



LESSON THREE

Christ's Sacrifices and Coming forward to the Holy of Holies

Scripture Reading:

HEBREWS 10

[Section 1 and 2]

- 1 For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, not the image itself of the things, can never by the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, perfect those who draw near.
- 2 Otherwise would they not have ceased to be offered, because those worshipping, having once been purified, would have no longer had the consciousness of sins?
- 3 But in those *sacrifices* there is a bringing to mind of sins year by year;
- 4 For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.
- 5 Therefore, coming into the world, He says, "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me.
- 6 In burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin You did not delight.
- 7 Then I said, Behold, I have come (in the roll of the book it is written concerning Me) to do Your will, O God."
- 8 Saying above, "Sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin You did not desire nor delight in" (which are offered according to the law),
- 9 He then has said, "Behold, I have come to do Your will." He takes away the first that He may establish the second,
- 10 By which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.
- 11 And every priest stands daily, ministering and offering often the same sacrifices, which can never remove sins;
- 12 But this One, having offered one sacrifice for sins, sat down forever on the right hand of God,
- 13 Henceforth waiting until His enemies are made the footstool for His feet.
- 14 For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.
- 15 And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us, for after having said,
- 16 "This is the covenant which I will covenant with them after those days, says the Lord I will impart My laws upon their hearts, and upon their mind I will inscribe them,"
- 17 *He then says*, "And their sins and their lawlessnesses I shall by no means remember anymore."
- 18 Now where forgiveness of these is, there is no longer an offering for sin.

[Section 3 and 4]

- 19 Having therefore, brothers, boldness for entering the *Holy of Holies* in the blood of Jesus,
- 20 Which *entrance* He initiated for us as a new and living way through the veil, that is, His flesh,
- 21 And *having* a great Priest over the house of God,
- 22 Let us come forward to *the Holy of Holies* with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.
- 23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope unwavering, for He who has promised is faithful;
- 24 And let us consider one another so as to incite *one another* to love and good works,
- 25 Not abandoning our own assembling together, as the custom with some is, but exhorting *one another*; and so much the more as you see the day drawing near.

- 26 For when we sin willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice of *bulls and goats* for sins,
- 27 But a certain fearful expectation of judgment and fervor of fire, which is to consume the adversaries.
- 28 Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without compassion on *the testimony of* two or three witnesses.
- 29 By how much do you think he will be thought worthy of worse punishment who has trampled underfoot the Son of God and has considered the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing and has insulted the Spirit of grace?
- 30 For we know Him who said, “Vengeance is Mine; I will repay”; and again, “The Lord will judge His people.”
- 31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.
- 32 But call to mind the former days, in which, having been enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings;
- 33 On one hand, being made a spectacle both in reproaches and in afflictions, and on the other, having become partakers with those who are treated the same.
- 34 For you both sympathized with those in bonds and accepted with joy the plundering of your possessions, knowing that you yourselves have a better possession and one that abides.
- 35 Do not cast away therefore your boldness, which has great reward.
- 36 For you have need of endurance in order that, having done the will of God, you may obtain the promise.
- 37 “For in yet a very little while the Coming One will come and will not delay.
- 38 But My righteous one shall live by faith; and if he shrinks back, My soul does not delight in him.”
- 39 But we are not of those who shrink back to ruin but of those who have faith to the gaining of the soul.

QUESTIONS:

Section 1:

1. What did Christ do that none of the sacrifices offered in the old testament could do?
2. Give three reasons why it would have been foolish for the believers to go back to the old testament and offer animal sacrifices again.
3. According to this message how has Christ sanctified us?

Section 2:

1. What does Christ sitting down at the right hand of God signify?
2. What are the three main items of the New Covenant?
3. Since sin has been dealt with once for all what should we focus our attention on now?

Section 3:

1. Why do we need to come forward? What do we come forward to?
2. What is the way to enter into the Holy of Holies?
3. How can we be the house of God?

Section 4:

1. What does it mean to sin willfully? What is the common misunderstanding in Heb 10:26?
2. Use verse 29 to explain the effect of the Hebrew believers returning to Judaism to offer the old sacrifices.

