

# Exhortations From *the* Sanctuary



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## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Heb. 10:19–25; Heb. 4:16; Exod. 24:8; James 4:7, 8; John 13:34; Heb. 10:24, 25.*

**Memory Text:** “And since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water” (*Hebrews 10:21, 22, NASB*).

Throughout the book of Hebrews, passages about Christian faith alternate with passages about Christian living. In other words, theology has practical implications. The “what” of faith leads to the “how” of living that faith. In Hebrews, after the author has painted the magnificent theological picture of Christ as our Sacrifice and High Priest (*Heb. 7:1–10:18*), he encourages and exhorts believers to live according to the implications of these truths. This exhortation is especially seen in Hebrews 10:19–25.

This passage is one long, complex sentence in Greek. It consists of two basic facts that lead to three exhortations, each starting with the phrase “let us,” and each containing the familiar triad of faith, hope, and love. Also, each “let us” section contains another facet of Christian faith.

This week we will study Hebrews 10:19–25 and its practical exhortations for Christian living.

*\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, December 28.*

## Access to the Heavenly Sanctuary

**Read** Hebrews 4:16; 6:19, 20; and 10:19–21. To what do believers have access, and what does this mean for us? What hope is offered here, and more important, what impact should this hope have on our life and faith?

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Believers have spiritual access to the heavenly sanctuary, to the very throne of God. We can seek closeness to God because our “entry” was made possible by the blood of Christ and by His representation in our behalf as our High Priest. The texts assure us that our soul has an anchor, Jesus Christ, who is in the very presence of God (*Heb. 4:14–16; 6:19, 20*). The assurance for us is that Christ gained full access to God after He was inaugurated as the heavenly High Priest (*Heb. 6:20*). At the inauguration, Christ sat on the heavenly throne, an image that demonstrates His royal status (*Rev. 3:21*).

The good news for us is that our Representative is in the presence of the Father. No mere earthly priest, who himself is sinful, serves on our behalf. We have the better Priest. Nothing separates the Father from the Son. Because Christ is perfect and sinless, there does not need to be a veil that shields God’s holiness from Jesus, our High Priest (*Heb. 10:20*).

“What does intercession comprehend? It is the golden chain which binds finite man to the throne of the infinite God. The human agent whom Christ has died to save importunes the throne of God, and his petition is taken up by Jesus who has purchased him with His own blood. Our great High Priest places His righteousness on the side of the sincere suppliant, and the prayer of Christ blends with that of the human petitioner.”—Ellen G. White, *That I May Know Him*, p. 78.

What assurance we have that we can have close communion with the Father, all because of what Jesus has done and is doing for us!

**Dwell on what it means that Jesus is interceding for you in heaven. Why do you need that intercession so greatly?**

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## Cleansed and Sincere

**Read** Hebrews 10:22. What conditions for approaching God in the heavenly sanctuary are laid down in this verse?

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According to this verse, worshipers should meet four conditions when they draw near to God:

1. *Come with a sincere heart.* The heart is our inner being, our thoughts, our motivations, our emotions, our will, and our character. God wants us to be sincere. However, the heart can become sincere only if it is cleansed. This doesn't mean that we are perfect, just that we are striving toward revealing the character of Christ.

2. *Come in full assurance of faith.* As we saw in yesterday's study, there is no more reason to doubt that we will gain access to God.

3. *Come with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience.* The sprinkling of the heart is sanctuary language that refers back to the blood sprinkled upon the people at the wilderness tabernacle (*Exod. 24:8; Lev. 8:23, 24*), which made them ritually clean but could not cleanse their conscience (*Heb. 9:9, 13*). The cleansing in the true tabernacle in heaven, however, is a cleansing of the conscience, brought about by the blood of Christ (*Heb. 9:14*). The justification of the repentant sinner is symbolized by this cleansing. We can have a clear conscience because we have been forgiven.

4. *Come with our bodies washed with pure water.* This sounds like an allusion to Christian baptism, but we can also understand it in a more spiritual sense as the "washing of water with the word" (*Eph. 5:26, NASB*), reading the Bible and applying its principles to our lives.

