

## NO MORE SACRIFICE FOR SINS

*For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

We have just established from Hebrews 4:15-16 that we have a Great High Priest Who enables us to have a most blessed and unexpected benefit: that we can now come boldly to the very throne of grace in Heaven, as it were, into the presence of the Father Himself.

We can do this by faith and prayer at any and every point of need. We can even now approach God in spiritual worship and ascend spiritually into Heaven by faith and prayer! This statement cannot be found in all Judaism or Islam; it is uniquely Christian. Our confidence and boldness are through Jesus Christ by His atoning blood shed on the cross; our better hope is all because of Christ (7:19). It is by Him that this “new and living way” (10:20) has been opened up to Glory.

This way is open only to “**brethren**” since we are the ones who have participated in the “**heavenly calling**” (3:1). We reach our ultimate destination by the One Who allowed His “**veil, that is, His flesh**” (10:20), to be torn on the cross. Hebrews calls this the “**veil**” (10:19), that was torn by an unseen hand.

That tearing of the veil was a visible representation of the power of God accepting His chosen means to achieve our redemption and approving His Son’s offering. His flesh was torn on the cross—the veil was torn as He died.

The four-inch-thick veil was replaced annually by the ladies of Jerusalem so that it was never rotten enough to tear except by an act of God. Who could have imagined, without the revelation Hebrews provides, that we as ordinary mortals, lower than angels, could enter by our spirits into the throne room of heaven?

As a result of these assurances, we should already feel at home with God. But our feelings must be led by faith and not the other way around. It is “**new**” because it was not known until Christ came and opened the entrance, the “**way**” to the Father (John 14:6). Who could have guessed that One so thoroughly human as we are, could have died in our stead (2 Cor. 5:19-21)? Muslims believe this is an

atrocious idea, beneath the righteousness of God who does all things fairly. To them, allowing the innocent to die for the guilty is completely abhorrent.

If they understood the love of God they could more naturally grasp that His love overcame His desire for justice (but the cross demonstrated both His love and His justice as nothing else could Rom. 3:24-26).

### **Since We have a Great High Priest (10:21-22)**

I will be discussing the two **“LET US”** statements in verse 22, and vers23.

We recognize that Jesus, is **“over the house of God,”** which is the church, which He paid for by His blood (Acts 20:28; Rom. 5:9; Eph. 1:7; 5:25; Col. 1:14). Therefore, the first **Let Us:** because we have a great High priest we can and must **“draw near with a sincere heart and full assurance of faith.”** This may be properly rendered as **“keep on drawing near.”**

We can take God at His word, believing each promise and obeying every command. This can only be done through purification, as Israel of old had to purify themselves before approaching God at Sinai (Ex. 19:10), so also the Christian is a purified one with a sincere heart and real faith in His Father.

We are **“sprinkled”** with the cleansing blood when our **“bodies are washed with pure water” (10:22).** The sprinkled blood of Jesus alone prepares us, thereby enabling us to approach the Father. This sprinkling is in conjunction with immersion in water, but when done, the water was not made impure for it was not a ceremonial cleansing as in Judaism, but a cleansing of the soul’s guilt.

First Peter 3:20-22 takes this a step further in saying that immersion saves through the resurrection of Jesus who is now at the right hand of God; this text is in full agreement with Hebrews as it implies the blood has been delivered and Jesus now is there interceding (Heb. 7:25). The cleansing alludes to immersion at which time we are purified, as Ananias declared to Saul/Paul: **“And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16).**

The Second **“Let us”:** Hold Fast and Stimulate One Another Hebrews 10:23-25.

This holding fast causes one to remain part of the church (Heb. 3:6), and in 3:14 holding fast to the end is part of being a partaker with Christ. The reasoning

here is similar to that in Romans 6:1-5 where saints—those who have been immersed—are admonished not to continue in sin. We once acknowledged the “**good confession**” as to who our Lord is, just as He did before Pontius Pilate (1 Tim. 6:12-13).

