

Our text today begins with one of the many “therefore” in this letter. The author is building a case, point by point. His last point was that Jesus’ sacrificial death on the cross was the full and only acceptable payment for all sins. The sacrificial animals through the ages were only pointing to the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29). Since Jesus has accomplished our redemption and represents us as our great high priest, we are for all time perfected in God’s sight. At the same time, we are being sanctified as we learn to yield to the Word written on our minds and in our hearts (Hebrews 10:14).

*19 Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, 20 by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.* Hebrews 10:19-22

That is a long sentence. Allow me to take it point by point. The author assumes that the readers agree with his previous point that we are made holy by the blood of Jesus. That is why we have access to the holy places. Holy places refer to the inner courts in the heavenly realm of which the earthly temple courts were only a shadow. Those who are in Christ, who have received the forgiveness He made possible, can come into the presence of God anytime without fear, and present their petitions to Him.

To get a sense of the wonder of what the author is telling us to do, we should think of it the way the first readers may have with their Hebrew background. In Exodus 24, Moses read the covenant God offered to the people of Israel. After they agreed to their part, Moses sealed it with the sprinkling of blood from the sacrifices (Exodus 24:6-8).

The author had just written that Jesus sealed the new covenant with better blood (Hebrews 9:12). What happened at Sinai gives us a picture of drawing near to God. The mountain was shaking, smoking with fire, and the top was enveloped in a cloud (Exodus 19:16-18; Psalm 114:4). The people wouldn’t come anywhere near the mountain and insisted that Moses speak to God for them (Exodus 20:19).

*1 Then he said to Moses, “Come up to the LORD, you and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and worship from afar. 2 Moses alone shall come near to the LORD, but the others shall not come near, and the people shall not come up with him.”* Exodus 24:1-2 Then the elders were invited to worship from a distance, but notice they were forbidden to come near. That is the opposite of the present invitation to draw near. Joshua went on up the mountain to the edge of the cloud of glory, but Moses went in, drawing near to the LORD. Moses entered the cloud while the mountain trembled, the deafening trumpet blast was blaring, lightning and fire were coming down as smoke ascended. Are you getting the picture?

With that context in mind, now hear the author say, “we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus!” Can we with confidence come before the all

**Commented [PW1]: John 1:29 (ESV)**

<sup>29</sup> The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”

**Commented [PW2]: Hebrews 10:14 (ESV)**

<sup>14</sup> For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

**Commented [PW3]: Exodus 24:6-8 (ESV)**

<sup>6</sup> And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he threw against the altar.

<sup>7</sup> Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, “All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.”

<sup>8</sup> And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, “Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.”

**Commented [PW4]: Hebrews 9:12 (ESV)**

<sup>12</sup> he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.

**Commented [PW5]: Exodus 19:16-18 (ESV)**

<sup>16</sup> On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled.

<sup>17</sup> Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they took their stand at the foot of the mountain.

<sup>18</sup> Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the LORD had descended on it in fire. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly.

**Commented [PW6]: Psalm 114:4 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup> The mountains skipped like rams, the hills like lambs.

**Commented [PW7]: Exodus 20:19 (ESV)**

<sup>19</sup> and said to Moses, “You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die.”

consuming fire that annihilates anything with any taint of evil? Yes, because the blood of Jesus has perfected us forever. We come <sup>20</sup> *by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh*, In the room called the Holy Place, a room that only priests could enter, was a curtain that partitioned off the Most Holy place. Two large cherubim were woven into this curtain, warning of the danger of coming into the presence of utter holiness. When we read of that massive curtain torn in two at the death of Jesus, I imagine it torn right between those two seventy-five-foot high embroidered cherubim (Matthew 27:51; J.W. 5.5.4 § 211). The author of Hebrews says the reality of this is the flesh of Jesus, a new and living way into the Holy of Holies. In other words, Jesus' flesh, torn by Roman whips and pierced on the cross, is what makes us holy before God so that we can draw near His awesome presence. Our sins have been exchanged for the righteousness of Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:21). By returning to Judaism, the readers would be forsaking this unimaginable privilege and going back to the High Priest going in once a year to a shadow of the reality, a shadow that was about to pass away (Hebrews 8:13). I think it would be appropriately humbling for us to recognize that when we pray we go into God's holy and awesome presence through the veil of Jesus' torn body. Communion reminds us of Jesus' body that was torn for us (1 Corinthians 11:24).

<sup>21</sup> *and since we have a great priest over the house of God,* <sup>22</sup> *let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.* Hebrews 10:21,22 So since we have a great high priest who is not only the means by which we enter the Most Holy Place, but also our intercessor (Hebrews 7:25), go into God's presence with a true heart. If we realize the awe of coming before our holy God, we won't dare do so without a true heart. You know you can't come with selfish desires. You know you can't trick God into doing something that is anything less than good and holy. If we regard iniquity in our hearts, He will not hear us (Psalm 66:18).

