

Hebrews 10:19-25 "Because of Christ\*\*

Main Idea: In Hebrews 10:19-25 we discover that because of Christ we have two amazing resources and three significant responsibilities.

I. Because of Christ we have resources (19-21).

A. We have confidence (19-20).

1. It gives us access into the holy places.
2. It's ours because of Christ's blood.
3. It's ours because of Christ's body.

B. We have a priest (21).

1. He is in a class all by Himself.
2. He is over God's House.

II. Because of Christ we have responsibilities (22-25).

A. We should be coming to God (22).

1. Do it with a sincere heart.
2. Do it with a confident faith.
3. Do it realizing He made you clean.

B. We should be confessing our hope to the world (23).

1. Our conviction is rooted in God's promises.
2. Our conviction is rooted in God's character.

C. We should be considering one another (24-25).

1. We should motivate each other to show Godlike love and deeds.
2. We should not get into the habit of missing church meetings.
3. We should encourage each other.
4. We should see that the Day is drawing near.

Make It Personal: Ask yourself these questions...

1. Am I living in light of what I have in Christ?
2. Am I living like I really believe I'll see Christ soon?

Do we realize what we have? I'm convinced that far too many of us far too much of the time live as though we *don't*.

It makes me think of the story of Hetty Green. Hetty Green, born in 1834, was reading financial papers to her father by the age of six. When she was thirteen she became the family bookkeeper. When her father died in 1864 she inherited 7.5 million. At the age of thirty-three, she married Edward, himself a member of a wealthy Vermont family, but didn't marry him until he renounced all rights to her money.

Hetty began investing her fortune and by the time she died in 1916 she possessed an estate valued between \$100 to \$200 million (in today's terms, that's between 1.9 and 3.8 billion dollars). In her day, she was arguably the richest woman in the world. On several occasions New York city officials came to her for help, such as in the Panic of 1907, and she loaned the city money to keep the it from bankruptcy. She once wrote a check for 1.1 million and took her payment in short term revenue bonds.

However, though Hetty Green was rich, she chose to live like a pauper. Not just conservative, but eccentric in her frugality. There are a lot of tales about her stinginess, with various degrees of accuracy. For instance, she never turned on the heat or used hot water. She didn't wash her hands. She wore only one old black dress until the day it wore out. When her son, Ned, broke his leg as a child, she tried to admit him in a hospital charity ward, but when recognized, got upset, left the hospital and said she would treat the wound herself. Her son's leg developed gangrene and had to be amputated so that he had to wear a cork prosthesis. When her children left home, she moved repeatedly from apartment to apartment to avoid establishing a permanent residence which might attract attention from the tax officials in any state. When she got old, she developed a hernia, but didn't get treatment because the surgery would cost \$150.<sup>[1]</sup>

Hetty Green was a person who possessed resources beyond comprehension but chose to live as if she had none. She's not alone.

Back to the question. Do you realize what we have in Christ? Again, I'm convinced that far too many of us far too much of the time live as though we *don't*. The Bible says that we are joint-heirs with Christ, yet so often we live as if we don't have the spiritual resources to make it through the day.

Today's text can help us. In Hebrews 10:19-25 we discover that if we know Christ we possess two amazing resources and consequently three significant responsibilities.

The fact is, we need regular reminders like the one God gives us in Hebrews 10:19-25. It's not enough to know intellectually some things about Christ. Hetty Green knew intellectually that she possessed millions, but that knowledge didn't affect her life. When we come to Hebrews 10:19, we've come to the point in the letter where the writer transitions from doctrine to duty. "Therefore," he writes. That's because what we learn is supposed to affect how we live. Theology should lead to action. We're not supposed to merely believe truth, but live it.

William Barclay explains the purpose of the writer of Hebrews, "From theology he turns to practical exhortation. He is one of the deepest theologians in the New Testament but all his theology is governed by the pastoral instinct. He does not think merely for the thrill of intellectual satisfaction but only that he may the more forcibly appeal to men to enter into the presence of God."<sup>[2]</sup>

Do you realize this morning what you have because of Christ, and are you living like it? At the close of nearly every letter I write or card I send, I attach a farewell statement. I think I've done it since I was in college. Just before signing my name, I'll typically insert three words ... *Because of Christ*, or sometimes, *Because of Him*. I do that because I want to remind myself and my reader that everything I've said in that letter, indeed, everything in my life is a reality solely *because of Christ*.

Because of Christ we have resources, and because of Christ we have subsequent responsibilities. Let's explore Hebrews 10 together...

