

Series: Ephesians
Title: Prayer by the Faith of Christ
Text: Ephesians 3: 12
Date: December 2, 2014
Place: SGBC, New Jersey

Ephesians 3: 12: In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.

This is our first meeting of 2014. When the clock struck 12 Tuesday, one of the first things that crossed my mind is how much we have to thank God for. Then I thought of who much we have to ask God for.

True prayer is includes thankfulness for what God has already done for us and total dependence upon God to do for us in the present and in the future.

Prayer is essential as life to the believer. The first and chief evidence the Lord Jesus gave to Ananias that he had made the apostle Paul a new creature was, “Behold, he prayeth.” It is the first act of a newborn baby to cry. And the first act of a sinner converted is to cry out to our heavenly Father. We never stop doing so the rest of our days in faith. If we are able, I expect the last thing we will do in this life is to thank God and to express our total dependence upon God to bring us home.

Our subject: Prayer by the Faith of Christ

Believers face all kinds of trouble and temptation in this life. We live in a body of death, we live in a sin-cursed world and Satan as roaring lion goes about seeking whom he may devour.

The apostle Paul is encouraging us to maintain our profession of faith unwaveringly—to not to faint in persecution or in any other trouble. He does not do so by telling us to muster up our strength. Instead he gives this important reminder: of how we may approach God’s throne of grace.

Ephesians 3: 12: In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.

Proposition: Believer, as we face trials, temptations, and difficulties none but Christ himself can make us hold fast our profession in a good conscience until the day he brings us home to glory. Therefore, always remember that we may approach the true and living God in prayer for grace and help in every time of need only by the faithfulness of Christ.

Ephesians 3: 12: In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.

Divisions: 1) First, we are told in whom we come to God in prayer—**v12: In whom**—in the Lord Jesus Christ; 2) Secondly, we are told what we have to approach God when we come in Christ—**v12: we have boldness and access with confidence**; 3) Thirdly, we are told how we approach God in prayer—**v12: by the faith of him**—by the faith of Christ.

I. FIRST, IN WHOM DO WE COME TO GOD IN PRAYER?—v12: In whom—IN CHRIST

In type, under the old covenant there was no way to the mercy seat—to God’s presence—except through the veil—there was no other way.

The New and Living Way

Likewise, under the new covenant of grace, there is no other way for any to come into fellowship with God and be accepted of God, except through the rent veil, but it is a new and living Way.

Our sin, our transgressions against God and his law, the enmity of our hearts against God barred our entrance into God's presence But that veil has been split in two and entrance consecrated for all God's people by three things happening:

One, by Christ laying down his life on the cross--**Hebrews 10: 19: Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20: By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;**

2 Corinthians 5:21: For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Christ, in his flesh, became what barred the entrance of his people. In his flesh, he paid the price we owed to justice. Now, justice says of those who come through faith in him that we are righteous, accepted of God.

Two, we have this entrance, by Christ rising from the dead to be the High Priest over the house of God—**Hebrews 10: 21: And having an high priest over the house of God;** Christ our High Priest is the one who presents all who come to God in him to the Father.

Three, we have this entrance, by our conscience being sprinkled with his blood and our bodies washed in pure water in the new birth by the Holy Spirit. **Hebrews 10: 22: Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.** Not only did we have to be made righteous before the law, but also, we have to be made holy inwardly to have this access. We cannot come to God while dead in sins. It is only by being born again by Christ being formed in our hearts. Only by his blood making us new creatures

Application: God has set forth Christ to be the propitiation for sin—the Way—the access to God. Come this way—through faith in Christ—and you may come freely and be accepted of God. Refuse to come this way, and there remains between you and God a veil which forbids you entrance. Without Christ we are without God; without Christ we are without hope. Christ said, “If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.” It is only on terms of grace—through a living, God-given faith in Christ—that we can come to God and expect to obtain the blessings that we need. The way is open, but not without the blood of Jesus. It would be to permit us to enter while unrighteous and unholy to allow us to draw near to God without coming in Christ with his blood by the new birth. “Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin”; Likewise, without that blood making us righteous and holy there is no access to God.

