

‘How Can We Be Always Together With Our Living God?’

Hebrews 10:19-25 (ESV)

19 Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus,
20 by the new and living way that 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.

Thank you for inviting me again to worship and to learn from the Bible together.

Today’s title is **‘How Can We Be Always Together With Our Living God?’**

Christians after they believe in Jesus, have a clear conviction that their sins are already forgiven by the blood of Jesus and that they can go to heaven in the instance they die. This is what I could not find in the people of other religions. I have talked with the members of different religions in my life. Their confession at best is, ‘If I keep practicing this religion, I will be saved, I hope.’ Christians can go to heaven. But today’s passage of the Bible ushers us to go one step further. ‘Christians have confidence now to enter the holy places, where God is, by the blood of Jesus.

Now shall we pray.

Dear Father, thank you that you saved us when we believed in Jesus as our Savior. And not only that our sins are forgiven, You want us to be always together with You.

Please open our eyes and help us to understand Your words so that we can see how close You want us to be with You. I pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

How can we be together with God?

A. We have confidence to enter the holy places v.19

Hebrews 10:19

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus,

Do we have the confidence to enter the holy places?

Why is it that it is proper for us to have such close fellowship with God?

A.1. What is a man, and a woman?

When God created a man.

Genesis 1:26-27

26 Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

A man, and a woman, was made, four times mentioned, 'in our image' or 'in his own image,' 'in the image of God,' and 'after His likeness.' This means that we humans are created so closely in the image of God. God is the creator and we are created beings. So there must be a vast difference between God and humans. But God made us so closely alike to God Himself.

In the Bible, important things are emphasized by repetition. What is the most important article in the Bible? Of course, God's Son, Jesus Christ. How many times does the Bible mention the story of Jesus Christ. Four times, in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The story of Jesus cannot be overemphasized. In the same way, 'Man is made in the image of God', God emphasizes it four times in the Bible. So God lays superlative emphasis on that 'man is made in the image of God.' So, our likeness to God must be much more than we can imagine. So I think we can say, "We are made in the very image of God."

Then, why was it that God made us so closely alike with God?
This must be that God wanted to have fellowship with us so close and abundant.

What is the very first commandment God issued to us, humans?

A.2. The very first commandment for a man.

Genesis 2:9

And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

These two trees must be very significant.
The first commandment is on one of the two trees.

Gen. 2:16-17

16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden,

17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

What do these two trees signify? (Two important trees.)

'Tree of life'

To live in trust and fellowship with God, namely to live in God's own life.

'Tree of the knowledge of good and evil'

To live by knowing good and evil, namely to live properly or appropriately.

No need to fellowship with God. No God's life in it.

Jesus, Who became a man, explained His relationship with the Father.

A.3. Jesus and the Father

John 14:10

Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I

do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works.

Jesus is God. But Jesus did not do His earthly ministry depending on His own authority or power. He always does His work in oneness with the Father.

God wants the same to us, humans.

