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Hebrews 10



Hebrews - Steve Gregg

In "Hebrews 10," Steve Gregg unpacks the significance of the sacrifices made under the old covenant versus the sacrifice of Jesus under the new covenant. He emphasizes that the sacrifices of the old covenant were not desired by God and that Jesus' sacrifice was necessary to atone for sin once and for all. Gregg also discusses the importance of regularly coming together with fellow believers and not drifting away from the faith. He warns that choosing to turn away from Jesus can lead to perdition or being lost and destroyed.

Transcript

Now, Hebrews chapter 10 is going to do, we're going to find two different things in this chapter. One is the finishing out of the implications of what chapter nine was talking about, Christ's sacrifice, his fulfillment of the typology of the day of atonement. That's what's going to be in view basically up to about verse 25, really.

And then the remainder of the chapter is yet another of the warning sections. It becomes the fourth of the five sections in Hebrews where the author breaks away from his topic to again warn, strongly warn against backsliding, against leaving the faith. We'll encounter both in this chapter.

In chapter 10, verse one, it says, for the law, having a shadow of the good things to come. We've encountered that word already in the previous sessions and not the very image of the things can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. And once again, he means those sacrifices because they are repetitious every year can't make your conscience perfect.

He doesn't say conscience here, but he's already said that in chapter nine, verse nine, where he said essentially the same thing, only adding the word conscience to the sentence. It was symbolic, said in which were both gifts and sacrifices offered, which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience. I'm sure he has the same thought in mind here, though he's not using as much as many words since he's already clarified what he means by perfect.

The repetition of sacrifices year by year, particularly the annual Yom Kippur sacrifices, they never settled the matter. And if the matter is never really settled finally, then your conscience can't really be settled finally. For would they not then have ceased to be offered? That is if they really did the full job, why would they offer them again next year and the year after when they just do it once and that's done the job? Why wouldn't they cease to be offered if they had really fulfilled all the requirements? For the worshipers once purged would have had no more consciousness of sins.

Their conscience therefore would be purged and perfect if it had done the job finally. But in those sacrifices, there is a reminder of the sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.

So here we have the indicator that the sacrificial system never really took away sins anyway. They just represented something that would come later that could, namely Christ's sacrifice. Therefore, when he came into the world, he said, and this now becomes a quotation from Psalm 40 verses six through eight.

And he represented as Christ saying this when he comes into the world. Actually in Psalm 40, if you read the Psalm, it sounds like David is saying it about himself. And there is a sense in which it would be entirely possible for David to say this about himself.

Not quite so much though, as it applies to Christ. David as a type of Christ speaks those things which apply to Christ. And in a sense they apply to Christ more than they apply to David.

Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you have prepared for me. Now we're here looking at the Septuagint rendering. In the Hebrew, it says, sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but you have opened my ear.

Now opening of the ear can either mean made me able to hear. You know, my ears were stopped, but now they're open. Now I can hear you.

Or opening the ear could refer to opening a hole in the ear lobe as when somebody is a voluntary slave for life, they receive the all in the ear and the ring. And so to open the ear could be a reference to opening an aperture in the ear lobe where a ring could be put, which suggests you have made me your servant. You've pressed me into what is actually for me a voluntary position of lifelong servitude.

So in the Hebrew, it's not even clear how you have opened my ear is meant, but the Septuagint translators, long before Christ came to the world, translated it and they substituted the term open my ear with the word you have prepared a body for me. Now I'm not sure how they justified that. And I'm not sure what they were thinking.

It is possible that the Hebrew text from which they worked actually said you have prepared a body for me. And that later Hebrew manuscripts, the ones that we have

changed it to you've opened my ear. It's hard to know which was the original.

It's perplexing for those who insist on knowing. Fortunately, I have learned over the years at something like this to say, we can't know. So it doesn't matter all that much.

But the way it's quoted here is at least approved. Whether this is the way it was said it originally in the Hebrew a long time ago or not, this is the way it read in the Bible at the time that the writer of Hebrews was writing. And God had prepared a body for Jesus.

That is he'd prepared a means for him to come to earth and live among us. Because sacrifices and offerings of the old system were simply not sufficient, not pleasing to God. Now it's interesting that David could write something like that.

Even if he said you have opened my ear and meant something like you've made me your servant or you've made me able to hear what you have to say or whatever, whatever he means by it. That David living under the old system a thousand years before it was abolished would say God didn't desire sacrifices and offerings. You certainly wouldn't get that impression for reading the law.

Reading Leviticus, you certainly wouldn't get the impression that God didn't desire sacrifices and offerings. Seems like he desired that a great deal. And this is an example of how David by inspiration saw way ahead of his time.

He understood things about God that you'd never have gotten just from reading the law. But what's interesting is David tells us in the Psalms that he meditated day and night on the law. He recommended people meditating day and night on the law but his meditations on the law caused God to reveal things to him that were deeper than the casual reading would be.

