

Hebrews 10**Lesson 10
Sacrifices And Exhortations****Hebrews 10****I. The Sacrifices Contrasted** (vv. 1-18)

- A. *The Levitical system was not sufficient* (vv. 1-4)
 1. Not the image, but the shadow (v. 1)
 2. Remembrance made of sin every year (v. 3)
 3. Could not forgive sin (vv. 1, 2, 4)
- B. *Christ's offering is all sufficient* (vv. 5-18)
 1. Fulfills the will of God (vv. 5-10a)
 2. Absolute forgiveness obtained (vv. 10b-18)

II. Exhortation to Steadfastness (vv. 19-39)

- A. *Exhortation to greater diligence* (vv. 19-25)
 1. Based on cleansing through Christ (vv. 19-22)
 2. What greater diligence involves (vv. 23-25)
- B. *Exhortation based upon the danger of apostasy* (vv. 26-31)
- C. *Exhortation based upon past endurance* (vv. 32-34)
- D. *Exhortation based upon receiving the promise* (vv. 35-39)

Key Verse that Summarizes the Chapter**Hebrews 10:11**

And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.

The chapter serves as a transition from the first major section (Christ is the Way -1:1 -10:18) to the second (Don't Give Up – 10:19 – 13:28).¹ In the first eighteen verses the writer contrast the sacrifices. Though the major point is the same that has been made in the previous chapters, he develops some points that have not been introduced thus far. Having concluded his arguments showing that Christ is the way, the author begins the application portion of the book with the fourth of five warning sections of the book (vv. 19-39).

¹ See the outline of the book in the Introduction.

The Sacrifices Contrasted (vv. 1-18)

The Levitical system was not sufficient (vv. 1-4). The point of these first four verses is to show what the sacrifices under the old law could and could not accomplish.

Not the image, but the shadow (v. 1). The old covenant with its sacrifices was merely a shadow (cf. 8:5) of the greater to come. The idea is that the old foreshadowed the new. "The word *shadow* here refers to a rough outline of anything, a mere sketch, such as a carpenter draws with a piece of chalk, or such as an artist delineates when he is about to make a picture. He sketches an outline of the object which he desires to draw, which has *some* resemblance to it, but is not the 'very image;' for it is not yet complete. The words rendered 'the very image' refer to a painting or statue which is finished, where every part is an exact copy of the original. The 'good things to come' here refer to the future blessings which would be conferred on man by the gospel. The idea is, that under the ancient sacrifices there was an imperfect representation; a dim outline of the blessings which the gospel would impart to men."²

Robertson observes that "shadow" can mean the shade that is cast by light, "The contrast here between σκία [*skia*] (shadow, shade caused by interruption of light as by trees, Mark 4:32) and εἰκὼν [*eikōn*] (image or picture) is striking."³ The point is that the old with its sacrifices was not the true image, but merely a resemblance of the true.

Remembrance made of sin every year (v. 3). When the High Priest offered the sacrifice on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16), it served to remind the worshippers that their sin was not completely removed. There was still a "consciousness of sin" (cf. v. 3). The sin was still there, for the blood of animals could not take it away (v. 4).⁴ Note also the contrast to the sacrifice of Christ wherein God will remember the sins no more (v. 17).

Could not forgive sin (vv. 1, 2, 4). The fact that the sacrifices were repeatedly offered says that those sacrifices could not take away the sin (v. 1). If the animal sacrifices had completely removed the sin, there would be no need to continually offer them every year (v. 2). The blood of bulls and goats could not take away the sin (v. 4).⁵

Christ's offering is all sufficient (vv. 5-18). Here the contrast is drawn to the insufficient sacrifices in the previous verses.

Fulfills the will of God (vv. 5-10a). The writer quotes Psalm 40:6-8. Though taking his reference from the Septuagint, "The quotation does not agree with either the Hebrew

2 Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament: Hebrews*. (R. Frew, Ed.), 218. London: Blackie & Son.

3 A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Heb. 10:1). Nashville, TN: Broadman Press.

4 "The cultic rights actually brought past sins into the present (cf. Lev. 16:21; Philo, *The Special Laws* 1.1215)" (Daniel H. King, Sr., *The Book of Hebrews*, Truth Commentaries, 300).

