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“**Persevere in Faith & Faithfulness”**

**HEBREWS 10**

In the previous chapters of Hebrews, the author wrote extensively explaining; the Priesthood, the Tabernacle, and all the necessary sacrifices to meet the requirements for atonement according to the Old Covenant. He then emphasized the importance of Jesus’ death on the cross to fulfill the law and bring us into a New Covenant in His blood.

In chapter 9, he explains that the tabernacle, and even the Temple that came later, were “inferior and imperfect”, and only a shadow of the “more perfect tabernacle” that became a reality through Jesus.

**Hebrews 9:11** “But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands…"

Those sacrifices of the Old Covenant did nothing more than make someone “outwardly clean”, but their guilt remained, and their conscience was not clear. The sacrifices still needed to be made every year as a reminder of their sins.

Jesus’ blood, however, was the once-for-all sacrifice that not only grants us forgiveness but cleanses us of all unrighteousness.

**HEBREWS 10**

**Hebrews 10:1-4** “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 Otherwise, 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 It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.”

As we’ve studied throughout the book of Hebrews, the entire process of sacrifice, blood, and atonement did not completely remove the sins of the people, they only covered them. They did not “clear the conscience of the worshiper”. Forgiveness and cleansing of sin could only be done through the blood of Jesus.

**Hebrews 10:5-10** “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, my God.’” [Ps.40:6-8]

8 First he said, “Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them”—though they were offered in accordance with the law. 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.”

The author of Hebrews offers an exegesis of Psalm 40, and explains that Jesus’ sacrifice was a fulfillment of the perfect will of God concerning sacrifice.

**Hebrews 10:11** “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 [Jesus] had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, 13 and since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool. 14 For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.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.” [Jer.31:33]

17 Then he adds: “Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.” [Jer.31:34]

18 And where these have been forgiven, sacrifice for sin is no longer necessary.”

Jesus paid it all! No further sacrifice, or payment, or offering of atonement is necessary. He was the once-and-for-all complete sacrifice for our sins. He did what the *“law could not do”.*

**Romans 8:3-4** “For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us,”

So, no sacrifice for sin is necessary, no offering or payment is required, He did it all, so what do WE need to do?

What is required of us to complete the work in us?

Answer:

For salvation, nothing! just believe.

For relationship, we need to be willing to give everything, all our heart soul, mind, and strength.

As much as we are able, we need to; **“Persevere in Faith & Faithfulness”** *Title*

**In order to fully experience a thriving, healthy, powerful, and fulfilling relationship with Jesus, we need to love him *“with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our mind.’***

**Example:** When I am asked to perform a wedding, I take great care to make sure that the couple knows exactly the level of commitment that they are entering into, and what exactly they will be pledging one to another in marriage.

Usually by the time I am asked to do the wedding, they have already secured each other’s affections, and made their intentions known to spend the rest of their lives together. My job is to make it official between them, their family and friends, the state, and most of all God.

*(This is similar to our commitment to The Lord. In fact, when I am about to lead someone in a prayer of salvation, I use marriage as an example.)*

Here are a sample of some formal wedding vows;

* **"To have and to hold from this day forward”.** This indicates the commitment to be with each other from that day forward.
* **"For better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health”.** This phrase acknowledges the ups and downs of life and the commitment to be with each other in all circumstances.
* **"To love and to cherish, till death us do part”.** This expresses the commitment to love and cherish each other throughout their married life.
* **"I pledge to you my faithfulness”.** This emphasizes the commitment to be faithful to one's partner.

My expectation is that they will be faithful to live out their commitment to one another in both big and small ways. That means spending time with one another, preferring one another, pursuing one another’s interests, and prioritizing one another.

On a practical level this may mean, how they spend their weekends or weeknights, where they spend holidays, how they divide household tasks and responsibilities, and what type of hobbies or leisure activities they persue.

(example: one couple was conflicted because ethe husband went bowling a few nights a week, the wife thought that would stop after the wedding, it didn’t).

Did the permanence of their Marriage Vows hinge upon the frequency of his bowling nights???

No, but the quality of their marriage and the quality of their relationship was very affected by it.

This is how it is with us before the Lord. Our salvation is not based on our ability to live sinless lives, pursue prayer, and attend church, but **the quality of our relationship** with Jesus, and the fulfillment of His purposes and power in our lives ***very much does****!*

**Hebrews 10:19-25** “Therefore, brothers and sisters, 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 and with the full assurance that faith brings, 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 not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”

* Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart
* Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess.
* Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.
* Let us not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing.
* Let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”

*“Let us not giving up meeting together…”*

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of coming to church.

Your presence in the body is invaluable and irreplaceable

Attending church is so much more than experiencing the worship and hearing a sermon. Your presence in the body is vital whether you know it or not. The people you greet and fellowship with, the relationships you reinforce and check in on, the opportunity to see, hear, and be part of whatever the Holy Spirit has planned for that day, cannot happen unless you are present to experience it.