If you casually read the law, you think God's all about sacrifices and offerings. But if you meditate on it day and night, apparently the Holy Spirit, even in Old Testament times could reveal to a person like David after God's own heart, this isn't really what God's into. And David says it not only in Psalm 40, but he says it even in a more significant place in terms of the content of the statement, more significant in Psalm 51, which he wrote after he'd sinned with Bathsheba.

And therefore was very much aware of his sinfulness and the very situation where a Jew under the old system would think I need to offer sacrifices. Problem is no sacrifice would suffice for a sin like that under the old system. But in Psalm 51, his Psalm of repentance, he says in verse 17 or verse 16 and 17, he says, for you did not desire sacrifice or else I would give it.

You do not delight in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart. These, O God, you will not despise.

So even under the sacrificial system, a man like David who knew God as well as he did would recognize that these sacrifices, these rituals are not really ever, they don't ring your chimes, God. That's not really, you're not that kind of a God who cares as much about that as cares about one's heart. A broken spirit, a contrite heart, a humble spirit is much more the sacrifice you're looking for.

And so David wrote that not only in Psalm 51, but also in Psalm 40. But in this passage in Psalm 40, the writer of Hebrews tells us this really is David speaking for Christ as it were, because Christ came because God in fact, wasn't pleased with sacrifices and offers. Not ultimately, it wasn't enough.

He wanted something more and what he wanted more was for Jesus to offer himself. And so he prepared for him a body. Verse six, in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin, you had no pleasure.

Now it's interesting, again, just how this impacts certain modern attitudes of certain Christians. Because I mentioned that there are Christians who believe and a great number of them actually, it's a major view among many evangelicals that in the end times, the temple will be restored with God's blessing. That in the millennium, there will be a temple and animal sacrifice and Levitical priests offering them.

This is based on a certain application of the last chapters of Ezekiel and the final chapter of Zechariah, which in my opinion, don't teach that, but some do see it that way. But one has to ask if Jesus is gonna come back and set up a millennial kingdom and they're gonna set up the temple and animal sacrifices against the world, why? He's already fulfilled them. And what's more, he never had any pleasure in them.

It's not just that they're unnecessary, they never were even desirable. God never had any pleasure in those things. Why would he, after Jesus comes back, reestablish the system of which the scripture testifies he had no pleasure? Both the Old and the New Testament tell us that.

Verse seven, then I said, behold, I have come, in the volume of the book it is written of me to do your will, O God. Now, I think the next line in the Psalms is, is your law is in my heart. When he says in the volume of the book, it is written of me, we have seen this as Christ speaking, can recognize this as true in a sense that it wouldn't be true of David necessarily.

That is the entirety of the Old Testament revelation, the book, is about Jesus. Jesus is the subject from the very earliest chapters on. Even at the time of the fall in Genesis three, there's the prediction that the seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent, which Christians recognize as a prediction about Christ.

You have Christ depicted in types and shadows and laws, in prophecies about him, the

messianic prophecies. Even in appearances personally in theophanies, lots of different ways Jesus is seen in the Old Testament. He is the message of the Old Testament, the Messiah who would come.

And so in Jesus saying in the volume of the book, it's written of me, we could understand him to be saying, I'm really the subject matter of the whole book. Now, David couldn't say it in quite the same sense about himself. He's not the subject matter of the whole Old Testament book, but he could be saying, my significance and the significance God has given me as the one who is the King of Israel and God has promised me that my seed will rule forever in his kingdom and so forth.

I mean, David as a progenitor of the Messiah might see his own significance as something connected to the whole drift of the Old Testament revelation. In any case, what the author wants to get across here by quoting this verse is that this verse testifies to two separate things. One is a sacrificial system, which God does not have any pleasure in.

And the other is the last line in verse seven, I have come to do your will. And the author of Hebrews wants to contrast those two things and he does so in verse eight, previously saying, sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings and offering for sin you did not desire, nor had pleasure in them. Then the author inserts, which are offered according to the law.

So he's saying those things in the law, God had no pleasure. The law was not what God wanted. Then he said, behold, I have come to do your will, oh God.

If God had no pleasure in the sacrifices in the law, then it wasn't really his will. Ultimately, not his ultimate will. It was provisional for the time being, but his will was something that goes beyond that, that isn't that.

And he contrasts that between what God has no pleasure in and what is God's will, what is God's pleasure? And what is God's pleasure is what Jesus came to do. I have come to do your will. So the writer of Hebrews has seen in that, that the will of God done in Christ is what really God took pleasure in and the law and the sacrifices before, not so much.

He says in verse nine, then he said, behold, I have come to do your will, oh God. He takes away the first, meaning the sacrificial system, that he may establish the second. Now this is another statement similar to chapter eight, verse 13, where it says that the coming of the new covenant has made the old one obsolete.