In James 4:7, 8, James struggles with the "double-minded" attitude of his readers. They have apparently lost their single-mindedness toward God. They have compromised and are in immediate danger. He uses language associated with purity at the sanctuary. It is truly a sanctuary concept that approaching God is possible only if purification takes place.

**It should be clear that only God can cleanse our hearts. The question is: what painful choices do we make that allow Him to do this work of grace in our lives?**

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## Faith: Be Confident

Read Hebrews 10:19–25 again. One theme appears again and again, and that is “confidence.” The Greek word for “confidence” (*Heb. 10:19*) refers to a boldness, courage, and fearlessness that in the New Testament describes our new relationship with God.

Originally, the word referred to an openness of speech, which, in this context, could specifically mean that one can freely approach God in prayer. This type of openness in our relationship with God produces a joyful confidence. The reason and object of our confidence is that we have a High Priest in heaven through whom we can have access to the presence of God. This access is unlimited and not blocked by anything but ourselves and our wrong choices. We have an open invitation to come into the heavenly sanctuary.

Where does this confidence come from? It is not produced by ourselves but by recognizing, again, that the blood of Jesus has won access to God’s presence for us.

**There** are other texts in Hebrews that speak about confidence and assurance: Hebrews 3:6, 14; 4:16; 6:11; 11:1. What kind of confidence do these texts describe?

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Assurance and confidence do not anchor us in ourselves but only in Christ. These conditions are not dependent upon who we are but who our Mediator is. Interestingly, there is no mention that believers would have anything less than “full assurance” (*Heb. 6:11, 10:22*). Obviously, the new way that has been forever opened through Jesus’ death will lead without fail to full confidence. Nothing less is expected.

There are two ways to obtain Christian confidence and maintain it in faith. One is through faith itself (*Eph. 3:12*); the other is through faithful Christian service for others (*1 Tim. 3:13*). Both aspects are necessary and important. In Hebrews, too, assurance of faith and exhortation to prove oneself as a Christian go hand in hand. Christian living is never detached from Christian faith.

**What things in life challenge your confidence in God or your full assurance of His good will for you? What can you do to help to protect yourself from this spiritual danger?**

## Hope: Be Steadfast and Unswerving

**Look** up the texts below. What do they all have in common? What should believers hold on to?

Heb. 3:6 \_\_\_\_\_

Heb. 3:14 \_\_\_\_\_

Heb. 4:14 \_\_\_\_\_

Heb. 6:18 \_\_\_\_\_

Heb. 10:23 \_\_\_\_\_

Besides having the assurance of salvation, it is important to persevere and uphold the hope offered us all. In Hebrews, to hold fast is a serious appeal. One gets the impression that some believers were slipping away from their Christian faith and hope. The apostle had to encourage them not to let go. The text expresses, quite similarly, the things that are worth holding on to: hope, confidence, assurance, and confession. All of these terms refer in an objective sense to the Christian belief. We can do these things because our hope isn't in ourselves but in Jesus and what He has done for us. The moment we forget that crucial truth, we will surely lose confidence.

These texts challenge us to be steadfast from the “beginning” (*Heb. 3:14*) and “until the end” (*Heb. 3:6, 14; 6:11*). To do so “without wavering” (*Heb. 10:23, NKJV*) refers to an immutable and unshaken faith. Whatever the circumstance may be, our hope remains the same, and our commitment to God is unchanged because we can trust that He is faithful and will do what He has promised.

There is no question that God is true to His Word. He fulfilled the promise that He made to Abraham and Sarah (*see also Rom. 4:19–21*); He fulfilled the promise of Christ's first coming (*Gal. 3:19*); and He will also fulfill the promise of His return (*Heb. 12:26*). God's ultimate promise, however, is eternal life, which He promised even before time began (*Titus 1:2, 1 John 2:25*).

God's faithfulness is immovable. Even “if we are faithless, He remains faithful; for He cannot deny Himself” (*2 Tim. 2:13, NASB*). Our unfaithfulness or disbelief will not change God's intention for us. His promises remain unshaken by our moral lapses. The promises will still be available for us because faithfulness is part of the divine nature.