## I. Because of Christ we have resources (19-21).

Verse 19 begins, "Therefore, brothers." It's the first time since he began chapter three that the writer referred to his readers as "brothers." These resources we're about to consider belong to *brothers*, to those who have been born into the family of God.

"Therefore, brothers, *since we have*." Notice the first person plural pronoun "we" (it's used throughout this passage). The writer includes himself in this call for application. He says we *have* some things, two things, two resources.

**A. We have confidence (19-20).** "Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body..."

We have *confidence*. That word is found four times in this book. It's translated "courage" back in Hebrews 3:6. In Hebrews 4:16 we're told, "Let us then approach the throne of grace with *confidence*, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." We'll see the word again in Hebrews 10:35, "So do not throw away your *confidence*; it will be richly rewarded."

Why do we have confidence? We've seen the answer in the first nine and a half chapters of Hebrews. We have it *because of Christ*. Hebrews shows us that Christ is the supreme one. He's superior to angels, to Moses, to the priests of Aaron. So if you know Him who is supreme, you have reason to experience *confidence*.

What's true of the confidence we have in Christ? Three things, and here's the first.

1. *It gives us access into the holy places.* "Since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place." Literally, "boldness for the entrance into the holy places."<sup>[3]</sup> It's plural. We can enter holy places. We can call on the Lord now in prayer and one day enter His holy presence in heaven, and we can enter these holy places because of Christ.

Ephesians 3:12 tells us, "In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence."

1 John 5:14 declares, "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us."

Under the old covenant, only priests could enter holy places, and only the high priest into the Most Holy Place. But that's changed. *We can enter there now.* We, common, ordinary people like us, we who have violated God's law and don't deserve the privilege, *we can enter holy places.* How can that be? How can we have such confidence?

2. *It's ours because of Christ's blood.* "We have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus." That's the theme the writer addressed for us in chapter nine. Christ's blood did for us what the blood of goats and calves could not do. Listen to Hebrews 9:14, "How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!"

But it's not just the blood of Jesus...

3. *It's ours because of Christ's body.* Verse 20 continues the thought, "We have confidence...by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body." That's the theme the writer just explained for us at the beginning of chapter ten. He told us in verse 10, "And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

Our text says that a way was opened for us *through the curtain*. That language represents what happened in the Jewish tabernacle. The high priest (and only the high priest) would go *through the curtain* into the Holy of holies. We now can enter God's presence because a way has been opened for us *through*

*the curtain*. And what is that curtain? The writer tells us, "That is, *his body*."

Raymond Brown explains, "Just as the heavy temple curtain was torn from top to bottom on that first Good Friday, so that pure and spotless body of Christ was rent for us."<sup>[4]</sup> Similarly, Warren Wiersbe observes, "When His flesh was torn on the cross, and His life sacrificed, God tore the veil in the temple."<sup>[5]</sup>

There's no barrier now, beloved. Those who come through Christ can come with confidence right into the throne-room of God. The implications are breath-taking. I don't have to work myself up to enter into God's presence. I don't have to try and impress God with my good deeds and thereby merit some time with Him. No, I have confidence because of Christ.

I like how Calvin sums it up, "No one will find God unless the Man Christ is his way and his door."<sup>[6]</sup> Unless Christ is your way and your door, you will never find God. But if He is, then you have *confidence*. Related to this, we have a second resource...

**B. We have a priest (21).** "And since we have a great priest over the house of God..." Again, the writer is picking up a theme he has developed in great detail earlier in Hebrews. "We have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God," he told us in 4:14. And he took the next six chapters to explain the superiority of Christ's priesthood, concluding in Hebrews 10:12, "But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God."

A priest, as you know, is a mediator, a go-between who represents men before God. Think of a toll bridge. To pass the toll bridge one must possess the required ticket. The priest had the ticket. Our priest, Christ Jesus, has the ticket.

We learn a couple of things about our priest in verse 21.

1. *He is in a class all by Himself.* Previously, the writer referred to Jesus as a high priest, but here he calls Him a *great priest*, literally a *mega* priest. There's none greater than priest Jesus. There's none like Him. By virtue of the perfect life He lived and the death He died as a substitute, He distances Himself from all other priests. And the fact that He conquered death and came back to life proves His superiority. Consequently, notice His current position...

2. *He is over God's House.* He's the head, the top, the highest, the ruler.

