do not throw away your confidence which has great reward, since you knew that yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one.

For you have need of endurance so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. That's what he's saying. Let's hold this profession, this confession of our hope without wavering through all the trials, through all the disappointments, through all the letdowns, through all the crushing blows that come in the providence of God itself.

Let's hold fast to this confession of our hope. let's really never take our eye off the fact that we're not made for time, we're made for eternity, we're made for this inheritance that God has now set and finished and reserved for us in heaven.

[29 : 26] And he says so you have need of endurance so that when you've done the will of God, you may receive what is promised for yet a little while and the coming one will come and will not delay.

Let's hold fast the confession of our hope. Why? On what basis? Well, he says not only these two great facts but he's reverting back again to reminding us that our holding our hope without wavering, which isn't very easy to think about doing anything in ourselves without wavering, without some fears, without some wobbles, but he says for he is faithful who has promised.

You see it's his faithfulness in giving you the promise, his faithfulness as the one who promised.

How do you have, what guarantee do you have that God's promises towards his people, that God's promise that you will share in this glory with Christ?

What guarantee do you have that that is not going to fail? Well, you don't have to look outside of his own character. He is faithful who promised.

That's why the Bible elsewhere says our hope will not be put to shame. What's a hope that's put to shame? It's a hope that's believed something and looked forward to something only to be disappointed at the end.

[31 : 00] the hope of human beings and certain things that they themselves may promise one another that they may have created for themselves, that they promise will yet be as far as possible their portion in the future.

Sometimes it's gone. It's not fulfillable. The person who promised it didn't have the ability to see that that promise was completed and fulfilled.

It's not like that with God. He is faithful who has promised. So hold fast the confession of your hope. When the thing is really difficult for you, when you're struggling, when you're being challenged as to your faith, when the world is pressing in upon you, when you feel confined, when you want more space, remember that you were not made for the narrow and restricted alleyways of this life.

You were made for the broad sunlit plains of heaven, the wide space and the freedom that beckons us as we go through the valley.

[32 : 21] let's hold fast the confession of our hope. Because our hope is in the promise and our confidence is in the character of the promiser.

He is faithful who promised. And thirdly, let us consider one another to stir one another up to love and good works.

Now the ESV translation is not the best actually here. The AV actually is more accurate in this instance where it says, and let us consider one another to stir one another up to love and to good works.

You see it's saying here, let us consider how to stir one another up. Well that's not really what the text is saying. What it means is let us consider one another so that we stir one another up.

In other words, the considering of one another leads to the stirring up of one another, to the stimulating of one another. And you get the clue to the word consider and what it means if you go back to the first verse of chapter 3.

[33 : 33] Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in the heavenly calling, consider Jesus Christ, the apostle and high priest of our confession, who was faithful to him.

In other words, the way you consider Jesus, the meaning of that word consider is really a careful study. You give a careful study to Jesus.

And the same meaning of the word as it's used here means that you give careful study to one another. You consider one another.

You have the privilege of from these two great facts to you have this requirement that you consider one another. You actually study one another.

In other words, you just, and we'll see in a minute something of what it means, the means that God has given us to do this. But it does mean that God's people as a people together have the privilege of studying one another.

[34 : 36] It doesn't mean that you're nosy, that you're looking into people's lives beyond what's legitimate. But it means you take such an interest in one another, that your concern for your fellow Christians, young or old, male or female is, that you give to them as much time and study as possible so that you go on your way together, stimulated to love and to good works.

That's what it means. we are to consider one another so as to stir up, so as to stimulate to love and to good works.

In other words, when we come to think of love and good works, what the apostle is saying to us here is that one of the ways, or one of the chief ways to that, to do that, to be doing that, is by taking such an interest in one another, that we prove mutually stimulative to one another, to further love, to more good works, to all these practical matters of a Christian life.

Where does it come from? It comes from being a fellowship in the proper sense. It comes from being the kind of church that God's church is intended to be.

That's why you see such a terrible thing to have division and schism and wranglings and arguments in the church of God because they interfere with all of this.

[36 : 11] There are many other things too, but they interfere with this. You no longer get the amount of consideration of one another, of the kind that stimulates one another to love and to good works.

The wranglings and the disputes, they go in the opposite direction. They don't stimulate you to love and to good works, but to ignore each other or to be jealous of each other.

That's why we prize unity so much. It's something by which we are able to fulfill this great requirement of love and good works.

And what's the means that God has given us? Well, the means is not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some. You see, even in those days, some were beginning to neglect the gatherings of the church.

But he says, encouraging one another, and all the more as you see, the day drawing near, the day of Christ's return. Well, what he's saying to us by that is that the means, the main means that God has given us, by which we stimulate one another to love and good works, is in meeting together regularly.

[37 : 26] it's not something you can do on your own. You can't stimulate other people if you're on your own. It's something that belongs to the fellowship of the church.

And while we are so grateful and thankful to God for things like electronic media by which the gospel can be promoted, by which preaching can actually be heard in parts of the world, that people are scattered from one another, all those sort of things.

And we're grateful that people even where the gospel is openly received can go back and listen to sermons again or listen to a service, whatever it is. We're grateful for all of that.

But they are not norm. The gatherings of the church are never to be the exception. They are the norm. Don't he says neglect.

We're not to neglect meeting together because you need the physical stimulation. You need the physical being together as a body of people physically together, gathered together in order to actually stir one another up by encouragement, by advice, by sharing experiences, by admonition to when it's needed.

[38 : 52] But by all of these things, we stimulate one another, mutually stimulating to love and to good works. And so much more as you see the day throwing near the day of Christ's return.

The more we find ourselves heading towards that, the more it should mean for us that we are engaged in these gatherings together, in these stimulating gatherings, in the stirring one another to love and to good works.

And that itself fits with the Lord's table as well, doesn't it? Isn't that the same emphasis that you have in regard to the Lord's supper? You, by taking this cup, by taking this bread and drinking this cup, you do show forth the Lord's death till he come.

That's exactly what he's saying here. You engage in this until the day comes. And all the more as you see the day approaching.

Three believing requirements. Drawing near to God in full assurance. Holding fast our confession of hope without wavering.

[40 : 15] Considering one another so as to stir up to love and to good works. And these from two basic facts. Confidence through the blood of Christ and having a great high priest over the house of God.

Are we not indeed a privileged people? Let's pray. gracious and ever blessed God, help us to realize more and more the benefits that you have given us, that you continue to bestow upon us through Jesus Christ our Lord.

And enable us, Lord, we pray, to have in our hearts and in our minds the way in which your word brings together what you have done and what you require of us.

We thank you that the latter is based on the former, that it is on the basis of all that you have done, that we find ourselves willing and able to do those things that you require us to do.

So bless us we pray and all through these coming days we ask that you would fix our mind upon you and upon that blood that speaks better things than that of able.

[41 : 40] Hear us now we pray for your name's sake. Amen.