

10. The New and Living Way

The preceding chapters have established that Jesus is the perfect sacrifice, his law is the perfect law, and heaven is a perfect tabernacle. In chapter 10, these themes combine to present the true way for Christians—the new and living way. This chapter begins by continuing the comparison between the old and new ways.

The Law, a Shadow of the Good Things Coming

Heb 10:1-4. 10:1 The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming – not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. 2 If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. 3 But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, 4 because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

The law, as a shadow of the good things to come and not the realities, forever describes the present status of the law. The sacrifices could not make perfect the worshippers. The acts of the law could not cleanse them of their guilt for their sins. The causal statement of the passage shows the inability of the law to provide salvation: "It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." The way of Christ and his shed blood is the only way to take away sins.

Christ Made Us Holy Once and for All, Forever

Heb 10:5-14. 5 Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said:

"Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; 6 with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. 7 Then I said, 'Here I am – it is written about me in the scroll – I have come to do your will, O God.'"

8 First he said, "Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them" (although the law required them to be made). 9 Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will." He sets aside the first to establish the second. 10 And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

11 Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. 12 But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. 13 Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, 14 because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

The quotation in verse 5 is from Psalms 40:6-8 in the Septuagint Version. The Hebrew writer explains it fully in verses 8 through 13. The conclusion is that we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Christ, according to the will of God. In the end, he has made us perfect forever. A key thought is that God set aside the first to establish the second covenant. The sacrifice of Jesus was once for all. Those who are, thus, holy are perfect forever because of the sacrifice of Christ.

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Heb 10:15-24. 15 The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says:

16 "This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds."

17 Then he adds:

"Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more."

18 And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin.

19 Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. 25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

The very Holy Spirit of God tells us about these things. What follows is a concise description of what God has done and what He intends for us to do. God will put his laws in our hearts and write them on our minds. He will remember our sins and lawless acts no more. Where these have been forgiven because of the blood sacrifice of Christ, there will no longer be any sacrifice for sin.

On our part, we must do the following:

- Enter with confidence the Most Holy Place (heaven where the sanctuary is) by the blood of Jesus.
- Enter by the new and living way opened for us by the curtain, his body.
- There, in the Most Holy Place, we find a great high priest over the house of God.
- We must draw near to God with a sincere heart and in full assurance of faith.
- Where we have (*having* in the text is a present participle whose action is at the same time as the time of *draw*) our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and our bodies washed in pure water.

These culminating acts parallel directly and identically with John 3:5 where Jesus taught, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit." Paul also taught that the cleansing of the church requires the washing of water and the word. In Eph 5:25-27 he said, "Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. Finally, Peter wrote words connecting baptism and a good conscience toward God. In 1 Peter 3:21-22, Peter said, "This water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also – not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand

In verse 23, the writer teaches that after we enter the Most Holy Place, we must continue to press forward:

- We must hold unswervingly to the hope we profess.
- We must consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.
- We must not give up meeting together.
- We must let us encourage one another.

We must do these things all the more as we see the Day approaching.

What of Those Who Keep on Sinning?

Heb 10:26-31. 26 If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, 27 but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. 28 Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29 How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? 30 For we know him who said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge his people." 31 It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

The early part of the letter to Hebrews deals with not falling away because of unbelief as they did under the first covenant. There is no more sacrifice for us if we turn away. God's judgment will come with raging fire to those who continue in sin. This passage is an exact parallel to Paul's warning to the Thessalonians in 2 Thess 1:5-10:

5 All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering. 6 God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you 7 and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. 8 He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power 10 on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.

Persevere and Receive His Promises

Heb 10:32-39. 32 Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering. 33 Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. 34 You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions.

35 So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. 36 You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.

37 For in just a very little while,

"He who is coming will come and will not delay.

38 But my righteous one will live by faith.

And if he shrinks back,

I will not be pleased with him."

39 But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved.

The conclusion to this section of the letter speaks for itself. These Hebrew Christians had suffered mightily – more than we have been called upon to suffer. Yet, they remained faithful. Now the writer admonishes them that they do not throw it away. To do so is to lose the rich reward of the Lord. The final promise is that the Lord will return. We do not want to be among those who shrink back, but we want to be of those who believe and are saved.

The final phrase – *believe and are saved* – leads to the 11 chapter, the great chapter on faith.