

CHAPTER 50

ACCESS TO GOD

(~~SCOPE~~ HEBREWS 10:19-23)

The verses which are now to engage our attention contain the apostle's transition from the doctrinal to the practical part of the epistle, for privileges and duties are never to be separated. Having at great length discoursed upon the priestly office of Christ in the foregoing part of the epistle, he now sums up in a few words the scope and substance of all he had been saying (verses 19-21), and then draws the plain inference from the whole (verse 22). Like a wise master-builder, he first digs till he comes to the foundation, and then calls himself and others to build upon it with confidence. Having demonstrated the vast superiority of Christianity over Judaism, the apostle now exhorts his Christian readers to avail themselves of all their blessed advantages and enjoy the great privileges which have been conferred upon them.

“The apostle's great argument is concluded, and the result is placed before us in a very short summary. We have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way; and we have in the heavenly sanctuary a great Priest over the house of God. All difficulties have been removed, perfectly and forever. We have access; and He who is the way is also the end of the way; He is even now our great Priest, interceding for us, and our all-sufficient Mediator, providing us with every needful help.

“On this foundation rests a threefold exhortation.

1. Let us draw near with a true heart, in the full assurance of faith.
2. Let us hold fast the profession of hope without wavering.
3. Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works, laboring and waiting together, and helping one another in the unity of brethren. Faith, hope, and love — this is the threefold result of Christ's entrance into heaven, spiritually discerned. A believing,

hoping, and loving attitude of heart corresponds to the new covenant revelation of Divine grace” (Adolph Saphir).

“In these words the apostle enters on the last part of the epistle, which is wholly hortatory. For though there be some occasional intermixtures of doctrine consonant to those which are insisted on before, yet the professed design of the whole remainder of the epistle is to propose to, and press on the Hebrews such duties of various sorts, as the truths he had insisted on, do direct unto, and make necessary to all that believe. And in all his exhortations there is a mixture of the *ground* of the duties exhorted to, of their *necessity*, and of the *privilege* which we have in being admitted to them, and accepted with them, all taken from the priesthood and sacrifice of Christ, with the effects of them, and the benefits which we receive thereby” (John Owen).

The same order of Truth may be clearly seen in other epistles of the apostle Paul. In Romans, the first eleven chapters are devoted to doctrinal exposition, the next four being practical, setting forth the Christian’s duties: see ^{<510>}Romans 12:1. Likewise in Ephesians: the first three chapters set forth the sovereign grace of God, the last three the Christian’s responsibilities: see ^{<300>}Hebrews 4:1. From this the teacher and preacher may gather important instruction, showing him *how* to handle the Word, so that the whole man may be edified. The understanding needs to be enlightened, the conscience searched and comforted, the heart inflamed, the will moved, the affections well ordered. Nothing but doctrine, will produce a cold and conceited people; nothing but exhortation, a discouraged and ill-instructed people.

“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus” (verse 19).

“The preceding part of this epistle has been chiefly occupied with stating, proving, and illustrating some of the grand peculiarities of Christian doctrine: and the remaining part of it is entirely devoted to an injunction and enforcement of those duties which naturally result from the foregoing statements. The paragraph verses 19-23, obviously consists of two parts: — a statement of principles, which are taken for granted as having been fully proved; and an injunction of duties grounded on the admission of these principles” (J. Brown).

The great privilege which is here announced unto Christians is that they may draw near unto God as accepted worshippers. This privilege is presented under a recapitulation of the principal points which the apostle had been treating of, namely, first, Christians have liberty to enter the presence of God (verse 19). Second, a way has been prepared for them so to do (verse 20). Third, a Guide is provided to direct them in that way (verse 21). These three points are here amplified by showing the nature of this “liberty”: it is with “boldness,” to enter the presence of God, and that by virtue of Christ’s blood. The “way” is described as a “new” and “living” one, and it is ready for our use because Christ has “consecrated” it. The “Guide” is presented by His function, “priest”; His dignity, “great”; His authority, “over the house of God.”

