

Reference: HEBREWS 10: 19-25

Church: GRACE Date: 08/08/10

Privileges of Priesthood 1: Access to God

Purpose: To show the church the privilege of being able to access God freely. To encourage them not to take this for granted, but to take full advantage of it!

1. Introduction

Our meditation reminded us of something that is often forgotten

If not forgotten then misunderstood

Every NT believer has been made a priest to serve God

The priesthood of all believers. It is an important truth

Historically, churches have failed to realize the implications

Do not understand that we have moved from OT economy

Where there was a special class of men descended from Aaron

Given certain tasks that only they were permitted to do

Blessed with certain privileges that others did not know

Many today maintain a false distinction

They call their ministers "priests" and everyone else "laity"

Even reformed churches have not shaken it off altogether

Without care, Ministers and elders may be seen as a separate class

This is a great shame because it obscures this glorious truth

In Christ, all true believers are priests of the New Covenant!

ALL have many privileges and responsibilities as a result

The OT priesthood was just a type in this regard

A visible, physical illustration of the place we have in the NC

We will uncover some of these things in 2-3 messages

Today, we'll look at our access to God - explained in Hebrews

Particularly want to review teaching and application of Ch 9&10

We will look at 3 things:

- Access to God's presence was v. restricted under the OC
- As believers, we now have unrestricted access
- What we should do as a result

2. Restricted access to God under the Old Covt

Hebrews theme? NC > OC in every way:

Then God spoke by prophets but now by His Son (Ch 1)

Then God spoke by angels but Jesus better than angels (Ch 1-2)

Moses a faithful servant in, Jesus Son over God's House (Ch 3)

Jesus a greater High Priest (Ch 5 - 7) - Tonight's message!

- sympathetic, eternal, made a more effective offering
- exalted above the heavens
- more excellent ministry, mediator of a better covenant, enacted on better promises (Ch 8:6)

In Ch 9, Writer reviews the worship rules of the earthly sanctuary

This was the place of God's special presence on earth

- Holy place (lampstand, table, holy bread) v2
- Here the priests continually enter to perform worship v6
- Holy of holies (Ark, manna, Aaron's rod, incense altar) v4
- Cherubim, mercy seat v5
- Only high priest enters once/year - blood for atonement v7
- High Priest could die if he got it wrong
- Leviticus 16:2 The LORD said to Moses: "Tell your brother Aaron that he shall not enter at any time into the holy place inside the veil, before the mercy seat which is on the ark, or he will die; for I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat.

The writer to the Hebrews tells us what we should learn from this

- The way into God's heavenly presence had not been revealed as long as earthly tabernacle was standing (9:8)
- It is a symbol for that time - when the temple was probably about to be destroyed or had just been (9:9)
- Since there was no access to God, the sacrifices clearly did not cleanse the consciences of worshipers - reformation was needed (9:9-10). Such inner cleansing is impossible thru blood of bulls & goats (10:4)

3. Unrestricted Access Under the New Covenant

What a change when we come to the New Covenant!

But... Christ appeared as High Priest of the heavenly things (11)

He entered the heavenly holy places with His own blood (12)

The blood of a better sacrifice than Aaron and other HPs had

He obtained eternal redemption (12)

If the blood of bulls and goats made people outwardly clean

How much more will the blood of Christ make them clean inside?

Moses sprinkled the earthly copies with blood of bulls & goats
 Made people and the place outwardly clean to serve God (19)
 Better sacrifices needed to cleanse Heavenly things & worshipers
 To make the conscience clean - sprinkling with Christ's blood
 It was so much better and so effective, it was only offered once
 Hebrews 10:14 For by one offering He has perfected for all time
 those who are sanctified.

Since all those who participate in the New Covenant are forgiven
 There is no further sacrifice for sin (10:18)
 Earthly Tabernacle no longer stands - the way to God is revealed

What was it that prevented OC worshipers from drawing near?
 A filthy, guilty conscience
 But now in Christ, NC worshipers' consciences are purified
 What hinders us now?
 But think about this
 Under the OC, priests could enter holy place to minister
 The High Priest only once a year into the most holy place
 Millions of Israelites, far fewer priests, One High Priest
 One out of millions entered very heart of God's earthly dwelling
 Once a year, with blood and at great personal risk
 Out of all God's people, so few ever got near to Him
 All because of their defiled consciences

Under the NC, our consciences have been cleansed once for all
 We have all been designated priests in the heavenly temple
 But there is no veil - it has been torn out of the way!
 Christ has opened a new & living way right into God's presence
 All His NC children have unrestricted access to this same God!
 Far superior than the access even the high priest had in the OC
 Once again, the NC is vastly superior to the OC
 In Him, sons of Adam boast more blessings than their father lost

4. What should we do as a result?

Read the text 10:19-25 - the writer tells us!

