

Boldness in Using Our Access to God

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[0 : 0 0] to 25. Hebrews chapter 10 and at verse 19. 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, since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, and so on through to as far as verse 25.

As you know, the epistle to the Hebrews is punctuated throughout its teaching by certain passages like this, which are effectively exhortations, many of them beginning with these same words, let us, or let us therefore.

And all the way through the epistle, and most of it at least, you find these passages fitted in between longer passages dealing with the priesthood of Jesus or other aspects that are theologically important for us as he presents Christ to us and his sufficiency to be our savior.

And this one here in verses 19 to 25 is really another of those exhortation passages where you find the writer building upon what he said and applying it in such a way that appeals to us as the readers of the scriptures now to actually carry out the actions that he is specifying there for us in the appeal or in the exhortation.

And the key theme in these verses is actually confidence, or in fact the word boldness is probably better. That's the word in the older translation, and here it's probably a stronger word in a sense.

[1 : 5 4] Since we have boldness to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, let us draw near with a true heart and so on.

So this boldness, this confidence to enter into the presence of God, or the confidence to use the access that God has opened up for us in the person of Jesus himself, that's really the key theme.

And everything else is built around that boldness that we have in using our access to God. And of course in doing that, he's contrasting what we have as believers now in this New Testament situation with what prevailed in the Old Testament running up to and leading up to and promising the coming of Jesus.

You can see that in different places. If you look at verse 1, for example, and the very last part of verse 1, which talks about these sacrifices in the Old Testament, it can never be by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near.

And you can see the link there, drawing near, is in the Old Testament sense of drawing near to where God was worshipped, where sacrifices were given in the temple, or previously to that in this sanctuary, in the tabernacle, where you find the drawing near there having its limitations, so that in the Holy of Holies, where the presence of God was represented by the cloud above the mercy seat, the people were not allowed to draw near to that extent.

[3 : 34] Only the high priest, and even then only once a year, was he allowed on the Day of Atonement to actually go into that particular spot. And we'll see in a minute how the curtain that came to be torn from top to bottom at the death of Jesus was itself symbolic in that tearing of opening up this new spiritual access, this new and living way that he mentions here, in which we can have boldness to come into the very presence of God as his believing people.

And so at the core of all of this is really the contrast between Christ and his death and its effects, and the previous Old Testament time, where you find these limitations.

In other words, you can see that verses 19 to 25, because they're the application of what goes before us, they're really setting out the outcome, or one of the outcomes of what you find in verses 12 to 18.

You find in verses 12 through to 18, where it speaks about the supremacy or the superiority of Christ and of his death compared to the Old Testament deaths of these animals and sacrifice.

And it's brought out, especially verse 10, by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Verse 12, when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice, he sat down at the right hand of God, and so on.

[5 : 10] And by a single offering, he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. And the contrast between that and the Old Testament is clear, but it is that particular accomplishment by Christ, the once for all death of Jesus, it's the outcome to that that you have, or the application of that, or the way in which that is a bearing upon the actions that we have to take in our lives.

That's what you find in verses 19 to 25. So two things just to look at briefly. First of all, how we possess boldness in our access to God.

How we possess boldness in our access to God. Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence, since we have boldness to enter. And then he says, since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us do this.

We have the boldness, and he's telling us here some of the features of it. How it is that we possess it. How has it come about? Where is our confidence situated?

And he says, first of all, since we have confidence to enter by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he has opened up for us.

[6 : 30] With boldness, with confidence. confidence. Now we'll have a problem with that. If you take that and immediately look in on yourself. If you take that and look in, or I take that and look in to my faith, or to my hope, or to the strength of my faith, or otherwise, if you turn that in on yourself, you're going to face a problem.

Because then you're going to say, well, I don't have that confidence. I'm lacking in confidence. I'm lacking in confidence because my faith is weaker than it should be. Or because I'm not anything like what I see in other Christians that I know.

What he's telling us is, having confidence to enter, not in our own ability do we have that confidence. Since we have confidence to enter by the blood of Jesus.

