

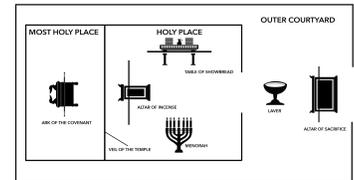
The CITYGATES C H U R C H

Hebrews 10:19-25 The Better Way to Live Pt 1

Summary: In light of all that God has done for us, Christians are encouraged to draw near through Jesus, hold on during difficult times, and pursue community in the church.

As we read and study the book of Hebrews together, we have been learning how much we have in Jesus and why He is so much better than any other system of religion. Most importantly we learned of the access He provides us to the presence of God through His sacrifice on the cross.

We've studied the ancient form of worship originally established in Israel, how they had a tabernacle and later a Temple for worship. Both used the exact same floorplan and furnishings, but one was a tent and the other was made of stone. Both had an outer courtyard with an altar for making offerings, and a big container of water for washing and cleansing because this was how you approached God – by bringing something to surrender to Him.



Priests could then enter the Holy Place where they had work to do every day, burning incense, replacing symbolic loaves of bread, and tending to the lamps. Behind that was the Most Holy Place where the presence of God dwelt, but out of the entire world only one man could go in there, and that was only one day every year.

So, you had a lot of people, doing a lot of religious things, but very little real access to God. And all of this was meant to show us how much we need Jesus. It was meant to show us that following rules, wearing robes, and participating in rituals doesn't actually help us connect with God. We needed something different, something better.

So, God sent His Son. Jesus became a new High Priest, offered a better sacrifice, initiated a new covenant, and tore down the veil that separated the people from the presence of God so that now, we can all come before the throne, *if* we come in the name of Jesus. We went from one guy, once a year, *visiting* the presence of God, to an open invitation to *dwell* in the presence of God with Christ. It's all been very, very, good news.

This morning we review it for a moment and then go on to note how we should live as a result – if all these things are true, and they are, what kind of impact should it have on our lives today in Fairfax? How should we respond? That's the question we answer as we read.

Follow along with me and notice three things we are admonished to *do* in light of all that has been *done* for us, three times you find the imperative "let us"

Hebrews 10:19 Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, 21 and having a High Priest over the house of God, 22 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. 23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, 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.

Did you catch all three? Let us draw near to God (vs 23). Let us hold on to what we believe, the confession of our hope (vs 24). And, let us consider one another (25). We'll talk about each of these this morning. But first, I want to be sure to emphasize, *this is all in response to what has already been done for you.*

Verse 19 begins with **Therefore**. This call to action is really a call to reaction which *is super important to understand*. You're not earning anything; you're responding to something. God has done good things for you; this is a prescription for proper response.

If you are a Christian, you *have* access to the presence of God, to be in the Most Holy Place. You *have* a privilege that is unprecedented in human history. No one in the days of ancient Israel would have presumed to barge into the tabernacle compound, much less the Holy Place and certainly not the Most Holy Place. In fact, the history of Israel contains accounts of people who died when they tried to freely access God or worship in their own way.

It's the same with important people today, we've spoken about this – just because you know where President Biden lives, or Jeff Bezos lives, doesn't mean you can just roll up and hang out. If you try to approach these men the wrong way, without permission, you will be stopped, possibly arrested, potentially killed if you're perceived as a threat. Why would that be true of human beings on earth and not a holy God? Why should you be able to just come rolling up to God whenever you felt like it and in whatever way you want?

Under the old system that was impossible. But Jesus flipped everything. He gives you full access, a badge that opens every door, you're on the list. You can come into the presence of God and do it with boldness, at any time. In fact, you are called in, invited in to the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh.

So, let us do three things. First,

Hebrews 10:22 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.

Remember, under the old system you came to God with something in your hands – you made a sacrifice or an offering, and you walked away with your hands empty, but

symbolically clean. Now, as we celebrated last week during communion, we come to God with empty hands and receive reminders of the sacrifice that was made for us – bread that represents Jesus’ body and wine or juice that represents His blood because He is the Lamb of God offered up for us.