This one points out that the new covenant isn't just something tacked on to the old. He takes away the old in order to establish the new. You can't have two at the same time.

You can't have the legal system of Israel in force and the new covenant in force at the same time. He takes away the old in order that he might establish the new, the second. By that will, and he used the word will here because he's repeating it from the end of the

quote.

I have come to do your will, oh God. Well, what will? What Jesus did was the will. By that will of God, we have been sanctified.

By Jesus doing the will of God, the ultimate will of God, we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. This once for all is a phrase that's been used already previously a couple of times. And it's of course intentional to contrast with the repeated necessity of sacrifices under the old system.

Verse 11, and every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices which can never take away sins. But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God. From that time waiting until his enemies are made his footstool.

For by one offering, he has perfected forever. The consciences of, I add the word consciences of because that's what he's, how he's qualified perfection in the earlier passages. He's perfected forever those who are being sanctified.

And the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us for after he had said before, this is the covenant that I will make with them after those days. He's repeating again the passage from Jeremiah 31 from the previous chapter or from chapter eight. When he said, this is the covenant that I will make with them after those days says Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts and in their minds.

I will write them. Then he adds their sins and their lawless deeds. I will remember no more.

Now there is where there is remission of these, what? Of the sins and lawless deeds mentioned in verse 17 where there's remission of sins and lawless deeds. There is no longer an offering for sin. Now, of course, what do you say? What he's saying is we don't offer additional offerings as they did then.

Jesus even doesn't do it. He offered once for all. And the contrast between standing and sitting is deliberate in verses 11 and 12.

Every priest in the Old Testament stands. He doesn't really sit down. He just stands ministering daily, repeatedly the same sacrifice over again, which actually never end the system.

They never do the job, never take away sins really. So the priest has to stand because you only sit down when your job's done and the priest's job is never done. Now he's not, of course, arguing that priests never literally sat down ever.

He's speaking impressionistically here. You don't really see the priest in the Old

Testament sitting down much. Certainly not when they're on the job.

They never have really offered the last sacrifice. So they have to keep standing and offering sacrifices until something happens to be more final. But he says Jesus, by contrast, after he offered one sacrifice for sins sat down.

So he's not standing anymore, he's sitting. He has entered into his rest and it's a rest like the rest that God entered into when he finished the creation of the world in six days. He rested because he was done.

He rested the seventh day because there's no more to do. Unlike the priests who couldn't ever sit down because there always was more to do. Christ doesn't have anything more to do along these lines.

So he did it once, did it right. Do it right the first time, you don't have to redo it. He did it right.

And then he sat down, done. Nothing more to do. He finished the work.

Now the finished work of Christ is that rest that he has entered into. He's finished, so he's sitting. We enter into that rest too, it says in chapter four.

We enter into God's rest, to Christ's rest by, I guess, simply believing and acknowledging that the work is done, that there's nothing more that God does require, that what Christ has done is adequate as far as God is concerned. And once you take stock of that, your conscience is clear for life in a sense. And so the interesting thing here is that he quotes again, Jeremiah 31, which he had quoted at length in chapter eight and capitalizes on the last statement in the quotation.

There's sins and lawless deeds I will remember no more. Now remember, he said back in verse three, in the repetitious sacrifices of the Old Testament, there was always a remembrance of sin. They're always remembering their sinning again.

They're remembering it by offering a sacrifice to cover it. But if God will remember their sins no more, then the remembrance of sin is a thing of the past. And therefore there's no repetition of sacrifices.

Where there's remission of these, there's no longer an offering for sin, by which he means there's no longer any validity or necessity in additional sacrifices. Now, of course, the writer knew that there were still sacrifices being offered in the temple every day, even as he wrote, the Jews were still doing that, but it's because they didn't accept the sacrifice of Christ. Just because sacrifices were still going on doesn't mean they had any validity.

It was just now an empty ritual. There are no more sacrifices for sins. That one has put

an end to them all.

And remember that line at the end of verse 18, when we come to another line in verse 26 later on, which is where it says there remains, there no longer remains sacrifice for sins. It's making the same point, but in the context of verse 26, sometimes people misunderstand it because they're not noticing what he said in verse 18. Now, we will find in verse 26 that he takes off on another warning section, but before that, he's gonna wind down this part of his rhetoric.

He has essentially made the point that Christ has offered the final sacrifice for sins. It is enough. We have a great high priest.

There's nothing to stand between us and God. And therefore he winds up with a pastoral kind of exhortation. How should we respond? Let's have the application to this fact.

What should I do about it? Well, therefore means because of these things that have been established and affirmed. Therefore, brethren, verse 19, having boldness to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he consecrated for us through the veil, that is his flesh, and having a high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Now, the sprinkling of the heart for a pure conscience is, of course, a reference to the blood of Jesus.