-----[SECTION 1] -----

**CHRIST'S SACRIFICES REPLACING
AND TERMINATING THOSE OF THE
OLD COVENANT**

The book of Hebrews tells us many times that Christ has dealt with sin once for all (1:3; 2:17; 7:27; 9:26; 10:12). The repeated mention of the fact that Christ, through His sacrifice, has put away sin was necessary because of the strength of the Jewish tradition in the ancient times. The Jews only knew to go to the altar and offer the sacrifice for sin. Daily, the sacrifices for sin were offered; they were also offered yearly on the day of atonement. Thus, the mind of the ancient Jews was occupied with the sin offering. Because of the strength of the Jewish tradition regarding the sin offering, after dealing with the matter of the accomplishment of the sacrifice for sin in chapters seven, eight, and nine, the writer gives us a further conclusion in 10:1-18.

The main point of this supplementary conclusion is that the Hebrew Christians had to realize that none of the sacrifices offered by the Levitical priests could put away sin or perfect the worshippers. Even their Old Testament predicted in Isaiah 53:10 and 12 that Christ would come to be the sacrifice for sin, that is, to replace and terminate the Levitical sacrifices. Since Christ, the unique sacrifice, has done this, it would have been foolish for the Hebrew believers to go back to the temple and offer the sacrifice for sin again. Sin has been put away and has become a history. Therefore, 10:18, speaking of sins and lawlessnesses, says, "where forgiveness of these is, there is no longer an offering for sin." This is a logical conclusion.

In God's economy, Christ did two main things: He put away sin, which had come in to frustrate God's eternal purpose, and He imparted Himself into us as the divine life which is working within us and spreading into all the inward parts of our being. The main thought in 10:1-18 is that Christ has put away sin, accomplishing what all the Levitical sacrifices were unable to do. Having put away sin once for all, Christ has now imparted Himself into us as the divine life, so that through the working of this divine life we may become the corporate reproduction of Himself.

**I. THE LAW HAVING A SHADOW
OF THE COMING GOOD THINGS**

The law of the Old Testament was not the reality; it was a shadow of the coming good things (v. 1). These coming good things are what Christ is and does. What the law had could not accomplish

anything. It is Christ, the reality of all the shadows in the Old Testament, who has accomplished everything for God's economy.

**II. THE LAW, BY ITS CONTINUAL AND
YEARLY SACRIFICES, NEVER BEING
ABLE TO PERFECT THE WORSHIPPER**

The law, by its continual and yearly sacrifices, was unable to perfect those who drew near to God (vv. 1-2). The sacrifices offered according to the law could not purify the offerers' conscience of sins. However often they offered the same sacrifice for sin, their conscience could never be at peace and they could never be perfected before God.

**III. THE LAW'S SACRIFICES
REMINDING OF SINS YEAR BY YEAR**

The sacrifices offered according to the law could not put away sins; rather, they reminded the people of them. Every year on the day of atonement the Jews were reminded of their sins. God's intention in these sacrifices of shadow was to remind the Jews that they were sinful and that they needed Christ, the Messiah, to take away their sins. According to God's intention, whenever they offered the sacrifice for sin, they should have looked unto Christ. The law's sacrifices were just a reminder of their sins, not a purifier of them.

**IV. IT BEING IMPOSSIBLE FOR ANIMAL
BLOOD TO TAKE AWAY SINS**

As the law's sacrifices were a shadow, not the reality, it was impossible for their animal blood to take away sins (v. 4). It is the precious blood of Christ, the real sacrifice for sin, that takes away sins. Therefore, it would have been vain for the Hebrew believers to go back to Judaism to offer sacrifices for sin again.

**V. CHRIST COMING WITH A BODY
TO REPLACE THE SACRIFICES OF THE
LAW**

All the sacrifices offered according to the law were a shadow of Christ. At the fullness of time, Christ came with a body of blood and flesh to replace the sacrifices of the law. In the flesh, He offered Himself to God once for all to take away sins. Verses 7, 9, and 10 tell us that it is the will of God to take away the first, the animal sacrifices of the old testament, so that the second, the sacrifice of Christ of the new testament, might be established to replace the sacrifices of the old testament. Hence, it would have been foolish for the Hebrew believers to go back to offer the

animal sacrifices which had already been replaced by Christ.

**VI. CHRIST HAVING SANCTIFIED US
THROUGH THE OFFERING OF HIS
BODY
ONCE FOR ALL**

Christ, as the real sacrifice for sin which has taken away sins, has sanctified us through the offering of His body once for all (v. 10). Sin had separated us from God, but Christ, through His redemption, has separated us from sin and has brought us back to God. This is to sanctify us unto God. Christ has thus sanctified us once for all.

