

Bookends: The Righteousness of Christ and Fellowship
Hebrews 10:19-25
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Intro

C.S. Lewis in his book, *That Hideous Strength*, writes about the “inner ring.” This is that place of significance, that exclusive club of some sort that we all want to be members of. It ordinarily takes exceptional ability, beauty, connections, or some material qualification to get into “inner rings” of this world. But the ultimate “inner ring” is the Trinity itself. The gospel is the means by which we have access to this ring, because in Christ we have fellowship with God. The gospel then has massive implications for all our relationships. Confidence in God (in the gospel) produces true fellowship in the church.

Key Points

1. The basis of our confidence before God

- a. The blood of Christ – his priestly work on our behalf.
- b. Jesus is our High Priest who not only makes possible our access into fellowship with God, but the one who leads us there to the Father.
- c. Do you want relational harmony? It is found through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

2. The first effect of confidence before God: a true heart

- a. It is not enough to know the objective facts of the gospel; the gospel ought to affect our feelings, our heart.
- b. Our hearts have been sprinkled clean by the blood of Christ. We are free from an evil conscience. We recognize there is now no condemnation.
- c. A clean conscience will impact our fears, our thoughts and our actions; it is transformational.

3. The second effect of confidence before God: perseverance in faith

- a. The basis of our endurance is not us, but Jesus. He who promised is faithful.

4. The third effect of confidence before God: fellowship

- a. Scripture calls us to “stir one another up to love and good works.”
- b. Enjoying the benefits of the gospel is a community project. We need a lot of help and cannot isolate ourselves if we expect to grow.
- c. Furthermore, we are to “consider one another.” This means we ought to think about our brothers and sisters in Christ. Are they living in the good of the gospel? Are they tempted to stumble? Do they need encouragement? What can I/should I say to that person?
- d. Some translations have “spur one another.” Think about horses and the use of spurs. A spur motivates a horse to get moving. It causes a little bit of pain but doesn’t do any real harm. It prods, provokes, even irritates. Such is the nature of relationship and fellowship in Christ.
- e. Why are we so resistant to giving and receiving correction? It all goes back to the inner ring and the fear of being rejected and removed from the favor of the inner ring.
- f. But the gospel is unlike any other inner ring in that we did not enter on account of any personal accomplishment—rather, on account of our admitted failure, our inability to meet God’s standard. Therefore, we can freely admit our fault and correct others.
- g. But stirring is only half of what is needed. We not only need correction, but we need encouragement. We need to faithfully point out evidences of grace in peoples’ lives.
- h. Finally, we need to meet together. This is simple but necessary in order for fellowship to take place. Faithfulness in meeting together applies whether we are experiencing trial or prosperity.

5. Fellowship starters

- a. Are there “inner rings” that you are still striving to get into, and in particular, that are keeping you from enjoying and flourishing in your status as a member of the ultimate “inner ring” of fellowship with God?
- b. How does confidence in the gospel change how you approach and think about your relationships?

- c. John Loftness spoke about those who know the facts of the gospel, but not necessarily the effect of the gospel on their hearts and lives. Talk with each other about how God has provoked greater gospel effect in your lives and what this has looked like for you.
- d. John encouraged us from God's Word to think about and consider one another for the purpose of stirring one another up for faith and good works. How are you doing in this? How is your care group doing? How can you grow in this area? What are the hindrances?
- e. How are you and the members of your group doing in being faithful to not forsake meeting together as saints? Does your attendance history demonstrate a greater willingness to accept excuses for missing or faithfulness in attending?
- f. Are your life and your care group defined by both the use of correction as well as the giving of encouragement? Or, is there an unhealthy imbalance? Ask the members of your group to give you their observations about this balance/imbalance in your life.