

ON A HILL TOO FAR AWAY - Fifteen Protestant Truths About the Death of God the Son - Part Six
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Pastor Don Horban, Cedarview Community Church, Newmarket, ON

Jesus Christ Died On The Cross To Become A Sympathetic High Priest Instead Of A Condemning High Priest And Give Us Confident Access Into The Presence Of A Holy And Just God

Hebrews 10:19-21 - "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..."

Hebrews 4:14-16 - "Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. [15] For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. [16] Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

In the previous message in this series we began unpacking the very precious and potent truth that Jesus died to abolish the earthly priesthood by becoming our eternal high priest. The book of Hebrews tells us in three carefully chosen words that Christ died on the cross **"once for all."** Those three words demolish the earthly priesthood.

In both of our opening texts for today's message there is a word used - a very important word - to describe the **kind** of access we all now have into the presence of our holy, just God. The word the writer uses is the word **"confidence"** - **"...since we have confidence to enter the holy place...."**(10:19), and **"...let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace...."**(4:16).

Apparently, each of those texts bears truth that, properly understood and appreciated, will calm and assure the heart of the one approaching God, even if that person is a very guilty sinner. And God help us if we ever get over just how amazing this mystery is, that we, even though stained and marred with the guilt of hideous sin, can not only **approach** God, but approach Him with **confidence**. That's important to remember as we so peacefully sing all those love songs so easily to Jesus tonight.

This is what we want to study today. There are **two sources** for a sinner's confident approach to a just and holy God. And you and I will need to **know** these things every day we live our lives for Jesus in this present evil age. There are surely enough things designed to **rob** us of our confidence in coming to God. Let's build our faith on two foundations designed to help us **keep** our confidence:

1) **OUR CONFIDENCE IS FOUNDED ON KNOWING THE WHOLE OLD TESTAMENT SYSTEM OF SACRIFICE WAS CUSTOM MADE TO POINT TO THE GRANDEUR AND POWER OF CHRIST'S COMING DEATH FOR OUR SINS ON THE CROSS**

Ask people what happened when the children of Israel came out of Egypt and reached the base of Mount Sinai and they will tell you that God gave them, through Moses, the Ten Commandments. And that's true, but it's only **one** of the things that God gave them there. The **second** thing God gave them at the base of that mountain was the detailed instructions on how to construct what would come to be called the **"Tabernacle."** That's what took the most time at the foot of Mount Sinai.

The whole process seems shrouded in mystery. God appears so picky about all the little, obscure details - **Exodus 25:40** - **"And see that you make them after the pattern for them, which is being shown you on the mountain."**

Everything had to be done, not as **they** might want it done, but exactly as **God** wanted it done. The exact dimensions, the exact kinds of wood and fabric, the exact colors are all spelled out. Absolutely nothing is left to chance.

Why? What difference could it possibly make whether a piece of fabric was blue or green? Wool or linen? Whether the poles were gold or silver? We don't get the answer to those questions until 1400 years later. Then, in a burst of revelation, we see, with the coming of Jesus Christ and His death on the cross, **why** God was so unbearably fastidious with all those ancient Tabernacle details:

Hebrews 8:5 - **"(The priests) serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, 'See that you make everything according to the pattern**

that was shown you on the mountain.”

Do you see it? All of these things in the Tabernacle, including, as we saw last week, the priesthood itself, were only **imitations - copies**, the text says - of the real dwelling place of Almighty God. Someone sent me a card not long ago and on the front is said I was a “model preacher.” On the inside it said - **“Model - a small imitation of the real thing”**

But model is a good description for our purposes. That’s a very good way to picture all of the Old Testament sacrificial system. It was never even **intended** to be permanent. The Bible tells us this explicitly - **Hebrews 8:13 - “In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.”**

The whole Old Testament system - the one given by God at the foot of mount Sinai - was only the **copy** - only the **shadow** - only the **model** of what would one day be fleshed out and completed in Jesus Christ. That’s why we don’t talk about a **first** covenant and a **second** covenant. We talk about a **old** covenant and a **new** covenant.

And the Tabernacle from the old covenant had to be **exactly** as God designed it because, one day, 1400 years later, our **eternal salvation** was also going to be exactly on **God’s terms** rather than **ours**, and the model was designed to train the people to expect that.

Mankind, especially **proud, sinful** mankind, has always liked to think he can design his own path to God Almighty. This is the hallmark of bad religion. It comes on its own terms rather than following the exact pattern laid down in God’s own revelation.

So, picture the children of Israel coming up to the base of mount Sinai. They’ve been gloriously set free by divine grace plus nothing. Now begins their **training in following their redeeming God**. And, right away, first on the agenda, God brings them to mount Sinai where they learn **two things**. First, in the Ten Commandments, they learn they are not free to **live** as they please. And, second, in the exact instructions about the construction of the Tabernacle, they learn they are not free to **approach God** as they please.

