

OUR TEXT

Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having 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 stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

INTRODUCTION

With this passage the Hebrews author moves from doctrine to practical application. He is not merely an excellent theologian, but a compassionate pastor, concerned about how his listeners will live out the truths he has encouraged them to follow.

Some have jokingly called this passage the “salad” passage of Hebrews, since we read “let us,” “let us” and “let us.” [a la “lettuce”] But surely here the author gives us practical challenge to match the doctrines that have been shared, kindly urging both himself and his listeners as he says “let us” be sure to do these things.

VERSES 18-20

The passage begins (v. 18) with a characteristic “therefore” to open this practical section. The “therefore” means: based upon all that has been said to this point here is the logical conclusion as to how we as believers should respond. The “brethren” indicates that these urgings are indeed intended for believers.

The essence of what has been taught so far is summarized in the simple but profound phrase: “we have confidence to enter the holy place.” CONFIDENCE is indeed the essence of what we possess as believers, based on Christ’s preeminence to angels, Moses and the Levitical priesthood. We have CONFIDENCE because of the better priesthood, better covenant, better sanctuary and better offering; and CONFIDENCE specifically to enter into intimate relationship with God (that is, “into the holy place”).

No more slaughtered bulls or goats; no more waiting outside while the priest sprinkles blood; no more once-a-year Day of Atonement; and no more atonement which only covers the sin – but now have come cleansing and forgiveness which do away with the sin.

This brings CONFIDENCE to have a relationship with God never before possible before Jesus did “His thing.”

TRIO #1

I observe that in our text today we find a “trio of trios” – that is, three sets of three key points each. And the first of these “threes” we find in verses 18-20.

I observe that our CONFIDENCE to enter into God’s presence is based on:

1. The BLOOD of Jesus (verse 19)
2. The BODY (or flesh) of Jesus (verse 20) and
3. The great PRIEST that Jesus is for us (verse 21)

To be more specific, we note

1. It is the priestly role of Jesus that allows us into “the house of God” – formerly the temple grounds, and now the body of Christ, the church. (v. 21)
2. It is the fleshly body of Christ that allows us access even closer, past “the veil” – formerly between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle and temple. Now Christ’s human body has become the “veil” that by it’s sacrifice has become our entrance into God’s presence (v. 20). This is a “new and living way” – “new” in that such access had never been allowed before and “living” in that it is the resurrected and very living Jesus who has preceded us into heaven as our forerunner into the heavenly tabernacle.
3. It is the blood of Jesus that allows us to enter all the way into the Holy Place where God resides – formerly the Holy of Holies and now in heaven.

If you will, the PRIEST gets us into the house, the BODY gets us past the veil and the BLOOD gains us entrance into the very presence of God.

This is TRIPLE CONFIDENCE!

VERSES 21-25

Here we find our 3 “let us” urgings and the second and third of our trios of three.

TRIO #2

Note this obvious trio of “let us” urgings:

1. **DRAW NEAR** to the God who desires our nearness
2. **HOLD FAST** to what we have believed
3. **STIMULATE ONE ANOTHER** by encouragements

DRAW NEAR (v. 22)

Since we have been allowed to draw near and therefore have confidence to draw near, then let us indeed **DRAW NEAR**. Just because we can, doesn’t mean we will. And that is his first urging to us.

We must draw near **OFTEN** in moment by moment acknowledging His presence and seeking His strength. We also must **MAKE TIME** to draw near in longer and more specific times of speaking (prayer), learning (the Word) and listening to His Spirit. And we must **CONTINUALLY** draw near in the sense of practicing the continual “**I AM**” presence of God in every moment.

Note from verse 22 that the specific urging is to draw near:

1. with a sincere heart
2. in full assurance of faith
3. with our hearts, conscience and body cleansed and washed

“Sincere” means I must really **WANT** to come, desiring His will and not my own.

“Full assurance” means I must truly believe that I am drawing near to God in reality, and not just “hoping” that I am. I talk to Him as if I truly am speaking with another, and not just in my mind.

“Cleansed” and “washed” means I come having confessed my sinfulness and my sins, and come desiring to determine His will rather than push my will. I come reverently and humbly even though I can come confidently.

