

Hebrews 10

What is the limitation of the Law (v. 1)? It was only a shadow of the real things that were coming. As a shadow, the law communicated the outline and figure of the fulfillment in Jesus, but was not the very image of the good things to come. Just as a photograph reveals features and facts accurately which a shadow cannot do.

What could Old Testament sacrifices not do (v. 1)? Make perfect those who draw near to worship. "Make perfect" does not mean to make sinless, but to make acceptable to (or to be justified before) God. The sacrifices also could not cover future sins, hence the need for annual repetition.

What reason is given to prove those sacrifices could not perfect people (v. 2)? They would have stopped being offered every year because the worshipers would have been cleansed permanently and they would no longer have felt guilty. Someone who has to take medicine every hour to stay alive can hardly be said to be cured.¹

What is the message (v. 3)? Instead of pacifying the conscience, the Levitical system stabbed it awake each year. Behind the beautiful ritual of the Day of Atonement lurked the annual reminder that sins were only being covered, not removed.² The Israelites never enjoyed the extent of freedom from sin's guilt that we do.

What is the message (v. 4)? It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. The animal sacrifices could only cover their sins temporarily. They could not remove them or take them away. The animals were a shadow of the sacrifice of the Lamb of God. What God truly wanted was obedience driven by the right heart behind the sacrifice (Psalm 51:16-17).

If it was impossible for the blood of blood of bulls and goats to take away sin, why did God institute the sacrificial system? The Old Testament sacrifices introduced the principle of substitution to the Israelites (an undeserving animal dying in their place) in preparation for understanding the substitutionary death of Jesus.

What did this passage say about animal sacrifices (vv. 5- 9)? They are not desired by God nor was He pleased with them. If animal sacrifices were inadequate, and not pleasing to God, though required by the Law, that is proof that the Old Testament law needed to change.

Who came to solve this problem (vv. 7, 9)? Jesus **What was the hallmark of Jesus attitude?** Submission. His overriding desire was to do the will of the Father. That will included the obedient offering of His life

What blessing can we expect to receive under the second Covenant (v. 10)? We have been made holy. We are set apart by God, to God and for God at conversion. We are a unique people. We are His. **How often did Jesus give this offering?** Once for all time (v. 12). **For whom was it given?** All. Everyone in all of creation.

How does the author contrast the Levitical priesthood with the priesthood of Jesus (vv. 11-12)? The Levitical priests never sat down because they never finished their work. But Jesus Christ "sat down" beside His Father in heaven, because He finished His work – a permanent one-time sacrifice of Himself for all. A seated priest is the guarantee of both a finished work and an accepted sacrifice.

What is Jesus doing now (v. 13)? Jesus Christ now awaits the final destruction of His enemies; the day when every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Philippians 2:10-11). **When will this happen?** At the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11-15) for unbelievers and at the Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10) for believers. The latter is a judgment of rewards. It is a place where rewards will be given or lost depending on how one has used their life for the Lord, not a site of punishment for sins committed.

What is the Holy Spirit testifying about (vv. 15-18)? The Law is no longer an external entity carved on stone tables but is now an internal law residing in our hearts and minds. Under the New Covenant sins would be effectively dealt with once and for all at the Cross when the perfect sacrifice was offered. Forgiveness at the Cross meant that no more sacrifices for sin were necessary. Our sins are gone....remembered no more.....as prophesied in the Old Testament (Jeremiah 31:34).

Why do we have "confidence to enter" the Most Holy Place (v. 19)? Unlike the high priest on the Day of Atonement entering the Most Holy Place with fear and trembling, we can enter the presence of God with confidence because we enter by the blood of Jesus not by the blood of animals as the High Priest did.

What are we supposed to do (v. 22)? Draw near to God. **What are some ways we can draw near to God?**

The encouragement to draw near wouldn't be given unless it was needed. These discouraged Jewish Christians had a problem in drawing near. They had drifted to the point where they had lost their intimate relationship with Jesus. The readers are reminded that they will never regain that intimacy through the institutions and sacrifices of the Old Covenant. The old system of worship they came from with the temple veil separating God from man was designed to keep God at arm's length.....the antithesis of intimacy.

What are we commanded to do (vv. 24-25)? Meet together as believers. Pursue the community of God's people, encouraging and exhorting one another. Regular attendance at church meetings facilitates love for one another, because there we receive reminders and exhortations to persevere. We need each other.

What is the plight of those who “deliberately keep on sinning after having received the knowledge of the truth” (vv. 26-27)? Judgment. There is no other sacrifice for sins available. You have rejected the one sacrifice given for all. For these discouraged Jewish Christians who are contemplating a retreat from Christianity and a return to Judaism with its sacrificial system, this is turning your back on Jesus. It is a knowing, deliberate rejection of Jesus' great sacrificial work for us on the cross. Judas is a prime example of one who deliberately kept on sinning after having received the knowledge of the truth. He decisively rejected the once for all sacrifice of Christ. Therefore God has no other way of salvation to offer him. This is the fourth of five warnings in the book of Hebrews.....the danger of willful sinning.

What is the message (vv. 28-29)? Since an Israelite who spurned the Old Covenant suffered a severe penalty, we will suffer an even greater penalty (more severe punishment) if we spurn the superior New Covenant. For the Hebrews who want to go back to the old system, this is a sharp warning.

When a person sins willfully, what has he done (v. 29)?

- Trampled the Son of God underfoot: We disgrace Him by rejecting His greatest work. We devalue Him by devaluing what He did.
- Treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified us. Considering Jesus' blood to be of no greater importance than the countless animals sacrificed under the Old Covenant.
- Insulted the Spirit of grace: Offending the Holy Spirit by despising Him and the salvation He offered.

What is stated as a reason the early Jewish Christians should continue steadfastly in the allegiance to Christ (vv. 32-34)? Remember!! Your former experiences should motivate you. You've been through persecution which strengthened you in your faith. When your goods were confiscated, you accepted it joyfully because you knew that your reward was ahead. You have experienced the grace of God at its fullest. Look at your past endurance and be encouraged; keep standing strong in the future.

What motivation does the author present (v. 35)? Reward is waiting. It is near. Having endured such persecution in the past, don't throw away your trust now. Don't miss the harvest of your tears.³

What do we need to do to receive God's reward (v. 36)? Persevere. The toughest and most discouraging trials are when we are called to obey God's will when the fulfillment of His promise seems so far away. Which is a measure of our obedience and spiritual maturity. This verse is a good summary of the message to the Christian Hebrews – don't fall away.....persevere.

What reassurance should comfort and strengthen them (v. 37)? Christ will return, which is the reward of v. 35

What is the motivation/incentive to steadfast perseverance (v. 38)? Fear of God's displeasure. "*Shrinking back*" refers to apostasy. What pleases God is the life that is lived by faith.

What is the message (v. 39)? He is disassociating himself and his readers from those who have fallen away. He is encouraging them by including them in the group of "*those who believe and are saved.*"

¹ Believer's Bible Commentary, William MacDonald, 1995 Edition, (published by Thomas Nelson Publishers), p. 2188

² Ibid. p. 2188

³ Ibid. p. 2194