Our hope is the whole of the Christian faith, all the Gospel has promised, and Hebrews affirms. This epistle/sermon shows how to maintain that hope in spite of all obstacles. Our faith includes the confidence that “**He is a rewarder of those who seek him**” (Heb. 11:6b).

This passage contains the keys to successful Christian living. Nothing else in Scripture is quite like this immensely interesting and profitable passage serendipity in Hebrews. These three verses are the avenue to constant faithfulness! They show how to get and give encouragement. A brief review is in order. We can be sure of all these things. We know God “**is faithful**” to His promises (10:23), whether the promises concern a rest in Heaven (Heb. 4:9), or forgiveness (Heb. 8:12; 10:17), or the right to approach the very throne of mercy with our petitions (Heb. 4:15-16).

Verse 24 is a powerful one in showing how much each member needs “**stirring up.**” Stir up is *paroxusmos*, from which we get “paroxysm” that implies a “**sudden outburst of emotion.**” Were it not for the modern negative connotation of “**provoke**” (KJV) it would be the strong word needed for this action going beyond mere stimulation. The word could mean a “**sharp disagreement**” as in Acts 15:39.

The point is that we should get emotional about stirring each other up toward greater faithfulness! At the point in history that I believe this admonition was given (as we shall note later), this urging was to the saving not only of souls, but of life and limb. What the faithful were urging their brothers and sisters to do would seem unreasonable and might even produce a strong disagreement.

How do we explain the action required in verse 25? Recall that 3:12-13 is the key verse in Hebrews: “**Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called ‘Today,’ so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.**” The author is not saying, “You must exhort one another to assemble,” but “You must assemble in

**order to exhort.**” They had no other means of exhorting (except perhaps by note sent through a messenger) than being together in an assembly.

How could early Christians encourage and strengthen one another, except by being together. Edifying, exhorting, and encouraging are essential purposes of the assembly (1 Cor. 14:26-33). The Preacher did not consider it possible for one who did not meet regularly with other believers to be faithful to the Lord. The **“loner”** may be a believer, but he is not normally a steadfast one. This verse is not urging attendance merely at the weekly Lord’s Day assembly, as important as that is, but in a time of real stress, special gatherings for encouragement are needed.

Hearing one another in prayer to the Father, with boldness, would encourage a greater boldness that would be desperately needed in just a few months at most. With this in mind we should be able to readily discern the meaning of **“the day drawing near” (v. 25)**. Some have imagined it to be the first day of the week. The construction of the words and situation eliminates that possibility. Others have thought it was the final judgment.

We cannot **“see”** the Judgment Day approaching! Jesus said He did not know when His second coming would be with its attendant Judgment Day! **“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only” (Matt. 24:36)**. Incidentally, if Jesus did not know while on Earth just when His return would be, and He knew well the prophecies of Daniel, how dare anyone today presume a greater understanding of the time.

The usual response from Dispensational Premillennialists is, **“Oh, we know we don’t know the exact day and hour, but we can get close. Times are so bad now, it must be near.”** They have been preaching this at least since 1909 with the first printing of Scofield’s Bible, but the root ideas go back to the early 19th century. Cyrus I. Scofield’s notes in his Bible (Foy E. Wallace used to say, “It was certainly Scofield’s and not the Lord’s”), promoted the Seven Dispensations of time theory, always proposing that the end was imminent.

One hundred years have proved him wrong, but his followers do not seem to realize how often they must alter their **“almost here”** date (John Hagee, Nov. 2007, virtually predicted the coming **“Rapture”** in 2008). If they even come close to the time it would belie the intent of the expression **“like a thief in the night”**

*(hinted in Matt. 24:43; Luke 12:39 and utilized in 1 Thess. 5:2-4 and 2 Peter 3:10).*

Stafford North's excellent book by this title destroys Dispensationalism. We just cannot **"see"** the Day of Judgment approaching. The same can be said for the day of our individual deaths; many doctors have predicted imminent death only to be disappointed when the patient lived another decade! I cannot **"see"** the day of my death even though I know that due to age and advancing infirmities (though still minor) that day is much closer.