We know that, first of all, because he's made that point earlier in chapter nine. He says in verse 14, chapter 9, 14, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself to God without spot, purge your conscience from dead works? Your conscience is purged by the blood of Christ. Actually, in 1 Peter 1 and verse 2, Peter says that we are elect, 1 Peter 1, 2, we're elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father in sanctification of the spirit for obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.

We've been sprinkled with the blood of Jesus and it has purged our conscience from dead works. These things are affirmed elsewhere, so we understand that this is the meaning when we see such language in verse 22 of Hebrews 10, that we have our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water, almost certainly a reference to baptism in water. He's not talking about something spiritual, he's talking about our bodies, our physical body has been washed with water.

Now, I think the reason for him mentioning both of these things, besides the fact that the early church did place a proper weight on the necessity of baptism in water, was that he's been talking about the tabernacle ritual throughout the last chapters. He's got his audiences and his own attention on the tabernacle. And if a worshiper wished to come to God at the tabernacle, initially they came to the altar of offering, burnt offering, where an animal was offered and blood was sprinkled and shed and so forth at the foot of the

altar.

But then they'd go to the labor of cleansing, which was water and the blood and so forth would be, and dirt and so forth would be washed off the priest so he could go into the building. But you see, the approach to God began with a blood sacrifice and the sprinkling of blood at the foot of the altar, followed by a washing in water. And these things are no doubt a reference to, no doubt these rituals represent being justified by the blood of Christ and baptism.

So in focusing on this whole ritual, he says, well, we've had our hearts sprinkled and that has cured the conscience problem we had. And our bodies have been washed. We can enter into the tabernacle now.

And certainly, as we've said in some of our private conversations outside of class, the early church knew nothing of a Christian who was not water baptized. I mean, water baptism was applied immediately upon conversion and no one was considered part of the church unless they had been water baptized. So he could count on the fact that all his readers had in fact been washed with water.

Now, whether this washing of water actually contributes to one's cleanness, actual cleanness before God, or whether it's a ritual that follows the cleansing of the heart in order to depict it in another way, like bathing the body, but it's only ritualistic. He doesn't say, and many Christians have different views about the actual role of baptism, but there's no question in my mind that he's referring to baptism here. He says, our bodies have been washed with pure water.

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering for he who promised is faithful and let us consider one another in order to stir up each other to love and good works. The King James has to provoke one another to love and good works. I always liked that phraseology.

When I provoke you to be more loving, stir up one another. It says in the New King James, to love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another and so much the more as you see the day approaching. What day? We might say the second coming of Christ.

I'm not sure if we do see that day approaching. Is it gonna come at a time when you think not? I don't know if we could see it approaching, but there was a day approaching for the Jews at this time, which would be a very crisis situation for those who had forsaken the assembly of the church and had gone back to the Jewish order and were counting on the temple, which was going to be attacked very shortly after this was written and destroyed. And not only the temple burned, but the people burned and killed and it slaughtered in great numbers.

So that day is approaching. Stay away from that system. Don't jump onto a ship that's sinking.

And as you see that day approaching, urge people all the more not to make that mistake. Exhort one another daily. Encourage each other in the right direction toward love and good works, in other words, toward following Christ.

And don't forsake the assembling of ourselves together, which is, it says, it is the manner of some. That is, some of the Christians had already forsaken the church. The readers presumably had not.

They were still in the church so they could hear this letter read, which was probably read in the church. But some had already left and others were perhaps thinking about it. He says, don't do that.

Now, I want to say that because this is, I go off on these digressions only because certain verses in Hebrews have been used certain ways by Christians so much that I think we need to examine and see whether they're doing the right thing with them. This verse, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, is a very often quoted verse with reference to going to church regularly. Obviously, it is talking about going to church.

It is talking about assembling. And some people have believed that there's some kind of specified frequency with which people need to go to church. Obviously, it's fairly customary and it has been since early days of the church to attend a church on a Sunday.

That's been just church tradition. We go to church on Sunday. Though there's nothing in the Bible that says Sunday has to be the day you do it or that you have to do it every Sunday or that you can't go more often than Sunday.

In other words, the idea that you have an obligation to go to church on Sunday is sealed in some people's minds that as a tradition, that if you don't go to church every Sunday or don't go to the same church regularly, that you may be in violation of some Christian duty. And when people go looking for a scripture to try to nail you on that, this is the only scripture they can think of because there really aren't any others. Don't forsake the assembling of ourselves together.

Well, of course you don't want to forsake the assembling of yourselves together, but that's not saying how often or where. People can assemble in a home, they can assemble at a restaurant, they can, as we will tomorrow morning with the men of the church, or they can assemble in a church. There's lots of ways to assemble.

You can assemble in a car as you're driving somewhere together. The Christians gathering together for mutual edification and mutual provocation to love and good works and to exhort one another. This can happen in formal or informal gatherings.