**VII. THE PRIESTS OF THE LAW
STANDING DAILY TO OFFER THE SAME
SACRIFICES
WHICH CAN NEVER TAKE AWAY SINS**

Verse 11 says, "Every priest stands daily, ministering and offering often the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins." The priests in the old covenant stood daily and offered the same sacrifices again and again, because what they offered could never take away sins. Their standing was a sign that the taking away of sins had not been accomplished. It was Christ's offering of Himself that has accomplished the taking away of sins.

-----[SECTION 2]-----

**VIII. CHRIST SITTING DOWN FOREVER
ON THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, AFTER
HAVING OFFERED ONE SACRIFICE
FOR SIN**

While the old covenant priests stood daily offering the same sacrifices again and again, Christ has put away sin (9:26) by offering Himself to God as the unique sacrifice for sin. Hence, as verse 12 says, He "sat down forever on the right hand of God." His sitting in heaven is a sign and proof that the taking away of sins has been accomplished. His sitting there is forever. He no longer needs to do anything for sin, for He has done it once for all. His sitting down forever after having offered one sacrifice for sin is in contrast with the priests' standing daily, offering the same sacrifices again and again.

**IX. BY ONE OFFERING CHRIST HAVING
PERFECTED FOREVER US WHO ARE
BEING SANCTIFIED**

Verse 14 says that by "one offering He has perfected forever those who are sanctified." Although the other sacrifices never perfected anyone, Christ's unique sacrifice has perfected us forever. Through His offering, Christ has not only

sanctified us once for all but also perfected us forever. Through that one sacrifice of Christ, we have not only been separated from sin and brought back to God but also have been perfected before God.

**X. THE HOLY SPIRIT TESTIFYING THAT
OUR SINS AND LAWLESSNESSES ARE
FORGIVEN**

At this point we need to read verses 15 through 17. "And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us; for after having said, This is the covenant which I will covenant with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws upon their hearts and upon their minds I will inscribe them; Then He says, And their sins and their lawlessnesses I will by no means remember anymore." In this section of the Word, the writer was trying his best to prove to the Hebrew believers that there was no longer any need of offering the sacrifice for sin, because Christ had accomplished the putting away of sins. The problem of sin has been solved. Now he stresses this fact by pointing out that in Jeremiah 31:33 and 34, which he had quoted in chapter eight for the inward law of life, the Holy Spirit also testifies to this effect. In Jeremiah 31:33 and 34, after the Holy Spirit said that God would put His laws upon our hearts, He then said that God would not remember our sins anymore. This proves that the Holy Spirit testifies that our sins have been taken away and that the problem of sin has been solved. Not only in Isaiah 53:6, 11, and 12 was there the prediction that Christ would bear our sins, but also in Jeremiah 31 there was the testimony of the Holy Spirit that our sins would be taken away and that God would no longer have any remembrance of them.

According to our natural understanding of the new covenant, the forgiveness of sins is the first item. However, it is the last item, even a supplementary one. The new covenant is mainly concerned with three things: with the law of life which is written into our being; with God being God to us and us being a people to Him; and with the inner ability of knowing God. These three things are eternal. But some brothers and sisters, still remembering their sins, may ask, "What about our sins?" They need a supplement telling them to be at peace about their sins, for God will not remember them any longer, because they all have been taken away by the sacrifice of Christ. Here, in chapter ten, after repeating the main item of the new covenant, the inward law of life, mentioned in chapter eight, the Spirit says that the Lord will by no means remember our sins and lawlessnesses. Since the Lord will by no means

remember our sins anymore, we should not remember them either. But it is difficult for us to forget our sins. Although God forgives and forgets our sins, and although we may realize that our sins have been forgiven, we cannot forget them. The remembrance of our sins is still subconsciously deep in our being.