“This is all well and good, Pastor Don. But what does this have to do with me **having confidence** in my approach to Father God today?”

The writer of Hebrews answers that very question in our text: **Hebrews 10:19-21** - **“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....”**

Or, perhaps with even more blazing contrast, look at these words from the same writer: **Hebrews 9:11-14** - **“But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) [12] he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. [13] For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, [14] how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.”**

If God honored the temporary, passing, shadowy copy of the Old Testament sacrificial system, which, the writer of Hebrews specifically tells us, **never** had the power to remove human sin, **how much more** will He honor the death of His own Son who died for our sins? That’s the argument. If God forgave Amos when he brought a goat to the priest to be slaughtered, how much more can **you** rest in His forgiveness when God the Son bled and died on the cross as a sacrifice for your iniquity. Rest in that confidence.

This is such a significant event God takes great pains to announce its inauguration. That word **“opened”** literally means **“inauguration.”** That’s the idea behind **Hebrews 10:19-20** - **“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....”**

There came a time when the old copy was folded up and put away in the plan of God. It didn’t die instantly in human religion. The change didn’t happen overnight in **this** world. In some religions the old system, or some variant of it, is

still being used with no saving effect apart from faith in Jesus Christ. But in **Father God's eyes** there was an **inaugural launching of the final sacrifice**. It was much like the way we launch a new ocean liner, only God does things on a bit bigger scale.

The writer of Hebrews tells us that the **"new and living way"** to God was opened **"through the veil of His flesh."** When the veil of Jesus' flesh was ripped apart on the cross - at that very moment - another veil - the veil that partitioned off the holy of holies from the rest of the temple - was ripped **"from top to bottom."**

Most people think that when Jesus breathed his last and gave up His spirit, all sorts of manifestation took place in the realm of **nature** - dark sky, earthquake, etc. And that's kind-of true and yet incomplete. Look with me at a very important little passage of Scripture in **Matthew 27:50-53** - **"And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. [51] And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. [52] The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, [53] and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many."**

Jesus dies. Silence. Nothing happens. Not right away. Then, the veil of the Temple is torn from top to bottom. Next - earthquakes, signs, wonders, bodies of Old Testament saints are temporarily raised. The signs don't happen at the moment of Jesus' death. The signs happen when the temple veil is torn - at the very moment of the **termination of the old temporary system of approaching God** and the **launching of the final, permanent way of approaching God**.

God is **inaugurating** something. And the change is so powerful God uses His Old Testament saints, who lived and struggled so long with that old system, to actually **come out of their graves** to demonstrate the superiority of the new. The whole point is, of course, you and I can have confidence in the new and living way.

On now to the second source of confidence:

2) **OUR CONFIDENCE IS FOUNDED ON THE ASSURANCE THAT CHRIST ALWAYS TREATS US SYMPATHETICALLY WHEN WE COME TO THE THRONE OF GRACE IN HIS NAME**

Hebrews 4:14-16 - **"Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. [15] For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. [16] Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."**

Sympathizing is, of course, the opposite of **criticizing**. When dealing with repentant sinners, Jesus always **sympathizes**, and never **criticizes**. That's where my confidence comes from. I want to tell you the most beautiful thing I know about Jesus. I have nothing better to offer you than this. If you remember this one truth all your life you will spend more of your time near the throne of God than away from it. Here it is - **Jesus always feels with us. He never feels against us**. And there is nothing the Devil wants you to forget more than that one truth.

Here is ground for the most wonderful, peace generating confidence in prayer. Here is peace from the **accusation of the Devil**. Here is peace from the **limitations of your own imperfection**. Jesus is **always** sympathetic to repentant sinners. **Always**.

Jesus didn't just die on the cross in an instant. He lived life in this world for about 33 years first. And the Bible says He lived those years just the same way you live yours and I live mine. He endured the **full force** of temptation in a way you and I never will because He never caved in to it. And when you **resist** temptation you know its power far more than when you give in to it. Jesus was tempted the way you and I are tempted. He experienced loneliness and pain and especially rejection in a way no one else ever will. Jesus knows how hard life is.

And when the writer of Hebrews says Jesus is a sympathetic High Priest, he means to say very clearly that Jesus **feels** for us. Remember, He feels **with** us, never **against** us.

When the veil of the temple - the veil that was a constant reminder of how unworthy we all were to even get **close** to a holy God - when **that** veil was torn from top to bottom, **not** by any earthquake, but by the Hand of God Himself - the Old Testament saints just had to come right out of their graves to have a look at the inauguration. Stay that excited about the glory of Christ's cross all your life. And be glad, church, be very glad.