Again, let this sink in. Because we have priest Jesus, we have an open invitation into the presence of God. Wiersbe offers this food for thought, "The Old Covenant high priest *visited* the holy of holies once a year, but we are invited to  *dwell in the presence of God* every moment of each day."<sup>[7]</sup>

Amazing. We who are not holy in ourselves can approach the One who is holy through His holy Son.

What are you doing with what Christ attained for you? He is your confidence. He is your priest. Are you making the most of the confidence your priest has attained for you?

"What do you mean?" you ask. Let me put it this way. It's one thing to have resources—Hetty Green had resources. It's quite another thing to use them. God didn't give us these resources simply to talk about. We're supposed to use them. How?

## II. Because of Christ we have responsibilities (22-25).

The writer says our responsibilities go in three directions, to God, to the world, and to each other. He uses three specific verbs to indicate that we are to come to God (22), confess something to the world (23), and consider each other (24-25). As we'll see these three verbs are in the present tense indicating our responsibilities involve ongoing activity. Hence, the first is not simply, *come to God*, but we should *be coming* to God. Let's probe these responsibilities carefully one by one...

**A. We should be coming to God (22).** "...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."

Since we have confidence and since we have a priest, here's our first responsibility. *Let us draw near to God.* The verb *proserchomai* is a compound of the words "come" and "to." We're supposed to *come to* (there is no indirect object, but it obviously refers to God). God didn't provide us with a priest so that we would remain distant from Him. He intends for us to *come to* Him and never stop coming to Him.

What should characterize our coming? According to verse 22, three things.

1. *Do it with a sincere heart.* Not with any sort of proud pretense, but always with humble sincerity. In order to approach God you must come with a heart that is clean and true.

2. *Do it with a confident faith.* To be precise, "in full assurance of faith." Don't come quaking in your boots. Don't come wondering if you really have the ear of the Almighty. Come with complete certainty. The word is translated "with deep conviction" in 1 Thessalonians 1:5. That's how we're to come to God. As the writer instructed us earlier in Hebrews 4:16, "Let us then approach the throne of grace *with confidence*, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

"But how can I come to God with a sincere heart and confident faith?" you ask. "God requires perfection, and I'm a sinner, right?" Yes, but if you're in Christ God doesn't see you as a sinner. Which brings us to the third mark that should characterize your coming.

3. *Do it realizing He made you clean.* "Having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water."

The writer may well have in mind a promise God made back in Ezekiel 36:25, "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols." God predicted that's what He would do under the new covenant. *I'm going to take steps to make my people clean inside out.* And through Christ that's exactly what God has done. He uses the cleansing agent of the blood of Christ to remove sin stains from a sinner's heart, thus taking away the sinner's guilty conscience. And He washes the sinner's body by the work of His Spirit, so that the sinner's now-cleansed-body may be used for His kingdom purposes. As Paul explains in Titus 3:5-6, "He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior."

So when you come to God, do it with a sincere heart and a confident faith, yes, but always do it realizing that it was He, and not yourself, who made you clean. That's why we regularly ought to sing hymns about the cross in our prayer closets. Like this one by William Cowper. By the way, Cowper wrote this at a low point in his life, after he had attempted suicide in fact. After recovering, he came to realize that God can wash away the stain of any sin, and so he wrote...

*There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins;  
And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.  
Lose all their guilty stains, lose all their guilty stains;  
And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.*

*The dying thief rejoiced to see that fountain in his day;  
And there have I, though vile as he, washed all my sins away.  
Washed all my sins away, washed all my sins away;  
And there have I, though vile as he, washed all my sins away.*

*Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood shall never lose its power  
Till all the ransomed church of God be saved, to sin no more.  
Be saved, to sin no more, be saved, to sin no more;  
Till all the ransomed church of God be saved, to sin no more.*

*E'er since, by faith, I saw the stream Thy flowing wounds supply,  
Redeeming love has been my theme, and shall be till I die.  
And shall be till I die, and shall be till I die;  
Redeeming love has been my theme, and shall be till I die.*

*When this poor lisping, stammering tongue lies silent in the grave.  
Then in a nobler, sweeter song, I'll sing Thy power to save,  
I'll sing Thy power to save, I'll sing Thy power to save,  
Then in a nobler, sweeter song, I'll sing Thy power to save,*

*Lord, I believe Thou hast prepared, unworthy though I be,  
For me a blood bought free reward, a golden harp for me!  
'Tis strung and tuned for endless years, and formed by power divine,  
To sound in God the Father's ears no other name but Thine.*

The second responsibility flows out of the first, for if we truly appreciate what Christ has done for us, God isn't the only audience we'll be approaching. Yes, we should be coming to God, but furthermore...

