

Access Granted

The Jewish people had a system of religion that was designed to keep people out of the presence of God. In the temple, the holy of holies was the place where the ark of the covenant, the presence of God was. And only the high priest could enter into the holy of holies to atone for the sins of the people once a year. So when the first readers heard Hebrews 10:19, *“Since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus,”* it must have shocked them

And it should shock us; we are invited to enter with confidence. Confident because our sins are forgiven, confident because our prayers are being heard. Do you know that confidence today?

We have access, *“...by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh,”* Hebrews 10:20.

As the high priest had to pass through the curtain to get into the holy of holies, so the broken body of Jesus, his weak flesh that was destroyed on the cross, had to be torn for us to enter in. And it is only by putting on the righteousness of Christ, that we can have access to the throne of God the Father.

Jesus didn't die, rise again and ascend into heaven; He is the High Priest now and forever. He is our righteousness, he is interceding for us, he advocates for us to the Father (see Hebrews 10:21).

Since we have a high priest who represent us, we don't have to doubt or waiver, we can be assured of our salvation (see Hebrews 10:22).

The Mosaic Law required the priests to undergo many washings and daily rituals in preparation for them to enter into the presence of God. The message of the Old Testament was, “stay back, do not come near.” But the New Covenant message is, “draw near, you are welcome.”

What changed? God's requirement for holiness has not changed. If you have placed your faith in Jesus as your savior and repented of your sins, you are invited to enter the presence of God through faith in the completed work of Jesus. However, there is preparation we need to do, we must confess our sins (see 1 John 1:9). Repentance must be a part of our daily prayers.

There are two problems with unconfessed sin:

1. Unconfessed sin hinders our prayers (see Psalm 66:18-19).
2. Unconfessed sin affects our worship experience. When we come to church and gather as the Body of Christ; our sin affects our worship time, our hearing and encountering God.

Hebrews 10:23 encourages us with these words, *“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.”* It does not matter what people say or how much the moral compass of our culture deviates, we must hold fast to the unchanging promises of the Word of God.

A Stirring Church

These are incredible verses set the stage for the next two verses, *“And let us consider how to stir up one another 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.”* Hebrews 10:24-25.

The focus here is not what we can get out of being a part of the church, but rather, what are we called to contribute to the Body. God calls us to provoke and stir one another up to love and good works (see Proverbs 27:17). We come together to provoke one another, not to irritate one another, but to provoke one another to love (see Matthew 22:36-40), and to good works (see Ephesians 2:10).

Being a part of the Body of Christ is not for spectators; we are all called to do our part. Verse 25 continues to encourage the readers to not neglect the gathering time of the church. All the more, as we see the signs of the end times around us. Whenever there is a tragedy that shakes the nation, church attendance increases. People want stability and hope in times of crisis.

Gen-Z Phenomenon

An interesting research project has just been done on Gen-Z, the demographic group born from 1997 to 2012. This generation loves the spiritual disciplines. Embracing spiritual disciplines like silence, solitude, and Sabbath-keeping, etc. However, this passion for spiritual disciplines is not accompanied by a rise in church attendance. In other words, the zeal for spiritual discipline is based on how the disciplines make the individual feel.

However, spiritual disciplines separated from church community does not create disciples. The reason is that the focus is on the individual and their desires, not the Lord or serving His church.

More than Sunday

That said, meeting together should include much more than how you spend a few hours on Sunday mornings. We have so many more ways to connect with each other than the first century church. While nothing can really replace getting in the same room with people, we also need to take advantage of those other opportunities. Simply being mindful of the Holy Spirit's prompting is a great place to start. If God puts someone on your heart, send them a text or give them a call. If your small group shares prayer requests, make sure Sunday morning isn't the only time you're taking those requests to God.

Let's look for ways to encourage one another, to spur one another on. At the end of the day, God wired us to need one another. How well are you living out the true meaning of meeting together? Is Sunday morning the full extent of your commitment to other believers? Is Sunday morning even part of that commitment? And when you come on a Sunday, is it to be a passive observer or are you coming prepared and expectant, ready to encourage one another?

Who is God prompting you to stir up today?