And all of this has an effect on us internally and externally – your soul has been **cleansed**, your **hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience**. If you call on the name of Jesus, confess what you have done wrong – your sin, the Bible calls it - and ask for forgiveness, God says it will be given. All of you studying Romans 8 right now know: “**There is ... no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.**” The blood of Jesus frees us, forgives us and cleanses us. It may take some time to work through what that means in your own heart and mind, it may take some time to train yourself to accept this new reality, but it’s true.

And notice: it’s past tense, this *has* happened. If you are *in Christ*, your heart has been **sprinkled**, and you have been **washed with pure water**.

Church, can you see and hear the power of the imagery here? You have been *washed*, and not only that, you have been washed with *pure water*. This is how God in heaven sees you!

I know you blow it. I do too. None of us are the people we want to be. **We all fall short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23)**. We all make mistakes. And worse, we all, sometimes, say, “I know what’s right and I don’t care, I’ll do what I want.”

Stop that. By God’s grace and with His help knock it off, grow up. But still, you’re **washed with pure water** in the name of Jesus. You are cleansed inside and out. You are fully accepted in the presence of a holy God who knew you could never get there on your own so He sent His Son to come and get you, to sacrifice Himself for you and then to wash you, with pure water and bring you before the throne. Praise Him for it!

Notice, you are told to come boldly into the presence of God in **full assurance of faith**. You can just go right in, act like you belong, because you do!

There’s a certain group of kids in our church, certainly all of the pastors’ kids, but some others as well, who have been around this building long enough and often enough, that they have a sense of familiarity with it, it feels like their second home. They know where everything is, including all the good hiding places. They see this place, and their freedom in it, differently than someone visiting for the first time, because these kids know they belong.

There are boundaries, and sometimes the kids need to be reminded of them, but they’re comfortable here, in the place of worship, it doesn’t feel awkward, or strange, or different, it feels like they belong *and that’s the way it should be*. What about you? Are you that comfortable, do you feel that at ease, in a place that was built for the worship of God? Are you comfortable in His presence? Are you comfortable in prayer? Are you comfortable reading God’s Word? Can you sit still quietly in the presence of God? You should be able to. You could be able to. He is making it all possible. So,

22 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.

But that's not all, our second imperative this morning is:

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

We spoke about this a few weeks ago and we said the Christian faith is fueled, in part, by both grace and grit. The reality is, there are many, many, people alive on the planet today who are enemies of God. Life for the Christian is not always easy, in fact it is hard. It is hard for the Christian because it's hard for everyone.

Now to be clear, following Christ will keep you from countless troubles if [you hold fast the confession of our faith](#) and allow Jesus to shape the way you see the world and your place in it; if you allow Him to direct and shape your life. He will give you your identity, your purpose, your reason for living. He will direct you professionally and relationally, He will keep you from making a mess of your life through bad personal choices and give you strength, wisdom, and patience to deal with the messes others cause.

But all human beings, rich or poor, male or female, young or old, single or married, regardless of ethnicity or family history, we all experience difficulty in life – tragedy, trauma, illness and injury, loss, misfortune and disaster. Having access to God does not insulate you from these things, though it does make a difference in how you experience them, because you're never really alone – as the 23rd Psalm so famously says, [even though I walk through valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil for You are with me.](#)

Christians can know the presence of God in their times of deepest trial and sorrow.

But, there is also an additional source of difficulty in the life of the Christian: rejection and suffering *as a result of being aligned with Christ*. You will suffer all the difficulties of the world, *and* the difficulties of being a child of God on a broken planet among broken people. In fact, Jesus told His disciples, they will hate you because they hated Me.

The truth is, there are times when you will be pressured and tempted to walk a different path. Things will happen in your life, or options will appear in front of you, desires will arise within you, and you will need to decide: should I [hold fast to my confession](#), or let go in light of this.

That may come from outside circumstances, the death of a dream, or a loved one, an opportunity that didn't materialize, or a really enticing offer that will take you off the path established by Christ. And you will have to decide – in light of what has happened, or what has not happened, or what I see as another option, will I hold fast to the confession of my faith? In other words, will I still trust God? Do I still believe His ways are right and best and true? Or will I let go?