5 God has always demanded a blood sacrifice for life is in the blood (Lev. 17). The only perfect blood sacrifice would be the sacrifice of God's Son. Furthermore, the following verses (vv. 5-10) will show that the sacrifice of Christ was a willing sacrifice whereas the animals were sacrificed against their will.

or the LXX, and the Hebrew and LXX do not agree.”⁶ The point of the Psalm is a call for genuine obedience to the will of God. Where Psalms says, “My ears You have opened” the Hebrews reference has “But a body You have prepared for me.” The open ears has reference to willingly yielding to God’s will. Christ was given a body so he could obey the will of God.

The use the writer makes of the Psalm is summarized in verses 8-10. God was not pleased with the sacrifices of the Old Covenant in the sense that they did not remove the sin (v. 8). But, Christ came (in the flesh) to fulfill God’s plan for redeeming man (vv. 9-10a). In so doing, he took away the first system to establish the second (v. 9).⁷

Absolute forgiveness obtained (vv. 10b-18). Under the Levitical system the priests *stand* (indicating their work is incomplete) and continually offer sacrifices that do not take away sin (v. 11). In contrast, Christ offered one sacrifice and then *sat down* (indicating his work is finished) at the right hand of God (v. 12). By that one offering those being sanctified are perfected (complete forgiveness) forever (v. 14). The Holy Spirit gives witness (from Jer. 31:33-34)⁸ to the power of the sacrifice of Christ in saying that their sins would be remembered no more (vv. 15-17). When there is complete remission of sin, there is no need for another offering (v. 18).

Exhortation to Steadfastness (vv. 19-39)

With these verses we begin the second major section of the book which we have entitled, “Don’t Give Up” (10:19 – 13:28).⁹ In light of the foundation that has been laid in the first section, the reader is urged to keep on the track they know to be right and don’t give up. Also this begins the second section of this chapter. Here we have encouragement to be steadfast. We are informed of what that involves and the reasons for it. Note also, that these verses (vv. 19-39) consist of the fourth of the five warning sections in the book.¹⁰

Exhortation to greater diligence (vv. 19-25). We can now have boldness (confidence, ESV) to enter the Holiest (Heaven).¹¹ This assurance is based on the cleansing that is available through Christ (vv. 19-22). If the blood of Christ accomplished what the old sacrifices could not, then we can have the utmost confidence. We have access by a “new and living way” (v. 20). It is new in that it is fresh or recent (as opposed to the old). It is living as opposed to the lifeless entrance (way) into the most holy place of the tabernacle. It may refer to the life that is imparted by this way. However, Lenski’s approach is interesting, “...this way is ‘living’ because it consists of Christ himself who is ‘the Way and the Life’ (John 14:6), a way that is itself active and bears those who step upon it. We go farther than to say that it is ‘living’ because of its *connection* with the living Christ; the living Christ *is himself* the living way.”¹² This new and living way is consecrated for us through the veil, his flesh (v. 22). Just as the veil of the tabernacle was the means of access into the most holy place, so through the

6 M. R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, 4:496. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons.

7 Man cannot be under two differing systems of law at the same time.

8 This is evidence that Jeremiah was inspired by the Holy Spirit.

9 See the outline of the book in the Introduction.

10 Look back at the Introduction for a list of the warning sections.

11 While this would include our entrance into heaven in eternity, here he seems to have reference to our approach to the throne of God as in Hebrews 4:14-16.

12 R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews and of the Epistle of James*, 344–345. Columbus, OH: Lutheran Book Concern.

flesh of Christ (his death) do we have access to the most holy place. Since this is true, we should draw near with a true heart (sincere, genuine) in full assurance (without any doubt, full trust in our High Priest) (v. 22). That boldness and assurance comes because our hearts are sprinkled from an evil conscience¹³ (our hearts are cleansed of sin) and our bodies washed in pure water (been baptized).¹⁴

Now the author tells us what greater diligence involves (vv. 23-25). First, it involves **holding fast** to the “hope we profess” (NIV). Second, it involves **considering one another** in order to **stir up** (stimulate, NASB) love and good works (v. 24). Third, it includes **not forsaking the assembling** of the saints (v. 25). Fourth, it involves **exhorting one another** (v. 25).

Several points need to be observed about verse 25. The assembling refers to the act of assembling as evidenced by “as is the manner of some.” Forsaking does not just include a complete abandonment, but even a one-time neglect.¹⁵ The day approaching refers to the destruction of Jerusalem rather than the second coming for there were signs that indicated that it was nearing (Matt. 24). Such an event would be a great trial of their faith.