“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.” To “enter into the holiest” is, as verse 22 shows, to “draw near” unto God in Christ, for “no one cometh unto the Father but by Him” (~~3146~~ John 14:6). The “Holiest” here is only another name for Heaven, the dwelling-place of God, being designated so in this instance because the holy of holies in the tabernacle and the temple was the type thereof. This is established by what was before us in ~~3024~~ Hebrews 9:24,

“For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, the figures of the true; but into heaven itself.”

It is most blessed to link with ~~3309~~ Hebrews 10:19 what is said in ~~3012~~ Hebrews 9:12: “by His own blood *He* entered in once into the holy place”; the title of the members of His body for entering in the Sanctuary on high, is the same as that of their Head’s!

The boldness to “enter into the holiest” which is spoken of in our text is not to be limited to the Christian’s going to heaven at death or at the return of the Savior, but is to be understood as referring to that access unto God in spirit, and by faith, which he now has. Here again we see the tremendous contrast from the conditions obtaining under the old and the new covenants. Under Judaism as such, the Israelites were rigidly excluded from drawing nigh unto Jehovah; His dwelling-place was sealed against them. Nay, even the Levites, privileged as they were to minister in the tabernacle, were barred from the holy of holies. But now the right has been accorded unto all who partake of the blessings of the new covenant, to enjoy free access unto God, to draw near unto His throne as supplicants, to enter His temple as worshippers, to sit at His table as happy children.

Most blessedly was this set forth by Christ in the close of that remarkable parable in Luke 15. There we find the prodigal — having “come to himself” — saying, “I will arise and *go to* my Father.” He arose and went, and *where* do we find him? Outside the door, or looking in at the window? No, but *inside* the House. Sovereign grace had given him boldness to “enter.” And why not? Having confessed his sins, he had received the “kiss” of reconciliation, and the “best robe” had been placed upon him, and thus he was *fitted* to enjoy the Father’s house. In perfect accord with our Lord’s teaching in that parable, we have been told here in Hebrews 10 that “by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified,” and because of this, God has put His laws into their hearts, written them upon their minds, and avowed that their sins and iniquities He would “remember no more.”

Here, then, is the force of the “therefore” in our present verse. Inasmuch as Christ’s satisfaction has removed every legal obstacle, and inasmuch as the work of the Spirit in the Christian has made him

“meet to be partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light”
(^{<S0112>}Colossians 1:12),

there is not only nothing to hinder, but every reason and motive to induce us *to* draw near unto God and pour out our hearts before Him in thanksgiving, praise, and worship. In ^{<S0416>}Hebrews 4:16 we are invited to “come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may *obtain mercy*, and find grace to help in time of need”; but here in ^{<S0109>}Hebrews 10:19-22 it is *worship* which is more specifically in view — entrance into “the holiest,” which was the place of worship and communion, see ^{<04789>}Numbers 7:89.

A further word of explanation needs to be given on the term “boldness.” Saphir rightly pointed out that this expression “must be understood here objectively, not subjectively, else the subsequent exhortation would be meaningless”; in other words, the reference is to something outside ourselves and not to a condition of heart. Literally, the Greek signifies “Having therefore, brethren, boldness for entrance into the holiest,” and hence, some have rendered it “the *right* of entrance.” Most probably the word is designed to point a double contrast from conditions under the old covenant. Those under it had a legal prohibition against entering the sacred abode of Jehovah, but Christians have a perfect title to do so. Again, those under Judaism were *afraid* to do so, whereas faith now perceives that we may come to God with the fullest assurance because He has accepted us

“in the Beloved” (~~4006~~Ephesians 1:6). There is no valid reason why we should hesitate to draw near unto our Father in perfect freedom of spirit.