Christian, listen to me: *this WILL happen to you*. Life is going to throw something at you. Satan himself and his demonic forces are going to throw something at you. People are going to throw something at you and life will be really, really, hard. Really disappointing. It's going to hurt and pinch, there may be tears, and lots of them. And you will need to choose to **hold onto** the Hand that is holding on to you.

You will need to **hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful**. But look again at the reason for why you should do so. It's because **He who promised is faithful**. Not because it makes sense. Not because you're strong enough to grit your way through this. But because **He who promised is faithful**. Trust in God because He's God.

It won't be easy, but, you've got help. You have the Word of God in your hand, the Spirit of God inside you, and the people of God around you. Look with me at our third imperative this morning:

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

I want to start by pointing out something that is true of each of these imperatives, each of these things we are encouraged to do in light of all God has done for us – notice they are communal. They are plural. **Let us**. These things are not written to you as an individual, they're written to **us**. And that's true of most of the New Testament, books like Hebrews, as well as Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Revelation and more, are written to whole churches, whole groups of people.

Western Culture has emphasized the individual, and the church in America has often done the same and spoken of your personal walk with God, your quiet time, your need to respond to the gospel. And all of that is true, there is, absolutely, a very important individual aspect to the faith. You must be saved personally, individually, there's no such thing as a family pack of salvation you can buy in bulk at Costco.

But, there is also a very important communal aspect to the faith and almost everything in our culture battles against it. The forces pulling you to do things your way, have things your way, order what you want when you want it, without waiting for anyone else are strong. It is fracturing society and it is one of the most dangerous and powerful threats pressing against the church today as well. People think of themselves primarily as individuals with consumer preferences, needs and desires, and view the world as a variety of vendors I choose from to satisfy my needs. It's all very individual.

But three times this morning we're told **let us**. **Let us draw near** to God, together. **Let us hold fast the confession of our faith**, together. **Let us consider one another, encourage one another, in love and good works**, together. And that doesn't just mean listening along to the podcast or watching the video stream.

Words like “us,” “our,” and “one another” appear *ten times* in the short passage we’re examining this morning. And it’s not just this passage, again, many of the books of the Bible are addressed to groups of people, not individuals. In those books you find the church referred to as a body made up of many parts, a temple made up of many bricks, a family with many siblings. Yes, you are an individual, but you are also meant to be part of something larger than yourself. The call of Christ is always a call to community. So,

Let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, 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.

Let me speak for a moment about this issue of **not forsaking the assembly** – of the importance of gathering with other believers for the purpose of fellowship and worship. You may have heard this verse a few times lately, it’s become increasingly relevant in an era of Covid – how do we obey Scripture’s commands to gather when the government says don’t come within 6 feet of other people, don’t sing, don’t let more than 25 people in the building?

There are a lot of things that could be said about the matter, but I just want to focus on this: attending worship in person with other believers has always been the standard for the Church throughout time. As a result, the Church has always had to consider the special needs of those with limited mobility or greater frailty and work to accommodate them, but in general, in-person worship, on a regular basis, was and is, the norm.

If you do not make it a priority to be in worship with a body of Jesus-loving, Bible-believing saints on a regular basis, you should feel uncomfortable. You may have a valid reason, maybe the kids are sick, maybe you’re especially vulnerable to illness right now, maybe you’re traveling, or working odd hours, OK. Totally understandable, but you still should not be comfortable and you should be looking forward to the chance to get back to assembling together as soon as possible. That’s not me trying to bump up the attendance numbers, it’s me reading to you *from Scripture* and if you can find a way to consistently excuse yourself from this clear teaching in God’s Word, what else are you excusing?

Christians are meant to be together in order to help each other and encourage each other. When you come to church or home group or small group, you should get something out of the time, but you should give something as well. That’s how the Church works. God wants to use His people to show His love and offer His help to one another.

So, let me tell you something very important to know: Sunday morning begins Saturday night. Whether you’re tempted to stay up late and sleep in, or you’ve got to try to organize the chaos of getting kids out the door, Sunday morning is always a challenge. So do whatever you can on Saturday night to prepare – get clothes picked out, decide on what’s for breakfast. And get yourself to bed on time unless whatever it is you’re doing is nourishing your soul as much or more than worship with the saints on Sunday – which usually isn’t the case.