What does it mean to forget our sins? It is to consider ourselves as never having sinned. Since believing in the Lord Jesus, have you ever considered yourself to be so sinless? God does. When we go to Him, saying, "Father, I wish to repent of my sins," He may say, "What are you talking about? Are you not one of My children? None of My children has ever sinned." To forgive sins means to forget them, to think of them as never having existed. Not only does God forgive our sins; He no longer remembers them. Not only in His administration are our sins put away, but they even have vanished from His memory. In eternity the Father will say, "I have many sons who have never sinned. In My divine memory there is no such thing as sin." Only God has this kind of forgetfulness. The more we try to forget our sins, the more we recall them. You may still remember the day you stole money from your father. While we still remember it, if we go to our Father about it, we shall discover that He has forgotten it. Hallelujah! Have you ever realized that we all have a share in such a wonderful forgiveness? How marvelous it is! Yet this is just a supplement to the three main items of the new covenant, the most important of which is the law of life. God is our God, and we, His people, have the inner ability to know Him. From now on, we should forget sin and not talk about it. Any local church which still talks about sin is not up-to-date. We must not be a sin-talking church but a life-law-talking church. Sin is history and life is here. We now have the law of life within us.

XI. NO LONGER ANY OFFERING FOR SIN

Since Christ has accomplished the sacrifice for sin and has terminated it, there is no longer any offering for sin (v. 18). This does not mean, as some Christians misinterpret this verse, that if we sin after being saved, there is no longer any offering for our sin and that we will not be forgiven anymore. It means that since Christ has accomplished the offering for sin once for all and has terminated it, there is no longer the need to offer any sacrifice for sin. This was a strong word to the early Hebrew Christians who were considering going back to their old custom of offering the sacrifice for sin. They should have

known that the offering for sin had been accomplished and terminated by Christ. Their need was not to go back to the shadow of the animal offerings, but to come forward to partake of the resurrected Christ and enjoy all He had accomplished for them through His offering of Himself to God.

Today we also need to see that our sins have been taken away by the death of Christ and that the problem of sin has been solved once for all. Since sin is over and has become a history, we no longer need to be bothered by it. Our attention must be turned from the Christ on the cross to the Christ in the heavens. We must enjoy the heavenly Christ as our life and all we need in following Him and running the heavenly race. When we enjoy the Christ who is in the heavens, we are truly under the new covenant participating in all the bequests of the new testament. This is the goal of this book.

-----[SECTION 3] -----

COME FORWARD TO THE HOLY OF HOLIES AND DO NOT SHRINK BACK TO JUDAISM

This warning, the fourth one in Hebrews, is a warning to come forward to the Holy of Holies and not to shrink back to Judaism. In chapter nine we saw the two tabernacles which symbolize two covenants and two ages. There is the danger of not coming forward to the second tabernacle but of shrinking back to the first. We must leave the first tabernacle, the first covenant, and the first age, and go on to enter into the second tabernacle, into the second age or dispensation. We must go on to the Holy of Holies, enter into the new covenant dispensation, and live in the new age. After presenting a complete picture of these things, the writer was very concerned that the Hebrew believers would not go on. Thus, he gave them a warning, telling them of the danger of shrinking back to Judaism and not coming forward to the new testament. He seemed to be saying, "Hebrew believers, come forward from where you are staggering. If you won't come forward, you will be in danger of shrinking back." Coming forward is in sharp contrast with shrinking back. It is a terrible thing to shrink back! Because shrinking back is such a dreadful thing, we must view this fourth warning in a very sober way.

Firstly, I would like to say a word about the phrase "come forward." This phrase is used four times in Hebrews regarding three things. In 4:16 we are told to come forward to the throne of

grace; in 7:25 and 11:6 we are told to come forward to God; and in 10:22 we are told to come forward to the Holy of Holies.

God is on the throne of grace, and the throne of grace is in the Holy of Holies. This is the scene of the new covenant age. Wherever we may be, we must come forward to the Holy of Holies, the throne of grace, and to God. When we do this, we come forward to the new age, to the new economy, dispensation, and administration in and through which God fulfills His purpose. God's eternal purpose can only be fulfilled with God sitting on the throne of grace in the Holy of Holies in this new covenant age. Coming forward is not merely a matter of our salvation or even of our glorification; it is for the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose. For us to be saved or glorified is a small thing, but for God's eternal purpose to be accomplished is a tremendous matter. Thank God that He has included us in this. Our coming forward and enjoying the new testament is altogether for Him and His purpose. It is for Him to be expressed and for His eternal purpose to be accomplished. This requires four things: God on the throne, the throne of grace, the Holy of Holies, and the new covenant age. If any one of these four items is missing, it is impossible for God to accomplish His purpose. How serious this is!

