

Study Notes For Hebrews **(Chapter Ten)**

Hebrews 10:1-4 - Our study in this article will be from the following text: *“For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins”* (Hebrews 10:1-4).

Take some time to think about a shadow. While out with my dog in the backyard at night, I can see a shadow of myself on our rock wall because of the flood lights we have out back. At first, my dog thought there was someone else out there with us. He barked at my shadow. Then, he saw his own shadow and barked at that too. He had to come to realize that these shadows were a rough outline of himself and me. However, those shadows were not really us. The word “shadow” is translated from the Greek word “σκία” (Strong’s # 4639). Part of the definition of the word is this: “an image cast by an object and representing the form of that object.”

Hopefully, if you have been studying these articles weekly, thinking of the Law of Moses as a shadow of things to come is not new to you. We have covered this already in our study of this letter (Hebrews 8:1-13). This epistle is not the only place in the Scriptures this is covered. The saints in Colosse were also taught that the Law of Moses was a shadow of things to come: *“Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ”* (Colossians 2:14-17). For first century Jewish Christians wanting to stay under parts of the Law of Moses, they needed to understand they were serving a shadow. The real image was not in view with that thinking.

The Law of Moses was not intended to be eternal (Jeremiah 31:31-34). The Law pointed to good things to come (i.e. Deuteronomy 18:15-19; cf. Acts 3:18-26). So, it was time for those struggling with this to step back and see the real image rather than the shadow.

Had first century Jewish Christians missed the true image, to whom were they looking for their sins to be forgiven? The Law of Moses could never make those serving thereunder perfect. If they were to return to the sacrificial system in place under the Law of Moses (Leviticus 4:1-35, Leviticus 12:1-8, Leviticus 14:1-57, Leviticus 17:11, etc.), that would have meant they were rejecting Christ. The result of that would have been falling from grace (Galatians 5:4). As we know, it was not possible for the blood of those sacrifices to take away sins. These are all things we have studied already in the previous chapter of this epistle (Hebrews 9:1-28).

Seeing as how these things are a review, I want to use the remainder of this article to address being perfect. Before the Law of Moses, God expected man to walk before Him and be perfect. Think about Job: *“There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil... And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil”* (Job 1:1; 1:8)? Regarding Noah, we read: *“These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God”* (Genesis 6:9). Notice what God told Abraham [Abram]: *“And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect”* (Genesis 17:1). After the Law of Moses was delivered, notice: *“Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God... Let your heart therefore be perfect with the LORD our God, to walk in his statutes, and to keep his commandments, as at this day”* (Deuteronomy 18:13 and I Kings 8:61).

So, from before and after the establishment of the Law of Moses, God wanted man to be perfect. That hasn't changed. Perfection is required under the Law of Christ as well (Matthew 5:48, II Corinthians 6:14-7:1, II Corinthians 13:11, Colossians 1:28, and II Timothy 3:15-17). Here is what has changed. In the past, once man erred and ceased to be perfect in the sight of God, there was no way to come back to that complete, whole, perfect state of being. The sacrifices, as our text of study states, did not take away sins. Those sins were brought to remembrance annually.

We are told to depart from iniquity (II Timothy 2:19). We are told not to use grace as an excuse for sin (Romans 6:1-2). We are told not to err (James 1:13-16). For them in the first century and for us today, if we cease to be perfect there is a way back to perfection. The way back to our Father was paved by Christ (I John 1:7-2:1). This too has been addressed in the Hebrew epistle (Hebrews 2:9-10, Hebrews 4:14-16, Hebrews 7:24-25, and Hebrews 9:24). While we should not abuse the grace of our Lord and take forgiveness for granted (Acts 8:12-24), it is possible for Christians to err and then be restored (Galatians 6:1, James 5:19-20, Revelation 2:1-7, and Revelation

3:14-22). Therefore, the perfection that eluded followers under the Law of Moses is attainable and sustainable in Christ.

Hebrews 10:5-10 - Since it is not possible for the blood of an animal sacrifice to take away sins (Hebrews 10:4), a better sacrifice needed to be made. So, the text we are studying addresses the role of Jesus as the sacrifice for the sins of many in the following way: *“Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all”* (Hebrews 10:5-10).

