

HEARTS DRAWING NEAR HEBREWS 10.22

INTRODUCTION:

1. God is unapproachable to those in sin. However, through the blood of Christ we can draw near to God with confidence.
2. As parents desire their children to come to them, so also does God desire for His children to come to Him.
3. We draw near to God in worship when we approach Him in prayer, song, study, remembrance, and sacrifice.

I. CHRISTIANS CAN DRAW NEAR TO GOD ANYWHERE

- A. Certain events are often associated with specific locations.
 1. Therefore many conclude that the place in which one ought to worship is in a church building. (Acts 17.24,25)
 2. While a critical part of our responsibilities, worshipping God in the assembly is not exclusive. (Jer. 7.2-7)
- B. The omnipresent characteristic of God make it impossible to escape from His presence. (Ps. 139.7-12; Jer. 23.23,24)
 1. However, drawing near to God is a purposeful act of approaching Him in worship. (1 Thes. 5.17; Acts 16.25)
 2. God desires that men seek Him out and find him, *“though He is not far from each one of us”* (Acts 17.27)
- C. Whether collectively or individually the challenge to draw near to God is a conscious goal and not achieved by itself.

II. DRAWING NEAR TO GOD IN SPIRIT

- A. When the children of Israel was saved from the pursuing Egyptian army, worship ensued. (Ex. 14.1-11)
 1. There was neither command nor law which required such worship, but it came as a direct result of appreciation.
 2. When men worship God out of habit it becomes empty and unacceptable. (Matt. 15.8; Mal. 1.10)
- B. Sincere worship, before, during, and after.
 1. Worship in spirit begins when we first leave the assembly in daily service. (Rom. 12.1,2)
 2. During the assembly worship is enthusiastic, but leaders set the tone. (Col. 3.23; 1 Cor. 14.23-25)
 3. Leaving the worship we ought to have both a sense of humility and exaltation. (Ps. 8.3,4; 139.14; Rom. 5.8)

CONCLUSION: Drawing near only through the blood of Christ.

NORTHSIDE CHURCH OF CHRIST

2424 McCarran St. ♦ North Las Vegas, NV ♦ 89030
Phone: (702) 642-3141 Email: Pruitt@nlvchurchofchrist.com
www.nlvchurchofchrist.com

MEETING TIMES:

SUNDAY MORNING BIBLE CLASS :	9:00AM
SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP:	9:50AM
SUNDAY EVENING WORSHIP:	6:00PM
WEDNESDAY EVENING BIBLE CLASS	7:30PM

*Worshipping
God “in Spirit
and truth”
(John 4.23)*

JULY 5TH, 2009

FREEDOM WORTH DYING FOR

It is difficult for us to fully appreciate freedom until it is lost. But ask someone who has been incarcerated in prison and he will quickly tell you the value of freedom. Or talk to someone who is imprisoned by illness not able to get out of bed, let alone perform normal daily routines, and you will quickly learn how fortunate we have it to be free.

Our freedom is so precious that untold numbers of soldiers have given their lives in sacrifice to protect the freedoms that most take for granted. However, this is not meant to be a patriotic address as much as a spiritual address. For there is nothing more precious, and more neglected than our spiritual freedom – freedom worth dying for.

Jesus brought it to the attention of the Jews that they were in the worst kind of slavery, for *“whoever commits sin is a slave of sin”* (John 8.34). However, Jesus believed that our freedom was worth dying for, and on the cross of Calvary, He voluntarily gave His life to save us from the bondage of sin (Rom. 8.2). It is for this reason that Christ revealed that freedom comes by knowing the truth (John 8.32; Rom. 10.17)

Christians understand that freedom is worth dying for. Knowing that the temporary pleasures of the flesh was not worth the bondage to sin and death, Christians have put to death the old man with its deed (Col. 3.5,9,10).

No greater blessing is there than freedom. It is a basic human necessity. And spiritual freedom is offered to everyone who wishes to put off the shackles of sin. (Matt. 10.28-30).

THE SHEPHERD AND THE SHEEP

JOHN 10.1-16

INTRODUCTION:

1. Though often applied with derogative meaning, the term "sheep" is used extensively to denote man's dependence on God.
2. The prophets foretold of a Shepherd that would come and lead Israel. Such was fulfilled in Christ. (Ezek. 34.23; John 10.11)
3. As the sheep under the leadership of the Good Shepherd, Christians find safety and protection in the fold.