Our confidence is situated and founded upon. He is the ground of our confidence. He is the one who enables us, by what he has already done, to actually come with boldness into the presence of God in this access that he himself has opened up for us.

It's not in our faith that we have boldness. It's not in anything to do with what we ourselves do that we have boldness. It's not in our intellect. It's not in anything of that.

[7 : 50] It's actually in him, in his accomplished work of atonement, in what he is, in who he is, in what he has brought about. And he adds to that and he says, by this new and living way that he opened up for us through the curtain that is through his flesh.

It's a new way because it is superior to the old way. It's new because of how it was opened up for us compared to the old.

It's new because it is in Jesus. It's new because of what you find in him as our access to God. He himself is the new and living way.

It's in himself. It's not by a high priest such as Aaron who acted on God's behalf. and who himself had limitations and who himself was sinful and had to present us an offering for himself before he gave an offering for the people on the day of atonement.

That's all gone. That's something that really had associated with it a certain amount of dread and fear under the regime of the law of God in the Old Testament times.

[9 : 04] Now he's saying, we have confidence, we have boldness to enter into the very presence of God by the blood of Jesus, by this new way. This way that is in his atoning sacrifice.

And of course it's living because while the Old Testament animals that were given the blood of bulls and goats and calves that he mentions earlier in the chapter, while that was in fact given as instructed by God and actually it was indeed a prefiguring or you could say a type or a symbolism of what would happen in Christ himself.

It was representative of what would come to be the case in Jesus. Nevertheless, what he's saying here, it was still the dead animal that was involved in that transaction, the blood of the animal that was put to death.

But our access is not through someone who is now dead. Though it is his death, it is Christ and his death that has opened up this new way for us.

But he's no longer dead, it's a living way. It's a way that's now in his person as risen from the dead, as at the right hand of glory. And isn't that a glorious, glorious emphasis for us here.

[10 : 28] What a privilege it is for us compared to the saints in the Old Testament times who saw things much more dimly than we see, who weren't able to see the things we see because they weren't living in days that could look back upon an accomplished atonement, upon Christ's actual death on the cross and his actual resurrection from the dead.

What a privilege you and I have when we are able to really say, I'm now approaching God and I can come with confidence and with boldness into his very presence because Jesus and the blood of Jesus and the fact that he's now living as my way of access, that's the ground of my confidence.

I have every confidence in that, that God will accept me when I come claiming that as my access and as my merit and as my warrant to come.

And it's interesting, isn't it, the writer here is saying, by this new and living way that he opened for us, through the curtain, that is through his flesh. And that's an interesting combination of the curtain or the veil that was in place until the death of Jesus.

The veil into these places that were restricted apart from the priesthood and the innermost holy place to the high priest alone. The veil of the temple was rent in two from top to bottom on the occasion of Christ's death on the cross.

[12 : 00] And it was seen. It was seen and recorded in the Gospels. It was such a remarkable thing. It wasn't rent from the bottom upwards as if a team of people on each side had started tearing it and then just pulled it apart.

It was rent in two from the top to the bottom it was a divine rending. And here it's brought out in such a way that equates that with the flesh of Jesus.

Now that doesn't just mean his body it means his actual offering of himself including his human nature his body but it's put here in a way that just as that curtain was for Aaron and all the high priests up to the time of Christ's death something they could not actually pull apart except for Aaron on that day.

And Aaron on that day could actually go through that curtain and into the Holy of Holies. And just as that curtain was for Aaron his way of access on that day into the Holy of Holies so the flesh of Jesus the death of Jesus is our curtain being drawn aside is our way of access being opened up for us by God by Christ himself so that we have this access and indeed boldness to enter through the flesh of Jesus.

That's the first element of how we possess the boldness beginning with this word since but there's then a second word since since we have a great priest or a great high priest over the house of God.

[13 : 44] That's the second element in why we can come with boldness and how we possess boldness. We possess boldness because we're not now actually following a priest like Aaron who was ministering in God's house but not over God's house.

And the contrast is actually brought out very clearly in chapter 3 if you just briefly look back to chapter 3 and verses 5 to 6.

