

## COMMUNION WITH GOD

Hebrews 10:19-23, ***“Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, 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. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.”***

In these verses there is one main, straightforward command, namely, "Draw near!" Once we strip away all the defining and qualifying phrases, this is the only exhortation. The writer (who is probably the apostle Paul) has one simple goal for his readers - to **draw near**. But to draw near to what, or to whom? Well, it is not hard to find out, since this is a favourite phrase for Paul. Let's take a look at just three of its seven occurrences in the Book of Hebrews (American Standard Version):

- Hebrews 4:16 - ***Let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need.***
- Hebrews 7:25 - ***He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.***
- Hebrews 11:6 - ***Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who draws near to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.***

Paul's great passion is that we draw near to God. That we come to His throne to acquire all the help we need; that we come to Him 'confident' that He will reward us with all that He has for us in Christ Jesus. This is clearly what Paul means in verse 22, because in verse 19 he says that we have confidence (boldness) **"to enter the most Holy Place"** - the new heavenly "Holy of Holies." This "holy place" is like that inner room in the old tabernacle where the high priest met with God once a year, and where His glory descended on the ark of the covenant. It is within this "holy place" (the "Holiest") that we draw near to God.

Therefore, the one command, the one exhortation, that we are given is to **draw near to God** in the Holiest. Paul's main aim is that we get near to God; that we have fellowship with Him; that we do not distance ourselves from Him. Our God should not be a distant thought, but a near and present reality. We are to have communion with our God. "Communion" signifies a closeness, an affinity, an intimate fellowship, a genuine friendship. And, togetherness, harmony, unity, sharing and connection.

This **communion**, or drawing near, is not a physical act. It is an invisible act of the heart. You can do it while standing absolutely still or lying in bed, or while sitting in church listening to a sermon. Drawing near is not moving from one place to another. It is a 'directing of the heart' into the presence of God. Here is a paradox, God is as distant as the "Holy of Holies" in heaven, and yet He is as near as the door of faith. But the truth is, He is the One commanding us to come - to approach Him, to draw near to Him, to commune with Him. In fact, this is the very heart of the Gospel, isn't it? That Christ came into the world to make a way for us to come into the presence of God without being consumed by guilt and condemnation. He came to restore the fellowship that was lost in the Garden of Eden.

***“For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God”*** (1 Peter 3:18). Jesus died so that we may draw near to God! This is at the centre of the Gospel, this is what the Cross is all about - that God choose to sacrifice His only Son to draw us near. He sent Jesus to suffer and to die so that through Him we might draw near. God desires to commune (be in close contact) with His children! This is for our joy but to His glory. He doesn't need us. If we stay away God is not impoverished. He can be satisfied and is complete in the fellowship of the Trinity. But He magnifies His mercy by giving us unrestricted access into His presence through the blood of Jesus Christ. Remember, there is only one Reality that can satisfy us completely, namely, God Himself. ***“In Your presence is fullness of joy, at Your right hand are pleasures forever more”*** (Psalm 16:11).

What is God's will for you and me? That we will draw near to Him. That we will thirst like the psalmist, ***“My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before Him?”*** (Psalm 42:2) Are you ready to draw near? Are you willing to draw near? Are you thirsty to draw near? If you are, there's a way into the Holiest that is dripping in blood. The blood that cleanses and makes you as righteous as God Himself. Yes, the precious blood of the Lamb!

Note, everything in these verses (Hebrews 10:19-23) is meant to help us **draw near to God** by giving us knowledge. We could say that it is all written so that our drawing near to God will be "according to knowledge." These verses are packed with knowledge about drawing near to God. Such knowledge keeps the heart burning with true zeal. ***“Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked to us on the road, while He opened our eyes to the scriptures?”*** (Luke 24:32) We should be zealous for His presence - we should long to be in “communion” with Him!

Notice the word "therefore" at the beginning of verse 19... ***"Therefore . . . let us draw near to God."*** This directs our minds back to a truth that has gone before. Verse 14 said, ***"[God] has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified."*** As we draw near to God we are being sanctified, and because of that, we are being transformed into the perfect image of Jesus Christ. Therefore, in line with this truth let our zeal for drawing near to God grow day by day. Let's thirst for His glorious presence! Let's move from glory to glory!