Some were already in the habit (ESV) of forsaking the assembling. What was the reason? We are either not told or the historical and textual context points to persecution. Later in the chapter he reminds them of enduring persecution in the past as evidence they can endure now (vv. 33-34). The resistance (12:4) they are facing is called a chastening of the Lord (12:1-6) that is peculiar to the sons of God (12:6). That is persecution that greatly discouraged some of these Christians (12:12). Barnes observed, “Some may have been deterred by the fear of persecution, as those who were thus assembled would be more exposed to danger than others.”¹⁶ The point for us is that if persecution was not to keep them from assembling, how does that compare with the reasons for forsaking today?

Exhortation based upon the danger of apostasy (vv. 26-31). If the Hebrews don’t press on, there is the danger of falling away and losing their souls. If one willfully sins after becoming a child of God, he rejects the only sacrifice that will save – there will not be another (v. 26). Rather, he can look toward judgment with fear (v. 27) for he is worthy of worse punishment than one received under Moses (vv. 28-29). To apostatize is to trample the Son of God, count his blood an unholy or a common thing and insult the Holy Spirit (v. 29). The author makes his point by quoting Deuteronomy 32:35-36 which says that the Lord will punish those who turn from him (v. 30). His conclusion is that “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hand of the living God” (v. 31).

Exhortation based upon past endurance (vv. 32-34). The fact that the recipients of this book had endured persecution in the past says that they can endure the present opposition. They had been made a spectacle by reproaches and tribulations (v. 33),¹⁷ suffered along

13 Compare Hebrews 9:13-14.

14 Baptism is referred to as a washing in other texts (Acts 22:16; Tit. 3:5). “Pure” does not refer to sanitary conditions of the water, but that it is not mixed with ashes as in Numbers 19.

15 The same word is found in Matthew 27:46 and 2 Timothy 4:16.

16 Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament: Hebrews*. (R. Frew, Ed.), 234. London: Blackie & Son.

17 The ESV says, “publicly exposed to reproach and afflictions”. The NIV says, “publicly exposed to insult and persecution.”

with those in prison, and experienced the plundering of their property (v. 34). This they accepted with joy knowing that they had a better and enduring possession in heaven (v. 34).

Exhortation based upon receiving the promise (vv. 35-39). The readers are urged not to cast their confidence aside (which they would do if they turn back to Judaism) because they have a great reward (v. 35). If they would endure, doing the will of God, they will receive the promise (v. 36).¹⁸

As proof of his point, the writer quotes Habakkuk 2:3-4¹⁹ (vv. 37-38). The coming of God (v. 37) is a coming in judgment. In Habakkuk the reference was to Babylon. Here, the author uses it to refer to Rome coming in the destruction of Jerusalem which was not far away from the time of the writing of this book. "The just shall live by faith" is explained in the next phrase and next verse. Rather than drawing back to destruction, we believe (keep on believing) to the saving of the soul.

Use of the Old Testament in this Chapter	
Verse in Chapter 10	Old Testament Reference
vv. 5-7	Psalm 40:6-8
v. 8	Psalm 40:6
v. 9	Psalm 40:7-8
v. 16	Jer. 31:33-34
v. 20	Deut. 32:35-36
vv. 37-38	Hab. 2:3-4

¹⁸ The promise is eternal life. It is the same as the "saving of the soul" (v. 39).

¹⁹ The quotation is from the Septuagint translation (LXX).

Questions

1. What are the two major sections of the book and how do they relate to each other?
2. What does it mean that the Old Covenant and its sacrifices were a "shadow" of the new?
3. In what sense was there a remembrance of sin every year (v. 3)?
4. Hebrews 10 quotes Psalm 40. The Psalm reference says, "My ears You have opened" while the Hebrews reference has "But a body You have prepared for me." What do those expressions have to do with each other?
5. What is the point being made from Psalm 40?
6. What is the contrast drawn in verses 11-12?
7. In what sense is the flesh of Christ a veil?
8. What four things are listed in this chapter that are involved in greater diligence?
9. What was causing some to forsake the assembling of the saints? What does that say to us today?
10. How is the expression, "the just shall live by faith" used by the Hebrew writer?