The blunt truth is: you need the church to stir you up and you need to be the kind of person who stirs others up at church.

One translation says “let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works.” I like that, but I need to point out something – that’s not just directed to the pastors. It’s directed to the entire church. We all minister to each other.

Now, I hope the pastors and the ministry leaders do a good job caring for and encouraging you. I know you take good care of us, from Christmas gifts to cards during pastor appreciation month, to random acts of kindness throughout the year, you bless us and, speaking for the staff, we are grateful. But according to Scripture we are all able to [encourage](#) each other, to [stir one another up to love and good deeds](#).

The good news is, it’s happening! There is always room to grow, but I met with two different people this week, going through two entirely different sets of circumstances, and both made comments about how helpful, encouraging and supportive the church has been to them through it all – not just the pastors, but the people – you all.

Discouragement is easy to find, it’s everywhere. But when we gather for worship and fellowship you will often find hope, a smile, someone way to pray for you and with you, and maybe even a hug or a fistbump to keep you going. On the authority of Scripture, I’m encouraging you to be here so you can receive it, and to look for those you can give it too – [Let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works](#).

Men, I want to ask you especially: what can you do to [stir up](#) your wife and your children, or even your grandchildren to [love and good works](#)? How can you exhort and encourage them in the good things that God has for them, the ways He wants to shape them?

I challenge you to spend time today, start making a list – can you come up with ten things you could do, say, or buy that would stir your wife or each of your kids up in love and good works? You have a very special role to play in their lives. They thrive under your approval and encouragement. How can you use this holy opportunity to encourage their souls?

And for everyone else, I encourage you to pray – to make yourself, as we often say around here, increasingly available to God. How does He want to use you to encourage and direct someone else? To be an inspirational example for someone else? In light of all that God has done for you - and remember *that’s the basis for all of this today* – since God has already done so much for you, how can you joyfully, heartily, enthusiastically join in with what He is doing in others?

When Scripture says, [let us - let us draw near to God](#) (vs 23), [let us hold](#) on to what we believe, (vs 24), and [let us consider one another](#) (25) – what’s your part of *us*?

Let’s pray.



Sermon Application and Discussion Questions

Hebrews 10:19-25 The Better Way to Live Pt 1

Summary: In light of all that God has done for us, Christians are encouraged to draw near through Jesus, hold on during difficult times, and pursue community in the church.

- This passage of Scripture contains three imperatives, how are you doing with each of them? Which comes easy for you? Which is hard?
 - Let us draw near to God (vs 23),
 - Let us hold on to what we believe, the confession of our hope (vs 24),
 - Let us consider one another (25)
- Hebrews 10 makes reference to the three lasting virtues: faith (22), hope (23), and love (24).¹ How do you see these three working together in the Christian life? Which needs the most attention in your life? Which is thriving?
- Read Acts 17:16 and notice the affect the presence of idols in Athens had on Paul. What gets you “stirred up” (Heb 10:24)? What compels you to take action on something, gets you excited, or intensifies your feelings?
 - How have you been stirred up by someone in the church in a positive, healthy, way?
 - How can you direct your attention toward, or “consider” fellow believers who need encouragement in love and good works? How can you keep this command ‘on your radar?’ What could/should/does it look like in your life?
- Not all provocation turns out the right way. Review Acts 15:36-41. The “contention” that arose between Paul and Barnabas is the same word as “stir up” in Hebrews 10:24. What lessons have you learned about the right and wrong ways to get stirred up? What’s the difference between a stirring that leads in a positive direction and one that leads to arguments and strained relationships?
- Look up the following verses. What do you learn about the role of good works in the lives of Christians?
 - Ephesians 2:10
 - 1 Timothy 2:10
 - Titus 2:7, 2:14, 3:14
 - 1 Peter 2:12

¹ Also referenced in 1 Cor 13:13; Col 1:3-5; 1 Thess 1:3, 5:8; Heb 6:10-12.