

Our Glorious Invitation

Hebrews 10:19-25

Introduction

The chapter began with a contrast and continues with a series of challenges. We are challenged to approach the throne of God (vv.19-22); to advance the people of God (vv.22-25); avoid the judgment of God (vv.26-31) and acknowledge the faithfulness of God (vv.32-34). The writer of Hebrews tells us that the sacrifice of Jesus takes away our sin (vv.1-10); it was an effective sacrifice (vv.5-20); unrepeatable (vv.11-18) and provides access to God (vv.19-39). Now the writer will engage in a little review; we are invited to consider all the blessings we as believers have because of the Lord Jesus Christ's once and for all sacrifice. Because we are chosen, adopted, accepted; because we have perfect (not imperfect) standing in Christ we have "boldness" (literally freedom of speech) to approach God—enter into the presence of our Heavenly Father. The barriers that once separated the Children of God are gone. In the Old Testament The Tabernacle's skins and veil masked the glory of God. When the body of Jesus was offered in sacrifice the veil was torn and a new and living way based on the New Covenant provides access to God for every believer. The writer's explanation (vv.19-21) will give way to an invitation (vv.22-25). We are invited to (1) draw near instead of drift away (v.21). We are invited to (2) "hold fast our confession (testimony) of faith (or hope as some translations have it); refusing to waver in trial or collapse in the face of test or trials; and (3) "let us consider" other believers and by our example encourage them to remain true to the Lord Jesus. We provoke each other—but our provocation is to love (1 Corinthians 13:5).

Boldness in Heaven (freedom of speech) should lead to boldness (freedom of speech) here on the earth. The early Christians faced with unspeakable trials, unrelenting persecution, economic distress, would sometimes neglect Christian fellowship and mutual encouragement. The writer of Hebrews argues—that since Jesus is our High Priest; and elsewhere Peter argues that we are a Kingdom of priests (1 Peter 2:9); we ought to assemble together for joint worship; teaching; service; but something more—mutual encouragement—mutual edification.

We are extended a glorious invitation "draw near" (v.22)—enter into the presence of God—and the writer of Hebrews continues in more glorious exhortations—hold fast the confession of our hope (v.23); and provoke—to love—and labor—in good works (v.24).

Let Us Come Into His Presence (vv. 19-22)

Hebrews 10:19 (NKJV) 19Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus,

The OT Jew could not enter the Tabernacle—and the High Priest could only enter once a year on the Day of Atonement. The sacrifice of Jesus provides a living way into the very Throne room of God. We can come into God's presence at any time!

We have the privilege of access to God. Boldness (freedom of speech absent fear).

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What has been wrought by the sacrifice of Jesus? A complete satisfaction and payment for sin.
What has been sought by the sacrifice of Jesus? Shadows replaced by substance.
What has been taught by Christ's sacrifice? We are welcome in God's presence!!!

What is the "Holiest"? The place where the Presence of God dwells in fullness and power!

Can you imagine a Moabite or Canaanite or Egyptian who stumbled into the camp of the people of Israel and made inquiry into the strange Tent or Tabernacle in the midst of the people. "What is this place?" This is the place where the glory of God and the presence of God dwells."

Can I go in? No. We are not even allowed to go in. What's in there? A large lamp. A table. An altar made of pure gold. The man you saw go in—is a priest—he will trim the lamp, he will place bread on the table—and burn incense to the true and living God. Beyond that is a veil—that divides the Tabernacle—we call this place—the Most Holy Place. What's in that place? An Ark or Box—we call this the Ark of the Covenant—it contains the Holy memorials of our past—the top is made of gold—it is the mercy seat—it is there that God sits—between the Cherubim.

What would it take for me to go to this place—enter into this place—remain in this place?
What will it cost to enter this place? The blood of Jesus. The cost is Calvary.

20by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh,

21and having a High Priest over the house of God,

The veil is the incarnate Christ. The veil was the barrier that barred men access. The spotless—perfect innocent—Jesus—free from all sin and every sin—is made sin—and torn! God demands absolute perfection. God says—"I demand a life—lived in absolute perfection—just like Jesus." With Jesus comes access. Jesus hung on a Cross. We have access to God—not simply on the basis of Christ's perfect life—but substitutionary death.

What is our proof of access? Jesus has entered the Holy of Holies. Because Jesus is there—we can be there! Jesus takes others with Him—into this place—He is our High Priest over the house of God!