HOLD FAST (v. 23)

Here we are urged not to waver in that which we have believed. If we have confessed Jesus as Savior and Lord then we must remain true and constant in that confession. The

faithfulness of God is referenced to remind us that God will be faithful in helping to keep us faithful, if we trust and lean on Him.

This urging is all the more important as we remember that our enemy, Satan, is constantly attempting to woo us away from our godly convictions. Never be so cocky as to think that your confession is secure apart from your diligent efforts to keep it so. Keep strong in the Word and in prayer and in fellowship.

STIMULATE ONE ANOTHER (v. 24-25)

We are strongest in our faith when we are helping others. Such should ever be a “consideration” of ours: “How can I challenge so and so to be more loving and faithful in his/her service?” This whole section is about Christianity not being a “one man show” but a community effort.

1. CHALLENGING ONE ANOTHER
2. ASSEMBLING WITH ONE ANOTHER
3. ENCOURAGING ONE ANOTHER

It is tempting as a pastor to turn this into a plea for each one of you to be regular in your church worship attendance. And although such is a noble and wise choice, the emphasis here is more about our need for Christian community than our need for Sunday worship services. “No man is an island” comes to mind. We need one another – and all of the “one anothers,” not just the comfortable ones or those most like us.

He makes the point that it is the habit of some to avoid this community of believers – and that it is an unwise and wrong habit to cultivate. Rather he urges each to make the regular fellowship of believers a high priority – and that would include Sunday worship service, but not exclusively. Just the “one on one” or “one with many” encouragements are critical to keep us on track. This harkens back to 3:13 when we were taught to “encourage one another day after day.” Be an encourager! And receive encouragement and challenges for your betterment.

TRIO #3

So, we have seen the trio of BLOOD, BODY and PRIEST. And then we have seen the trio of DRAW NEAR, HOLD FAST and STIMULATE ONE ANOTHER. But there is one more trio to which I want to draw your attention. This one might be a little less obvious to observe, and yet once seen it becomes obvious that this was intentional on the author’s part.

The final “trio” is this:

1. FAITH - draw near with full assurance of it (v. 22)
2. HOPE - hold fast your confession of it (v. 23)
3. LOVE - stimulate one another to it (v. 24)

We probably all know that these are the three things that the apostle Paul taught would abide forever, being the greatest three elements of our Christian lives.

1 Corinthians 13:13 *But now faith, hope, love abide - these three; but the greatest of these is love.*

I find that this trio underlines the deep significance and everlasting importance of the three “let us” urgings.

√ It is the depth of our FAITH that will draw us ever nearer to God in relationship. And conversely, the nearer we DRAW NEAR to Him, the deeper our faith will grow.

√ IT is not only the confession of our faith that must not waver, but it is specifically the CONFESSION OF OUR HOPE. That is – we must continue to “look up” for “our redemption draws near.” When our HOPE in the future coming and reign of Jesus is strong, our walk will be strong – and, I might add, specifically our evangelistic walk – our boldness in sharing with others. When

hope withers, our Christian self withers – but when our HOPE is strong, so also is our vibrancy as a believer.

√ We are generally to stimulate and encourage other Christians, but specifically we are to stimulate them to LOVE. The greatest of all of God's many qualities is LOVE. And the greatest imitation of God is to LOVE with the same selfless, unconditional love that He gives to us. And I would suggest that the best way to stimulate another to LOVE is to show them LOVE – God's love.

Think of it – by His amazing LOVE, God made access to Himself possible. And now in light of this amazing access to Him that I enjoy, He urges me to consider how I can stimulate each of you to LOVE Him more. This is my most sacred duty. And I suggest that it is yours as well.

So do you have the TRIO of 3's?

1. BLOOD , BODY & PRIEST (our access into God's presence)
2. DRAW NEAR, HOLD FAST & STIMULATE ONE ANOTHER (our expected response)
3. FAITH , HOPE & LOVE (the 3 abiding elements of our being that we are especially urged to develop and pass on to others)

What a healthy “salad” of “let us” ! Go for it !