We come with a true heart in full assurance of faith. That is because our hearts have been sprinkled clean from an evil conscience. Just as the Jews were sprinkled with the blood of the first covenant (Exodus 24:8), the blood of Jesus has been sprinkled over us relieving us of all guilt. Our evil consciences are cleansed (1 Peter 1:2). I remember hiking in Japan with a serviceman who just couldn't accept the idea that God could forgive him. He just kept saying, "You don't know what I've done." Saying that is really saying we don't understand the power of what Jesus has done and how great His grace really is. This is one time the saying "too good to be true" doesn't apply.

Not only are our hearts clean, but our bodies have been washed clean as well. The priests had to wash their bodies with the water from the basin behind the altar before entering the holy place. We have been washed by the water of the Word (Ephesians 5:26). We strive to live holy lives dedicated to God's service, but when we sin with our bodies, we know those sins have been paid for on the cross. Like the ritual cleansing of the high priest before appearing before God on the Day of Atonement, we have

**Commented [PW8]: Matthew 27:51 (ESV)**

<sup>51</sup> And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split.

**Commented [PW9]: 2 Corinthians 5:21 (ESV)**

<sup>21</sup> For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

**Commented [PW10]: Hebrews 8:13 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup> In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

**Commented [PW11]: 1 Corinthians 11:24 (ESV)**

<sup>24</sup> and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

**Commented [PW12]: Hebrews 7:25 (ESV)**

<sup>25</sup> Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

**Commented [PW13]: Psalm 66:18 (ESV)**

<sup>18</sup> If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.

**Commented [PW14]: Exodus 24:8 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words."

**Commented [PW15]: 1 Peter 1:2 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you.

**Commented [PW16]: Ephesians 5:26 (ESV)**

<sup>26</sup> that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,

experienced the reality of that cleansing with a permanent result. That is why we have the great opportunity to draw near at any time. No wonder Paul told us to pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17). We should gratefully exercise this priceless gift.

We have four kinds of "let us" in our passage today. It makes a very spiritually healthy salad (lettuce – get it?). The first was "let us draw near." Now we come to the second. <sup>23</sup> *Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.* Hebrews 10:23 Our sure hope is that Jesus' has paid our sin debt and will finish the work He started in us (Philippians 1:6). Our confession is the same as that of the early church. "Jesus is Lord." He's Lord of all, but we declare that He is also Lord of our individual life. Hold fast to that confession. The world will try to shake you out of it. It will label us in various ways, mock us for not conforming, and threaten us if we continue to declare our hope in Jesus' salvation (2 Timothy 3:12).

This was the threat to this Hebrew church. Just deny Jesus and slip back into Judaism or be persecuted. But **the One who promised to conform us into the image of His Son is faithful** (Romans 8:29). **The One who promised to finish the work He started in us is faithful** (Philippians 1:6). **The One who said He would never leave or forsake us is faithful** (Hebrews 13:5). **Don't waver. The promises are sure.** Don't miss out on them for some temporary relief or pleasure. Temptations lie to us and promise more than they can deliver and cost us much more than we'll want to pay.

It reminds me of those Olympians who concocted a lie to cover their misbehavior. They were out too late getting drunk, destroyed a restroom, and then lied about the confrontation that followed. The flesh will always tell you some stupid act is going to be more fulfilling than it will ever be and suggesting that it won't cost you. How much did those men lose in endorsements? How embarrassing to be caught in a cover up lie? The old nature constantly suggests that you waver, that you don't need to live a life of faith, but rather that you find pleasure in something that will be destructive to you. Hold fast to your confession brothers and sisters. Compromise is never worth it! It's amazing what our fallen nature will give up for a little bowl of lentil stew (Hebrews 12:16)!

The next "let us" in our spiritual salad is <sup>24</sup> *And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,* Hebrews 10:24 Draw near to God. Hold fast to our hope without wavering. Now let us consider how to stir one another up to love and good works. How do we do that? Well, we are supposed to consider different ways to bring that about. One way is to be an example yourself. Love begets love. If you love others, it will stir them to love. Sharing testimonies about the fruit of love will also stir them. We shared about Biddie's life of encouraging others yesterday. Love can transform lives, and we need to hear about those transformations. Love usually costs. It is usually expressed in good works toward others in need. I should brag more on your faithfulness to love your neighbors and tell of how it has touched their lives. Many of our guests comment on how welcome they felt. That is love in action.

**Commented [PW17]: 1 Thessalonians 5:17 (ESV)**  
<sup>17</sup> pray without ceasing,

**Commented [PW18]: Philippians 1:6 (ESV)**  
<sup>6</sup> And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

**Commented [PW19]: 2 Timothy 3:12 (ESV)**  
<sup>12</sup> Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,

**Commented [PW20]: Romans 8:29 (ESV)**  
<sup>29</sup> For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

**Commented [PW21]: Philippians 1:6 (ESV)**  
<sup>6</sup> And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

**Commented [PW22]: Hebrews 13:5 (ESV)**  
<sup>5</sup> Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

**Commented [PW23]: Hebrews 12:16 (ESV)**  
<sup>16</sup> that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal.

Another way to stir one another up is to talk about the opportunities God puts before you to demonstrate love. We don't always see the results, but just that we have the opportunity to show love is a blessing to us. Remember, that Jesus said if you give a cup of cold water to a disciple you won't lose your reward (Matthew 10:42). Doing something for the least is to do it to Jesus (Matthew 25:40). That ought to stir us to action.