Jesus is our necessary sacrifice. "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and by a sacrifice for sin, condemned sin in the flesh (Rom.8:3). An offered Sacrifice ". . .He offered up Himself" (Heb. 7:27); A removing sacrifice—"Put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Heb.9:26); an accepted sacrifice; "Christ. . .hath given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor" (Eph.5:2); a substitutionary sacrifice—"Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us" (1 Cor.5:7).

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We are allowed unprecedented access.

No Jew was allowed this kind of access. Even in the High Priest—would never imagine a world where he was allowed daily visits in this place!

The writer of Hebrews—tells the Jewish believers—welcome—welcome—into the Holy of Holies!

The Jew tempted to return to Judaism returns to a closed door—Heaven's only access is through the blood of Jesus. Why would anyone opt for a religion where access to God is denied?

Let Us Draw Near With Pure Hearts (v.22)

22Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

What is our privilege? Access. Access to God through Christ.

We have full assurance. This means unqualified assurance in Christ. We can present ourselves to God because we are sufficient in Christ. We are sufficient in Christ; apart from works; apart from religious rituals; apart from Church attendance.

What is our responsibility? We are required to worship—with pure hearts. Let us draw near—with a true heart in full assurance of faith—having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water! We are conscious of our condition—and conscientious. God requires a pure heart—not an empty heart—or an empty profession of faith! We are confident—in Christ—and in conscience. **The writer of Hebrews has told us to come! Jesus invites us to come! We must be cleansed when we come! The physical and spiritual cleansing—is not a reference to hygiene—the idea is one of spiritual purity.**

Our assurance of faith—we can draw near! What are the conditions? A pure heart—a true heart, a full assurance, a clear conscience and a pure life.

Let Us Hold Fast In Unshakable Faith (v.23)

23Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.

Our assurance of faith (v.22) looks forward—hope—the Jews—often looked back—go back—return—to the old religion—the old ways—the old covenant—but for the person—truly saved—truly born again—truly regenerate—there can be no going back. There can be no wavering!

The Lord will not waver in His promise. Why should we waver in our confession? Our confession of hope is our testimony concerning Christ's salvation in our lives! In the early

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church Augustine wrote; “The faithful must believe the articles of the Creed. . .so that believing they may obey God, by obeying may live well, by living well may purify their hearts, and with pure hearts may understand what they believe”.

Irenaeus (b.130-202 AD)

Irenaeus was born in Smyrna (Izmir Turkey) disciple of Polycarp/disciple of John the Apostle;

Rule of Faith

This faith: in one God, the Father Almighty, who made the heaven and the earth and the seas and all the things that are in them; and in one Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who was made flesh for our salvation; and in the Holy Spirit, who made known through the prophets the plan of salvation, and the coming, and the birth from a virgin, and the passion, and the resurrection from the dead, and the bodily ascension into heaven of the beloved Christ Jesus, our Lord, and his future appearing from heaven in glory of the Father so sum up all things and to raise anew all flesh of the whole human race.

The Psalmist (40:10) wrote; “I will speak of your faithfulness and salvation”.

Revelation 2:10; “Be faithful, even to the point of death.”

George Horne wrote; “When men cease to be faithful to their God, he who expects to find them faithful to each other will be much disappointed”.

We might say it this way—remain faithful to God—be faithful to one another.

The poet John Milton wrote;

Among the faithless, faithful only he;
Among innumerable false, unmoved,
Unshaken, unseduced, untterrified,
His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal;
Nor number, nor example, with him
wrought
To swerve from truth, or change his
constant mind
Though single.

John Piper: “The Lord rewards faithfulness above fruitfulness, which puts us all on the same footing, whether famous for our effectiveness or unknown in our faithfulness.”

No wonder Teddy Roosevelt was fond of saying, “It is better to be faithful than famous.”

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Let Us Consider One Another (vv.24-25)

24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,

We are Christians. We consider (**it means pay attention to**) one another! The word consider can also mean fix our attention—watch over! Consideration—concern—care!

One believer encourages and helps another believer. We all know what it means to ‘stir up trouble’ but what does it mean to stir up love and good works? It means to provoke—to love—to provoke to labor—motivate—demonstrate—activate. We know that actions speak louder than words. “Well-done is better than well said”.

The words “one another” occurs some 70 times in the Bible.

We consider one another; we strengthen one another; we help one another in trial and temptation. Why do “consider on another”? To insure—health—holiness—we feed the poor—we visit the sick—we offer help—to the widows and orphans—we provide friendship to the lonely—and purpose—for people who struggle for meaning and purpose in their lives! Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father in Heaven” (Matt. 5:17).
Love one another

Deeds and not fine speeches are the proof of love (Spanish Proverb).

