

Assurance to Draw Near

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[0:00] Let me turn to Hebrews chapter 10 this evening from Hebrews 10, and I'll read the first 25 verses.!

For the worshiper would have been cleansed once for all and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said, He said, Then he said, Here am I. I have come to do your will.

He sets aside the first to establish the second. And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Day after day, every priest stands and performs his religious duties. Again and again, he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.

[1:56] But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. Since that time, he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool.

Because by one sacrifice, he has made perfect forever, those who are being made holy. The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this.

First, he says, This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.

Then he adds, Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more. Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the most holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way open for us through the curtain, that is, his body.

And since we have a great high priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience, and having our bodies washed with pure water.

[3:20] Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.

Let us not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another, and all the more, as you see the day approaching.

Let's start with a church history exam question. I know that's how you want to get going, so that's how we're going to start. According to the 16th century Roman Catholic Cardinal Robert Ballermin, complete this sentence.

The greatest of all Protestant heresies is, what do you think he said? Justification by faith alone? Perhaps scripture alone? Those certainly would be good answers. But that's not what he said. The greatest of all Protestant heresies is assurance.

[4:35] It was assurance. What was the worst thing about the Reformation? It gave people assurance. It made people confident in their spiritual state.

It made them comfortable, confident, happy in God, with God, being around God. It let them live in the full sunshine of God's love without a spirit of fear.

It gave people assurance. And if you give people assurance that they are in good standing with God, that they are acceptable before God, then they don't have to do good works, right?

If you take away their spiritual fears, then won't they just throw themselves into sin? Assurance. It's the worst. But if Christ did really die, and he did really rise from the dead, if Christ is right now standing before God, offering his own sacrifice to the Father, then assurance is possible for every believer.

It is the inheritance of every believer. If Christ rose from the dead, then this is God's gift to you. Assurance.

[5:56] Assurance. So it's my longing. It is my great hope. And I do pray for you often that you as God's people would have this assurance.

That you would have this confident standing before God. Thomas Brooks, an old Puritan, he wrote a book called Heaven on Earth. And in that book he said this, and just follow along. It's not that hard, but follow along. Being in a state of grace will yield a man a heaven hereafter. But the seeing of himself in this state will yield both a heaven here and a heaven hereafter. To have grace, and to be sure that we have grace, is glory upon the throne. It is heaven on this side of heaven. What is so wonderful about assurance is that it gives you two heavens, heaven now and heaven later.

That's what Thomas Brooks is saying. And so why do I want every believer to have this assurance, this confident standing with God? It's because, well, I love you, and I want you to experience heaven on this side of heaven.

[7:06] But even more than that, Christ died to give it to you. Christ rose again to give it to you, so that you would enjoy it.

And that is the main point, the driving point, of Hebrews chapter 10, verses 19 through 22. And that's the passage that we're going to be looking at again tonight.

Hebrews 10, 19 through 22. And in this brief passage, you can see three things about assurance. You can see assurance described, assurance given, and assurance used.

So assurance described, given, and used. So first you see assurance described. You see a picture of assurance, a portrait of it in verse 19.

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the most holy place by the blood of Jesus, we have this confident entrance, is one way we could put it, into the most holy place by the blood of Jesus.

[8:17] Now that's a portrait, a description, of what it's like to have assurance. It's having confidence to enter into the most holy place, right into the presence of God.

Now we have a hard time hearing how audacious that sounds, how truly bold and even brash that kind of language sounds. But you have to remember the old covenant, only one man, only on one day, could come into the most holy place.

And it wasn't you. It wasn't you. The whole temple itself was designed in such a way to keep people away from God.

I know we don't think about it like that, but there were layers in the temple. There were walls. There were curtains. There were certain sections. The Gentiles could come so far. The women could come so far.

Men could come so far. Priests could come so far. And then finally, you're in the most holy place. And one man, once a year, could go into the most holy place into God's presence.

[9:32] But therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter into the most holy place, do you understand how audacious and how that just tears down all those curtains and all those divisions and we go right into the presence of God?

John F. Kennedy Jr. was a small boy when his father was the president. And like every good boy, he liked to hide.

And he had a wonderfully big house to hide in. And one time, his dad was having a meeting with some very important British leaders, diplomats, and the talks were growing tense.

They were getting serious. They were getting uncomfortable when all of a sudden, little John Jr. jumped out from the desk and said, I'm a big bear and I'm really hungry.

And, of course, everyone laughed and smiled and all the tension went right out of the room. Well, who could do that? Who could jump out from the president's desk and scream, I'm a big bear and I'm hungry, except for the president's son?

[10:41] No one had access except for him. Who has that kind of access except a son or a daughter? So, brothers and sisters, we don't enter into the most holy place trembling in terror, waiting to be struck down.