There's nothing here that states how often or in what circumstance a person needs to be with other Christians, but certainly this is a fact. If you're not growing cold toward Christ, if you're not sort of on the road to backsliding, you are going to want to be with other Christians. I mean, just the short time that you've been in this community here for a few days, many people told me what a difference it is just to be in the presence of Christians and with this kind of fellowship and encouragement.

Every Christian wants that. If you find yourself not wanting that and being to draw back from that, it's gotta be because your heart is getting cold. I'm not saying there aren't times when you don't need a break from it, but someone who just kind of gradually moves away from Christian fellowship, starts hanging out with other crowd, not Christian, that person's showing that their affinity is changing.

They don't have the inward affinity with the Christian sympathies that they had, and they're finding more in common with this other crowd they're going to. To forsake the assembling of Christians does not refer specifically to missing church. It specifically refers to drifting away from the relationships in the body of Christ, which you will in fact naturally crave if you're spiritually healthy.

It's like when Peter says, as newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word. It doesn't say exactly how much Bible reading you have to do, but if you're a healthy baby, you're going to crave the word, like a baby craves milk. There's a certain, sometimes we reduce the obligation of Christianity to certain rules and schedules and things like that, which is not what the Bible does.

The Bible is looking for you to have your heart always fervent toward God. If you do, you're going to want to be with Christians. No one's going to have to tell you how often to get with Christians.

You'll do it as often as you can. You'll want to. If you're a healthy spiritual baby, you're going to be desiring the milk of the word.

No one's going to have to tell you how often to read it. It'll be, you'll have an appetite for it. So spirituality isn't reduced to certain hours or days of obligation to go to services or to read the Bible.

Those things are something of a thermometer to show if your temperature is right, as a Christian, spiritually speaking. We know that this was being written because the readers were tending to drift away. The warnings in this book would not have been given as they were if that wasn't so.

And so he's saying, some of you are drifting away from fellowship. Don't do that. What are you drifting away to? You're going back to the temple system.

That day of its demise is fast approaching. And as you see people beginning to drift

away, you need to exhort them daily. You need to continue to provoke each other in the right direction because it's hard, especially if your family and friends outside of the church are anti-Christian, as would be the case with many of these readers and their families and friends who are Jewish.

It's hard to just follow Jesus alone against a stiff opposition from your social or family group. And so you need the support of the Christian like-minded group. It's very, very, very, very strengthening to be around people who share your values and will keep you accountable and will encourage you in the right direction.

Now, of course, this business of noting that some people have fallen away, have left the assembly is the jumping off point for the author to go into another strong warning about not doing such things as that, not falling away. And that's what comes up in verse 26. For if we sin willfully, now verse 26 through 39 are the fourth warning section.

For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment and fire indignation, which will devour the adversaries. Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the spirit of grace? For we know him who said, vengeance is mine.

I will repay, says the Lord. And again, the Lord will judge his people. Both of these quotations come from Deuteronomy 32.

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God but recall the former days in which after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings, partly while you were made a spectacle, both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who are so treated. For you had compassion on me in my chains and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven. Therefore, do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward.

For you have need of endurance so that after you've done the will of God, you may receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith, but if anyone draws back, my soul has no pleasure in him.

These words in verses 37 and 38 are a quotation from Habakkuk chapter two, verses three and four. Paul also likes to quote the just shall live by faith in some of his epistles. Verse 39, but we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

Now this warning section begins by saying that if we sin willfully after we've come to the knowledge of truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins. I commented on this, I think, in our introduction to Hebrews, if I'm not mistaken, but I'll just bring it up again now that we're at this passage. This is a frightening passage for many people.

I know from my own youth, reading this early on and not quite grasping what it was saying, the impression I had was that the sacrifice of Christ, which atones for my sins now, will no longer be effective if I sin willfully after I've known the truth. There will remain no more sacrifice for sins. And if there's no more sacrifice for sins, I'm in a heap of trouble because I depend fully on the sacrifice of sins that Christ offered.

And if the author is saying, well, that's good only until you sin willfully, you know, that's, it's like we pointed out earlier, some people think that the sacrifice is only good for sins of ignorance or unintentional sins. But if you do it on purpose, you're out. No, there's no coming back.

There's no more sacrifice that'll be effective for you. Now, it would be a very strange thing if that's what this was saying, because he's just spent a long time talking about how Christ's sacrifice perfectly cleanses our conscience once and for all. And it would seem that sinning willfully, well, what does that even mean, sin willfully? What does willful mean? Does it mean I chose to do it? Well, don't I choose to do all my sins? Whatever I do, if I choose to do good or evil, isn't that willful? Isn't that my will? Isn't every decision I make an act of my will, an act of my choice? How could, what do we mean by a willful sin? Is there such a thing as a sin that I did accidentally? Well, I guess if I didn't know it was a sin, but I have to say the only reason I know I'm a sinner is because I did some sins I knew were sins.