Since COVID, church attendance habits have really suffered. Our church, along with many other churches around the world, have been offering “online services” ever since. In our online service we offer a song, announcements, and a prerecorded video of last week’s sermon. It gives people an opportunity to stay connected if they absolutely can’t make it to church. It is at best, a small sample of what we experience at our services. Even if it was a live simulcast, it would still not be an adequate replacement for coming to fellowship in-person.

One person said it’s like watching a fireplace on TV. It looks good, but it doesn’t have the look, feel, smell, and warmth of a real fire.

A thriving fellowship is like a *campfire.* We rely on the heat that comes from the convection and radiation of each other. If you remove one coal from a campfire, it would like grow cold and grey while the rest of the fire remains blazing. That’s how it is for a person who neglects or forsakes meeting together in fellowship with other believers.

Now a difficult verse…

**Hebrews 10:26-31** *“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 someone deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified them, 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.” [Deut.32:35-36]

*“If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.”*

These verses are often used to try to prove that salvation through Jesus can be lost through bad conduct. As if to say, your ability to be saved depends on Jesus, but your ability to stay saved depends on YOU. This is simply untrue.

What these verses are actually addressing is, “Apostasy” - the abandonment of one's religious faith or previously held loyalty. If I who claim to know and love Jesus, turn away and renounce that He even exists, I would be apostate. You would have to wonder if I ever truly knew Jesus at all.

Can you imagine someone visiting from the Midwest to see the ocean for the first time, then going back and claiming that they’ve seen it, then changing their mind and saying no, it actually doesn’t even exist. You’d have to wonder if they ever really saw it at all.

The entire New Testament speaks of God’s mercy and grace. It repeatedly states that we can find help in our weaknesses, forgiveness of sins, and cleansing of all unrighteousness. Hebrews itself makes one of the boldest promises of God’s mercy and grace;

**Hebrews 4:15-16** **15 “**For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. **16**Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”

So, what these verses are NOT saying is, *“if you struggle with sin or a weakness in the flesh of any kind you cannot be forgiven and will burn in the fires of hell whether you’ve been saved or not*.”

That would be a contradiction of the “gospel of grace” spread throughout the New Testament. It would also contradict the “message of mercy” found in the Old Testament as well;

**Psalm 130:1-4** “Out of the depths I cry to you, Lord; **2**Lord, hear my voice.  
Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy. **3**If you, Lord, kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand? **4**But with you there is forgiveness, so that we can, with reverence, serve you.”

What these verses are saying (to “the Hebrews” that are receiving the letter), is that; *after being exposed to the knowledge of the truth of the sacrifice Jesus made, you cannot reject His sacrifice and continue to sin in hopes that sacrifices at the temple will save you. That is not an option. You have taken your fate upon yourself and will face God’s* judgment.

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Remember the earlier days…

**Hebrews 10:32-34**  *“Remember those earlier days* after you had received the light, when you endured in a great conflict full 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 suffered along with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions.”

It's as if the writer is saying, *“Remember when you first became a believer? You would preach to all your friends and family, probably suffering insults and persecution because of it, but you didn’t care, you accepted it joyfully because you were so “in love with Jesus”. You went to church or Bible Study every chance you could, and you spent time devouring the word of God because you finally found the words of eternal life. Don’t forget those earlier day and throw that away your confidence…”*

**Hebrews 10:35-39** “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 little while, he who is coming will come and will not delay.” [Isaiah 26:20]

38 And, “But my righteous one will live by faith. And I take no pleasure

in the one who shrinks back.” [Hab. 2:3-4]

39 But we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith and are saved.” <>

The choices that are given is to:

**“Persevere”** (verse 35)

OR

**“Shrink Back”** (verse 39)

* *“Persevering”* means ‘moving forward’ regardless of adversity,
* “Shrinking back” means allowing the things of the world to get you to ‘retreat’ from passionately pursuing God.

There is a reward for one, and consequences for the other.

We must encourage ourselves, and each other to “Persevere” *“all the more as you see the Day approaching.” (v. 25)*

As we persevere in our love and devotion to Jesus, we will be richly rewarded and will receive what he has promised. But we cannot let our light go out. We must remember to not forsake our first love, persevere in times of difficulties, and overcome the temptation to shrink back.

**Rev. 2:4-5 “4**Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first. **5**Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first.”

**Rev. 3:12** “He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more.”

There is a ‘new season of growth’ and a ‘time of refreshing’ upon us. Don’t miss it. Make a renewed commitment to reinvigorate your relationship with God by pursuing Him more passionately, being faithful in your time and devotion to Him, and declaring that you “Believe in Him”, “Belong to Him”, and “Love Him” with all that is within you.

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