“By the blood of Jesus.” This is the meritorious cause which procures the Christian’s right of entrance into the “Holiest” — the place where all the tokens of God’s grace and glory are displayed (~~3898~~Hebrews 9:3, 4). The blood of the Jewish sacrifices did not and could not obtain such liberty of access into the immediate presence of God. The blood of Jesus *has* done so, both in respect unto God as an oblation, and in respect unto the consciences of believers by its application. As an oblation or sacrifice, the atonement of Christ has removed every legal obstacle between God and believers. It fulfilled the demands of His law, removed its curse, and broke down the “middle wall of partition”; in token whereof, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, when the Savior expired. So too the Holy Spirit has so applied the efficacy of the blood to the consciences of Christians that they are delivered from a sense of guilt, freed from their dread of God, and enabled to approach Him in a spirit of liberty.

“By a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh” (verse 20).

This presents to us the second inducement and encouragement for Christians to avail themselves and make use of the unspeakable privilege which Christ has secured for them. In order to understand these verses, it is necessary to bear in mind that N.T. privileges are here expressed in the O.T. dialect. The highest privilege of fallen man is to have access unto the presence of God, his offended Lord and Sovereign: the only way of approach is through Christ, of whom the tabernacle (and the temple) was an illustrious type. In allusion to those figures Christ is here presented to our faith in a threefold view.

First, as a *gate* or door, by which we enter into the Holiest. No sooner had Adam sinned, than the door of access to the majesty of God was bolted against him, and all his posterity, the cherubim with the flaming sword standing in his way (~~01024~~Genesis 3:24). But now the flaming sword of justice being quenched in the blood of the Surety (~~38307~~Zechariah 13:7), the door of access is again wide open. The infinite wisdom of God has devised a way how His “banished” may be brought home again to His presence. (~~10414~~2 Samuel 14:14), namely, through the satisfaction of Christ.

Second, to encourage us in our approaches to God in Christ. He is also presented to us under the figure of “a new and living way, which He hath consecrated *for us*.”

“Having told us that we have ‘an entrance into the holiest,’ he now declares what the way is whereby we may do so. The only way into the holiest under the tabernacle was a passage with blood through the sanctuary, and then a turning aside of the veil. But the whole church was forbidden the use of this way, and it was appointed for no other end but typically, that in due time there should be a way opened unto believers into the presence of God, which was not yet prepared. And this the apostle describes.

1. From the preparation of it: ‘which He hath consecrated.’
2. From the properties of it: it was a ‘new and living way.’
3. From the tendency of it, which he expresseth, first, typically, or with respect unto the old way under the tabernacle: it was ‘through the veil.’ Secondly, in an exposition of that type: ‘that is, His flesh.’ In the whole, there is a description of the exercise of faith in our access unto God by Christ Jesus” (John Owen).

In the previous verse it was declared that heaven has been opened unto the people of God. But here Christ is set forth more as the antitype of that “ladder” (^{<0282>}Genesis 28:12, ^{<0151>}John 1:51), which, being set up on earth, reaches to heaven. In this respect Christ is styled “the Way, the Truth and the Life” (^{<0146>}John 14:6), for He is the only true “way” which conducts unto God. That “way” is variously referred to in Scripture as the “way of life” (^{<0017>}Proverbs 10:17), the “way of holiness” (^{<0338>}Isaiah 35:8), the “good way” (^{<0166>}Jeremiah 6:16), the “way of peace” (^{<0179>}Luke 1:79), the “way of salvation” (^{<0167>}Acts 16:17). All of these refer to the same thing, namely, the only path unto heaven. Christ Himself is that “way” in a twofold sense: first, when the heart turns away from every other object which competes for the first place in its affections, abandons all confidence in its own righteousness, and lays hold of the Savior. Second, when grace is diligently sought to take Christ as our Exemplar, following “His steps” in the path of unreserved and joyful obedience to God.

