

Hebrews 10:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us,
through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;

Analysis

By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; This verse describes the unprecedented access believers have to God through Christ. The phrase "new and living way" (hodon prosphaton kai zōsan, ὁδὸν πρόσφατον καὶ ζῶσαν) contrasts sharply with the old covenant. Prosphaton means "freshly slain" or "newly made"—this way was opened by Christ's recent death and remains ever-fresh, never becoming stale or obsolete. Zōsan means "living"—this is not a dead ritual but a living relationship with a living Savior.

Christ "consecrated" (enekainisen, ἐνεκαίνισεν) this way—He inaugurated, opened, and dedicated it through His sacrifice. This verb was used for dedicating temples or altars, making them holy and suitable for approach to God. Christ's death sanctified the way to God, making it holy ground where sinners can safely approach the Holy One.

The way passes "through the veil, that is to say, his flesh" (dia tou katapetasmatos, tout' estin tēs sarkos autou, διὰ τοῦ καταπετάσματος, τοῦτ' ἔστιν τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ). The temple veil separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the temple, symbolizing the barrier between God and humanity due to sin. When Christ died, this veil was torn from top to bottom (Matthew 27:51), symbolizing that His flesh—torn on the cross—opened access to God's presence. His body had to be broken, His blood shed, for this way to be opened.

The identification of the veil with Christ's flesh is profound. The veil was beautiful, intricate, and served an important function—but it was also a barrier. Christ's humanity likewise was glorious yet necessary to be rent for our salvation. What appeared to be destruction (crucifixion) was actually construction—building a highway to God through the torn veil of His flesh.

Historical Context

In the tabernacle and temple, only the High Priest could pass through the veil into the Holy of Holies, and only once per year on the Day of Atonement. Common Israelites never saw beyond that veil; even priests of the daily ministrations were excluded. The veil represented the unapproachability of God due to human sin. To pass through uninvited meant instant death (Leviticus 16:2).

When Jesus died and the veil was torn, it signaled the end of restricted access to God. The Gospel writers present this as a divine act—torn from top to bottom, from heaven downward, by God Himself. This validated Jesus' claim that He is the way to the Father (John 14:6) and that anyone coming to God must come through Him alone.

The early church understood this imagery powerfully. No longer did they need priestly mediation, yearly cycles of sacrifice, or restricted access to God's presence. Through Christ, every believer becomes a priest with direct access to God's throne (1 Peter 2:9, Revelation 1:6). The Reformation recovered this truth of the priesthood of all believers after medieval Catholicism had reinstituted a mediatorial priesthood. Luther proclaimed that every Christian has the same access to God that the High Priest had—but ours is better, immediate, and permanent.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does understanding the cost of your access to God (Christ's torn flesh) affect your approach to prayer and worship?
2. In what ways might you take for granted the privilege of direct access to God that was purchased at such infinite cost?
3. How should the truth that you have the same access to God as any pastor, priest, or spiritual leader shape your confidence in approaching Him?

Interlinear Text

ἣν	ἐνεκαίνισεν	ἡμῖν	ὁδὸν	πρόσφατον	καὶ	ζῶσαν
which	he hath consecrated	for us	way	By a new	and	living
G3739	G1457	G2254	G3598	G4372	G2532	G2198
διὰ	τοῦ	καταπετάσματος	τοῦτ'	ἔστιν	τῆς	σαρκὸς
through		the veil				flesh
G1223	G3588	G2665	G5124	G2076	G3588	G4561
αὐτοῦ						
G846						

Additional Cross-References

John 14:6 (Parallel theme): Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

John 10:9 (Parallel theme): I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

Hebrews 9:3 (Parallel theme): And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all;

Hebrews 9:8 (Parallel theme): The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing:

Hebrews 6:19 (Parallel theme): Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;

Mark 15:38 (Parallel theme): And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.

Matthew 27:51 (Parallel theme): And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;

John 10:7 (Parallel theme): Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.

Luke 23:45 (Parallel theme): And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.

1 John 4:2 (Parallel theme): Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: