

Access to God

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[0 : 0 0] to the chapter we read Hebrews chapter 10 and I want us to consider some very simple thoughts over the passage that we find in verse 19 verse 19 to 25 and I want us to consider this passage in relation to the Lord's Supper the Lord's table remembering the death of Jesus which is what we hope to do God willing on the forthcoming on the coming Lord's day verse 19 of chapter 10 of Hebrews 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 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 let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering for he who promised is faithful 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 well now let me say right away that there's a danger in applying this passage to communion and the

Lord's table and the danger is that when we read let us draw near to the most holy place that somehow we equate the Lord's table with the most holy place and we elevate the Lord's table to a place that it doesn't it should not have there is nothing more sacred about the Lord's table than there is about what we're doing this evening there is nothing more solemn about sitting at the Lord's table than when we meet together every Lord's day or when we meet together on a Wednesday evening we come round the same word we come in the name of the same Savior we come on the basis of what he has done alone we come confessing our sinfulness and our dependence upon him we come in an act of worship we are joining together to sing his word to read his word to preach his word to gather together as he has commanded us to do and the Lord's table is simply another command that the Lord has given to us it is no more holy or more sacred or more solemn than any other time that we meet together like this and it's important it's not just me that said that I remember hearing Murdo McCauley Reverend Murdo McCauley saying that years ago I remember here I remember hearing Professor Finlayson saying exactly the same thing so this is not my idea and it's not anything new it's something that needs to be said regularly we need to be reminded that whilst we prepare for the Lord's table and rightly so that we are not to elevate it more than ordinary acts of worship and we're not to think that somehow or other we can that we can elevate it above even a service as we are doing and the same is true for the section of the service on Sunday that relates to the breaking of bread and the remembering the Lord's death that while that is part of the service it is no more solemn and no more holy than when we are reading and preaching his word we need to remember that that everything that we do in the name of the Lord we do seriously in his name and we do for his glory what this passage though tells us is about access to God and that's what the gospel is all about for some people access to God is something you don't even think about it's assumed we've often heard people saying that well God is as if he were on the top of a mountain and we have to make our way religion is all about our making our way up to the top of the mountain where

God is and we have to find whatever road around the mountain is most suitable to us they tell us there are many roads and all we have to do is to take whichever one is suitable to us where we were born or where we were brought up and it doesn't really matter they tell us what road we take but that gospel is making a terrific assumption it makes the assumption that there is a mountain somewhere where God sits at the top there isn't it makes the assumption that somehow when I get to the top of the mountain that God will accept me he won't everything in my Bible starts off by telling me that access access is denied there was a time when access wasn't denied at the very beginning when God created the heavens and the earth when he created Adam and Eve in

perfection that was the time at the beginning of the universe when God enjoyed perfect unbroken fellowship in a perfect world with Adam and Eve there was no sin sin had not come into the world at that particular time and so for Adam and Eve access was assumed

I am sure that the greatest part of their day was the access they had with the Lord but it was something that took place on a regular basis on a continuous basis as God walked with them and dwelt with them in the garden of Eden but the moment they brought sin into the world the Bible tells us that God placed an angel at the door of the garden of Eden with a flaming sword and what that meant was that from then on there was no access back to God and every time as you move on from there you hear about the presence of God meeting with this person you'll find the access is denied for example when Moses saw the burning bush and when he realized that the flame was actually God the glory of God himself God said to him don't come any nearer take the shoes from off your feet because the ground on which you're standing is holy ground don't come near that's the message of the Old Testament and it has to be that way because God is holy we are sinful we cannot come near to God that's the problem if it wasn't that way there wouldn't have been any need for Christ to come into the world but that is the problem that each one of us has had to face no access to God you remember when God brought his people out of Egypt and he brought them to Mount