Paul told the Romans (12:6,8) that we all have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man’s gift is encouraging. . .let him encourage. People need encouragement. One person said, “Correction does much, but encouragement does more.! We need encouragement like crops need rain. It may sound corny but the best way to get a chip off the shoulder might be a pat on the back. We offer a hand instead of pointing a finger.

It was G.K Chesterton who said, “The really great man is the man who makes every man feel great.”

25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

It would appear that the constant pressure—the unrelenting persecution—and the pain and sorrow of trials—had caused some to abandon the fellowship of believers. The fire of trial had caused the fire of fellowship to wax and then wain—and for some to neglect and then abandon fellowship.

Our trials were never meant to drive us apart but bring us together in mutual ministry. We are to exhort one another. Storms make a strong tree. Testings make a strong Christian.

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The command is imperative “not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together” (episunagoge) —gathering together—(used only here and in 2 Thess.2:1)—one reference—to the gathering on earth—the other reference—to the gathering in the air! “Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together (same word) to Him, we ask you, (a reference to the rapture of the Church—1 Thess.4:13-18).

Christians seemed to have gathered at least weekly (Acts 20:7; cf. also Pliny Epistles 10:96—an early second century description of Asian Christians from a pagan governor).

"on an appointed day they had been accustomed to meet before daybreak, and to recite a hymn antiphonally to Christ, as to a god." Then they would take an oath (Latin sacramentum) "to abstain from theft, robbery, adultery, and breach of faith." After this ceremony they left, but reassembled later on to eat together."

Pliny's description is second-hand from Christians who abandoned their faith.

The command isn't simply to go to church—the exhortation is mutual ministry in light of dark days. What is the value of mutual ministry?

In a few weeks we are launching a call for greater involvement in mutual ministry in our church.

Mutual ministry can only take place in the context of smaller groups. There is a place for preaching and corporate worship. But there also must be a venue for mutual ministry.

We assemble for worship; prayer; study of God's Word; mutual encouragement; care concern.

The imperative—consider one another; stir up love and good works.

The incentive—“as you see the Day approaching”.

What “Day” is that? The coming of Christ? The Day of Judgment? I think it is the Day of Christ (see Philippians 1:6, 10; 2:16) or the Day of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 1:8; 5:5; 2 Corinthians 1:14).

The End Times will be marked by ever increasing trial, wickedness, pain and persecution. Even now Christians are being tortured and imprisoned in Saudi Arabia, North Korea, Turkey, Pakistan, India, Egypt—more than 50 countries are actively and consistently committed to active persecution against Christians. Christians face severe hostility. Christians are deprived of justice. Christians are imprisoned, tortured, murdered.

The presence of pain and persecution were not meant to keep Christians apart but keep them together! As the darkness deepens all around—it should provide us with the courage—to

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continue in fellowship and mutual ministry. We cling together—to resist—social pressure—economic pressure—entertainment pressure.

Why do people forsake the assembling of themselves? Perhaps fear. Some may fear being seen with Christians. Some fear criticism and contempt. Perhaps conceit. Some people feel they don't need church—they don't need fellowship—they don't need encouragement. In their conceit they imagine the hypocrisies of the church exceed their own. **Shallow—immature—foolish Christians—imagine Church as a place where they get something. It rarely dawns on them that church is a place to give—to exercise gifts—to manifest mutual ministry. It never occurs to them—that the faults and the failures—and the deficiencies of the church—need gifted men and women and their gifts for wholeness and wellness.**

We have been invited to enter into God's presence. We have been invited to love, encourage, exhort and provoke one another—in our mutual faith—and in our mutual hope!

Gregory the Great (c.540-604 AD) was admired by John Calvin and called him “The last good pope”. Gregory wrote; “Beloved men, realize what is true: this world is in haste and the end approaches: and therefore in the world things go from bad to worse, and so it must of necessity deteriorate greatly on account of the people's sins before the coming of the Antichrist, and indeed it will be dreadful and terrible far and of throughout the world.”

Conclusion

Casting Crowns sings a song with the chorus;

Joy unspeakable
faith unsinkable
love unstoppable
Anything is possible.

We draw near to God (v.22).

We hold fast our confession and profession of faith (v.23)

We stir up one another to love and good works (v.24).

We refuse to forsake corporate worship; corporate prayer; and personal worship; and mutual ministry (v.25).