You can see there how he's contrasting Christ and Moses. We can begin at the beginning really. You who share in a heavenly dwelling consider Jesus the apostle and high priest of our confession who was faithful to him who appointed him just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house.

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

He says for every house is built by someone but the builder of all things is God. Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son.

[15 : 01] God's God's house. They were part of the believing people although Aaron represented as Moses indeed did in his own way the coming Messiah Christ.

But Christ is now over the house of God. He is actually the one who presides over the matters of our salvation. God's salvation.

And therefore since we have a great high priest over the house of God then we come with boldness. And that's what you remember or part of what you remember as you remember the Lord's death.

You take this with you. You take this with you as setting out before you in the elements of the Lord's supper in the bread and in the cup the very basis of your confidence the very basis of your boldness and you know we're actually not regarding these matters properly and fully and sufficiently if we say of these things yes I fully accept them but I really doubt whether I should have boldness.

Don't doubt whether you should have boldness if you're saying about Jesus Christ he is my all in all he is the fully sufficient one. Certainly if you look into yourself you're not going to have complete boldness that's what we said a few minutes ago but this is not looking to yourself since we have this high priest over the house of God since we are able to come with boldness by the blood of Jesus by this new way by this living way it would be somewhat remarkable if we didn't have boldness when all this is in place.

[16 : 49] So that's how we possess boldness in our access to God but secondly how we practice that boldness in our access to God and that's what you find in the following verses since this is the case since this is the case therefore let us and there are three let us clauses there in verses 22 through to verse 24 and it's interesting that in each of these you have the three elements respectively or the three important graces if you might call them as they're often called faith and hope and love because it's saying there let us come drawn near with a true heart in full assurance of faith and the second let us is let us fold fast the confession of our hope there's the hope and the third let us consider one another to stir up to love and to good works so he's bringing three main features of a Christian life and of

Christian activity and Christian relationships into how he's setting out these three letters or exhortatory clauses he's saying first of all let us draw near and of course that answers to the drawing near of the Old Testament which is now behind and which has been overtaken by this drawing near where we have the confidence and the boldness to draw near to God now this is not just in respect to coming together to worship him or coming to worship him privately on your own this drawing near is a wider thing that includes really the whole of your life whenever and wherever you draw near to God wherever you're actually carrying out a spiritual relationship with God and speaking to him in prayer and praising reading his word whatever it is wherever you are actually in communion with God when you're drawing near to God what he's saying here let us do this on the basis of the boldness we have let us draw near to God with he says a true heart and that means quite simply in sincerity sincerity

I know that we can misuse that word as some people misuse the word and think well my beliefs that I hold are my beliefs and I hold them sincerely and therefore if I have these beliefs and I'm holding them sincerely then who's going to accuse me of being on the wrong road or being in any way inferior to what Christians believe I hold my beliefs sincerely therefore why should you accuse me of not falling into line with other things that are believed by other people well it's not sincerely in that sense this is the sincerity of someone or people who come on the basis of Christ and what he has done they don't come to draw near to God hypocritically they don't come near God of course there's an element of that in all our hearts yes but you come to God sincerely because you're convinced that what he has done for you is absolutely sufficient for your needs you come to God sincerely because you're fully persuaded of the beauty and the worth of Christ you come to him sincerely not questioning what God has done there or somehow or other if it's for you or not sincerely in that sense let us draw near with a sincere heart with a heart that's not coming before God knowing that we're just pretending or we're just being hypocrites about it all we're coming before him on the basis of what he has done with a true heart sincerely but also in full assurance of faith now then that one sometimes gives people problems and he gave me problems until I realized and was reading the commentary of John

Owen a long time ago but it was through reading that that I came to realize what this actually means because it isn't actually at all it doesn't at all mean let us come in the full assurance or persuasion that I am saved you see it's still about Christ about his sacrifice it's still about the perfection and the completeness and the sufficiency of what he has done and your full assurance of faith as you draw near to God is not full assurance that you have great faith or not even full assurance that your faith is genuine saving faith it's full assurance about him this is how John Owen put it let me just read to you how John Owen comments on this particular phrase he says the full assurance of faith here represents not the assurance that any have of their own salvation nor any degree of such an assurance it is only the full satisfaction of our souls in the reality and efficacy of the priesthood of Christ to give us acceptance with