So, what day could they see? Jesus gave one great sign in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke **"When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies . . ."** (Luke 21:20-21), then the disciples were to flee the city. That sounds crazy! When surrounded they were to flee? How, when surrounded? You know we are fortunate that Josephus gave a detailed account, when he had no intention of supporting the Scripture or Jesus' prophetic powers. Christ announced, **"Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short."**

Josephus had no idea why the Roman Army left the first siege when it had Jerusalem in its grasp, and said they left **"without any reason in the world"** (496). But we know the reason! You see, Eusebius said: **"that no faithful Christian perished in the holocaust accompanying the second siege and destruction (86).** With this one great sign, the saints of Jerusalem could **"see"** their deliverance.

Imagine how many were mocked as they fled. It is highly probable other Jews were saying, **"Don't you see how God has delivered us just as he did in the days of Hezekiah. This shows we are His faithful ones; how foolish you are to leave all you have behind!"** The final warning to leave is hinted at in Hebrews 13:13- 14: **"therefore let us go to him outside the camp . . . For here we do not have a lasting city."** Jerusalem must have been the **"city"** in mind here.

Our Preacher knew the time was short when he spoke and the author when he penned this treatise. Perhaps even the time to grow in the word was short, for he said, **"And this we will do, if God permits" (Heb. 6:3).** Moses Stuart gave a summary of verses 23-25: **"Brethren, do everything in your power to guard against apostasy. And this the more, because a return to Judaism would now be**

very ill-timed; the season is near, when the Jewish temple and state are to be destroyed” (475).

### The Results of Forsaking the Assembly (10:25-31)

Verses 26-31 are terrifying and are intended to be so (***“It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” v. 31***). There are so many passages in Hebrews which deny the impossibility of apostasy that it is difficult to choose the one most potent. This ranks high among them and has some similarities to 6:4-6. Naturally, Calvinists feel compelled to say, **“These Jews prove they were not true converts when they kept on sinning willfully.”**

A study of the benefits received by those mentioned in chapter six demonstrate they could not have been false converts (6:4-5). In the earlier passage it became ***“impossible to renew them again to repentance,”*** and here is the strong utterance, ***“For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins” (10:26)***. The sin for which there is no more sacrifice is a willful or rebellious one that is continued in. The warning is given to impress on the first readers the dangerous consequences of forsaking the assembly of the church and thereby forsaking the Lord.

It becomes evident that if one forsakes the church he indeed is simultaneously forsaking Jesus! The popular opinion of today is that Christ and the Church are not closely related; as usual, the general populace is in great error. The distressful utterance found here cannot apply to the merely weak Christian or a new convert. It fits only one who is a purpose-driven apostate from the faith who knew better than what his life has come to. Whether the departure from regular assemblies of the saints was due to derision, sarcasm or cowardice, it remained a disastrous sin (See Rev. 21:8).

The attacks from their fellow Judeans must have been horrendous and constant. How many drifted into this dire state is impossible to know, but it must have been several to deserve this drastic warning. The Old Testament Covenant provided nothing in the way of sacrifice and forgiveness for this kind of sin; this

fact was surely well-known to the Jewish community who had rejected Christ in turning away from His church.

The knowledge (not gnosis, but epignosis) here suggests to **“know fully”** in contrast with elemental knowledge. Some are **“always learning and never able to come to the knowledge [epignosis] of the truth” (2 Tim. 3:7)**. Many Jews had a **“zeal for God”** but were lacking this knowledge (Rom. 10:3-4). This person was and is set in his ways and committed to his departure from the only sacrifice that could or ever would bring forgiveness. If he thinks his sacrifices at the Temple were efficacious, he is deadly wrong. The **“once for all time sacrifice” (Heb. 7:27; 9:12, 26, 27, 28; 10:10)** of Christ is never to be repeated, in spite of Roman Catholic claims that it is repeated regularly in the Mass.