Sinai and he wanted to meet with them how did he do that he descended on the top of a mountain but there were no roads up that mountain he descended in fire and clouds and lightning and thunder and he told Moses that on no account must anyone come anywhere near the mountain and if they did they were put to death access was denied and when God moved on to a place of worship for the people of Israel and when he commanded Moses to build the tabernacle where his glory would dwell in the most holy place you remember that innermost chamber where the ark of the covenant was and how the glory of God God rested on the ark of the covenant between the angels wings the golden angels wings and the mercy seat access was denied the first thing you saw if you made any approach to the act of the tabernacle itself was a curtain and if you were allowed to go in which you weren't there was another curtain and then there was another curtain and with each curtain there was a greater level of denial access was denied that is the message of the old testament and it has to be that way because we are sinners but here the writer to the Hebrews is absolutely ecstatic why because the access which in the old testament was denied has now been opened for us by the lord jesus christ now going back to the old testament when god established the priesthood and that particular way in which god was to be worshipped by the tabernacle and then the temple and the sacrifices what the writer here is telling us is that all of these things were put into history when jesus came in but that doesn't mean they don't have anything to teach us about god's relationship with his people and it doesn't mean they don't have anything to teach us about our relationship with god but whatever they have to teach us it was superseded by the lord jesus christ coming into the world as our sacrifice in the flesh and at calvary when he laid down his own life for us for us the access the door that was previously closed was opened for us so that by faith we are invited to come in through that open door which he as our high priest has opened for us to the most holy place the most holy place is not the lord's table the most holy place is heaven itself we have access to god himself in heaven through our great high priest who by his blood opened the curtain says verse 20 that is through his flesh since we have a great high priest over the house of god now of course i could go this evening i could go off on on a tangent and talk about how jesus is our great high priest that's one option open to us but i don't want to do that it would be it would be great to do that but i want us to look at those three statements that the writer makes beginning with the words let us let us first of all in verse 22 he says let us therefore draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith in verse 23 he starts another sentence with let us let us hold fast the confession of our hope and then verse 24 he says again let us let us this time consider how to stir up one another to love and good works i want to consider with you this evening how each of these three statements

[10:52] equates in some simple way with the act that you and i will be making as the lord's people in remembering the lord's death on the lord's day i want us to first of all see that according to verse 22 the lord's table is communion i want us to look look at how in fact according to all of these verses the lord's table is communion you notice how each of these statements is not an imperative it is a cohortative that's a grammatical term there's two grammatical one is an imperative an imperative would say draw near hold fast consider how to it's a command it's an order that's an imperative but the apostle doesn't say that he says let us now what's the significance of that statement the

significance is that he is one of them we're all in this together there is no separation between any of god's people around the table of the lord none of us are more important than the other none of us are more deserving than the other of the lord's grace every single one of us is making a statement by sitting at the lord's table that we're all in the same position of being poor in spirit that's what the lord jesus says blessed are the poor in spirit when you're poor you have nothing and when you have nothing you go to the person who has something to give you and when we discover that as far as our relationship to the lord is concerned that naturally we have nothing we are empty then we go to where that where we can fill that emptiness and that place is jesus christ we're all in this together no one can say i don't need to be here the preacher the elder the deacon the member none of us can say we're all in this together let us he says draw near with a true heart second thing i want us to notice about these words is that the lord's table is a drawing near drawing near to what drawing near to the lord himself now i'm not suggesting let me say once again i am not suggesting that we are nearer to god at the table than we are at other times there is a sense in which we're always near to god every day 24 7 he is not far from any one of us and that's particularly true for his own people thank the lord for that truth but there is a special sense in which when we draw near to god he draws near to us that's what james tells us draw near to god and he will draw near to you and that is when we engage and i'm using technical terms and it's much more natural than that it's when we come to god in worship there is a special sense in which god draws near to us whether it's private worship when i read my bible in the privacy of my own room or whether it's us coming together like this we are drawing near to god and the same is true of course as we come to remember jesus death at his table it's not just an act of remembrance it's an act of worship the lord's table is not just the table in the sense that we remember what he did it is the lord's table in the sense that we come to meet with him we come to hear and to see what he did for us in his death at calvary and the very elements that we hold in our hands the bread and the wine they are the instruments by which the lord speaks to us and brings home to us his death on the cross at calvary we are coming near to the lord they tell me that this verb coming drawing near is exactly the same verb as was used for the priest in the old testament when he once a year on the day of atonement was allowed to go into the most holy place with the blood of the goat he drew near to the presence of god this was as close as it was ever possible to get to the glory of god when this priest drew near he came through the curtain with the blood of the goat and he sprinkled the blood of the goat in front of the ark of the covenant and of course he did that on behalf of the people so when he moved in when he approached god the people were kind of in him he represented them and so when he drew near to god they drew near to god as well the same is true with the lord jesus he was our representative and as he drew near to god in his death and his resurrection and presented himself as the once for all sacrifice for our sins we being in him drew near to god and continue to do so and what we do on the lord's day in remembering his death is drawing near to the lord meeting with him at the lord's table so it is a drawing near and then secondly if you move on to verse 23 the lord's table is also a holding fast it says here let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering for he who promised is faithful it's a holding fast the confession of our hope what that tells us is that as we sit at the lord's table we're making a statement we're confessing our faith we're saying we're declaring what we believe we're declaring ourselves to be sinners hopeless helpless bankrupt filthy sinners we're declaring that the only hope that we have lies in jesus christ alone as the son of god who by god's grace took our nature upon himself and was born into this world and he laid down his life as the lamb of god the sacrifice by which our sin could be forgiven we're making a statement about that we believe that we totally believe that this jesus is the only hope of our salvation and we're saying to the world and to every person around us that we are relying and depending upon him as our saviour and as our lord what does the death of jesus mean to us this evening are we putting our hope in anything else you see there can only be two options either we are trusting ourselves to be right with god hoping that somehow there's enough goodness in us to deserve god's favour that's a no brainer none of us are in that position or we are trusting entirely in jesus and his death on the cross and his resurrection and if you tonight are whole if you if that is your position tonight in relation to the lord then hold fast to it because you know there is no other option now i want to stop for a minute here and to talk about this term for example in verse 22 full assurance of faith and in verse 23 where he says this whole fast the confession without wavering now i know what a lot of people will say to that they'll say well i don't have full assurance of faith and i don't have a faith he's not talking about a faith that wavers i