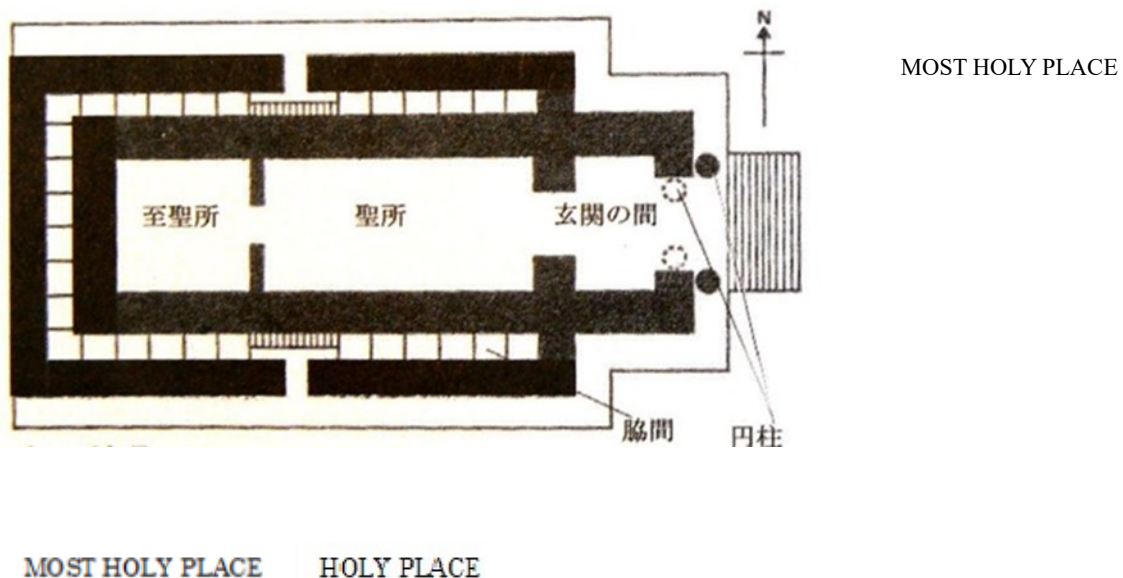
For this also, God made us in His close image. God always wants us to live in fellowship with God.

B. Jesus opened a living way v.20-21

Hebrews 10:20

by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh,

Temple in Jerusalem



This is a diagram of the temple in Jerusalem in the Old Testament time. God wanted the people of Israel to build a temple where God manifests His presence on earth.

This is not a place to worship man-made deities. In the City of Kyoto, there are 4,800 Buddhist temples or Shinto shrines. These are the places to worship manmade idols or prominent persons in history. They are not the place to worship the true God Who created the earth and everything.

The central part of the temple in Jerusalem is called 'the holy place' where priests daily served God and worship. The left or the innermost part is called 'the most holy place.' This is where God manifests His presence with holiness. No one could come in here except once a year, the high priest entered with the blood of bull and goat to cover his sin. Man has sin. A man cannot enter God's presence. If a man meets God's holiness, he must die instantly. So a very thick curtain separated the most holy and the holy places.

But, Jesus opened the way at the cross.

Mark 15:37-38

37 And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last.

38 And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.

Because Jesus died for us, because of His blood, we Christians can freely come into the presence of

God.

In the Old Testament times, priests worshipped outside of the curtain following the established orders. But now the curtain was taken away and every Christian can go into the presence of God. This is the new and living way.

God wants us to be so close with Him.

The temple in Jerusalem is a temporary model of the heaven where God is. We are not allowed to enter the most holy place of the Jerusalem Temple but we can enter where God is in heaven.

After the Cross of Jesus, there is no more curtain, between God and the Christians.

Do you always place yourself with God in His holy place? Or, like the Old Testament priests, do you sometimes serve God outside of the curtain?

Hebrews 10:21

and since we have a great priest over the house of God,

Jesus is our priest. A priest is one who takes away the hindrances between the worshippers and God. Jesus always takes away whatever sins and weaknesses we have.

Romans 8:34

Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

What does Jesus do now? He intercedes for our sins always at the right hand of God.

C. God wants us three things. v.22-25

Based on what we have just learned, there are three main exhortations. The commentary I use said these are the main exhortations of the whole Epistle to the Hebrews.

C.1. God wants us to draw near to Him

Hebrews 10:22

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.

Here, it says that God cleanses us from even our evil conscience. What is the conscience?

Conscience = con(with) + science(knowledge)

Conscience is the conformity to one's own sense of conduct. So, it is something like this. 'I am doing it right. So I am OK.' But this verse teaches that conscience can often be evil. When I quarreled with my wife, I thought I was right. But then I felt that God might have a different opinion. So I prayed and God showed me that I was wrong. And I apologized. When we draw ourselves to God, He cleanses us from whatever the matters.

1John 1:7

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

Walking in the light is very easy on our part, just open our heart and say, “God please see me, check me and cleanse me from all evils.” Christ died for all of our sins. So the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin.

C.2. God wants us to hold fast to the confession of our hope

Hebrews 10:23

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.