**It is so easy to become discouraged because of our sins. How can we overcome those sins and yet, at the same time, not give up when we fail? Why must we cling to these promises, especially when we fail?**

## Love: Encourage One Another

**“And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds” (Heb. 10:24, NASB).**

Whereas the exhortation in Hebrews 10:23 focuses on the individual attitude, the next one in Hebrews 10:24 has the community of believers in view. We do not walk alone on our path with Christ. We should care for one another consistently.

The challenge to love one another is a traditional component of Christian behavior (*John 13:34, 35; Gal. 5:13*). However, loving one another does not just happen naturally. The act of “considering” suggests concentrated and careful pondering. We are urged to pay attention to our fellow believers and see how we could incite them to love others and to do good works. Unfortunately, it is easier to provoke and antagonize others than it is to spur them on to Christian love, isn’t it?

Then let us consolidate our efforts to work for the best of the community so that, because of our inducements to love, others cannot help but love and perform good works, as well.

**Read Hebrews 10:24, 25. What do “love” and “good deeds” have to do with the “assemblies”?**

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One point that Hebrews stresses is that we can express love toward one another in Christian gatherings. If someone does not come to worship, how can he or she ever fulfill Christ’s law of love? Some people may think that they have “good” reasons to stay away from Christian meetings. Hebrews, however, touches on the sensitive issue that, in the end, it might be their own apathy that keeps them away. If one wants, one can always find reasons to avoid church attendance or other Christian gatherings. Those reasons, however, pale in contrast to one of the reasons for coming: to be a blessing to others.

Such behavior is all the more pressing as the day of Christ’s return comes nearer and nearer. At the beginning of Hebrews 10:19–25, the author admonished believers to draw near to God in the heavenly sanctuary, and at its conclusion he reminds them that the Day of the Lord draws near to them. Christ’s return should always be a major incentive for Christian behavior.

**Who in your church do you want to encourage with your words, deeds, or just by your presence? If you are deliberate in that intention, you can make a big difference in people’s lives and, in turn, be blessed yourself.**

**Further Study:** “The Mediator, in his office and work, would greatly exceed in dignity and glory the earthly, typical priesthood. . . . This Saviour was to be a mediator, to stand between the Most High and his people. Through this provision, a way was opened whereby the guilty sinner might find access to God through the mediation of another. The sinner could not come in his own person, with his guilt upon him, and with no greater merit than he possessed in himself. Christ alone could open the way, by making an offering equal to the demands of the divine law. He was perfect, and undefiled by sin. He was without spot or blemish. The extent of the terrible consequences of sin could never have been known, had not the remedy provided been of infinite value.”—Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 2, p. 11.

“Faith in the atonement and intercession of Christ will keep us steadfast and immovable amid the temptations that press upon us in the church militant.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7A, p. 484.

### Discussion Questions:

- ❶ Skim through the book of Hebrews. What are all the times in this book that we are called to act in certain ways, ways that directly result from our faith?
- ❷ Dwell more on the idea that we have full access to God. What does that mean? How should this influence our lives, especially in times of temptation or in times of discouragement over our spiritual state?
- ❸ What is the difference between “full assurance” of faith and a presumptuous attitude?
- ❹ Dwell on this line taken from the Ellen G. White quote in Friday’s further study: “The extent of the terrible consequences of sin could never have been known, had not the remedy provided been of infinite value.” What does that tell us about just how bad sin is that it cost something of “infinite value,” the life of Jesus? How do we understand the idea of “infinite value”? How does the fact that Jesus is the Creator help us to grasp this amazing truth? Knowing these things, how can our lives not be transformed? How can we know these things and not want to teach them to others?
- ❺ How can we develop spiritual friendships in which we encourage one another to be more loving and to live a life of good deeds? What spiritual benefits do you gain from “assembling together”? What would you miss if you could not worship with other Christians in church?

## The Lesson in Brief

► **Key Text:** *Hebrews 10:19–25*

► **The Student Will:**

**Know:** Recognize the Source of our confidence, Christ, our High Priest, who died for us and lives to help us to serve God and others.