"Therefore", he says (reaching back to 9:1 and possibly before)

1) Having confidence to enter the holy places by Jesus' blood

Confidence = boldness in intimidating circumstances
 Why confidence? Because it is a new and living way!
 What would have happened in OC if someone tried this? Death!
 But this is a way to come and to live - **it is a living way!**
 A way He opened through the veil - signifying His torn body
 He is the Way! No one draws near to God but through Him!
 2) And having a great priest over God's house
 One who died to gain this entrance for us, who lives to intercede
 "Therefore what?" 3 things:

4.1. **Let us draw near to God (22)**

This way has been opened for us, says the writer - so let's use it!
When do God's children use this new and living way?
 In worship, in prayer, in means of grace
How are they to use this access to God?
 Boldly - it's a living way, Jesus is their great priest
 With a sincere heart - no hypocrisy here
 With full assurance - looking to the great priest and his merits
 Having their hearts sprinkled to cleanse their consciences
 AND having their bodies washed - need outward purity too! (OC)
 Do you use this way, brothers and sisters?
 What an astonishing privilege you have! Do you use it?
 Genesis 28:16-17 Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said,
 "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it." 17 He was
 afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than
 the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."
 What we have is greater than anything Jacob knew!
 The house of God is here, the gate of heaven is open - always
 Are you present for worship and for prayer in the church?
 Do you worship and pray at home?
 Or are we asleep like Jacob, and do not know these things?
*I have never understood the appeal of window shopping
 Standing outside a store looking at good things on the inside
 But never going in to possess them! How does that make sense?
 Maybe on earth it does but not in the spiritual realm
 Don't window shop the good things here! (9:11, 10:1)
 In these windows there are no fakes or copies - it's the real thing!*

Draw near to God, go in, possess these things - all of us!
 If you're not a believer, you have no living way to God
 You are an outsider, cut off from Him, from any hope of heaven
 You have no sacrifice you can make to cleanse yourself
 You only have a way of death.
 You'll face Him with your unclean conscience - you'll die for ever
Draw near to Christ while you may! He'll open the way for you!
 His blood can make the foulest clean - it can make you clean too

4.2. Let us hold fast our confession (23)

The Hebrews were tempted to return to the OC ways
 But look what they were doing! NC > OC in every way
 In promises, in mediators, in sacrifices, in High Priests
 In access - Christ has opened a living way into God's presence!
Remember those old detergent commercials?
Try this one for a week... now do you want your old one back?
 Yet here were the Hebrews wavering on their confession
 Persecution was around them and it was physically safer to be OC
About to take back old detergent that wouldn't make them clean
 Any of you tempted to give up on Christ?
 Maybe it's tough right now - at home, work, school
 It looks like it would be easier to bend a little - back to old ways

But Jesus has opened the only living way to God!
 How will you draw near otherwise? Do you want to be cut off?
 Look at the promises and privileges you have as a Royal Priest
 Is there anything you know that can surpass them? No!
 Then hold fast and do not waver
 God is faithful to keep all the promises He has made -
 Do not give up your confession!

4.3. Spur others on to love & good deeds (24)

Lastly, (24) consider this - give your full attention to it
 You have a living way to God and a great priest in heaven
 You have fellow priests in God's household
 All of them are tried and tempted, just like you
 Some may be finding it hard now to pray and to worship

How can you spur them on to use the living way & look to Jesus?
 Some may be undergoing persecution or affliction
 How can you spur them on so they hold fast their confession?

There is one way NOT to do it, says the writer
 That is to get into a habit of not meeting together (25)
 How shall we be the body of Christ if we never meet?
 Hideous picture - hands - Ripon, feet - Turlock, chest - Riverbank
 More like an episode of CSI than Jesus' body
 But it is not just meeting together - anyone can do that
 Vintage car enthusiasts, chess players, Shriners etc
 When we meet we are to **encourage** one another
Comfort, call to, beseech, exhort - love and good deeds is the goal
 Because we have bold access God & a great priest in heaven
This seems something we could do more of at Grace
We are islands often, not members of the same body
Talk with each other about many things - even spiritual subjects
About doctrines, Puritans, churches - all safe territory
How often do we try to encourage each other?
Get alongside and offer comfort, a word of prayer, point to Jesus?
Share openly of our spiritual struggles, experiences and needs
Give full attention to this - how to stimulate one another in Christ

5. Conclusions

Jesus has opened a living way into heaven for us
 Through it, we have unrestricted access to God
 Let's draw near to Him then, following in the way He has opened
 Let's be at the worship services, at the fellowship meals, prayer
 Let's use the access we have when at home, too
 Jesus is the way in for us - let's not be window shoppers!
 Let's hold fast to our confession - there's nothing better to be had!
 Let's not trade the gospel that makes us whiter than snow for a
 cleanser that leaves the stains untouched!
 And let's give full attention to spurring on to love & good deeds
 Meeting together at every opportunity - the day is approaching!
 Encouraging each other to use the free access Christ has opened
 for all His people through His precious blood. Amen