

## Prayer

Surprise us Lord Jesus, with the inspiring blessing of being healed. Activate Your Spirit in each of us to remove our pain, bring light to our world, establish peace deep within, and remove diseases of the body. Then as we receive this grace, give us hearts to praise and thank You with every fibre of our being! Praise God: AMEN

## Other Prayer Suggestions

### Weekly Theme: Strengths and Weaknesses

Praise God today for your own strengths and weaknesses. Offer them to God, and do not be ashamed of the truth about who you are. The Lord alone knows whether your weaknesses need addressing or your strengths need to be disciplined, for example. Ask the Holy Spirit to use every aspect of your character in the greater work of the Kingdom.

## Meditation

Brothers and sisters in Christ,

We are bound together in life.

We share the common humanity

Of all people everywhere.

We share a common sickness

Of the sins of our mortality.

We share a common hope

Of salvation through faith in Christ.

We share a common goal

Of holiness, by God's grace.

We share a common work

Of service to each other, for our Lord.

We share a common destiny

Of all who stand together in Christ.

Brothers and sisters in Christ,

We are bound together in life and death;

And in Christ, we are together in eternity.

## Bible Study - Hebrews 10:19-25

<sup>19</sup> Therefore my friends, we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Christ, <sup>20</sup> a new and living way which He has opened up for us through the curtain (that is, through his body); <sup>21</sup> and we have a great High Priest over the household of God. <sup>22</sup> So let us approach with a true heart and in confident faith, our hearts purified of a sinful conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. <sup>23</sup> Let us take firm hold of the hope we profess, for He who made the promise is worthy of all trust; <sup>24</sup> and let us be concerned to encourage one another in love and good deeds, <sup>25</sup> not refraining from meeting together as some now do, but encouraging each other, all the more because you see the Day approaching.

## Review

This most remarkable of passages is a highlight of the whole letter to the Hebrews. The writer has reached the point where his detailed explanation of the work of Christ on the Cross has finished, and he now tells us the glorious consequences. His explanation of the privileges of faith in Christ is both memorable and challenging, and although the imagery he uses remains rooted in the Old Testament, it reads with visionary and poetic fluency, inspiring us to embrace the widest possible understanding of the gracious work of God through Christ Jesus.

Hebrews has exhaustively explained the unique nature of Christ's entrance into the 'holy place', which is the throne room of God and His real dwelling place in heaven (10:19,20). He has also described Christ's supreme authority to forgive sins and clear the guilty consciences of all who

come to Him (10:22). All this has been achieved through Jesus' body, which by His life, death, resurrection and ascension, links earth and heaven and makes it possible for the needs of all to be met by the compassion and love of the Father. This ushers in a new world order, a new 'age' in which all may share in the benefits of Jesus' gracious work, and he explains these benefits with boldness and joy.

We should not pass quickly by this note of confidence and boldness. A favourite Old Testament text says 'Be bold and courageous ... for the Lord your God is with you.' (Joshua 1:9), and the promise of God's presence first given to the forefathers (e.g. Gen 17:4, 21:22,23 etc) is now made to all who have faith in Christ! To know that the Lord is with us in all the circumstances of our lives is utterly life-changing and transforming. Any presentation of the Gospel which does not include this glorious fact is wide of the mark, as is any teaching about the Christian life which does not build upon it, the greatest gift God has given us. Sometimes we teach about the gifts of the Spirit as if these individual benefits were the most important marker of faith we possess. This is not so. They are profoundly important, but nothing can compare with the gift of Jesus Christ 'with us', His very presence. By this we confess our sins, receive forgiveness, and may have complete assurance that our sins are forgiven. Christ is our only foundation stone, our 'High Priest over the household of God' (10:21).

Because of the supreme importance of Christ's presence, Hebrews tells us that some things must follow, without question. Just as one plus one equals two, Hebrews tells us that those of us who have benefitted from the grace of God in Christ Jesus 'add up' to a community who have one thing in common; the 'hope we profess' (10:23) of our salvation in Christ Jesus. There is no hint in this Scripture that God's people should find their common purpose in anything else, such as their manner of worship, culture, schemes for doing good deeds, or even natural friendship. The priorities of those who are Jesus' disciples are therefore to 'encourage one another in love and good deeds' (10:24), to meet together regularly (forcefully expressed in 10:25), and offer each other spiritual encouragement due to the approaching 'Day' (by which the author meant the final 'Day of the Lord', expected to come with suffering and distress).

It is unfortunately true that many of God's people do not express their faith primarily in this way. They prefer to concentrate on the secondary things I have mentioned above rather than the empowering presence of Christ. We discover that things are not right when in undertaking things within the life of the church, we find that others we presume to be doing the Lord's work demonstrate the opposite of love, and the consequence is that people are not encouraged or valued, and they do not want to meet together regularly. The message is that none of us can afford to ignore the basics of our faith in Christ; for they, and nothing else, bind us together as God's forgiven and saved people. We must never assume this or forget it.

## Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. Have you ever thought what it would be like to enter into the very presence of God? Discuss what you think it will be like.
2. How may we know that our hearts are purified?
3. In what ways can we take firm hold of our faith and demonstrate this in what we do with our lives?

## Discipleship

It is important that we build the Christian church and do so with vigour and care, indeed, Hebrews tells us to mature in faith in many ways, as we shall discover in coming studies. How can we make sure that we do not presume on the foundations, or forget to pay attention to the core issues of faith? This will certainly happen if we refrain from reading God's Word and thinking about it, and avoid spending time in prayer before the Lord, in intercession for others and in petition for ourselves. It is up to us to do what we know to be right, and not avoid it when it becomes inconvenient!

## Final Prayer

You ask us to be still, Lord Jesus Christ. Still so that we might rest, still so that we might listen, still to be at peace with ourselves, and still to hear Your voice speaking. Thank You Lord Jesus Christ, for the gift of this stillness, and may it enrich all our work and activity, for You: AMEN