

Theology is for life. Deeply profound and significant theology is meant to help us to live deeply profound and significant lives. Lives that matter. Lives that count beyond here and now. Or to put it another way. Hebrews is a book that is deeply theological. It unpacks for us the Person and work of Jesus unlike any other book the bible. The glorious work of Jesus Christ as high priest and sacrifice gives us full access to God so that we may live full lives. Full access to God, full lives. Full lives before God.

## **Full Access**

This full access comes to us through the dual work of Christ in 1) sacrificing himself (pouring out his blood) once for all and 2) his present work as High Priest interceding for us in the presence of God. We see this in verses 19-21.

1) First, we have full access by the blood of Jesus (verse 19-20) - [unpack old/copy vs. new/true holy place]

*<sup>19</sup> Therefore, brothers, since we have **confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus,** <sup>20</sup> by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh,*

2) Full access by the present intercession of Jesus our High Priest (verse 21) - his present advocacy

*And since we have [now] a great priest over the house of God,*

He is alive in the presence of God today, always covering for you and always advocating for you. He is a powerful, present, and eternal Mediator for you in the presence of God.

We have a strong foundation for confidence before God. NOT in ourselves. None at all! But in and through Christ. Or to change the metaphor from building foundation to trees, the work of Jesus as our high priest and sacrifice is the strong root system in which we may grow up in Christ. Roots that go deep and are thick and spread broad. The mighty sequoia trees have a massive and wide spreading root system. They sink 12-14 feet deep and occupy over an acre of earth and contain over 90,000 cubic feet of soil. This mass of roots and soil can maintain the balance of a tree that is 300 feet tall and weighs almost 2 million pounds.

To be rooted in Christ's work for us as high priest and sacrifice is to be rooted solid, through which we may grow up in him.

It is from the vantage point of this fully-loaded work of Jesus on our behalf, which gives us full access to God, that we are given three sweeping commands to live full. To live full before God, to live full in light of the future, and to live full together. And each command comes with a weighty and serious tone. Let's look at each of one.

## Three Commands

### 1. First Command: Draw near to God! (verse 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.*

Because we have access through Christ's finished work on the cross and his present... We were made for God... and he is the fountain of unspeakable joy -

John Piper says, "*The greatest good of the good news - the gospel - is the enjoyment of fellowship with God himself.*" Draw near... this is the greatest concern of the author (4:16, 7:25, 10:1). That his readers understand that Jesus takes away sin and intercedes for us in order that we may draw near and live near to him.

We see this in the connection between 19-21 and verse 22. Since we have confidence through the blood of Jesus... and since we have a great priest over the house of God... draw near. And notice the author says, "Let us draw near." Don't let the words "Let us" fool you. We hardly ever say let us - it almost sounds like old english. "Let us have some lunch". We smash the two words together and say, "Let's eat!" That's the point - "let's draw near". It is an imperative. It's like, "Since we have confidence... what are we waiting for. Let's go!"

But we are to draw near in a particular way: we see "draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith".

1) With a true heart. True as opposed to phony. True or sincere or genuine. The heart represents the entire inner life. Have you ever heard it said, "whatever has your heart has you." And so we are to draw near with a true, sincere, genuine, and whole heart. Proverbs 4:23 says, "Watch your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life." We don't want to be like the Pharisees who praised God with their lips, while their hearts were far from him (Matthew 15:8).

2) In full assurance of faith - objective. Fully assured in Christ. This the only road that leads to the mountain peak of the Holy Place - the presence of God. And we may come near if we come by this road.

With the totality of our hearts, absorbed, fully engaged, looking fully to Christ. Resting completely on Christ - that he has opened the way through the shedding of his blood and he stands there FOR ME. Fully assured that I am welcome because of Christ and in Christ and through Christ.

When? Now. Let us draw near... not when you get home (he's writing to a church - "let us"), not at some opportune time, not when you feel particularly mystical or spiritual, not when you get over depression, not when you get past the holidays, not when once you get some alone time. NO! Now! Are you a Christian? Has the blood of Jesus been poured out for you, cleansing your conscience? Is he standing in the presence of God on your behalf now? Then what are you waiting for?!?! The command is, "Therefore draw near to God."