He says confidently, with confidence. It's a word that means outspokenness, brashness, boldness, frankness, bluntness. A confident, face-to-face, heart-to-heart dealing with God.

And that's what we lost in the garden. Confident, face-to-face friendship. Friendship with God.

Closeness to God. God came walking in the cool of the evening. Where are you, Adam? Where are you, Eve?

Where are you? That's sinful man's natural response.

[11:51] God calls and men hide. What about you? Are you hiding from God? Do you find no joy in being with him?

Are your devotions something that you just do because you feel like if you don't do him, he's going to be mad at you? Why do you stay away? I think two things are possible.

Either you aren't right with him, or you still think that you're not altogether right with him. He's still holding something against you. I have more to do before he'll accept me, before I'm right with him, before he'll stop being wrathful and angry toward me.

And in your heart, it's really still about those works. It's not about grace. I think it was Thomas Brooks who said, so many Christians live between fears and hopes.

They hang between heaven and hell, sometimes confident, sometimes terrified. They run to God. They hide from God. But Hebrews says, we can go right in.

[13:04] We have this confidence. We have this assurance. But how? How can sinners have assurance before God? How can sinners have confidence with God?

Sinners like us, forgiven sinners, but yet still sinning. Well, how could we ever enjoy being with God? Because we do have this sense that he is holy, that he is righteous, and he knows our sins. We know our sins. Well, how can I have assurance? How can I go comfortably before him, confidently before him? Well, next we see how assurance is given.

How it's given. Where does this confident entrance come from? Well, it has two places, and it's really one saving act.

It comes from the cross, and it comes from the empty tomb. It comes from the cross, and it comes from the empty tomb. So, what does it say there? We enter by his blood, the blood of Jesus, in verse 19.

[14:13] And then it also says, we enter through the curtain, that is his body. So, we have this new and holy, this new and living way open for us through the curtain, that is his body.

And so, we have the blood, and we have the body. That body is that new and living way through the curtain. So, we couldn't enter before because of our sin, but Christ suffered death for our sin, in our place.

You couldn't enter into God's presence because of God's justice. His holy justice. And that justice said, you're unclean. You're not able to come in.

I am sacred, I am holy, I am majestic, and you are dirty. You have no place here. You are unworthy. But the punishment that brought us peace was upon him. And by his wounds, we are healed. So, it's peace through punishment. It's grace through justice.

[15:18] That's the gospel. Nothing in God is being shortchanged in the gospel. It's grace through justice. How does God give us grace? By giving the justice that we deserve to his son.

That's the gospel. God doesn't, God can't, willy-nilly, just by divine will, just because he says so, forgive sins. His justice, his goodness, his holiness, his sacred majesty will not allow it.

That would be a total betrayal of himself to forgive sins without punishing them. But he wants to forgive. He wants to forgive.

And so, he sends his son as a substitute for us. And so, our blessed Savior goes to Gethsemane and his soul falls apart in anguish as he thinks about what is ahead.

And then he goes to Gavatha to face Pilate's judgment. And he stands before Pilate. Pilate says, do you have anything to say?

[16:29] And he says, nothing in his own behalf. And put yourself in that crowd. And like spectators, we would say, why Jesus?

Why don't you say something? I've seen you escape again and again. I've seen you answer everyone again and again. He always knew what to say.

He always knew the right answer. He could solve the trickiest questions. He knows how to defend himself. He knows exactly what to say, but he doesn't say anything. And we're saying, Jesus, why don't you say something in your defense?

You've escaped these things many times. Why don't you walk out of this one? He says, because I'm here for you. And you have nothing to say in your defense.

And he goes to our place in our place to Golgotha and in the darkness of that day, Jesus stood under the Niagara of God's righteous anger. And he was broken on the rocks.

[17:34] Why? Why? What does Hebrews 10 say? Why did he do this? So that we could draw near to God. So we could come to God.

So we could be friends with God. So we could have this confident entrance into the most holy place. Thomas Goodwin says, what love when we had fallen into sin and enmity against God, he died to make us friends again, though he could have created new ones far cheaper.

Dear believer, doesn't that grip you? If God wanted people to come and have friendship and have fellowship with him, he could have made new friends. It wouldn't have cost him his son.

He would have said the word. And words don't cost anything. But what does he do? Let this sink in your mind.

What does he do for you? Look at his love for you. He gives over his son for you so that you could be his friend again, so that you could come into his presence and live with him.

[18:44] He gives his son the treasure of his heart, the most precious and valuable thing that he has, the apple of his eye, the most precious one, the one that he loves so dearly, and he wrenches the joy from his heart, and he wrings the life out of his body, and he pours out his holy hatred for sin out on his son.

The son became sin. He who knows sin became sin. He became the opposite of God. He became the antithesis of God.

He became what turns God's nature into a consuming fire, and he dangled his son in the flames of that fire.