**B. We should be confessing our hope to the world (23).** "Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful."

Romans 10:9 says that if a person makes a verbal, heartfelt profession that Christ is Lord, that person is saved. But that certainly won't be the person's final verbal profession, not if he's truly saved. Jesus made it clear in Acts 1:8 that we are to be His witnesses, to proclaim Him to the world. Here the writer of Hebrews tells us we're to hold on to this profession and to hold it unswervingly.

The question is, is that happening in our lives? Are we holding fast our profession? I think that means a whole lot more than merely do we still believe what we said we believed on the day we first made our profession of faith in Christ. The issue is, are we holding on to that profession?

For starters, does our lifestyle support it? Are we living in a way that shows that we truly believe that Jesus is Lord? Is it apparent to those watching us that Jesus is *our Lord*? Do we have marriages that reflect His Lordship? Do we raise our kids in ways that reflect His Lordship? Do we work our jobs in ways that reflect His Lordship? Do we choose entertainment that reflects His Lordship?

But take it a step further. Perhaps we are living in light of Christ's Lordship. That's good. But are we proclaiming it, too. Peter exhorts us in 1 Peter 3:15, "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect."

So answer this. Who have you talked to about Christ in the past month? With whom have you shared, "I am a believer in Jesus Christ. My hope is in Him and I believe that He alone offers forgiveness of sins and eternal life"?

I need to warn you. You can get killed in this world if you hold unswervingly to that hope. Quite frankly, some of the first readers of this letter were wavering. At the end of chapter ten, the writer commends them for their willingness to suffer for Christ in the past, and calls them to persevere in the present (see verses 32-39). It will be worth it, he says.

Now notice the reason we're given in verse 23 as to why we should hold unswervingly to the hope we profess: "...for He who promised is faithful." So...

1. *Our conviction is rooted in God's promises.* And...
2. *Our conviction is rooted in God's character.* He who *promised is faithful.*

There's one more responsibility in our text. Because of Christ, we should be coming to God and confessing our hope to the world. What's more...

**C. We should be considering one another (24-25).** "And let us *consider*." The word *katanoeo* means "notice, observe carefully, give careful consideration." We've seen this verb earlier in the letter. Back in 3:1 we were commanded to "fix our thoughts on [to *consider*] Jesus." Now we're told to do the same thing with someone else. Who? Verse 24 says, "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds."

Fix your thoughts on Jesus—that's a command. As is this. Fix your thoughts on each other. For what purpose? For starters, we're told that...

1. *We should motivate each other to show Godlike love and deeds.* The text says we are to fix our thoughts on, consider, think about how we may *spur one another on* to love and good deeds. The word "spur" is in reality a noun in the Greek text, *paroxysmos*, which usually has a negative connotation, meaning "irritation" or "exasperation." The fact that the writer uses it in a positive sense is meant to grab our attention.

The term means to *provoke* or *to stir up*. But we're not to stir up trouble. We're to do things that stir up our brothers and sisters so that they show God-like love and good works in their lives. With Proverbs 27:17 in mind, Chrysostom remarked, "As iron sharpens iron so also fellowship increases love; for if a stone rubbed against a stone sends forth fire, how much more person in contact with person!"<sup>[8]</sup>

When I worked with teens we called it "positive peer pressure." There ought to be a lot of it in the church. When we hear that our brother is about to make a decision that will harm his testimony for Christ, we look for ways to turn the tide. "Oh, my friend! Are you sure you want to do that? Even if that job offer gives you a bunch more money, is it worth it if it takes you away from your church and family? Let's pray about it right now."

Brothers and sisters, look for ways to spur each other on to Christ-like deeds. Here's an example. Don't just do ministry. Look for ways to get others involved. Here's another example. Don't just raise a godly family, as important as that is. Look for ways to help others do the same, particularly others who are struggling. Ask them to get together with you for prayer. Send an encouraging note. Pay for a young couple so they can attend the upcoming marriage or parenting retreat at Scioto Hills Camp.

And if we're going to consider one another, here's something we must *not* do.

2. *We should not get into the habit of missing church meetings.* That's what verse 25 says, "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."

It's actually a participle, and it's a strong one, as the KJV indicates, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together." The term means "to cease from an activity which has gone on for some time—to cease, to stop, to forsake."<sup>[9]</sup> Jesus used it when He cried, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me

(Matt. 27:46)?” It’s what Demas did according to 2 Timothy 4:10, “For Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica.”