When we had the French teens come through, several of you hosted them and showed them Christian love. Gary and Barbara have been a blessing to Old Town Mission. You've all been a blessing in your giving to those in needy mission fields. Bob and Sharon are showing love helping with search and rescue animals and crisis counseling. Deaconesses write the shut ins and those who have moved away with encouraging notes. There is so much of this going on in this congregation; I hope you have found how God would have you live this out.

Love is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). Good works have been prepared for us in advance for us to act on (Ephesians 2:10). These indicate to me that the love we show and the good work we do is empowered and directed by the Holy Spirit. We respond to His leading and He does the work through us. I often pray in the morning that God will use me that day to sow something into a life that will have eternal significance. Then I watch for those opportunities to come and rejoice when it happens. Pray and expect God to show you an opportunity designed especially for you (1 John 5:14).

While the last type of "let us" does not use those words, it is implied. Let us <sup>25</sup> *not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.* Hebrews 10:25 There are no flocks of one. Buildings don't just have one piece (1 Corinthians 3:9). Bodies don't have only one member (1 Corinthians 12:12). We were meant to be together. Is it easy? Of course not. That's because everyone else can be just as selfish as I can be. But everyone else can be just as loving and encouraging as I can be too, when I yield to the Spirit. We have differing convictions, but we really need one another. **Are we the family of God, or are we each an only child? Being involved in one another's lives costs. It costs time, one of our most valuable commodities. But it is worth the investment partly because of what I said earlier, love begets love.** But the main reason is so that we can grow together and round out the needs we have. Together we have a much greater impact than we could have separately. Together we mature more rapidly than we would on our own. Part of that is from the need for trials. Testing our faith matures us (James 1:3-4). When someone hurts our feelings, we realize what we did to someone else when we hurt their feelings. When we forgive, we learn the joy of letting go and trusting God. We need one another in so many ways. Imagine how much stronger the church would be if every lone ranger Christian contributed their part!

There are so many people in our town who once went to church but gave up because something or someone offended them. Love them back in by showing them you care

**Commented [PW24]: Matthew 10:42 (ESV)**

<sup>42</sup> And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward."

**Commented [PW25]: Matthew 25:40 (ESV)**

<sup>40</sup> And the King will answer them, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me."

**Commented [PW26]: Galatians 5:22 (ESV)**

<sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

**Commented [PW27]: Ephesians 2:10 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

**Commented [PW28]: 1 John 5:14 (ESV)**

<sup>14</sup> And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.

**Commented [PW29]: 1 Corinthians 3:9 (ESV)**

<sup>9</sup> For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building.

**Commented [PW30]: 1 Corinthians 12:12 (ESV)**

<sup>12</sup> For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.

**Commented [PW31]: James 1:3-4 (ESV)**

<sup>3</sup> for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.

<sup>4</sup> And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

and sharing testimonies from your church. They need to know we need them and they need us. We've have a number of people who have entered back into church life after years of staying away because someone reached out to them.

You are great at encouraging one another. Let's keep it up and even increase in this area. I remember how Ida would, in every annual meeting, tell individuals what it was about them that she appreciated. It encouraged them to see their own gifts and helped them know they didn't go unnoticed. Sometimes just your presence can encourage a person. You don't even need words. Just to be there for them shows you care.

Today we've considered this wonderful gift we have of being able to approach God, to draw near to Him. I hope you've seen how priceless this opportunity is and that you won't be satisfied to go to the edge of the cloud where Joshua stood, waiting for someone else to come back with a message from God. You are encouraged to draw near. Set aside time to do what Jesus said, to enter your place of prayer and pray to your Father in secret. The promise is that your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly (Matthew 6:6).

That theme connects with the other "let us" challenges in that we can show love by praying for one another, especially those who are going through difficult experiences. Let us draw near. Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering. Let us consider how we might stir one another to love and good works. And let us not neglect meeting together but encourage one another.

The passage concludes by telling us to meet and encourage one another even more as we see the Day of Christ approaching. It looks to me like that Day is approaching. What do you see? Are you in a week day Bible study? Do you get together with the family of God as friends during the week? We need one another's prayers and encouragement. Not getting enough encouragement? Remember, what you sow, you will reap (Galatians 6:7). If you need more, sow more. Amen? This is a great spiritual salad. Want to get spiritually healthy? Try more "let us"!

#### Questions

- 1 Describe drawing near in Exodus.
- 2 What qualifies us to draw near?
- 3 What does the curtain picture?
- 4 What can clear our conscience?
- 5 What is implied by "bodies washed"?
- 6 What are the first two "let us"?
- 7 What tempts us to waver?
- 8 What is the third lettuce and how do we/you live it?
- 9 What is the final exhortation?
- 10 How does the first fit with the last three?

#### Commented [PW32]: Matthew 6:6 (ESV)

<sup>6</sup> But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

#### Commented [PW33]: Galatians 6:7 (ESV)

<sup>7</sup> Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.