The “way” to God is here said to be “a new and living” one. The word for “new” is really “newly slain,” for the simple verb “occido” from which it is compounded signifies “to slay.” The avenue of approach to God has been

opened unto us because Christ was put to death in this way. But this word “new” is *not* to be taken absolutely, as though this “way” had no existence previously to the death of Christ, for all the O.T. saints had passed along it too. No, it was neither completely “new” as to its contrivance, revelation, or use. Why then is it called “new”? In distinction from the old way of life under the covenant of works, in keeping with the new covenant, because it was now only made fully manifest (^{<408>}Ephesians 3:5), and because of its perennial vigor — it will never grow old.

This “way” unto God is also said to be a “living” one, and this for at least three reasons.

First, in opposition unto the way to God under Judaism, which was by the *death* of an animal, and was the cause of death unto any who used it, excepting the high priest.

Second, because of its perpetual efficacy: it is not a lifeless thing, but has a spiritual and vital power in our access to God.

Third, because of its effects: it leads to life, and effectually brings us thereunto.

“It is called a living way, because all that symbolizes Christ must be represented as possessing vitality. Thus we read of Him as the living stone, the living bread, etc.” (Adolph Saphir).

Probably this epithet also looks to Christ’s resurrection: though slain, the grave could not hold Him; He is now “alive for evermore,” and by working in His people repentance, faith, and obedience, conducts them safely through unto life everlasting.

This new and living way unto God has been “consecrated for us” by Christ. It is a path consecrated by Him for the service and salvation of man; a way of access to the eternal sanctuary for the sinner which has been set apart by the Redeemer for this service of men” (A. Barnes). As Christ Himself is the “way,” the meaning would be, that He has dedicated Himself for the use of sinners in their dealings with God — “for their sakes I sanctify Myself” (^{<4179>}John 17:19). As the “way” is also to be regarded as the path which we are called upon to follow through this world as we journey to heaven, Christ has “consecrated” or fitted it for our use by leaving us an example that we should follow His steps — “when He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth *before* them” (^{<4104>}John 10:4).

“The phrase ‘consecrated for us’ giveth us to understand that Christ hath made the way to heaven fit for us, and this by His three offices. First, as a Priest, He hath truly dedicated it, and that by His own blood, as by the blood of sacrifices things were consecrated under the law. Christ by His blood has taken away our sins, which made the way to heaven impassible. Second, as a Prophet, He hath revealed and made known this way to us. This He did while He was on earth, by Himself; and since His taking into heaven, He hath done it by His ministers (^{<4041>}Ephesians 4:11). Third, as a King, He causes the way to be laid out, fenced in, and made common for all His people; so as it may well be styled the King’s highway” (William Gouge).

“Through the veil, that is to say, His flesh.” It is through the humanity of Christ that the way to heaven has been opened, renewed and consecrated. But prior to His death, the very life which was lived by the man Christ Jesus only served to emphasize the awful distance which sinners were from God, just as the beautiful veil in the tabernacle shut out the Israelite from His presence. Moreover, the humanity of Christ was a sin-bearing one, for the iniquities of His people had all been imputed to Him. While, then, the flesh of Christ was uncrucified, proof was before the eyes of men that the curse was not abolished. As long as He tabernacled in this world, it was evident that sin was not yet put away. The veil must be rent, Christ must die, before access to God was possible. When God rent the veil of the temple, clear intimation was given that every hindrance had been removed, and that the way was opened into His presence.

“And having an High Priest over the house of God” (verse 21).

Here is the third great privilege of the Christian, the third inducement which is presented to him for approaching unto God, the third character in which Christ is presented unto faith. Whereas it might be objected that though the door be opened and a new and living way consecrated, yet we are too impotent to walk therein, or too sinful to enter into the holiest; therefore, to obviate this, Christ is now set forth as Priest over the house of God. O what encouragement is here! As Priest Christ is “ordained for men in things pertaining to God” (^{<3831>}Hebrews 5:1). He is a living Savior within the veil, interceding for His people, maintaining their interests before the Father.