Not only were the pagans and the heathen far away from these four things, but even the Judaizers who had the old covenant were far away from them. Moreover, many Christians today are also far off from these four items. Therefore, there is the call to come forward. We thank God that today the sky is crystal clear above us and we can understand that to come forward means to come forward to the Holy of Holies, to the throne of grace, and to God, and that this means we must come forward to the new covenant dispensation. Where are you? Are you still at the altar beholding the One crowned with thorns, or are you touching the throne of grace in the Holy of Holies gazing upon the One crowned with glory? How we need to come forward! Coming forward is the focal point of the book of Hebrews, and it is very crucial that we all see it. Once we see it, we should never depart from it.

I. THE FIRST TABERNACLE, THE HOLY PLACE, BEING A FIGURE

The first tabernacle, that is, the Holy Place, is only a figure, not the reality. As we have seen, all

the things in the Holy Place, such as the showbread table and the lampstand, are the types of Christ, not the reality.

II. THE SECOND TABERNACLE, THE HOLY OF HOLIES, BEING REALIZED BY THE NEW COVENANT DISPENSATION

The second tabernacle, which is the Holy of Holies, is realized by the new testament dispensation (9:3, 8, 10). The Holy of Holies is a reality. It is realized by the new covenant dispensation in which we now are experiencing its reality. The presence of God, the shekinah glory of God, God's meeting with man, and God's speaking, which are in the Holy of Holies, are all real. They are not types but realities which are fully realized and experienced by us in the new testament dispensation.

III. THE OLD COVENANT AGE BEING TERMINATED AND THE NEW COVENANT DISPENSATION HAVING BEEN INAUGURATED

The old covenant age has been terminated by the death of Christ, and the new covenant dispensation has been inaugurated by His resurrection and ascension. In His ascension, He is the "High Priest of the good things that have come" (9:11). He is now ministering in "the greater and more perfect tabernacle" in the heavens to execute the new covenant for God's economy.

IV. THE WAY TO ENTER THE HOLY OF HOLIES HAVING BEEN CUT

Verse 19 says, "Having therefore, brothers, boldness for entering the Holy of Holies by the blood of Jesus." The Holy of Holies today is in heaven, where the Lord Jesus is (9:12, 24). Then, how can we enter it while we are still on earth? The secret is our spirit, referred to in 4:12. The very Christ who is in heaven is also now in our spirit (2 Tim. 4:22). He, as the heavenly ladder (Gen. 28:12; John 1:51), joins our spirit to heaven and brings heaven into our spirit. Whenever we turn to our spirit, we enter into the Holy of Holies. Here we meet with God who is on the throne of grace.

We enter the Holy of Holies by a "new and living way, which He dedicated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh" (v. 20). The way into the Holy

of Holies has been cut. According to the Greek, the word “new” in this verse means “freshly slain.” Through Christ’s death on the cross, the way has been “freshly slain” for us. What was slain? Not only the flesh but the entire old creation. In this verse, the veil, which is His flesh, signifies the old creation, including us. On the veil were cherubim (Exo. 26:31) which signify the creatures (Ezek. 10:15). When the veil was rent, the cherubim were also rent, signifying that when the flesh of Christ, which is typified by the veil, was crucified, all the creatures also were crucified with His flesh. This flesh has been slain. According to Matthew 27:51, when the Lord Jesus died, the veil was rent from top to bottom, meaning that it was not rent by anyone on earth but by God in the heavens. The old creation has been slain and a new and living way to enter into the Holy of Holies has been cut. Now through the riven veil of the flesh and by the blood of Jesus we can enter into the Holy of Holies. His death and His blood are still available to us today.

The veil in verse 20 is the second veil (9:3) within the tabernacle which, as we have seen, typifies the flesh of Christ. When Christ’s flesh was crucified, this veil was rent, thus opening the way for us who were excluded from God, who is signified by the tree of life (Gen. 3:22-24), to enter into the Holy of Holies to contact Him and take Him as the tree of life for our enjoyment. This also implies that since our old man has been crucified with Christ, we have an open way to contact and enjoy God in our spirit as our life and life supply.