**Feel:** Appreciate God’s care for us by encouraging His followers to positively respond to His exhortations.

**Do:** Cultivate the feeling of love toward sinners as God has and encourage them to go forward no matter how big their obstacles.

► **Learning Outline:**

**I. Know: Our Only Confidence**

**A** Why is our confidence not built on our performance or achievements but solely rooted in God’s work for us?

**B** Why do Christians need to cultivate faith, hope, and love?

**II. Feel: God Exhorts His People**

**A** How do you feel when God encourages you to follow Him? What does it say about His care for His people?

**B** How can you draw near to God when He is always with His people and takes the first step in restoring a genuine relationship with us?

**III. Do: Encourage Others**

**A** How can you help people to experience and grow in a meaningful relationship with God?

**B** How can you encourage a friend, a member of your church, or a former member to worship God by regularly attending church?

► **Summary:** Our faith in God is shown by our care for others. When you encourage the weak, you strengthen your own relationship with God. We need each other and need to walk together to the New Jerusalem.

## Learning Cycle

### ► **STEP 1**—Motivate

**Spotlight on Scripture:** *Hebrews 4:14–16, 6:19–20, 10:19–25*

**Key Concept for Spiritual Growth:** God is the Great Encourager, and He wants us to obtain the ultimate, positive sanctuary experience. We can have bold confidence to enter the heavenly sanctuary and have sure access to God through Jesus Christ, our High Priest, who opens the way for us. From this cosmic command center, He blesses His people, gives us full assurance of faith, strengthens our hope, and deepens our love so that we can spiritually grow and be ready for the day of judgment.

**Just for Teachers:** This week’s lesson should help individuals to know how important it is to never give up, to encourage one another, and to stay in close fellowship with one another. We depend on one another and need to be in touch with brothers and sisters as they also need us. Because God encourages us, we can encourage one another.

**Opening Discussion:** Can you remember when you were down and someone encouraged you? What were your feelings, and what was most helpful for you in that situation? Were you encouraged by a smile, gesture, greeting, hug, financial help, song, sermon, prayer, welcome, or a simple word?

### ► **STEP 2**—Explore

**Just for Teachers:** The major theme of the Epistle to the Hebrews is that Jesus is superior, better, and higher than anything or anybody else. This superiority of Christ should lead His followers to a new lifestyle in such a way that He is always their priority.

## Bible Commentary

**I. Enter the Sanctuary and Approach the Throne of Grace With Confidence**  
(Review *Hebrews 4:14–16* with your class.)

We may boldly enter with full confidence and assurance into the heavenly sanctuary, because we have a great High Priest, our Intercessor, who has gone ahead of us. He understands our fragility, vulnerability, weaknesses, temptations, problems, troubles, and difficulties, because He went through

similar experiences while living on earth as a human being. Thus, He is able to sympathize with us and help us in life's struggles. This is why the author of the letter to the Hebrews encourages: "Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence [Greek word *parresia* means also "boldness," "assurance," "courage"], so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (4:16, *NIV*).

### Discussion Questions:

- 1 How is our boldness in approaching God connected with the claiming of His promises? Support your answer with biblical evidence.
- 2 How can you grow in love? Be practical and concrete in your answers. How can you tie your answers to Paul's explanation about what is true love in 1 Corinthians 13:4–10?

## II. Let Us Not Give Up Meeting Together (Review Hebrews 10:24, 25 with your class.)

The author of Hebrews underlines the fellowship of believers (10:24, 25; 12:22–24), which is the result of a new reality accomplished by Christ. Christians need this community in order to stay focused, and they should never abandon this fellowship (10:25). The sense of belonging to Christ and to one another forms one family of brothers and sisters (10:19; see *John 1:12; 1 Cor. 12; 1 John 3:1*). This close bond must be strong among believers. It is actually Christ's love that draws and joins His followers together (2 *Cor. 5:14*).

### Discussion Questions:

- 1 What is the reason that the author of Hebrews gives for not abandoning meeting together?
- 2 Why should we build a community of faith, as opposed to living individualistically and independently? Why do we need one another?

