

Hebrews Chapter 10

Hebrews Chapter 10 Small Group Study

The Ineffectiveness of the Old Covenant Sacrifices (Hebrews 10:1–4):

Scripture:

Since the law has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the reality itself, it can never perfect the worshipers by the same sacrifices year after year. Otherwise, would the sacrifices not have ceased being offered since the worshipers, once purified, would no longer have any consciousness of sin? But those sacrifices remind them of sins year after year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

Key Greek Words and Definitions:

- *σκιά (skia)* — shadow; a faint or incomplete representation pointing to something greater
- *τελειόω (teleioō)* — to perfect; to bring to completion or full maturity
- *ἁμαρτία (hamartia)* — sin; missing the mark or moral failure
- *συνείδησις (syneidēsis)* — conscience; awareness or perception of moral condition

Exegesis:

The law and its sacrificial system are described as a "shadow" (*skia*) — an incomplete reflection of the good things to come, namely Christ's work. These sacrifices could never perfect (*teleioō*) worshipers by removing the guilt or cleansing the conscience (*syneidēsis*) permanently. Instead, they served as yearly reminders of sin (*hamartia*), pointing to the need for a better sacrifice.

Theological and Historical Insight:

The sacrificial system under the Mosaic covenant was temporary and symbolic. The repeated nature of sacrifices reveals their insufficiency. This reflects a key dispensational truth: the Law was God's program for Israel in the past but was never meant to be the final solution for sin.

Application:

Recognize that rituals or repeated religious acts cannot cleanse us from sin. We must look to Christ's perfect sacrifice as the only means of true forgiveness and cleansing.

Discussion Question:

Why does the author describe the Law as only a "shadow" and not the "reality"? What implications does this have for how we view Old Testament sacrifices?

Christ's Fulfillment of God's Will (Hebrews 10:5–10)

Scripture

Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me. Burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not delight in. Then I said, 'See, I have come to do your will, O God.'" He sets aside the first covenant to establish the second. By that will, we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Key Greek Words and Definitions:

- *θέλημα (thelēma)* — will; God’s desire or purpose
- *ἀγιάζω (hagiazō)* — to sanctify; to make holy or set apart
- *καταργέω (katargeō)* — to set aside or abolish
- *σῶμα (sōma)* — body; referring here to Christ’s incarnate human nature

Exegesis:

Quoting Psalm 40, the author stresses that God did not desire animal sacrifices but obedience — a body prepared by God, referring to Christ’s incarnation and obedient sacrifice. This obedience was God’s will (*thelēma*), which Christ fulfilled perfectly. The first covenant (Law and sacrifices) is set aside (*katargeō*) to establish the new covenant, through which believers are sanctified (*hagiazō*) once and for all by Christ’s offering.

Theological and Historical Insight:

Christ’s obedience contrasts the ineffective animal sacrifices and fulfills the law’s demands. This passage underscores the transition from the Mosaic Law to the new covenant of grace. It highlights the dispensational shift from law to grace — from shadow to substance.

Application:

Live in the reality of Christ’s obedience and sacrifice. Know that your sanctification is based on His will being accomplished, not on your own performance.

Discussion Question:

How does Christ’s obedience “doing God’s will” change our understanding of sacrifice?

Christ’s Once-for-All Sacrifice and Priestly Ministry (Hebrews 10:11–18):

Scripture

Every priest stands daily ministering and offering the same sacrifices that cannot take away sins. But this priest, after offering one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God. Waiting from that time until His enemies are made His footstool. By one offering, He has perfected forever those who are sanctified. The Holy Spirit also testifies: “This is the covenant I will make... I will remember their sins no more.” Where forgiveness of these is, there is no longer any offering for sin.

Key Greek Words and Definitions:

- *καθίζω (kathizō)* — to sit down; indicates completion or rest after work
- *τελειόω (teleioō)* — to perfect, to complete fully
- *ἀφίεμι (aphiemi)* — to forgive, send away
- *διαθήκη (diathēkē)* — covenant; a binding agreement between God and man

Exegesis:

The contrast is made between the daily repeated sacrifices of priests and the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ. Christ’s sitting down (*kathizō*) signifies the completion and sufficiency of His priestly work. The new covenant (*diathēkē*) promises complete forgiveness (*aphiemi*) of sins, a permanent and effective cleansing, unlike the old sacrifices.

Theological and Historical Insight:

Christ's priesthood is superior to the Levitical priesthood, as it is eternal and effective once for all. The "sitting down" indicates the finished nature of His work. This shows the fulfillment and replacement of the old covenant sacrifices and priesthood with the new covenant in Christ.

Application:

Rest in Christ's finished work, confident that no further sacrifice is needed for your sins. Approach God daily with assurance of complete forgiveness.