Don’t do that, says Hebrews. He doesn’t merely say, “Don’t miss the Sunday worship service at 10:30.” He says, “Don’t forsake the gathering of God’s people,” the implication is, *whenever* that gathering occurs. You see, every time the church assembles we have an opportunity to meet as Christ’s body, and we ought to value that highly.

And notice the word “habit.” Our text indicates that not coming to church services is a habit that we’re prone to develop, one we must resist, and sadly, one that far too many have fallen into. Let’s not do that, he says. Let’s not forsake church meetings, as some are in the habit of doing.

Calvin says the writer here has in mind Jewish believers who didn’t like the fact that Gentiles “were a new and unaccustomed addition to the Church.” He explains, “The Jews thought that this was an insult to them, with the result that many seceded from the Church thinking that they had a just pretext as a result of this mixture.”<sup>[10]</sup>

When a person stops coming to church, he nearly always convinces himself that he has “a just pretext.” The preaching isn’t good enough. The music doesn’t help me worship. The people aren’t friendly enough. But the writer of Hebrews will accept no such reasons. *Let us not give up meeting together*, he says. You may have your reasons for not liking your church, but remember this. Christ *loves* it, not because it’s perfect (He sees the warts far better than we do), but because it is *His bride*.

Why do people stop coming to church? Please realize that the fact that they do is as old as the early church. But why? Pastor John Calvin faced the problem nearly five hundred years ago and offered this pastoral insight: “This is a disease which reigns throughout the human race, that everyone prefers himself to others and especially that those who seem to excel in anything do not easily allow their inferiors to be equal to them. There is so much peevishness in almost everyone that individuals, if they could, would gladly make their own churches for themselves, because it is difficult to accommodate oneself to the ways of other people.”<sup>[11]</sup>

Let’s face it. We like what we like, and we want other people to like what we like. And when they don’t, our tendency is to either fight or leave, and if we choose to forsake the group, we justify our actions asserting, “I’m different. I just don’t fit there any more.”

But we’re all different, and by God’s design. When He designed His church, He deliberately chose to mix Jews and Gentiles, old and young, male and female, rich and poor, even educated and illiterate.

Beloved, when we attend church services, we are making a statement. By our actions we are saying that we identify with the followers of Christ. Barclay elaborates on this, “It would be well if we remembered that, apart from anything else, to go to church is to demonstrate where our loyalty lies. Even if the sermon be poor and the worship tawdry, the church service still gives us the chance to show men what side we are on.”<sup>[12]</sup>

Here’s a very practical step we can take to help each other not fall into the habit of church missing. Verse 25 says...

3. *We should encourage each other.* “Let us not give up meeting together...*but let us encourage one another.*” It’s another participle, *parakaleo*, meaning, “call to one’s side.” It’s what happens when we pick up the phone and say, “Bill, I didn’t see you this morning in Sunday School, and I sure missed you. Everything okay?” We need each other, and we need to hear from our brothers that we’re missed and needed.

John Wesley used to remind the early Methodist brothers of the words of a friend, “The Bible knows nothing of solitary religion.”<sup>[13]</sup> And here’s one of the greatest incentives that exists for promoting faithful church participation...

4. *We should see that the Day is drawing near.* Verse 25 again, "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.*" The Day is coming, my friend, the Day when Christ returns. And on that Day, when we look into His eyes, into the eyes of the One who left His home in heaven in order to come and sacrifice Himself for us, we'll wish we would have done more. We'll wish we would have left the comfort of our homes more often and sacrificed ourselves for Him.

Resources, yes, we have them, tremendous resources. And responsibilities, too, all because of Christ.

Make It Personal: Ask yourself these two questions...

1. *Am I living in light of what I have in Christ?* We're supposed to be coming to God, confessing our hope to the world, and considering one another. Rate those activities in your life. Which one most needs to change today? Ask the Savior to help you change.

2. *Am I living like I really believe I'll see Christ soon?* He is coming. Maybe today, my friend.

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\*\*Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

[1] Information taken from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hetty\\_Green](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hetty_Green)

[2] William Barclay, p. 119.

[3] *Young's Literal Translation.*

[4] Raymond Brown, p. 185.

[5] Warren Wiersbe, p. 315.

[6] John Calvin, p. 141.

[7] Warren Wiersbe, p. 315.

[8] Quote taken from Philip Hughes, p. 415.

[9] Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996, c1989). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament*

[10] John Calvin, p. 143.

[11] John Calvin, p. 144.

[12] William Barclay, p. 122.

[13] Taken from Raymond Brown, p. 187.