And some of them I think I did after I was saved. So is it all over for me? Is there no more sacrifice of Christ for me then? Well, I think we have to understand that the theology of the New Testament, and even of this author, does not suggest that you get just one shot at salvation. If you sin again, you're done.

What is he saying? He's talking to his audience who are in a particular situation. Sinning willfully is something that really, I mean, it doesn't mean that you did an act and you wanted to do it at that moment. I believe it means if you really want to go back to a life of sin.

The NIV reads it, if we go on sinning willfully, which just means that we choose not to abandon our sins. We choose not to repent. We choose not to be Christians, in other words.

A Christian is one who has repented of his sin. A Christian is one whose wills to live a holy life, even if he fails, he wants to. It's my will to live a holy life.

If I do sin, it does go against my grain at a certain level. Certainly there's a part of me that's drawing me that way. We call that, I wanted it at that level.

But like Paul said in Romans 7, I do things I hate. There's a part of me that wants to do it, but in my mind, I embrace the law of God. Who I really am doesn't want that.

So to sin willfully, I think here refers to, if you come to the place where you don't care that you're sinning anymore, that it's not your will to live a holy life anymore. You don't have a Christian spirit or a Christian motivation or a commitment to God or Christ anymore. And you give up on that.

You turn away and say, okay, my will from now on is to sin. Okay. Well, then you've abandoned your Christian moorings there and deliberately, willful means it's a deliberate thing.

What he's referring to here is not that you've, you commit an individual sin once you were saved, but that if after you've known the truth or been a Christian, if you choose to go back to sinning instead of being a Christian, this is so hard for us because we're all aware that we as Christians have sinned. And so we don't think of being a Christian and sinning as opposite and mutually exclusive things. We think, well, I'm a Christian and I sin.

So that's not mutually exclusive. But in the mind of the biblical writers, you're choosing one way or another. You're choosing to follow Christ.

You're choosing to live in sin. I had a friend who I overheard him being asked once. He was a kind of a prophet preacher, kind of a guy.

He was kind of a hippie Jesus freak guy who had sort of saw himself as having a prophetic ministry. But he actually had some insightful things to say. He's gone on to be with the Lord now, but I was with him once and someone asked him and said, can you be a Christian and still live in sin? And I remember he said, well, you tell me, can you ride two different horses going different directions at the same time? I thought, well, that's a really simple question.

I mean, it's rather obvious, but the Christian wasn't thinking that way. They weren't thinking being a Christian is riding a certain direction. Living in sin is riding the opposite direction.

You can't do both. The early Christians did not see a life of sin and a life of being a Christian as compatible. They were opposite directions.

So he says, if you sin willfully, he's not just talking about if you're a good Christian, but you fall into sin. He's talking about if you choose sin as your way of life instead of choosing Jesus, which is exactly what these people apparently were doing. Because if

you choose to go away from Jesus, you're choosing to rebel against him, in sin and rebellion against him.

Well, why would anyone choose that? Well, these people were Jewish, and they thought, well, we could go back to the temple. We could live in sin like we did before, and we'd do what we used to do. We'd go to the temple.

The high priest will offer a sacrifice once a year. We'll offer our own sacrifices once in a while. We'll cover it.

We don't have to live this hard life of being persecuted and living righteously and avoiding sin. We can go ahead and sin like all of our ancestors did and just count on that sacrifice on Yom Kippur to cover all that. And when he says, if you do that, guess what? There does not remain any sacrifice for sin.

He doesn't mean Christ's sacrifice doesn't remain if you happen to stumble into sin as a Christian. In fact, the opposite is affirmed in 1 John 2. If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father. Jesus Christ, the righteous, and he's the propitiation for our sins.

So John is talking to Christians. He says, if anyone here sins, I'm frightened so you won't sin, he says, but if you do, Christ is our advocate. Christ is our propitiation.

It's the opposite of what some people understand Hebrews 10, 26 to say. What he's saying is there's no more Jewish sacrifices if that's the direction you're going. If you're going back to a life where you're careless about sin and careful about ritual to cover it instead of following Jesus, you're going back to a system that isn't even there.

There doesn't even remain a sacrifice for sin. And he said that in verse 18, where there's a remission of sins as where the new covenant has come in, there's no longer any offering for sin. That is, there's no longer additional offerings for sin, additional to Christ.

There's no alternative offering for sin. It's what he's saying. If you forsake the sacrifice of Christ and its ramifications in your life as a Christian, and you give all that up, you're going to where there's no other sacrifices available.

He's not diminishing the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice to a believer who stumbles into sin. He's got an entirely different thing in mind, leaving Christ, going back to the Jewish system and counting on those sacrifices, which are not there anymore, as far as God is concerned. But what you can find, though you won't find a sacrifice there in the temple for you that God will honor, you will find a certain fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation, which will devour the adversaries.