believe that from time to time everyone's faith wavers no one has perfect faith the question is not how strong our faith is tonight the question is who our faith rests in it's not whether our faith has been brought to perfection but where we run to with that imperfect weak faith do we run to the cross and when we talk about the full assurance of faith he's not talking about whether we feel at all times that sense of confidence that we are as we should be he's talking about the assurance that rests in Jesus Christ and in him alone in other words he's not telling the people to look into themselves and see what they can find and if they can find that sense of full assurance then go and come to God he's not saying that at all he's saying don't look at yourself look outside of yourself look to Calvary rest in Calvary trust in what Jesus Christ alone has done if you can say tonight that you are resting only exclusively uniquely in him then you draw near and you come with that full assurance of faith and with hope without wavering he's not talking about each one of us who does waver in our strength from time to time he's talking about the conviction that we have I hope we have that conviction that Jesus the son of God died for sinners like myself therefore

I rested there is no other hope there's no other way of being saved so when we sit at the Lord's table we are holding fast we're making a statement we are not speaking about our weak faith but we're making a statement about what Jesus has done for me but then verse 24 takes us to the last letters he says 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 and what this tells us is the Lord's table is both an encouragement to other believers and it is also a reminder of the second coming it's an encouragement to other believers and it's a constant reminder of the promise of Jesus that he will come again first of all it's an encouragement to other believers we never take communion by ourselves there's no such thing as private communion

[22 : 32] I can never I have no right ever to take the elements by myself it is always collected it is always done in fellowship with other believers it's an act of fellowship it's a communion in which we have communion with the Lord but we have communion with other people because Christ died to bring us together as a family of believers and it is as that family that we remember his death in fellowship with one another and part of that is the way in which I can look to the faces of other people who are sitting beside me and to know that they too are where I am they too are experiencing their own difficulties their own problems their own sense of loneliness their own weakness of faith their own temptations because that's why they're there we wouldn't have any need to be at the Lord's table if we didn't need the

Lord day by day strengthening us and guiding us and bringing his word to us every face that we see at the Lord's table is a face that says I need the Lord I rest in the Lord he is my only hope and when I see that face I'm encouraged because it's as if you're saying to me you keep going and I need to keep going you need to keep resting I need to keep resting you need to keep loving the Lord you need to keep confessing your sin as I do it's a huge strength and encouragement that's why we must never look down on anyone who's at the table don't ever judge anyone you don't know what that person is going through you don't know and you don't know of himself and greater growth and grace every one of us is growing in grace we're all moving and changing all the time as the Holy Spirit works in us to sanctify us and to conform us to the image of Christ every one of us is a person who is changing for not there's something wrong continually putting away sin dying unto sin the catechism tells us and living unto righteousness the work of encouragement is absolutely vital in the work of the church in the building up of God's church and we are to sit at the table and as well as remember what the Lord has done for us we are to consider one another we are to consider how my life can be of good and benefit to them that's the practical result that's the fruit of the spirit that's the command of Jesus that we love one another as I have loved you you don't forget love for one another when you sit at the table you don't just focus exclusively on Jesus you do in a sense but that must result in our considering one another as the brother as our brethren as our brothers and sisters in the

Lord Jesus Christ so it should be an encouragement to us we're standing before God believe me you don't need the Lord any more than I do I don't need the Lord any more than you need the Lord just as much as I do and our dependence is upon him and our faith rests in him and in him alone and lastly the Lord's table is a reminder that Christ will come again and a day will come when each one of us will see him as he is do this he says in remembrance of me for as often as you do you eat this bread and drink this cup you remember the Lord's death until he comes we sit at the Lord's

table to remember not just the first coming of Jesus not simply the death of Jesus and his resurrection that's the primary function of the Lord's table but we remember that he future it's in the past in the present and in the future that future certainty that certainty that is absolutely guaranteed for the Lord's people that one day that we will see him as he is that his name will be on our foreheads and that he will wipe away every tear from our eyes so therefore let us draw near with boldness with confidence not confidence in ourselves but confidence in him as the only hope that we have for our salvation that's what the Lord's table is all about and may the Lord bless us as we do so in obedience to him let's bow