V. HAVING BOLDNESS TO ENTER THE HOLY OF HOLIES THROUGH THE BETTER SACRIFICES OF CHRIST

Through the better sacrifices of Christ, we have boldness to enter into the Holy of Holies (9:23; 10:19). It is not a small thing to enter the Holy of Holies, for there the very God is sitting on the throne of grace. In order to enter into such a place we must have boldness, and we have it by Christ’s death and by His blood. By the Lord’s death and His blood we have the boldness to enter the Holy of Holies at any time we want to, unlike the high priest in the Old Testament, who could only enter into it once a year.

VI. HAVING A GREAT PRIEST OVER THE HOUSE OF GOD

Verse 21 says that we have “a great Priest over the house of God.” This is deep. We have seen that we are the house of God (3:6). But if we are in the outer court, we do not have the right position to be the house of God. In order to be the house of God we must come forward to the Holy of Holies, because it is only there that Christ, our High Priest, takes care of the house of God. Since the Holy of Holies is joined to our spirit, we can only be the house of God when we are in our spirit. If we would turn from our spirit to our flesh, we would no longer be the house of God but a house of scorpions and snakes. When Christians fight and argue with one another, they are not the church, the house of God; they are scorpions and snakes. Although they may be saved, they do not live in the saved life but in the scorpion life. According to Ephesians 2:22, the house of God is in the spirit. If we live like scorpions, we could never enjoy Christ’s presence. Only in the Holy of Holies in the spirit does Christ, our High Priest, take care of the house of God.

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VII. COMING FORWARD TO THE HOLY OF HOLIES

Let us come forward to the Holy of Holies (v. 22), that is, to the new covenant dispensation. The Holy of Holies not only denotes a place, but also means a covenant, an age, and a dispensation. In chapter nine we saw clearly that the tabernacle was not merely a place but also the symbol of a covenant and an age. The call to come forward to the Holy of Holies includes coming forward to the new covenant and to the new covenant age. We must come to the Holy of Holies with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and having our body washed with pure water. For us to come forward to the Holy of Holies, our heart must be true, our faith must be with full assurance, our conscience must be sprinkled, and our whole being must be washed. We should not consider this as a light thing. We must be very serious in this matter.

VIII. HOLDING FAST THE CONFESSION OF OUR HOPE UNWAVERING

“Our hope” (v. 23) refers to Christ and to all we shall partake of in Him. He is our hope of glory (Col. 1:27). The redemption of our body, which He will accomplish at the time of His second appearing, is also our hope. Even now, He, as our indestructible life, is our hope, regardless of our situation. As our High Priest with the more excellent ministry of His kingly and divine priesthood, He is our hope in our daily life. By His intercession on our behalf He takes care of us and is able to save us to the uttermost. This is what we believe. This is our confession. We must hold fast this confession without any wavering of our faith so that we might come forward to enter into the Holy of Holies to enjoy the heavenly Christ.

IX. CONSIDERING ONE ANOTHER FOR INCITING TO LOVE AND GOOD WORKS

For the proper church life, we need to consider one another (v. 24). To be isolated from others is to commit suicide in the church life. To consider one another is to increase life in inciting to love and good works. Good works here and in 13:21 are the good things which, in the eyes of God, are mainly related to the fulfillment of His purpose. If we consider one another in this way, we shall be kept in the church life.

X. NOT FORSAKING THE CHURCH TO SIN WILLFULLY

Now we come to a crucial point. The writer warns the Hebrew believers not to forsake the church to sin willfully, that is, to go back to Judaism to offer the sacrifice for sin which has been terminated (vv. 25-26, 18). Verses 25 and 26 say, “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the custom with some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the day drawing near. For when we sin willfully after receiving the full knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.” For the Hebrew believers to shrink back to Judaism and offer again the sacrifice for sin would be to do something which God had terminated. For the Hebrew believers at their time and in their situation to forsake the assembling of themselves together would have been to forsake the new covenant way of contacting God, to forsake the church, and to return to their old religion—

Judaism. That would have broken God’s administration of grace, thus constituting a serious sin before God. It would have been to “sin willfully after receiving the full knowledge of the truth.” Truth here refers to the things disclosed in the foregoing chapters and verses, which affords the Hebrew believers the full knowledge that God has annulled the old covenant and has established the new. To sin willfully means to forsake the assembling of ourselves together with the church. The Hebrew believers had been instructed to abandon Judaism and remain under the new covenant. If they had returned to Judaism, they would have forsaken assembling themselves with the church. This constitutes a willful sin in the eyes of God after receiving the knowledge of the truth, after knowing that God had forsaken Judaism, which was formed according to the old covenant, and had established the new and living way of contacting God according to the new covenant.

