

American Decency Association

PO Box 202, Fremont, MI 49412 231-924-4050 www.americandecency.org
Encouraging Christians to guard their hearts September 2019

Pride and Prayer



2 Chronicles 26:16–23 - Israel's history shows that, for the most part, the people did not follow God's commands for worship faithfully. The people were not content to pray exclusively to their covenant Lord Yahweh but instead erected altars of incense where they were not supposed to build them and offered prayers there to foreign gods. ...

Yet praying to other gods was not the only problem that Israel had when it came to prayer. Second Chronicles 26 describes the reign of King Uzziah, the ruler of Judah just before Isaiah received his call to prosecute God's covenant (Isa. 6). The reign of Uzziah started out well, as he initially sought after God and walked according to His ways (2 Chron.

26:4–5). He fortified Jerusalem's defenses, making them strong against the Philistines and other enemies (vv. 6–15).

Unfortunately, Uzziah forgot the One who made him strong towards the end of his life. Instead of humble reliance on the Lord, Uzziah let his strength get to his head and took it upon himself to "burn incense on the altar of incense" (v. 16), which was the prerogative of the priests alone (Ex. 30:1–10). The priests warned the king against his foolhardy course of action, but Uzziah persisted and broke out with leprosy from the hand of God, finally dying in disgrace

As new covenant believers, it is no longer possible for us to disobey the Lord at the altar of incense simply because there is no altar of incense today. ... [T]here is still a warning in this text about how we should approach our Creator in prayer. We can never stand before Him in pride and demand that He answer us because of our own goodness or strength. Neither can we proudly

think we are so strong that we have no need to pray to Him. On the contrary, we must always come before Him with humility, not boasting of our own strength but relying on Him alone. Blaise Pascal, the influential seventeenth-century mathematician and Christian apologist, recognized this truth when he said "Jesus Christ is a God whom we approach without pride and before whom we humble ourselves without despair."

Coram Deo

We are always to be humble servants of the Lord, coming before Him in prayer boldly (Heb. 10:19–22) not on account of what we have done but knowing that such access has been granted to us in Christ alone. He looks with favor only upon those who are contrite and humble (Isa. 66:2), and if we are not humble before Him, we cannot rightly expect Him to hear or answer our prayers. Let us all cultivate humility in His presence.

[Used with permission: Ligonier Ministries, Tabletalk, April 2010]

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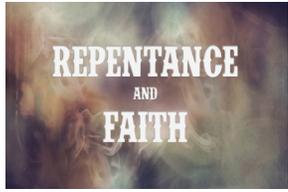
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One Way into the Most Holy Place



“We have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh” (Heb. 10:19–20).

Ezekiel had a clear vision that the Lord would make His presence manifest again in the Holy of Holies in Jerusalem (Ezek. 41:1–4), but what he did not see as clearly was how this was going to take place. It would be left to the New Testament to explain just how it is that the Israel of God would be able to meet with its covenant Lord once more in the Most Holy Place.

Today’s passage is one of the clearest explanations of this reality in all the New Testament. Instead of coming back to an earthly Holy of Holies where only a select few could ever enter, the Almighty instead sent His only Son to open the way for all of

His people to meet with Him in the heavenly Holy of Holies. Having already established that we have a hope in the heavenly Most Holy Place behind the curtain (Heb. 6:19–20), the author of Hebrews makes clear in 10:19–25 that our hope is Christ Jesus Himself, whose death tore the veil that formerly blocked access to this place. The allusion to the tearing of the veil in the temple at the death of Jesus is unmistakable (Luke 23:44–49). It was an earthly event that depicts a heavenly reality. With sin finally atoned for, the barrier between the holy God and those who trust in His promises no longer stands. By faith we can now enter into that place in heaven of which the earthly Holy of Holies was but a copy. Formerly, entering that earthly place would have brought us death, but now a new and living way into the heavenly place enables us to enter and seek life.

In his exposition of Hebrews, A.W. Pink notes that this way, “because of its perpetual efficacy . . . is not a lifeless thing, but has a spiritual and vital power in our access to God.” Jesus “always lives to make intercession” for us, so we

need not fear that any sin can separate us from the Father if we live a life of repentance and faith (Heb. 7:25; see Rom. 8:28–39). On the contrary, the Lord delights for us to come near Him so that He might see how we trust Him, hear our needs, and receive our worship (Zeph. 3:17).

We will sin and forget that Jesus fulfills God’s purpose in the temple by opening up the way into the Most Holy Place. And so we must surround ourselves with believers who encourage us to keep on entering the Holy of Holies. Let us therefore not neglect our opportunities for corporate fellowship and worship (Heb. 10:24–25).

Coram Deo Living before the face of God

In this life it is easy to fill our schedules with activities that can get in the way of regular participation in corporate worship. While these activities in themselves may be perfectly fine and fruitful, we should make sure never to forsake the gathering of our brothers and sisters in Christ. . .

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