God in contrast to all other ways and means thereof you're coming to the Lord's table at this time or contemplating coming to the Lord's table and you're saying about Jesus you're fully persuaded that what God has provided in him through his death as a sacrifice for sin is absolutely enough and more for you in contrast to any other that you could be offered as a way of being accepted with God including anything you find in yourself if you're fully persuaded as

[23 : 24] Owen says of the reality and deficiency or efficacy of the priesthood of Christ to give you acceptance with God in contrast with every other way you have full assurance of faith that's what he means and that's the full assurance of faith that we are to come to draw near to God with in sincerity of heart and in this full assurance of faith this persuasion about Jesus as to who he is and to what he has done and how complete that is for us as sinners who need him having our hearts he says goes on to say having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water well we haven't time to go into all the details of this because I want to just go on through to verse 25 but this is actually really in a summary sort of way saying what Jesus has done in providing us with salvation is inclusive of both what we must be inwardly in terms of our conscience and what we must be outwardly in terms of our working out of life that's what he's saying our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water

God's cleansing of us inwardly and outwardly if you like in our persons we are fully accepted by God in Christ both in terms of our standing formally with God and our persons as we live our lives of course that doesn't mean we're perfect that we no longer have sins to confess that doesn't any longer mean that our conscience is now telling us we're just a hundred percent perfect all the time if that were the case you wouldn't be here you'd be in heaven but what it is saying is that even through all of that in our confession and acknowledgement of sin still in our lives nevertheless in Christ and for the sake of Christ God fully accepts others through what he is through what Christ is and so we come with that true heart and that full assurance of faith and secondly let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering now that may also seem like a challenge and it is in fact a challenge of course all of these things essentially are challenges to us as to how we live our lives but maybe a challenge and if you look at it in the wrong way again because it's not actually saying to us again let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering as if that was depending on our own strength or our own steadfastness because he goes on to say for he who promised is faithful we don't hold fast the confession of our hope our hope in

Christ our hope that God will be true to his promises as they will be fulfilled in heaven by his people that doesn't depend on your own ability that holding fast of the confidence of your hope if you like the confession of your hope without wavering on what basis can we hold our hope fast without wavering on the basis that God is never anything other than true to his promise remember your hope itself is very very closely connected to the promises of God that you find in scripture how do you actually exercise your hope how do you feed your hope how does your hope grow as it is along with faith well your hope grows and you exercise your hope by going to the promises of God you believe the truthfulness of them you believe the faithfulness of God to accomplish them to fulfill them for you and so you strengthen your hope and you hold your force your hope then without wavering because what you're seeing is

God faithfulness and God steadfastness rather than anything in yourself you're not coming to the Lord's table this time or in previous times whether you've been there before or contemplating coming for the first time you're not coming and saying well I'm really determined to hold fast my hope without wavering because I can do it if that's what we're thinking we should stay away from the Lord's table our confidences in ourselves in our own ability in our own strength in our own intellect whatever else it is of ourselves what he's saying is let us hold fast the confession of our hope for he who promised is faithful you come to the Lord's table and you're saying yes indeed I'm committed to holding fast the confession of my hope I believe the promises of God but I'm holding them fast on the basis of his faithfulness that he will fulfill them that he will actually bring me to experience them in their fulfillment and secondly thirdly rather that's the second one let us hold fast the confession of our hope let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works now again it's probably not the best translation actually here in ESV again I prefer the older translation in this instance where it's really let us consider to provoke one another to good consider one another to provoke to love and good works because what it's really saying is let us actually give consideration to one another so as to stimulate in one another love and good works he's not saying let us as this translation might suggest he's not saying let us consider how to do this he's saying let's give consideration to one another not just to love and to good works let us consider one another let's actually give that consideration to one another that will lead to the stimulation of further love and good works and everything really that follows on from that is connected to that what he says not neglecting to meet together as the habit of some is well if we're going to actually stir one another up and consider one another so as to stir up love and good works that it follows logically that you don't do that on your own you don't do that just by praying for others you do that by being with them by not neglecting gathering together with them and that's what's beautiful about this evening and about these meetings that we have from time to time that this is part of what they're about we are there of course to worship God primarily but our gatherings together both in formal worship and informal as well at other times of fellowship whatever we call them this is part of their design they are there so that we will give thoughtful attention to one another to one another's needs to one another's circumstances without being intrusive or nosy but rather just genuinely concerned to give such attention carefully to one another that it will lead to mutual stimulation for further love and good works on the part of us as a people and that's what he's saying and that's really one of the problems that Paul faced in