Illustration: Usually entrance to a place is valued by the price one has to pay to enter. The higher the price you paid for your ticket the more valuable the venue. Our entrance into God's presence cost the Son of God his precious blood, his life. Oh, how precious is our entrance into God's presence!

II. SECONDLY, HE TELLS US WHAT WE HAVE AS WE COME IN CHRIST—v12: In whom we have boldness and access with confidence

Boldness

First notice, we have v12: “boldness” to enter in. What does that mean? Presumptuously and recklessly? No. Self-righteously! No. Demandingly! No. Holy boldness does not mean that we come without the deepest reverence for holy God. Never forget we are coming to our Holy Father; never forget we are coming to Holy, King Jesus; never forget we are coming in the Holy Spirit. Boldness does not mean that we come

forgetting what I am and what Christ is to me. Our boldness to enter is not due to our holy and righteous living but Christ's; not from us walking consistently but by Christ; not because we think we have subdued all our evil passions and overcome all sins it is by the blood of Christ. He would turn us away if we came like that. That is how Pharisee's come. The grounds for our boldness is, not what we are in ourselves, but what the "great High Priest over the house of God" is to us.

Boldness is to come freely, with all out-spokenness, honestly bearing your heart to God. It is opposite of slavish fear; opposite of being afraid that because he is so holy he will turn me away. It is coming with liberty to speak to God our Father, even though you have sinned, even though you have not walked honorably as you desire to walk. It is to come freely knowing you have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous and that he is the propitiation for your sins. It is to do so freely but humbly

Sometimes you hear folks pray and they are so demanding toward God. To speak to God in that way is pride and self-righteousness. When Abraham was praying for Lot and for any righteous men in Sodom and Gomorrah he spoke plainly, he came out with what he was asking for, but here was his spirit, "Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes."

Boldness in prayer is consistent with humiliation; boldness comes freely, honestly but humbly and reverently. It is to come with submission in your hearts as the children of God to our loving Father in heaven. As our Lord himself prayed, "Nevertheless, not as I will but as thou wilt."

To come to God in prayer with boldness is to come believing that Christ has made us one with him, robed us in his righteousness and made us partakers of the divine nature. So he will receive us. He has made us kings and priests unto God therefore all the privileges of those offices came to us with the office itself. So we are welcome within the holy place. We are called to enter with no fear of being intruders.

Illustration: Walking into a friend's house and walking into your own house. When we have been given faith in Christ from then on we are at home with God our Father. Shall a child be afraid of his loving Father's presence? Shall a son draw near with slavish fear? Or shall a child be afraid to ask help from his own Father who loves him? God's children are always welcome by the blood of our Lord Jesus. "Let us *therefore* come boldly unto his throne of grace.

Access

He says also that we have v12: Access. We may enter at all times, because the veil is always open in Christ Jesus. This was not the case under the old covenant. It was not the case when we were in our unregenerate state, under the curse of Adam's transgression.

Leviticus 16: 2: The Lord said until Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy Place within the veil before the mercy-seat, which is upon the ark; that he die not: for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat.

But now, to you made one in Christ, the Lord promises that we have access. You and I who believe have access in Christ at all times. When your faith is weak you have access; when you feel more like a child of hell than a child of heaven you have access; when your sin brings you to the point of despair you still have access; when you are grieving you have access. At all times you have access in Christ.

Always remember the character of the one who gives us this access. He delights to show mercy. (Mic 7: 18) He loves his own with an everlasting love which changes not therefore we are not consumed. (Jer 31: 3; Lam 3: 22; Mal 3: 6) He "upbraideth not" (Ja 1: 5) There will never be another separation between God and his

elect, redeemed by the Son and regenerated by the Holy Spirit for “Who shall separate us from the love of God?” (Rom 8: 35-39) The devil himself can never divide us from God now.