The son became sin so that you could be God's friend, so that you could boldly come. We have confidence to enter the most holy place by the blood of Jesus by a new and living way opened up for us through the curtain that is his body.

And we see here that the assurance does not only rest on Jesus' death, but it also rests on his resurrection. It flows out of the empty tomb. This is a new and living way.

[20:09] So Friday is over, Sunday is here. And God raised him from the dead to be a priest, a great priest over the whole house of God.

Verse 21, since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God. So why do we get to draw near to God?

Because we have these two things. We have this confident entrance through his body and through his blood. secondly, since we have a great priest over the house of God, we have this great priest. Now we have to get this right. If we're going to really enjoy this, if we're going to come with joy, if we're going to have this assurance, we have to ask this question, why is Jesus a priest?

Who made him a priest? Turn a page or two back to Hebrews chapter five in verse four. Hebrews five in verse four.

[21:09] And here he's talking about how men become priests. So this is the answer to our question. How does Jesus become this priest? Why is he this priest?

So he's talking about this and he says, no one takes this honor upon himself. He must be called by God just as Aaron was. So Christ also did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him, you are my son. Today I become your father. And he says in another place, you are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek. Being a priest, Jesus didn't say, this is what I want to do.

I'm going to do this. This wasn't Jesus' idea. We don't have an angry God that gentle Jesus sues. We have a holy God who wants his children to come.

He wants them to come with confidence and with boldness. And so he appoints Christ a priest. The fact that Jesus is a priest doesn't say God really doesn't want you near.

[22:19] He's really upset and angry. No, he wants you to have comfort in his presence. And so he gives you a priest to come with you, to represent you. He wants you to draw near to him.

So Jesus' living priesthood changes everything. It changes our prayers. One author put it like this, imagine that your prayer is a poorly dressed beggar, reeking of alcohol and body odor, stumbling towards the palace of the great king.

You have become your prayer. And as you shuffle toward the barred gate, the guards stiffen. They can smell you. And you stammer, I want to see the king.

Your words are barely intelligible. But you whisper one final word, Jesus. I come in the name of Jesus. And at the name of Jesus, as if by magic, the palace comes alive, lights come on, the doors fly open, you are ushered into the palace and down along the hallway into the throne room of the

great king who comes running to you and wraps you in his open arms.

The name of Jesus gives me royal access. The name of Jesus gives my prayers royal access.

Asking in Jesus' name isn't another thing I have to get right so my prayers are perfect.

[23:51] It's one more gift of God because my prayers are so imperfect. Because I am so imperfect. So Jesus lives as your priest.

He lives to take you to the throne. He lives to carry you on his arm, to open the door to God. Now this is your inheritance. This is his gift to you.

So what should you do? Well, we've seen assurance described, we've seen it given, and now third, use this assurance.

Use it. Get it. Live up to your inheritance. Since we have this confidence, since we have this priest, let us draw near to God.

He gave you this way of coming. He gave you what it takes to have confidence in his presence through his blood and through his body, through his resurrection, and so use it.

[24:55] Use it. Be friends with God. Be friends with God. He is a friend to you. Draw near and worship.

Draw near in prayer. Draw near and stay a while. We're too flighty. We're in and out too quickly. Stay a while.

Listen again to Thomas Goodwin. Besides the daily worship you owe to God, take time to come into his presence to have communion with him. Friendship is kept up by visits.

The more free and the less busy they are, the more friendly they are. And we often say to our friends, you always come when you have some business, but when will you come and see me?

Is that how you deal with God? God, you just have business and you get through it and you go on your way. God has given us every reason to confidently draw near and stay a while.

[25:59] And so friends, draw near. But I do have a question. If Christ died and rose again for all Christians, why do some feel confident?

Why do some feel assured? And some feel so timid and afraid? And this is a big stumbling block for them. If the gospel is the same for all Christians, why is there such a difference in assurance?

Why is there such a difference in this confidence, in this boldness? Why do we hear about men praying bold prayers and we can't imagine praying like that? Why is there this difference?

Well, is Christ's death more effective for some than for others? Is Christ any more alive for some than for others?

So think about yourself and then think about Martin Luther who on one occasion prayed, Lord, do such and such for this is my will.

[27:04] And what he was saying was, God, this is right. My will be done because he felt so confident in God's presence. Now, you might struggle with that.

We certainly would want to qualify that. But why couldn't we ever have that kind of confidence? What's the difference? Why are some more assured than others?

Well, the answer can't be that Christ's death is more effective for some than for others. It can't be that Christ is any more alive for some than for others. Then what's the answer? The answer is, what Christ has done must be applied by faith.

And that's what you see in the next couple of verses. What's the difference? Because some are believing more than others. Their faith is stronger and they reach out for more. They're living by faith more than others.

