

“Welcome to Holy Boldness!”
by Rom A. Pegram (8/13/17)

In order to understand scripture, it's really important sometimes to have some background. What was going on at the time that this particular piece of scripture (a letter) was written? What was it that the original audience might have understood in their context ... better than you and I understand it in our context? Again, the original recipients of this letter to the Hebrews were probably 2nd generation Christians, not so far removed from Judaism that they'd not remember some of the references here...

In a nutshell, the reason we no longer need an earthly priest to go before God ... is because Jesus paved the way ... through his life, death, and resurrection! Folks, God loves us so much that he sent his only Son ... *to tear the veil (in the Temple) apart!* The sin, represented by that veil in the Temple, was now torn apart, done away with, because of what Jesus did for us. And I'm here to tell you, eternally speaking, it doesn't get any better than that! Listen to our lesson for today—back to Hebrews, Chapter 10 (19-25, NLT)...

And so, dear brothers and sisters, we can boldly enter heaven's Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus. ²⁰ By his death, Jesus opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place. ²¹ And since we have a great High Priest who rules over God's house, ²² **let us go right into the presence of God** with sincere hearts fully trusting him. For our guilty consciences have been sprinkled with Christ's blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water. ²³ **Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm**, for God can be trusted to keep his promise. ²⁴ **Let us think of ways to motivate one another** to acts of love and good works. ²⁵ And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.

“Come on in...” is what Christ's life, death & resurrection mean to us! *Come on in* to God's throne room ... any time you need to ... or want to! Folks,

- It's not everyone who's allowed to freely enter the King's presence, but we can...
- It's not everyone who's allowed to speak freely before the King, but we can...
- It's not everyone who's allowed to come before the King *at any time*, but we can...

It's a privilege, granted to those who put their faith in Christ and become children of God, heirs of all that Christ has given us through faith... *One commentator said it this way:* “As [the writer of Hebrews] begins (v. 19-20), he assumes matter-of-factly in the opening phrase that his hearers have a proper confidence in their divine access.” In other words, *the veil has been torn in two by the very One who can welcome us in...*

Then, this ‘confidence in access’ is especially strong because it's coupled with a confidence in Christ's ‘priestly advocacy’. Not only have we been granted *access to God's throne room*, but we also have *a friend on the other side of the veil!* *It's on these two foundation stones of the faith that we need to stand!*

And, as people of faith, why shouldn't we be confident? But, now, let me also ask this: *With this incredible privilege before us, how are we going to respond?* We cannot be granted such an incredible privilege ... and give no response, can we? Here's how the writer of Hebrews instructs us...

LET US GO RIGHT IN TO THE PRESENCE OF GOD... Verse 22 encourages us in this way: "...**let us go right into the presence of God** with sincere hearts fully trusting him. For our guilty consciences have been sprinkled with Christ's blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water." Our author, here, desires us to make use of the open way and to come close to the presence of God! In other words, *exercise your privilege of divine access!!!!* And how do we do that?

When we enter the throne room of God (prayer), we need to enter with hearts that are 'true'—with no guile [deceit] or shame... And they need to be hearts that are 'fully trusting [God]'... It's kind of like the song "Fill My Cup, Lord," by Richard Blanchard. The line that I'm thinking of is 'fill me 'til I want no more.' Now that would be one full and trusting heart, wouldn't it? To be filled with that much faith?

Our hearts, in Christ, will be hearts that are sprinkled and purified by his blood (sacrifice) and hearts that are no longer bothered by an evil conscience—cleansed from all evil motivation, and of any guilt or memory of wrongdoing. It's with that kind of *transformed heart* (transformed by the blood of Christ) that we are to enter God's throne room with (in prayer)... And then, the writer of Hebrews tells us:

LET US HOLD TIGHTLY ... TO THE HOPE WE AFFIRM... Verse 23 goes on with this: "**Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm**, for God can be trusted to keep his promise." The Greek verb, translated here as 'hold tightly,' has a sense of holding firm, securing or tightening down our faith...

One of my father's pet peeves (and, I guess, mine too) was 'wishy-washy people.' He used to get on to some parishioners who he knew had already professed the faith that they were now wavering on ... and he would tell them: "Drive a stake in it ... and then stand firmly there!" In other words, you don't have to keep on learning this same lesson! God is God; God is unchanging in his nature ... and your faith can stand on that!

Again, the Hebrew believers were fighting persecution of Christianity ... not unlike we still hear about in the world today. "Hang on!" the writer of Hebrews was telling his people. "God is on his way with resources for endurance!" And that message is good for us today, too! So, 'let us hold tightly ... to the hope we affirm' and then, the author of Hebrews instructs us to respond to God's love (and our divine access) in this way:

LET US THINK OF WAYS TO MOTIVATE ONE ANOTHER... Verse 24 says, "**Let us think of ways to motivate one another** to acts of love and good works." The emphasis here is on getting to know one another in the intimacy of a community of faith. As we come to understand one another more and more, there's usually a creative interchange

that results in a motivation to both love and good works. *Our response to all God has done for us ... needs to be modeled on the love we've seen in God!* Next...

LET US NOT NEGLECT OUR MEETING TOGETHER... Finally, the author tells in verse 25 ... whatever you do, in response to God's grace in your life, **DO NOT FORGET THIS:** "And **let us not neglect our meeting together**, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near." Folks, frankly, *here* is where we have our constant reminder ... that we (not just as individuals, but as the people of Christ) have the privilege of being God's children, with all the rights and privileges granted through Christ. And, because we are human beings with short memories, we need redundancy—*regular* reminders!

A father was showing his young son through a church building one day, when they came to a plaque on the wall. Curious, the little boy asked, "Daddy, what's that for?" His father replied, "Oh, that's a memorial to those who died in the service [referring, of course, to our veterans]." The little boy thought for a moment and then said, "Which service, Daddy, the 9 O'Clock ... or 10 O'Clock?"

People have thousands of reasons to stay away from church; this is not a new problem. But one thing's for sure—*the more people stay away, the more they forget who they are and whose they are ...* and HOPE soon wanes. Whatever you do, out of love for all God's done for us—here at Trinity, 'let us not neglect our meeting together'...

Today, we've found out that God gives us the gift ... of entering into his presence with boldness, whenever we want! How can we possibly do that? Two reasons:

- Christ's sacrifice has made a way (tore the curtain in two) and...
- ... because of all he did, we now have a High Priest in heaven as a personal advocate for us! We have a friend on the other side...

So ... how are we to respond, as God's people? Let us go *boldly* in to the presence of God, holding tightly to our faith! Let us think of ways to motivate one another in acts of love! And, whatever we do, let us NOT forget to meet together regularly, because this is where God reminds us ... *who we are and whose we are!* *Folks, welcome to 'holy boldness'—a true gift from God...*