

Lesson Seventeen

(10:19-25)

ACCESS TO GOD

19Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus,²⁰ by the new and living way which 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.²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful;²⁴ and let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,²⁵ 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.

The sacrifice has been provided, the ransom for sin paid — the way to God is open. Good news, this!

Our text, built on the above fact(s), is the opening section of the second general division of the epistle. With the doctrine of a better covenant built on better promises, providing a better hope (8:6) firmly established, our author begins to make practical and sustained application to his first auditors about keeping that which they then had:

TWENTY-SIX LESSONS ON HEBREWS

Christianity. As the general outline on page viii reveals, the remaining text in Hebrews relates directly to the Christian way of life, though flashes of the previous discussion (as in 12:18-29) appears. Our immediate text is given over to exhortation, then to a rather solemn warning (10:26-31) and a solid bit of encouragement (10:32-39).

10:19 — Therefore — This word indicates a conclusion drawn from a preceding argument. It is an important word in exegesis, and should be carefully considered. Here, it is based upon the careful argumentation about Jesus and all he has done, beginning actually at 1:1 and running through 10:18.

we have — A present possession, the author says, which may be continued, and should be acted upon. We have 1) confidence, v. 19, and 2) a great priest, v. 21. In our text, three basic exhortations are set forth, each with direct application to the Christian life, and based upon what Christians possess. They are 1) let us draw near, v. 22, 2) let us hold fast, v. 23, 3) let us consider . . . one another, v. 24.

sanctuary — This word has been used to translate the Greek expression *τῶν ἁγίων*, sometimes translated as "the Holy Place," though it is in the plural form. The word *ἁγίων* is the plural of *ἅγιος*, and was applied to Jesus in 2:11 (note I Cor. 1:30) and also Christians, the sanctifier and the ones being sanctified. Sometimes it is back of the word "saint" as in Romans 1:7, or the idea of consecration/sanctification, as in Romans 6:19, 22. It is used in 8:2; 9:1, 2, 3, 8, 12, 24, 25 to mean a holy place, (as the tabernacle, 9:1), or in plural form to the sanctuary in which the high priest went yearly, 9:3, 24; 25; or where Christ serves as mediator and high priest, 8:2; 9:8, 12.

confidence — See this word in 3:6; 4:16; and 10:35.

V. 20 — new and living way — In effect, Jesus himself, whether one considers the specific reference is to his flesh, his death, blood, etc. Because he sacrificed himself and became an acceptable substitute, he is the "way" to God, and in comparison to the Old Covenant, author and perfecter of a "new way."

V. 21 — house of God — Note 3:1-6; then Ephesians 2:19-20; I Peter 2:5. This expression is somewhat equivalent to "people of God" in 4:9.

V. 22 — Let us draw near — On the basis of all that Jesus has done, no reason exists not to do so.

true heart — One fully committed to God, and to Jesus Christ, his son. Christians were/are to be fully persuaded that Jesus is able, doubting nothing, seeking no other foundation (see II Timothy 1:8-14; Acts 4:11-12).

our hearts sprinkled — The imagery of the high priest's actions in the Holy of Holies is here used. When he entered the Holy of Holies with the blood of a sacrifice, he was to sprinkle blood upon the mercy seat for the removal of sins from the people of Israel. Likewise, the

offering Jesus made in our behalf, upon our acceptance of it, cleanses us from all sin, and we stand "clean" before God. In such a condition, we no longer need to have a consciousness of sin.

bodies washed — Both the "inside" man and the "outside" man (note Romans 2:25-29) must be conformed to God's will. Our mind must be in a constant state of renewal (repentance) and trust, bringing every thought captive to Christ, II Corinthians 10:5; while our "outward" man is continually expressive of an obedient servant to God. Initially, our faith is placed in Jesus through a decision based upon information received and an act of the will. This is "inside." We then in an outward act of obedience are immersed into Jesus, completing the initial requirement to become Christian. This is "outside." At this point in time, the "old has passed away, the new has come into being," II Corinthians 5:17. Note here Ephesians 5:26; Titus 3:4-5; I Peter 3:21. There is no direct relationship between Jewish priestly practice and immersion in the Christian sense.

V. 23 — **Let us hold fast** — Assuming the point in v. 22, the first auditors were exhorted to establish a close relationship. On the basis of God's eternal trustworthiness, 6:13-20, the readers were to keep their status as Christians, as was also enjoined in 3:6 and 4:14.

V. 24 — **Let us consider** — Christians are to give continual thought to considering each other, not primarily to criticize or tear down, but to build up. Here the consideration is to be of such a nature that action is produced, specially the action of love and good works. Love for God and one's fellow man forms the basis of all other commands, Matthew 22:34-40; John 13:34-35; 14:15; Romans 13:8-10. Good works are just such things as God expects of us, and for which he created us, Galatians 6:7-10; Ephesians 2:9-10; Philippians 2:12-13; etc. Note Dorcas in Acts 9:36; Jesus in 10:38; and then read Matthew 25:31-46 and Revelation 14:13. Note upon what judgment is based, Romans 14:12; II Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 20:11-15. Reread Hebrews 6:9-12.

V. 25 — **not neglecting** — Positively, Christians were, in their consideration of each other, v. 25, to keep meeting together as a group, which would enable them to respond correctly to the preceding exhortations. While there were many early Christians who, because of status in life (such as being a slave) might have found it difficult or impossible to meet as much as they would like to have done, yet Christianity is of such nature that some arrangement to meet could be arranged, at least normally, and should be made. From information in New Testament books, some Christians met upon Sunday for corporate worship (Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 16:2). This seems to have been the general practice of the church in the early centuries, if writers like Justin Martyr are correct. They may not have had the two Sunday meetings and one on Wednesday night as some now practice, but evidently they assembled at least once on Sunday.

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Meditation upon the injunction expressed in the text will be good for all of us, as we think about the general assemblies we provide. Do the assemblies promote love and good works, etc.? If not, why? A good reason for assemblies can be seen in 12:15.

the habit of some — While some because of various states in life might not have been able to attend, others who could do so were to do so. There was to be no habitual absenteeism by Christians from the assembly.

encouraging — From *παρακαλέω*, to beseech or exhort, admonish and plead, even bordering on 'to command' in some texts.

the Day — The meaning of this term is not given. Context alone can determine. It can mean "Day of worship" or "day of Jesus' coming," though some other less likely ideas have been suggested. The idea of Jesus' second coming, mentioned in 9:27-28, coupled with the urgent points made in such texts as 3:7ff., and 10:26-31, combine to make the second suggestion most likely.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 17:

153. Outline the whole book, at least as detailed as the outline given in the Introduction.
154. Take this section from 10:19-25 and analyze it as it fits into the whole.
155. Discuss the word "therefore."
156. What do Christians "have" as listed in our text?
157. List the three exhortations.
158. What is your explanation of "hearts sprinkled clean" and "bodies washed . . ." in v. 22?
159. If Jesus was immersed according to God's will (Matt. 3:15; Luke 7:29-30) and commanded his apostles to do so (Matt. 28:18-19) does the book of Acts reveal that they obeyed?
160. When Jesus spoke of a new birth (John 3), and Acts records the apostles immersing, and no other explanation is found about a "new birth," in the light of the scriptures mentioned above in v. 22, and that text in Romans 6:3-6, why should it not be a valid conclusion that the act of immersion was/is the consummation of the new birth?
161. Why should Christians not waver?
162. Have you ever caught yourself merely "sizing" up another Christian with no thought of stirring him up to love and good works?
163. In what area of thought and exhortation is the general meeting together by Christians placed?