Verse 26 says that “there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins” for those who sin willfully. If the Hebrew believers had forsaken the church and returned to Judaism, there would have remained no sacrifice for sin in the economy of God, for all the sacrifices of the old covenant have been altogether replaced by the one sacrifice of Christ. Since Christ has once for all offered Himself as the real sacrifice for our sins (7:27; 10:10, 12), the sacrifice for sin has ceased (10:2), having been taken away by Christ (10:9). Many Christian teachers misinterpret verse 26, saying that if we sin willfully after being saved our sins cannot be forgiven because there is no more sacrifice for sin. This interpretation is terrible! As we have seen, the willful sin mentioned here is forsaking the church and shrinking back to the old covenant after knowing that God had annulled it and established a new one. Forsaking the church to return to Judaism to offer the sacrifice for sin when there was no longer any such thing, was, in the eyes of God, a willful sin.

A. Trampling Under Foot the Son of God

Verse 29 says, “By how much do you think he shall be thought worthy of worse punishment who has trampled under foot the Son of God.” In the new covenant the Son of God replaces all the sacrifices of the old covenant. If the Hebrew believers would still return to Judaism to offer any of the old sacrifices, they would in effect be trampling under foot the Son of God. They would

be despising Him, disregarding Him, and putting Him under their feet.

B. Regarding the Sanctifying Blood of the Covenant a Common Thing

Verse 29 also speaks of regarding the blood of the covenant a common thing. If the Hebrew believers would have returned to Judaism to offer the old sacrifices and rely on the blood of the slain animals, they would in effect have regarded the precious blood of Christ a common thing. That would have been a serious disregard of the unique redemptive work of Christ. Since animal blood was common, it could be offered again and again. However, if, after receiving Christ, the Hebrew believers returned to Judaism to offer again the sacrifices for sin, they would have been making the blood of Christ the same as animal blood. This is an insult to Christ.

C. Insulting the Spirit of Grace

This verse also mentions insulting the Spirit of grace. Under the new covenant, through the redeeming blood of Christ, the Hebrew believers had become partakers of the Holy Spirit (6:4), the Spirit of grace. If they had returned to Judaism to offer the sacrifices for sin, this would have been against the work of the Spirit of grace who was indwelling them and working in them and who would have been insulted by their willful sin. The Spirit of grace would never have agreed with this and would have reacted within them. This is serious.

XI. DO NOT SHRINK BACK TO JUDAISM

In verses 38 and 39, the writer told the Hebrew believers to live by faith and not shrink back to ruin. For the Hebrew believers to shrink back to Judaism was to shrink back to ruin, which is not eternal perdition but punishment by the living God (vv. 29-31). The ruin mentioned here is the punishment, as mentioned in verses 27 through 31, of those who forsake the new covenant and return to Judaism, thus trampling underfoot the Son of God, regarding Christ's precious blood common as animal blood, and insulting the Spirit of grace.

By now, we all should be able to understand this fourth warning. The economy of God has been presented clearly. We have seen the old way and the new way, and we have been warned to come forward along the new way and not to shrink back

to the old. To shrink back to the old way after having such a clear word is to commit a willful sin. At the time this epistle was written, to shrink back meant to forsake the new testament church and to give up the new testament dispensation and economy of God. This was not a small matter; it was a very serious willful sin. The writer warned them that if they did such a thing, they would suffer punishment.

According to God's economy, all the old sacrifices have been terminated and the old way has been closed. If the Hebrew believers would have shrunk back to the old way to offer sacrifices according to the law, it would have been in vain, for, in the eyes of God, such a thing had been terminated. This is the correct meaning of this warning. However, many Christians misinterpret it, saying that if you sin after you are saved, you are sinning willfully and there is no possibility of having your sins forgiven. Under the Lord's light, we have seen that to sin willfully is to give up God's economy and to go back to the old way of traditional religion. Here, at the end time, the Lord has presented us with His up-to-date economy. We know what is the old way and what is the new way. The old way has been closed, and the new way has been freshly slain. For the sake of the Lord's recovery and God's economy, we must come forward to take the new way.