Discussion Question:

What does Christ's sitting down at God's right hand teach us about the effectiveness of His sacrifice?

Encouragement to Draw Near and Persevere (Hebrews 10:19–25):**Scripture:**

Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over God's house, let us draw near with a sincere heart and full assurance of faith, with hearts sprinkled clean from a guilty conscience and bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. Let us consider how to encourage one another toward love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, but encouraging one another.

Key Greek Words and Definitions:

- *παρρησία* (*parrēsia*) — confidence, boldness
- *καινός* (*kainos*) — new, fresh, unlike the old
- *ζῶν* (*zōn*) — living, active, powerful
- *ἔλεγχος* (*elenchos*) — conviction, conscience
- *ὑπόμνησις* (*hypomnēsis*) — reminder, exhortation

Exegesis:

Believers now have bold access (*parrēsia*) to God's presence because of Christ's sacrifice. The "new and living way" (*kainos*, *zōn*) refers to the path opened by Christ's flesh (his incarnation and death), replacing the old curtain in the temple. The call is to sincere faith and mutual encouragement, holding firmly to hope.

Theological and Historical Insight:

This is a call to live in the grace dispensation, drawing near to God directly without the temple priesthood. Christian fellowship is vital in this dispensation, reinforcing perseverance in faith as the return of Christ approaches.

Application:

Approach God confidently through Christ, maintain sincere faith, and actively support fellow believers. Fellowship is crucial to endurance.

Discussion Question:

How does Christ's "new and living way" impact our daily approach to God and community?

Warning Against Deliberate Sin and Apostasy (Hebrews 10:26–31)

Scripture:

If we deliberately keep sinning after receiving the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins remains, only a fearful expectation of judgment and raging fire. Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, profaned the blood of the covenant, and insulted the Spirit of grace? It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Key Greek Words and Definitions:

- *ἐκούσιος* (*hekousios*) — voluntary, deliberate
- *βδέλυγμα* (*bdelygma*) — abomination, detestable thing
- *παραβιάζω* (*parabiazō*) — to trample, violate with violence
- *οργή* (*orgē*) — wrath, anger

Exegesis:

The author warns of the grave consequences of willful sin after knowing the truth. Rejecting Christ's sacrifice and the Spirit's grace results in judgment, far worse than rejecting the Mosaic Law. The imagery of trampling and insulting highlights the severity of apostasy.

Theological and Historical Insight:

In the grace dispensation, apostasy—rejecting Christ after having received the truth—is a serious offense deserving divine judgment. This serves as a solemn warning to persevere in faith.

Application:

Do not take God's grace for granted. Avoid willful rebellion and remain faithful to Christ, understanding the seriousness of apostasy.

Discussion Question:

Why is willful sin after knowing the truth considered so dangerous?

Exhortation to Persevere in Faith (Hebrews 10:32–39)

Scripture

Remember the earlier days after you received the light when you endured a hard struggle with sufferings. You were publicly exposed to insults and afflictions, and you sympathized with those imprisoned. You accepted joyfully the confiscation of your property because you knew you had better and lasting possessions. Do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need endurance to do God's will and receive what is promised. The coming One will not delay. The righteous will live by faith. But if anyone shrinks back, God is not pleased with them.

Key Greek Words and Definitions

- *ὑπομονή* (*hypomonē*) — endurance, patient perseverance
- *πίστις* (*pistis*) — faith, trust, belief
- *ἀποστάσιον* (*apostasion*) — shrinking back, falling away, apostasy
- *μαρτυρία* (*marturia*) — testimony, witness

Exegesis:

The author reminds believers of their past faith and endurance despite suffering, urging them to continue. The promise of reward and God's faithfulness encourage perseverance. The phrase "the righteous will live by faith" (from Habakkuk 2:4) emphasizes living consistently by trusting God.

Theological and Historical Insight:

This call for endurance is essential in the dispensation of grace, where faith and perseverance are the marks of genuine believers. The reference to the coming One signals Christ's return and final judgment.

Application:

Hold firmly to faith through trials, knowing God rewards perseverance. Live daily by faith, not sight, trusting God's promises.

Discussion Question:

How can remembering past faithfulness and God's promises help us endure present trials?

Closing Summary

Hebrews chapter 10 teaches that the old covenant sacrifices were insufficient and pointed forward to Christ's once-for-all sacrifice, which perfects and sanctifies believers. This ushers in a new dispensation of grace, characterized by bold access to God, mutual encouragement, and a call to persevere in faith while avoiding willful sin. From a dispensational perspective, this chapter marks the clear transition from the law to grace, emphasizing the superiority of Christ's priesthood and the need for faithfulness until His return.