There is access between a believer and his God; and there must be such free access forever, since Christ has removed that which separated us, the veil is rent, the law satisfied, our sin is put away. It is God Himself who laid the sin of his elect on Christ, and who in Christ has put that sin away. God did it, so none can change it! There is not any believer, chosen of God before the foundation of the world, who can sin more exceedingly than the power of Christ’s blood has purged us forever. None can exceed God’s willingness to forgive us and help us for the sake of his darling Son. We have access at all times. The throne of grace is always open to God’s children who come through faith in Christ, by his merits not our own.

Confidence

Then he says we can come with v12: “confidence.” Confidence is the opposite of doubts and fears, and apprehensions. It is to come with assurance in our consciences.

“We have been brought near by the blood of Christ.” (Eph 2: 13) When Christ brings us near, he makes us to know that “truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.” (1 Jn 1: 3) So we can come to his throne of grace with confidence. His blood should give us all the confidence we need. God said, ‘when I see the blood’ not when he sees us. (Ex 12: 13) So let us look to the blood for assurance rather than to ourselves.

Also, to come with confidence means we come perseveringly, confident that he will hear us and help us. If, at first, God appears not to answer, we can be sure we have asked amiss. (Ja 4: 3) But when he does not give us what we ask, he is answering our prayer. But let us come again, and again and again—with confidence—that he does hear us and that he shall give us what is best for our eternal good and his glory. God sometimes makes us wait to make us value it all the more when we do receive it.

Included in coming with confidence is to come asking unreservedly with all sorts of petitions.

Illustration: Sadly, we are prone to scold our children for asking us something that we deem insignificant. If it was significant enough for them to ask us then it is significant, at least in their estimation. Can you think of anything that little childish sinners like us, could ask the omnipotent, all-knowing God that would be worth him hearing us if he judged the importance of our petitions the way we do our children?

To come confidently is to come assured that whatever we ask—whatever is burdening our hearts—will be significant to our heavenly Father whether it be great or small; whether it be an infirmity that is crushing us to the ground or some simple obstacle that stands in our way. The scripture says, “Cast ALL your care upon him, for he careth for you.” (1 Pet 5: 7) The only thing that will insult our heavenly Father is not to ask at all. We can have far more confidence in approaching God our Father than we can in approaching even the most loving earthly father.

So these three words—boldness, access, and confidence—tell us we are invited to enter into God’s presence in Christ through prayer. God would never have invited us to pray if he had not intended to hear and answer us. If he invites us, he will not send us away empty.

III. THIRDLY, HOW DO WE HAVE ALL OF THIS—V12: BY THE FAITH OF HIM.

This speaks of Christ’s faithfulness. When you read in the Kings James translation there is a difference between “the faith of Christ” and “faith in Christ.” The “faith of Christ” refers to Christ’s faithfulness; “faith in Christ” refers to our faith in Christ. You will find that that distinction is removed in most modern

translations. They make all to hinge on your faith in Christ because that is not offensive to a man. When you tell someone to read their bible you have to specify which translation because many critical words which give all the glory to God are removed or changed in modern translations.

Faith in Christ

Indeed we must be given faith and believe on Christ to enter. Two things the high priest had to do before he might enter the holies of holies was: one, he had to be sprinkled with blood, and this every true believer has; for “our hearts are sprinkled from an evil conscience.” The other was to have their “bodies washed with pure water.” This every believer has received in the spiritual cleansing of regeneration and by the water of the word. (Titus 3: 5) But how often we need our conscience purged once again and we need our bodies washed once again to turn us from our vanity and draw us to his throne of grace.

Faith of Christ

Thankfully, v12 speaks of “the faith of Christ” which we, in our day, would call “Christ’s faithfulness.” It includes the faithfulness of Christ in redeeming us by his blood, it includes the faithfulness of Christ in sending the Holy Spirit to regenerate us by the Holy Spirit, but particularly, it includes the faithfulness of Christ to make us truly pray. It is by his faithfulness that he gives us boldness, access and confidence to enter into the holiest through faith in Christ.