And the adversaries of the early church were, frankly, the Sanhedrin and the synagogue. It was the Jews that were persecuting them. After AD 70, it was mainly the Romans that

persecuted the Christians.

But until AD 70, the main persecutor and adversaries of God and of the church were the apostate Jews, the ones who crucified Christ, who stoned Stephen, who sent Saul out to persecute Christians, then persecuted him when he got saved, and basically tried to get Paul imprisoned and killed every time they could. These were the main adversaries of Christianity and of God. And that fiery indignation that was coming upon them, I believe, of course, did come shortly after that.

And that's what he's saying, you go back there, you're not gonna find a sacrifice, you're gonna find judgment on that system. And you'll be in it. He says, anyone who rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.

That's just an observation. Moses' law had quite a lot of capital crimes, 30 or so. And that being so, the total rejection of Moses' authority would get you killed eventually.

You'd do something, some violation that would get you killed. It's a severe penalty for violating Moses' law, but there's a worse penalty for violating a greater authority. Of how much worse punishment do you suppose he will be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot? Now, trampling the Son of God underfoot would be simply what he's referring to as forsaking Christ.

Knowing about Christ and just burning him. Insulting the spirit of grace, as he says, at the end of the verse. But he also says in that verse that they count the blood of the covenant, Christ's blood, by which that person was sanctified, a common thing.

Now, what's interesting here is it says the person in question was sanctified by the blood of Jesus. The blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified. That person can lose his position and is warned against doing so.

Trampling underfoot that sanctifying blood that sanctified you. So it's rather difficult to see the... One of the two Calvinist points must be wrong. Either perseverance or limited atonement must be wrong.

Limited atonement teaches that Jesus didn't die for everyone. If you have an unlimited atonement, you could say everybody was sanctified by the blood of Jesus, but some can fall away. Or, but the elect won't.

You could still have perseverance of the elect, but still some people who do wrong, they were purchased by the blood of Jesus. They just didn't get saved because they were an elect. But if you've got the same people who were sanctified by the blood of Christ, are the ones who are in danger of falling away from Christ, then you can't have both the universal atonement and the universal perseverance of the saints either.

Just this doesn't work out well. One of those two doctrines has to be sacrificed to this

statement, it seems to me. Now he quotes from Deuteronomy 32.

We know him who said, vengeance is mine and I will repay. And then he says, again, the Lord will judge his people. Both of these are in the same passage in Deuteronomy.

Why does he quote that here? Vengeance is mine, I will repay. God is saying that he will avenge himself. Now, Paul quotes this verse from Deuteronomy to say that God will avenge us.

When in Romans chapter 12, Paul says, brethren, do not avenge yourselves, but give place to wrath for God has said, vengeance is mine, I will repay. In other words, instead of you avenging yourself, just leave God to avenge you. But here he seems to be saying God will avenge himself.

He can do that, of course. He can avenge us and himself as the knee arises. He's the one who reserves for himself the right to avenge.

But the mention of it here seems to be saying that God is planning to avenge himself. Now, vengeance is something where you're repaying someone for something they've done bad. It's vengeance isn't just hostility, it is a repayment.

It's avenging some wrong. So God is going to avenge a wrong. What wrong was done and by whom? In my opinion, I believe that he's referring to the fact that Jerusalem crucified Christ and God is gonna avenge Christ or avenge himself on those who killed him.

And so that's what I understand it to be talking about here. And the Lord will judge his people. It's interesting, the word judge can mean to vindicate if they're innocent.

But in this case, he's kind of assuming that Israel, God's former people are about to come under judgment, just like Deuteronomy warned about. He says, it's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. I don't mind being in God's hands.

I like being in God's hands. I don't wanna fall into his hands. I like to rest in his hands, but it's a different thing to fall into his hands as a victim.

When he's exercising judgment, to be put into his hands is not a good thing. Now, David wanted to fall into the hands of God instead of the hands of man. Remember that? When the prophet said to him, judgment's coming, you can either be persecuted by your enemies, you can have a plague for three days, persecuted by your enemies for three months or whatever it was.

These options were given and David said, let me fall into the hands of God rather than the hands of man because God is merciful. Well, God is merciful to the repentant, but to those who abandon Christ, there's not much to hope for there. It's a fearful thing to fall

into God's hands when his intention is to judge.

But then he reminds them of the former days. We won't read that again because we read these verses, but these people used to be putting up a bold witness. They used to suffer and endure reproaches and sufferings.

And they weren't afraid to stand by others who were imprisoned, including the author. Verse 34, you had compassion on me and my chains. And they had even lost their goods.

They cheerfully endured the spoiling of their goods. Now, I'm not sure under what circumstances that would be. I mean, you might have your goods spoiled by burglars coming into your house, but this is probably more a result of persecution of some kind.