## **2. Second command: Hold tightly to the hope (verse 23)**

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

I think this is pointing us to the future. And what is our final hope? The end of the chapter says, "*Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay*" (10:37). Christ is coming again to set everything right. And the dead in Christ shall be raised. Our hope takes us to the end of history and the glorious return of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul calls this our "blessed hope - the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2).

And we are told to hold fast to this hope, and to do so without wavering (unbending, not yielding an inch). And why? When do you need to hold fast? When there is a strong wind, a storm, a bumpy road, rough waters. That's when you need to hold tightly to something. These Christians the author is writing to Christians going through rough waters. Experiencing strong headwinds. "Hold tightly to your hope", the author urges. Hope that stretches out into the future, looking to the eternal reward when "the coming one comes..."

We are given a very good reason we can hold so tightly. God is faithful - "for he who promised is faithful". "*Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father. There is no shadow of turning with Thee. Thou changest not...*" Our confidence in our future hope is grounded in something strong. God's faithfulness - shown to us so gloriously in the incarnation, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and present intercession of Christ on our

behalf. This is what fills our hope with more than wishful thinking, but with the rock solid assurance of a faithful God who will not fail, who cannot fail. This kind of hope is what has given Christians the intensity and courage to face the worst. Blandina - a young Christian woman (22) in Lyon, France in the 2nd century during a terrible time of persecution for Christians. Brutalized, beaten mercilessly. Tied to a post in the arena with other Christians to be torn to shreds by hungry lions. All the Christians were, except for her. She was put back in prison, brought back out to the arena to be eaten by lions...

*"She looked," one eyewitness said, "as if she were invited to a wedding feast, not thrown to the beasts." Her persecutors, frustrated and angry, wrapped her in a net and threw her to a bull that tossed her around the arena. Finally, a soldier reached down and slew her with a sword. The pagans said they had never seen a woman suffer so much or so long. The bodies of Blandina and the other Christians lined the streets of Lyons. Guards stood watch, preventing their friends from giving them a decent burial.*

*"Why won't you let them bury their dead?" the guards were asked. "So they may have no hope in the resurrection," they answered. "It is this hope that gives them such courage."*

What headwinds are you facing? What fiery trial are you walking through? If not now, trust me, you will. And you will need to hold tightly to your hope in Christ.

### **3. Third Command: Consider one another** (verses 24-25)

*And let us consider how to stir one another up to love and good works, 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.*

Consider one another. Consider. Think about one another. Focus on one another. This is specifically language about personal relationships in the church. This is one of the "one another" passages that show the inner workings of the local church. And it's powerful. One other place the author uses this word translated "consider" and it is in Hebrews 3:1, where he says, "Consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession". There he is telling us to look at, study, think about, focus on Jesus. Here we are being commanded to look at, study, think about, and focus on one another.

Specifically how to stir one another up to love and good works. “Stir up” - paroxysm - violent epileptic seizure. The idea is irritate, incite, or provoke, stimulate. To provoke. Think of it as grace-filled stimulant. To what end? To love and good works. Isn't it awesome that he says “love and good works”? If he had just said love, we might think that good, loving feelings was all that he is after. But of course that isn't true. The grace of God isn't just so we can have good vibes or nice loving feelings. But rather that our hearts may be changed and motivated and to “serve one another through love” (Galatians 5:13).

We are given a very practical way in which we are to do this in verse 25: Don't forsake gathering together... but encourage one another. It doesn't contrast, not showing up with simply showing up. Rather it contrasts not gathering together with getting together ready to encourage. Invested in lives.

“And all the more as you see the Day drawing near...” We are not to be more lax the closer we are to Christ's return. We are to be more earnest, more serious, more watchful, more concerned for each other's well being. Why all the more near the end? Jesus said near the end “*lawlessness will be increased, [and] the love of many will grow cold.*”

## **Conclusion**

Okay, let's wrap this up. Because of what Christ has done to give us full access, live full lives!

1) You were made for God. Draw near to Him now...

2) You belong to God forever. Hold tightly to your hope. Unmoved by headwinds, undaunted by shaking, because God is faithful and cannot fail. And therefore your hope is certain... and it is better than you can imagine!

3) In Christ, you have been joined to each other. You are here for a significant reason. Consider one another - study and seek the Lord about how you can be a stimulant, a catalyst; how you can stir people others up to love and good works. And all the more as we get closer to marvel of marvels, the return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's pray.