The main exhortation, "Let us draw near," is preceded by an important truth... ***"Since we have confidence to enter the Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh"*** (verses 19-20) Literally, "since things are true" (and you have this knowledge) you can confidently draw near! But do not come carelessly or flippantly because you are entering the Most Holy Place. Here is another truth: the **blood of Jesus** has been shed for you so that your sins are forgiven and the "holiness of God" will not consume you but exhilarate (quicken) you. Hallelujah!

Note also, the way to God is new: it is not the old covenant way with dead animals and priests who die and have to be replaced. It is a living way, with One Sacrifice and One Priest - Jesus. And Jesus is alive and He intercedes for you and me. Since this is a reality, "draw near to God." In fact, it says in verse 21 that He is a great High Priest over the house of God. And He has made a way for us by shedding His blood and the tearing of His flesh (like the curtain in the temple), and He is alive as our High Priest today. A High Priest who will always cover us, and advocate for us, and be our mediator in the presence of God. Since this is also true, "draw near." Draw near according to the knowledge of this reality.

Then comes the command itself in verse 22: **"Let us draw near to God."** But the apostle Paul is not finished with packing gems of truth around this exhortation. He says to do it **"with a sincere heart, in full assurance of faith."** This is the attitude that he wants us to have... As we come into God's presence, we must enter with "full assurance of faith," or, as verse 19 says, come with "confidence" or "boldness." But what if the heart wavers, or it begins to grow cold? What if it trembles with uncertainty and has a sense of complete inadequacy? Paul has it covered, so he adds this last truth at the end of verse 22, **"Having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our body washed with pure water..."** Our hearts are sprinkled clean from an evil conscience, and baptism was the sign of it.

The blood of Jesus Christ so completely covers our sin and removes our guilt that the conscience can rest at peace - not because we are sinless, and not because the conscience doesn't sometimes accuse us, but because when it does, we "by faith" speak to it and say, *"I know I have sinned. It grieves me. I hate my sin. But I have a Saviour, Jesus Christ, who shed His priceless blood for me, to bear my sins and cover my transgressions. Therefore be silent conscience! Be at peace in Jesus Christ."* And because that is the truth, we can draw near in a confidence and boldness that only comes from truth itself.

Finally, James 4:8 says, **"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you."** Implying that we must instigate this process. Three times in the passage in Hebrews (verses 19-24) it says, **"Let us..."** Again, this is suggesting that we are to initiate the action. Therefore, "communion" with God is up to us to set in motion. We must **draw near to God**, for **God to draw near** to us! When it comes down to relationship, God does not want to force intimacy upon us. So He takes a lead from us, and depending on how thirsty we are, He responds accordingly.

The next verse (v. 23) is very interesting, it says, ***“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.”*** Notice that even in the presence of God we must hang on to our confession, without wavering! We have just drawn near with a sincere heart, in full assurance of faith, yet we are still to hang on to the confession of our hope. Why? Because He who promised is faithful! The Message translation says, ***“Let’s keep a firm grip on the promises that keep us going.”***

Just because we’ve entered the Holy of Holies and have drawn near to God, it doesn’t mean that we should stop **living by faith**. The word “hope” represents things that we are expecting to happen in the future. Therefore, these are things that are still to materialise. Much of the time, just because we have met with God, we expect everything to come right immediately. But this verse clearly states that we must keep confessing (without wavering) because He who promised is faithful! Another translation says, ***“Because He can be trusted to keep His promise.”***

For that reason, I propose that the most important thing about coming into God’s presence is not getting our needs met. It is communing (spending time) with Him for who He is! Being close and intimate with our Creator is what brings Him pleasure. It is our act of worship, and the very least that we can do. Therefore, there is no need to fret, just **draw near** and know that He can be trusted to keep His promises. There’s a confidence or assurance in this knowledge that comes only through faith. Faith in the Person we’ve drawn near to!