We don't know of any case when the Christian's property was confiscated, but it could have been. We don't know all that went on. It's possible that the Sanhedrin may have once issued an order that all Jews who turned to Christ will have their property confiscated.

Or it may be that by turning to Christ, they lost their inheritance from their family. They were written out of the will. In that sense, we could say their houses and their properties were taken from them.

They were spoiled of those things. They were plundered of them, so to speak. They sacrificed those things for their loyalty to Christ.

We don't know exactly what this plundering of their goods amounted to, but it was interesting that they were joyful enough about it. It's clear that their goods, their possessions were not that important to them because he says, you knew you had a better and enduring substance in heaven. And he says, therefore, in verse 35 and 36, don't cast away that confidence.

You need to be patient. You need to hold on until the promise has come. What is the promise they're holding on to? It says, you have need of patience that after you've done the will of God, you may receive the promise.

This could be referring to a promise of personal salvation or something like that, but I think in the context here, he's talking about the crisis that Israel was facing at that time. And some were going to be lost, but some would not. Some would escape.

We know that the Christian Jews did escape. They were warned and they escaped. And so in a sense, if you're a Jew at the time of the judgment coming on the Jews, but God says, if you stick with Jesus, you'll avoid this judgment, then that's a promise they want to keep.

And if they go back to the system, they're not going to avoid that judgment. I, you know, verses 37 and 38 are quoted in a strange way. And I don't have time to try to defend this proposition, but I believe this passage in Habakkuk, in chapter two of Habakkuk, is talking about the judgment coming on Jerusalem.

I mean, not just from this statement in this place, but from the passage itself in its context, which I don't have time to look at right now. Habakkuk has some, in chapter two, some passages that are a little difficult to sort out. This is one of them.

Even this is the Septuagint translation. It reads real different than the Hebrew. If you happen to look up Habakkuk two, verses three and four in your free time, in your Bible, it'll read quite differently than this.

This quotes from the Septuagint. But in the context, I believe that what God is saying is I'm going to judge. I'm going to come, I'm going to judge the apostate Israel, but there will be a remnant to a faith.

The faithful remnant will be spared. And so he quotes, for yet a little while, and this is not the second coming because that has been more than a little while, but this is something that was coming soon. For a little while, and he who is coming will come and will not tarry.

Now we think of that as the second coming, perhaps, except we recognize that although there is indeed a second coming that we anticipate, there are other events in history that are also referred to as God coming in a figurative sense, coming in judgment, usually. And I believe this is referring to coming in judgment on Jerusalem. It says, he will not tarry.

And he says, now the just will live by his faith. That is when God does judge Israel, there will be a faithful remnant. Our author is encouraging his readers to be among them and not to drift from them.

The faithful remnant will be saved. He'll live. When God brings this horrible judgment, there will be some who survive.

That's the promise you need to hold on for. He says in verse 36, this is the promise, the just shall live by his faith. The faithful remnant will escape it, in other words.

But if anyone draws back, my soul has no pleasure in him. So this is of course why he quotes the verse that there will be a remnant saved, but even if that remnant draws back, they'll fall into that group that God isn't pleased with. And no doubt the judgment that comes upon them.

Again, what's interesting is in the Greek, it doesn't say if anyone draws back, but if he draws back. And so the just one lives by faith, but if he draws back, that's another story.

It's not someone else.

It's not like one person has faith and someone else draws back. But if the one who is saved by faith actually backslides or draws back away from God, then God will, well, he'll have no pleasure in him. And what that will amount to is not really spelled out.

But in verse 39, he says, but we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe unto the saving of the soul. Now we, who's we? Well, the author and those like-minded with him. We are not gonna draw back, but some do.

There is that danger. We're warned against it. Some Christians think, well, this proves that you can't fall away because after he talks about falling away, he says, we aren't those who do that.

In other words, we Christians don't fall back. Well, but some do. The author includes himself among a group of faithful who will not do so.

I'm not gonna draw back. And others who are like-minded with me are not going to, but I'm urging you not to do so. Don't draw back because you'll draw back to perdition, a word that means, it means to be lost or destroyed.

This Greek word is translated lost and translated destroyed in various passages. And so you don't wanna draw back away from God unto destruction or perishing, perdition, but you wanna believe unto the saving of the soul. You need to hold onto your faith because it's an unto thing.

It's something you're going toward. You are saved in one sense, but the full salvation is gonna be realized, of course, when Jesus comes back or for that matter, just as life progresses, your salvation, your sanctification advances. It's believing to the saving of your soul is something that can be interrupted by drawing back unto perdition.

And so that is a very stern warning he gives them here. Now, when it comes to chapter 11, of course, we come to one of the most famous chapters in the Bible and we have three chapters left, all of which are delightful chapters. And so I'm looking forward to them, but we'll take our break now.