A bold Christian is bold because he boldly believes. Assurance, strong assurance, is the child of strong faith.

[28:11] So look at verse 22. Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and full assurance of faith. Faith that's full of confidence. Having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with the pure water.

So where does this full assurance of faith come from? Well, that second part of that sentence is answering it. So where does this full assurance of faith come from? Where does this sincere heart and full assurance of faith?

Comma, it comes from this, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Here's the secret. Here's how you use this assurance.

Here's how you get this assurance. In verses 19 and 20, he's talking about things that happen outside of us. Happened outside of us. Christ died and rose again so we could draw near.

And then in verse 22, he talks about applying it. Applying it, believing it. And so when you don't feel like God could ever want you, you're too guilty, apply that blood.

[29 : 17] Sprinkle the blood. Look to that risen Savior. Venture on him, venture wholly onto that risen Savior. See, assurance doesn't come from silencing our conscience.

It doesn't come from pushing down its accusing voice. And assurance on the other hand doesn't come from sitting in our sin and holding on to our sin.

So we don't get assurance by ignoring our conscience, nor do we get assurance by just staying in our sin and dwelling in it. But where do we get it?

Not ignoring and not dwelling in it, but believing in the cross, believing in the resurrection, sprinkling that blood, applying that blood, seeing ourselves as under that blood.

as being represented by that Christ. So Christ has done great things for you. Apply it. Believe it. Live on it.

[30 : 15] When your conscience is dirty, go to Jesus for washing. When you feel unpresentable, go to Jesus for cleansing. And then apply it. Take your righteousness from him.

This is your inheritance. This is this glorious access to God. this friendship with God. So use the assurance.

Draw near. Don't waste your inheritance. Homer and Langley Collier were two sons of a New York doctor back in the early part of the 1900s, the 20th century.

Both earned college degrees. Homer studied to be an attorney even. old Dr. Collier died. These two sons inherited the family estate, the house, the mansion in New York.

They were both bachelors. They were both financially secure. Their dad had done very well in business and made a lot of money, but they didn't live up to their inheritance. It was a very strange situation.

[31 : 22] They lived in seclusion. They boarded up all the windows. They padlocked all the doors. All the utilities, everything, the water, it was all shut off.

The house looked empty. On March 21st, 1947, police received an anonymous phone call that a man had died inside this boarded up house.

Unable to get into the front door, they climbed into one of the second-story windows, and inside they found Homer's body, his corpse on a bed.

To picture the scene, there's his body on the bed, and all around is junk. For decades and decades, they had been collecting junk.

The house was crammed full of broken machinery, auto parts, appliances, folding chairs, musical instruments, rags, newspapers. It was all completely worthless.

[32 : 32] This enormous mountain of debris blocked the front door. For three weeks, they had to keep using that second-story window as they took stuff out of the house.

After three weeks of clearing away this garbage, they found another nasty discovery. They found Langley's body buried. beneath a pile of rubbish.

Langley had been crushed to death in a crude booby trap that he had made out of his junk in order to keep thieves from stealing his junk. Now, Homer and Langley didn't live up to their inheritance.

They spoiled it. They wasted it. And so my question as we end is, are you living up to yours, Christian? Are you living for the junk?

Jesus died and rose again to give you God, to give you confident entrance into the most holy place so that you could be friends and have fellowship and live with God, to draw near to him and worship, to draw near to him in prayer, to draw near to him in communion and friendship.

[33 : 44] friendship. So do you need to renew your friendship, your fellowship with God? Do it tonight.

Come and say, God, I come in the name of Jesus. I come to you through Christ. This is my inheritance. Forgive me for not living up to it.

Forgive me for living for the junk. And draw near to God through the risen Savior, Jesus Christ. Christ. He lives for this. He's alive right now to receive you and to bring you before God's throne. So enjoy it. Enjoy what he's given you. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we do look around and look around our lives and we see so much that is wasted and useless.

I pray that you would help us to narrow our lives down to the most important thing. Narrow our lives down to you. You died and you rose again and you are alive, Lord Jesus.

[34 : 55] That we could come to God. That we could have confident entrance into the most holy place. That we could come and worship in joyful adoration.

Will you please help us to use that entrance. help us to use what Jesus has done for us and who he is for us.

Will you forgive us for wasting so much of our time and so much of our energy and so much of our life on lesser things, things that will end up destroying us. Pray, help us to embrace you, embrace the gospel for all that it provides for us.

that we might silence our fears in the blood of Jesus and that we might come with boldness and confidence. And will you make this communion with you so precious that we will be quick to deal with our sin.

That we will be quick to deal with anything that would get in the way of fellowship and communion that we would long for and walk after and yearn for holiness.

[36 : 02] holiness. That we might enjoy your presence. I ask that you would please do that work in us. Make us confident, joyful Christians.

In Jesus' name, Amen.