## III. Never Give Up! Persevere in Doing God's Will! (Review Hebrews 10:35, 36 with your class.)

That God is for us is also shown through the work of the Holy Spirit. There are seven references to the Holy Spirit in the book of Hebrews (*Heb. 2:4; 3:7; 6:4; 9:8, 14; 10:15, 29*), which assert how the Holy Spirit

brings divine confirming witness of the definitive word spoken through Jesus. The Holy Spirit is the Source of Scripture’s inspiration and speaks through it (3:7, 9; 9:8; 10:15). Through the Spirit, the Written Word remains current and contemporary: “So, as the Holy Spirit says” (3:7, *NIV*). The words of Scripture are “living” words (*Heb. 4:12*). The Holy Spirit interprets Scriptures for today and enables us to walk in the new covenant (*Jer. 31:31–33, Ezek. 36:24–28*).

The phrase “Spirit of grace” (*Heb. 10:29*) draws attention to the power and presence of God in our lives. The work of the Spirit is an expression of divine grace. Insulting the Spirit of grace would mean insulting everything that has come from God. Welcoming the Spirit of grace would mean opening one’s way, via the Spirit, to the very “throne of grace” where divine helping grace (available through our great High Priest) is anchored, offered, and assured. Here the transformational work in relation to the new covenant experience is fully realized in the heart (10:15). To be partakers of the Holy Spirit means to be partakers of Christ.

The author of Hebrews appeals: “Persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised” (10:36, *NIV*). Perseverance is important; it is one characteristic of God’s people before the second coming of Jesus (*Rev. 14:12; see also the experience of Moses—Heb. 11:27 and James’ appeal in 5:7–12*).

There are many exhortations in the book of Hebrews. They can be summarized by God’s appeal: “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts” (4:7, *NIV*). God’s call is actually a call of the Holy Spirit (3:7), and it demands total dedication to God. When we realize that something needs to be changed and put in harmony with Him and His will in our lives, we should respond to His calling immediately.

### Discussion Questions:

- 1 The author of the Epistle of Hebrews states that we should encourage one another “all the more as you see the Day approaching” (*Heb. 10:25, NIV*). What kind of Day is it—the Day of Judgment/Atonement or the Day of Jesus’ second coming? Support your answer with the Bible.
- 2 How can we hope without wavering? What does it mean to “hold unswervingly to the hope” (*Heb. 10:23, NIV*)?
- 3 How can believers in Christ insult “the Spirit of grace” (*Heb. 10:29, NIV*)?

## ►STEP 3—Apply

**Just for Teachers:** Help people to understand the real value of prayer.

**What does it mean to come to God with bold assurance and courageous confidence in order to “receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (*Heb. 4:16, NIV*)?**

### Discussion Questions:

- 1 What does it mean that believers can freely approach God? Is God so far from us that we need to draw near to Him?
- 2 Jesus Christ entered into the heavenly sanctuary in order to do His mediatorial work and provide the benefits of His intercession for His followers. How, and for what, can we obtain help from our Intercessor?
- 3 Ask the members of your class to discuss how to make the life of the congregation attractive for youth, church members, and friends.

**Activity:** Discuss with your class the difference between a destructive and a constructive critique. What is the nature of true encouragement? How can one avoid being judgmental or putting people down while helping them to grow in certain areas of life?

## ►STEP 4—Create

**Just for Teachers:** Practice in a concrete way with your class what to say and how to encourage people who are disappointed, hurt, or spiritually weak. How can you motivate people to regularly worship, be part of the community of faith, and study the Word of God?

### Activities:

- 1 The summary of the Epistle to the Hebrews is simple: “Do not forsake Jesus. He brought a whole new dimension to your life, opened heaven for you, and brought reality toward which all the Old Testament types pointed.” What techniques can you use in order to remember Jesus’ work for humanity and keep it fresh in your mind in order to experience it?
- 2 Divide your class into two groups and ask each group to discuss the meaning of Jesus’ entry “within the veil” (*Heb. 6:19, 20; 10:19, 20*) and then evaluate their arguments. Ask them the following question: is the Day of Atonement, or the inauguration of the heavenly sanctuary, a part of what it means to enter “within the veil”? Compelling evidence speaks in favor of the view that takes entering within the veil as referring to the inauguration.