“And having an High Priest over the house of God.” The opening “And” shows that the contents of this verse form a link in the chain begun in verse 19, so that they furnish a further ground to help us in approaching unto God. The next word “having,” while not in the Greek, is obviously understood, and as the principal verb (needed to complete the sentence) is fetched from verse 19. The adjective should be rendered “great” and not “high”: it is not a relative term, in comparison with other priests; but an absolute one, denoting Christ’s dignity and excellency: He is “great” in His person, in His worthiness, in His position, in His power, in His compassion.

To show for whom in particular Christ *is* the great Priest, it is here added “over the house of God.”

“The apostle doth not here consider the sacrifice of Christ, but what He is and doth after His sacrifice, now that He is exalted in heaven; for this was the second part of the office of the high priest. The first was to offer sacrifice for the people, the other was to take the oversight of the house of God: see ^{<SR6>}Zechariah 3:6, 7 — Joshua being an eminent type of Christ” (John Owen).

The “house of God” represents the whole family of God both of heaven and earth: compare ^{<SR6>}Hebrews 3:6. The church here below is what is first comprised in this expression for it is unto it that this encouragement is given, and unto whom this motive of drawing nigh is proposed. But as it is in the heavenly sanctuary that Christ now ministers, and into which we enter by our prayers and spiritual worship, so the “house of God” includes both the church militant and the church triumphant.

When it is said that Christ is “*over* the house of God,” it is His headship, lordship, authority, which is in view. The Lord Christ presides over the persons, duties, and worship of believers. In that all their acceptable worship is of His appointment; in that He assists the worshippers by His Spirit for the performance of every duty; in that He directs the government of the church, ordains its officers, and administers its laws; in that He makes their service acceptable with God. He is King in Zion, wielding the scepter, protecting the interests of His church, and, according to His pleasure, overthrowing its enemies. It is the Lord who adds to the church those who are to be saved. He is the alone Head, and as the wife is to be subject to her husband in all things, so the members of Christ’s mystical body are to own no other Lord. From Him we are to take our orders; unto Him we must yet render an account.

“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” (verse 22).

Having described the threefold privilege which Christians have been granted, the apostle now points out the threefold duty which is entailed; the first of which is here in view, namely, to enter the Holiest, to draw near unto God, as joyful worshippers. To “draw near” unto God is a sacerdotal act, common to all the saints, who are made priests unto God” (~~1006~~ Revelation 1:6): the Greek word expressing the whole performance of all Divine worship, approaching unto the Most High to present their praises and petitions, both publicly and privately.

“To draw near to God is an act of the heart or mind, whereby the soul, under the influence of the Spirit, sweetly, and irresistibly returns to God in Christ as its only center of rest. There is a constant improvement of the merit and mediation of Christ in every address made to the Majesty on high. The believer, as it were, fixes himself in the cleft of the Rock of ages; he gets into the secret place of the blessed stair, by which we ascend unto heaven; and then he lifts up his voice in drawing near to God, by the new and living way. He says with David ‘I will go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy.’ And if God hides His face, the soul will wait, and bode good at His hand, saying, ‘hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him: He will command His loving kindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with me.’ And if the Lord smiles and grants an answer of peace, he will not ascribe his success to his own faith or fervor, but unto Christ alone” (Condensed from Eben. Erskine, 1733).

“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.” This is the requisite manner in which we must approach unto God. It is not sufficient to assume a reverent posture of body, or worship with our lips only; nor is God honored when we give way to unbelief. A “true heart” is opposed to a double, doubting, distrustful, and hypocritical heart. All dissimulation is to be avoided in our dealings with Him who “trieth the hearts and the reins” and “whose eyes are like a flame of fire.”

God desireth truth in the inward parts, and therefore, “Son, give Me thine heart” (~~1036~~ Proverbs 23:26) is His first demand upon us. Nothing short of this will ever satisfy Him. But more; there must be “a true heart”: a sincere,

genuine, honest desire and determination to render unto Him that which is His due. We cannot impose upon Him. Beautiful language designed for the ears of men, or emotional earnestness which is only for effect, does not deceive God.