What are we to confess?

God is faithful. Not only that He takes us to heaven, but allows us to be with Him always, also in every bit of our daily life, God is faithful.

I shared the story that our daughter who works in Tokyo had a rupture of aneurysm in her brain and caused bleeding. So she was hospitalized. This happened two years ago. She was in the hospital for a month and a half. I, often with my wife, had to go to Tokyo for her operation three times plus to meet the doctor and sign the documents of approval and so on. So, I had to go to Tokyo eight times in a month and a half.

My schedule was already almost full during this time for message preparation and teaching a class at a seminary every week. I suddenly became super busy. But God’s peace and confidence was always in my heart, just thanks to God. So I did not have to worry at all. “God will let me do whatever I should do. So I just follow Him, one after another. Because He is perfect.” My pastor friend asked me to officiate a wedding for an international couple, a Japanese bride and an Indian bridegroom. I said, “Yes,” Because I had peace that it was God’s will to do so.

Everything perfectly fit in the schedule. I just followed God’s leading Who has everything in His hands. It was so easy just to follow Him.

Since God is faithful, when we stand on His faithfulness, our hope does not waver. God keeps our hope straight up. It is not us that sustains our faith. We put ourselves in His faithful hands which carry us through safely and securely.

C.3. God wants us to stir up one another for love and good works v.24-25

Hebrews 10:24

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,

We are Christians. So we ought to love and do good works. By saying, “Let’s love and do good works,” it is difficult that we can actually put them into practice. But if God works in us, it will not be difficult.

For several years, I have taken time for slow jogging for about half an hour in the early evening. I bring a small plastic bag and tongs to pick up trash on the way and in the park.

This month, when I went into a park as usual, a young man, smoking, came to me and said, “Today is my twentieth birthday.” Then I said to him, “So you are smoking?” He said, “I would like to stop smoking.” He showed me a box of cigarettes from his pocket. And he continued, “This will be my last cigarette box. In my family, everybody smokes. So I started smoking when I was twelve.” I said, “Wow, it is very good not to smoke. If you smoke, in your life, you are burning the money worth buying several cars.” I did not know him. I had never talked with him. But I think he had seen me picking up empty cans, plastic bottles and especially cigarette butts. He might have thought it is not good to let someone pick up his cigarette butts for all his life. I was glad because I thought God was

using me to influence someone for something good.

In the same week, when I went to a different park, four or five elementary school boys were eating instant yakisoba or Chinese fried noodles together from one plastic tray. They were about to finish. As I approached them with a plastic bag and tongs, one of them said to me, “I will give you this tray.” So I said to him, “O, you are supposed to say, ‘Please take this tray.’” Then he said, “Please take this.” Soon one of the kids, folded the tray and put it into my bag. Then the kids tried to put in their chopsticks into my bag. So I said, “Long chopsticks easily break my bag. So why don’t you break them in half?” They all did this. Then they started to picking up the litter around, probably of their own, into my bag.

One of them asked me, “Why do you collect garbage?” I said, “Isn’t it not fun to see the garbage around. But if we pick up some and it becomes a little bit cleaner, we are glad.” He nodded.

These two experiences were remarkable for me. I had them in the same week. I think this was because God wanted to share the stories in my message in relation with verse 24.

God wants us to walk with Him and He works through us to love and good works even though we may not notice.

As I jog I sometimes pray, “God, You first made this world very good. Please use me so that I can make it even a little better.”

Hebrews 10:25

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.

This verse is not just to prompt us to attend worship services or meetings, but actually to encourage and pray for one another, care for one another. We are not invited here just to attend the worship service together, but to get to know the concerns and necessities of others and bring them into the presence of God together all the more.

Because the day Christ comes again is drawing near.

Prayer:

Dear Father, You saved us when we believed in Jesus as our Savior and You opened a new way of life for us. Now we can be always together with You in Your presence. Help us to draw near to You. And help us to stir one another to love and good works because of Your presence. May the people of this world see Your glory through us, in Jesus’ Name.