**The following verses need only be read to shock even the hardened deviant:**

***For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES. Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, “VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY” and again, “THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE.” It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Heb. 10:26-31, emp. added)***

It is noteworthy that the first of the two quotations does not correspond to any in the Hebrew or LXX (Septuagint) text we have, but they are exactly as found in Rom. 12:19 (such items are found in Brother Martel Pace' commentary are referred to as possible “Pauline Pointers”). However, the truth taught is the same. Did Paul or Luke give a paraphrase or have access to a manuscript type which we do not have today?

Preachers often paraphrase a passage to expound on it more thoroughly. To think one has **“trampled underfoot the Son of God” (v. 29)** is certainly equivalent to those who after becoming hardened, were offered the chance to return and cannot because such would only mock the one once crucified for him,

with impossibility of repentance simply ***“crucifying once again the Son of God”*** and ***“and holding him up to contempt” (6:6)***.

## **The Necessity of Local Membership**

Brothers and sisters I choose to stress the implied fact in Hebrews that one obtain and retain membership in a local church if he is to remain faithful, I can see how only rare exceptions might apply, such as Paul and Timothy traveling continually among many churches. Ephesians 1:22-23 stresses that the ***“fullness of Him who fills all in all”*** is to be found in the church.

The spiritual blessings of redemption, hope and confidence in the faith are for those who are in the church. Hebrews goes farther in a last admonition to steadfastness: ***“Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.”***

Who are the leaders? They are hardly the civil authorities who do not seek to bless our souls. These can only be the ones given charge over a local congregation—the elders, presbyters, shepherds, or overseers (Acts 20:17, 28 and 1 Peter 5:1-4 contain all these terms). Note that these men are always mentioned in the plural in the New Testament, and were a body of men in the local church. Peter mentioned himself in the singular as an ***“elder”*** (1 Peter 5:1). He could have been in that activity while remaining in Jerusalem until elders were appointed or an apostle could probably have done both the work of evangelism and overseeing souls.

That would have been a temporary role in the church, but they still rule through their writings. As apostles they could surely fill many positions, even as ***“deacons”*** until such were appointed to special tasks (***Acts 6:1-6, where the term “deacon” is not found but its cognate verb is used***). The Jerusalem elders may have taken on their role slowly from the apostles. It is hard for me to see how so many denominations can say, ***“We see no pattern in the New Testament for church organization, so we just have one pastor. It’s simple and faster to get things done.”***

How sad it will be on Judgment Day, when your name is called and **“Brother Smith,”** an old elder from your Earth days has to say, **“We saw him seldom at worship and could find out little about his conduct since he was never active in the local church!”** What grief and sorrow that would bring to an elder, but even more so to you. What if one happens to be in a small congregation that has no qualified men as yet to be elders? Then, work diligently to help get them qualified.

But, if that is difficult to achieve, Hebrews has another answer to the problem. It is found in 12:15: **“See to it that no fails to obtain the grace of God; that no “root of bitterness” springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled.”** **“See to it”** (or **“looking carefully”** NKJV) is from *episkopeo*, which is a cognate of *episkopos* (**overseer**) and means that every member should do the work of looking after the souls of other members!

If all did this, then even in congregations with elders, their work would be much easier and far more successful. Jesus died for His church, which means the people who are added to it when saved (Acts 2:47). Incidentally, Ferguson said that the word **“church”** is a proper term to use in this verse (as in the KJV) since the **“added to them”** certainly meant the **“community”** of the saved (232-33).

### **In Conclusion:**

The church in Jerusalem was a local church which soon had elders (Acts 11:30 and following). They were appointed in every church (Acts 14:23) and may have been empowered with special spiritual gifts to qualify as elders more quickly. This is what the Lord’s Church is all about:

1. Looking after one another in the local church.
2. Encouraging strongly, stirring up.
3. Doing so enthusiastically.
4. To keep everyone saved and then meeting again in Heaven.

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