“God is spirit; and they that worship Him, *must* worship in spirit and in truth” (~~3024~~ John 4:24).

How this condemns those who rest satisfied with the mere outward performance of duty, and those who are content to substitute an imposing ritual for real heart dealings with God! O to be able to say with David, “with my whole heart have I sought Thee.”

“In full assurance of faith”: which means, negatively, without doubting or wavering; positively, with unshaken confidence — not in myself, nor in my faith, but in the merits of Christ, as giving the unquestionable title to draw near unto the thrice holy God. “Full assurance of faith” points to the heart resting and relying upon the absolute sufficiency of the blood of Christ which was shed for my sins, and the efficacy of His present intercession to maintain my standing before God. Faith looks away from self, and eyes the great Priest, who takes my feeble praise or petitions, and, purifying and perfuming them with His own sweet incense (~~608B~~ Revelation 8:3, 4), renders them acceptable to God. But let not Satan deter any timid child of God from drawing near unto Him because fearful that he neither possesses a “true heart” or “full assurance of faith.” No, if he cannot consciously come *with* them, then let him earnestly come unto the throne of grace *for* them.

“Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.” Here we have a description of the characters of those who are qualified or fitted to enter the Holiest. A twofold preparation is required in order to draw near unto God: the individual must have been both justified and sanctified. Here those two Divine blessings are referred to under the typical terms which obtained during the old covenant.

“Having your hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.” The Jewish cleansing or “sprinkling” with blood related only to that which was eternal, and could not make the conscience perfect (~~3000~~ Hebrews 9:9); but the sacrifice of Christ was designed to give peace to the troubled mind and confidence before God. An “evil conscience” is one that accuses of guilt and oppresses because of unpardoned sin. It is by the exercise of faith in

the sufficiency of the atoning blood of Christ — the Spirit applying experimentally its efficacious virtue — the conscience is purged. “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God” (^{<4150>}Romans 5:1): we are freed from a sense of condemnation, and the troubled heart rests in Christ.

“And our bodies washed with pure water.” This figurative language is an allusion to the cleansing of the priests when they were consecrated to the service of God (^{<4234>}Exodus 29:4). The antitypical fulfillment of this is defined in ^{<4085>}Titus 3:5 as “the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.” But here the emphasis is thrown on the *outward* effects of regeneration upon the daily life of the believer. We need both an internal and an external purification; therefore are we exhorted, “let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (^{<4701>}2 Corinthians 7:1). The sanctity of the body is emphatically enjoined in Scripture: see ^{<4512>}Romans 12:1; ^{<4166>}1 Corinthians 6:16, 20.

The whole of this 22nd verse contains most important teaching on the practical side of communion with God. While the first reference in the cleansing of the conscience and the washing of the body be to the initial experience of the Christian at his new birth, yet they are by no means to be limited thereto. There is a constant cleansing needed, if we are to consciously draw near to the holy God. Daily do we need to confess our sins, that we may be daily pardoned and “cleansed from all unrighteousness” (^{<4109>}1 John 1:9). An uneasy conscience is as real a barrier to fellowship with Jehovah, as ceremonial defilement was to a Jew. So too our walk needs to be incessantly washed with the water of the Word (John 13). The Levitical priests were not only washed at the time of induction into their holy office, but were required to wash their hands and feet *every time* they entered the sacred sanctuary (^{<4219>}Exodus 30:19, 20).

It is just at this very point that there is so much sad failure today. There is so little exercise of heart before God; so feeble a realization of His high and holy requirements; so much attempting to rush into His presence without any previous preparation.

“Due preparation, by *fresh* applications of our souls unto the efficacy of the blood of Christ for the purification of our hearts, that we may be meet to draw nigh to God, is required of us. This the apostle hath special respect to, and the want of it is the bane of public worship. Where this is not, there is no due reverence of God,

no sanctification of His name, nor any benefit to be expected unto our own souls” (John Owen).