I. THE SHEEP HEAR THE VOICE OF THE SHEPHERD

- A. The voice of the Shepherd is recognizable. (John 10.1-5)
 1. The words of Christ are truth. (John 10.3,4,27; 18.37)
 2. In contrast, those who speak contrary to truth can be quickly identified. (John 10.5,8; 1 John 4.5,6)
- B. Hearing the voice of the Shepherd, the faithful follow.
 1. God speaks to us through Christ, but many have become dull of hearing. (Matt. 17.5; Heb. 1.1,2; 5.11)
 2. Who will follow Jesus? Those who hear. (Rom. 10.17)

II. THE CARE OF THE GREAT SHEPHERD

- A. The Pharisees had no interest in the welfare of the Jews, but only their own status. (Luke 20.45-47; John 10.12,13)
 1. Christ had come "...that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10.10)
 2. As the Good Shepherd, Christ gave His life to save the life of His sheep. (John 10.11; 1 Pet. 2.24,25)
- B. The good that the Good Shepherd does for His sheep.
 1. The Shepherd feeds the flock. (John 10.9; 21.15-17)
 2. The Shepherd protects the flock. (Ps. 23.4; Acts 20.28,29)

III. THE SHEEP KNOW AND ARE KNOWN

- A. **JOHN 10.14:** "*I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own.*" (cf. 2 Tim. 2.19)
 1. We may not always know who are and are not faithful, but one cannot fool God. (Mark. 9.38,39; Heb. 4.13)
 2. Who are these other sheep not of the fold? Gentiles who later come to Christ. (John 10.16; Eph. 2.11-18)
- B. We are comforted by His righteous judgment. (Rom. 2.5-8)

CONCLUSION: We rejoice over sheep who come back to the fold.

THE JONAH SYNDROME

The inhabitants of the ancient city of Nineveh were living in wickedness and in need of the message that Jehovah charged His prophet Jonah to preach (Jonah 1:2). But where was Jonah? He was "fast asleep" on board the ship that he desperately wanted to carry him "from the presence of the Lord" (Jonah 1:3-5).

He was asleep on the job! God had commanded him to go preach in Nineveh, but Jonah had other plans. Today, the world is lost in sin and headed to eternal condemnation with the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41). Jesus has commanded us to teach the soul-saving gospel to every person in the world (Mark 16:15). Could it be that some, as Jonah was, are "fast asleep" on the job and giving no real attention to what they can do to more effectively get the gospel to those who are lost? If so, then like Jonah of old, we need to heed the message, "Awake thou that sleepest..." Ephesians 5:14; cf. Jonah 1:6).

Finally, after being swallowed by the great fish, Jonah did go to Nineveh and preached God's message. The people repented, and as a result God did not destroy the city (Jonah 3:5-10). Yet, amazingly, Jonah was "exceedingly" displeased and angry (Jonah 4:1). Can you imagine? A prophet of the living God being upset because people had turned from their wickedness to their Creator and thus escaped His wrath!

What about you and me? Do we really join with the angels of heaven and rejoice when men and women, regardless of their racial or cultural background, turn away from sin and turn to the living God (Luke 15:10)? If our greatest joy in life is something other than hearing of or seeing people come to Christ via the gospel for salvation, then we need to adjust our thinking. We must possess the spirit of the apostle Paul, who declared that his "heart's desire and prayer to God" was for Israel to be saved (Romans 10:1). A love for lost souls must first burn in our hearts before we will ever go forth to teach God's word to them.

A number of years ago the leadership informed a preacher that they would be unable to assist him in his efforts to preach the gospel to the lost of Southeast Asia. Their reason? The church was going to "have to" spend \$5000 to build a covered walkway to keep the members dry (and happy) during bad weather when they made their way to their feasts. Being more disturbed over a little rain on one's head than for lost souls sounds like Jonah, don't you think?

May God help us to set our desires on things above (Colossians 3:2), keeping our priorities straight, and manifesting a genuine compassion for those that are lost. There are 6 billion souls just outside the door. [edited and condensed]