Corinth in the church in Corinth and it's obvious from what he writes about the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 11 and you know the words I mean very well I'm sure where he's saying there about the Lord's Supper that he passed on these things to them that he'd received from the Lord and then he gave some directions to counteract the things that they were actually doing in Corinth that they shouldn't have been doing but then he says near the end of that passage so then my brothers which means my brothers and sisters too of course when you come together to eat wait for one another when you come together to eat wait for one another and that can be translated share with one another but it has the thrust of meaning that you actually give careful consideration to one another as much as to yourself let us he says give consideration careful attention to one another so as to stimulate to love and to good works not neglecting to meet together as is the habit of some and then he adds just expanding on that but encouraging one another there's the other element that he's adding now it's not just that we give consideration to one another so that it will lead to more love and to more good works but that's all part of encouraging one another and the meetings together actually are part of what he means there too so as to encourage one another and he finishes by saying all the more as you see the day drawing near isn't that interesting he's talking about the day of

[33 : 19] Christ's return although there are different opinions as to what it means if you go back to chapter 9 verse 28 there's a clue there so Christ having been offered once to bear the sins of many will appear a second time not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him waiting for that day waiting for his return and it's interesting that he's saying so much more you see the day drawing near it's nearer now however many years there may be yet to it is nearer now than it was yesterday for us in the process of time and so he's combining our drawing near to God and the things that he mentions in relation to that and the drawing near of this day of Christ's return and the two are so closely related because the more we contemplate and give attention to the drawing near of the day of Jesus the more that should affect how we draw near to God and what use we make of our access to

God and it is also of course important in relation to the Lord's Supper as well because as Paul himself said in that chapter to the Corinthians for as often as you do this you do show you do actually manifest forth the Lord's death till he comes till he comes there's a time constraint on it because when he comes the Lord's Supper will be no more it'll be replaced good though it is by something far better by the marriage Supper of the Lamb but until that day you and I have the privilege of possessing boldness and our access to God and we have the privilege of practicing boldness in drawing near to him in holding fast and in considering one another in faith and hope and love may he bless his word to us we're going to conclude our service this evening now singing in psalm 73 psalm number 73 verses 25 to 28 that's page 316 and it's in the

Scottish Psalter version page 316 and from verse 25 to 28 a psalm which ends of course verse 28 the psalmist has been contrasting himself with those who live without God and tells us how he very nearly slipped away but then came back to God when he went into the sanctuary and was taught there by God and he concludes now by acknowledging that he has no one else but God in heaven or on earth no one else above him that he desires and he finishes by saying whatever it is with others surely it is good for me that I draw near to God so psalm 73 from verse 25 to God's praise whom have I in the heavens died but thee

O Lord our Lord and in the air whom I decide besides thee there is none my flesh and heart do fit and fail but God doth fail me never forever for of my heart God is the strength and ocean forever for all they have come from thee forever ever perish shall than that the hoarding long thee hope thou past destroyed all but surely the hope is good for me that

I go near to God in God I trust that all thy works I may declare a pray I will go to the main door perhaps Kenny if you would like to do the side door here after the rendition thanks now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and always Amen Thanks Amen Amen Amen I fell about the men twelve in heaven and all don't know at the end to death