Be sure to get this: In the heart of God, believers always have access to approach God through Jesus Christ. But we, personally in our hearts, do not always have boldness and confidence in our access to God.

Most times our approaching is merely formal in the head but not in the heart. You may decide to get on your knees. Still, so often your heart feels dead as a hammer. Most of the time, we use vain repetitions and senseless words but say nothing from the heart.

To truly enter into Gods presence is to come when Grace reigns in the heart by his faithfulness, when Grace draws us in power by his faithfulness, when grace flows out of the fullness of Jesus Christ like light and heat from the sun by his faithfulness.

Because we dwell in a body of death, it takes the faithfulness of Christ ever moving upon us to make us feel the depths of our sins then to behold the forgiveness of those very sins; to feel our lukewarmness then feel the power of his heat in our souls. Oh, how different it is to pray by his faithfulness working in our hearts than it is to crank out a few senseless, vain words while our hearts are really set on this earth. To feel our inward man surrounded with infirmities and a thousand temptations then to see Christ present to deliver us makes all the difference in the world.

It is only when the Spirit of Christ “takes the things of Christ and shews them to us” effectually (John 16:14.)—by Christ’s faithfulness—that we have true boldness and confidence and access in him. The Holy Spirit says through the apostle Paul, “Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is Liberty.” (2 Corinthians 3:17.)

Romans 8: 26: For the Spirit helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. 27: And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

This is so important to remember, it is Christ through the Holy Comforter who moved Paul to write our text, as well Romans 8: 26-27, 2 Corinthians 3: 17, Hebrews 4: 16 and other scriptures which remind us we have access to his throne of grace. In those scriptures, Christ Jesus, together with the Holy Spirit, reminds us that

he faithfully promises to move upon us and accompany us to his own throne of grace. How does he do that? Christ does it by his faithfulness.

When we are cast down or turned aside by our flesh, by the faith of Christ, he speaks by his divine Voice into our hearts, wraps his divine arm around us and turns us, walking beside us, saying, "Let **US** therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

When you and I would never otherwise approach him in spirit and in truth, by the faith of Christ, our merciful Savior comes to us in the power of the Holy Spirit, drawing us to walk together with him to his very footstool by speaking effectually into our hearts, "Let **US** come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms." (Ps 95: 2)

He promises "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." He promises, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." And Christ is that Strength. (Heb 13: 5; Deut 33: 25; Ex 13: 3; 15: 2) By the faith of Christ he himself by the Holy Spirit guides us unto his holy habitation. (Ex 15: 13)

Therefore, Christ by his faithfulness Christ not only presents our petitions to the Father, but also by the faith of Christ, he draws us and accompanies us to his own throne to ask of him.

Then how gracious he is to say to us, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." (Jn 16: 23) And by the faith of Christ, once he has drawn us to ask, it is Christ himself who gives that which we ask according to God's will. (Jn 14: 3) Do you see that we have no room to boast even of our prayers to God?

Oh, brethren be thankful for "**the faith of him.**" Jesus is the Author and the Finisher of faith. And by the faith of him, he sustains our pitiful faith the whole way. "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil.1:6). By the faith of Christ, it is Christ the Way who draws, leads, guides, bears us and brings us near.

Then by his faithfulness, Christ represents us before God, so that we come to God through Him who is our covenant Head, our Representative and our Forerunner before the throne of the Most High. Our access, our boldness, and our confidence is by the faith of the Faithful One, Jesus Christ our Righteousness and Sanctification.

Oh, speak little of your faithfulness, but speak much of the "faith of him." Let us never try to pray without Christ; never try to sing without Christ; or never try to preach without Christ. Let us perform no holy function, nor attempt to have fellowship with God in any way, except through Christ. Prayer is by the faith of Christ. To God be the glory even in our prayer!

Amen!