We should first reference the Psalm from which some of the text we are studying comes from: *“Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart”* (Psalms 40:6-8). We have seen in the previous chapter (Hebrews 9:11-13) and in the current chapter we are studying, that the sacrifices of old were not sufficient. Now, through the quote from the Psalm, another layer comes forth in our study. God did not desire continued sacrifices. Not only were the sacrifices not sufficient, but the hypocrisy of those offering them made them undesirable to God (Isaiah 1:10-20). There were times wherein God rejected and even despised their offerings (Jeremiah 6:20, Amos 5:21-22, and Malachi 1:6-14). The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD (Proverbs 15:8 and Proverbs 21:27).

In times past, the Lord wanted them to change rather than just keep coming to Him with their sacrifices. Consider what Micah the prophet said: *“Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God”* (Micah 6:6-8; cf. Deuteronomy 10:12-13)? Furthermore, consider the following words of wisdom regarding what God wanted: *“To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice”* (Proverbs 21:3).

In the past, they erred over and over again. Instead of repentance, they offered vain sacrifices. God took no pleasure in that (1 Samuel 15:22). As Christians, those written to and in Hebrew letter and we too ought to be greatly interested in what pleases our Creator (Colossians 1:10 and Revelation 4:11). In times past, the sacrifices and the people offering them were not acceptable to God.

The law in which sacrifices were being made was flawed. The people offering the sacrifices were flawed. The sacrifices themselves were flawed. Under that system no one could have their sins taken away. The law needed to change. The system needed changed. The sacrifice and the priesthood had to change. We have covered all of that in this letter so far (Hebrews 7:11-9:28).

Jesus understood that the Father had prepared for Him a physical, fleshly body. We have also studied that, to a point, in this epistle (Hebrews 2:9-18). To the saints in Philippi, Paul and Timothy wrote the following through inspiration: *“Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross”* (Philippians 2:4-8).

Jesus not only understood His role, but was willingly obedient to the will of our Father in Heaven (John 4:34 and John 6:38). He finished the work the Father gave Him to do (John 17:4). In fact, we covered earlier in the Hebrew epistle how Jesus learned obedience by the things which He suffered (Hebrews 5:8-9).

The benefit of Jesus' obedience is not to the Father or to Jesus. Those whom have sinned and have needed salvation are the beneficiaries of what Jesus did. Through Christ, we can be saved (Acts 15:11). The “we” in the context of our study is more than I will have space to cover. To keep it simple, those who are sanctified through the offering of the body of Christ are those whom have done their part to be beneficiaries of Jesus' death. Thus, the “we” are those of us whom have and continue to obey the various requirements to be saved and continue in that state (Luke 8:4-15, Luke 9:57-62, Luke 13:1-5, Luke 14:25-33, Acts 2:36-47, Acts 3:19, Acts 8:25-39, Acts 18:8, Romans 6:1-23, Galatians 3:26-29, Colossians 1:23, Titus 2:11-14, etc.).

Most will not come to our Lord and obey Him to be saved (Matthew 7:13-23 and Luke 13:23-24). Yet, Jesus died so it is possible for all the lost to be saved (1 John 2:1-2). That is why the Gospel was to be preached to the whole world (Matthew

28:16-20 and Mark 16:14-20). There will not be some other plan or way. Jesus is the way to the Father (John 14:6). Thus, He is the once-for-all sacrifice. Thanks be to God for that!

Hebrews 10:11-18 *“And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin”* (Hebrews 10:11-18).

Under the Law of Moses, the priests offered daily sacrifices (Exodus 29:36-42). The system of offerings was very complex then. Offerings were made twice a day. Things changed on the Sabbath. There were special offerings on a monthly basis. There were feast offerings as well (Numbers 28:1-31). The priests of old were busy when they were following the Law of Moses correctly. As we have already addressed, though many offerings were made and some of those offerings were for sin, those offerings could never take away sins (Hebrews 10:1-4).

In chapter seven of this Hebrew letter, some of the differences are given between Jesus as our high priest and those high priests of the past. The daily sacrifices is one of those differences. In a context talking about Jesus, this was written: *“For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself”* (Hebrews 7:26-27). As we have also already studied, Jesus' sacrifice was once for all (Hebrews 9:25-28 and Hebrews 10:10). There was/is no need for Him to offer Himself or any other sacrifice again. That part of His work is forever over.

After Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection He ascended back into Heaven (Acts 1:6-11). This letter opened saying this: *“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; Being made so*

much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they" (Hebrews 1:1-4). The point of Jesus being on the right hand of the side of our Father is made throughout this letter (Hebrews 8:1 and Hebrews 12:1-2). Where Jesus is right now is of no small meaning. His being beside our Father in Heaven was preached from the first sermon that was preached after Jesus left this world (Acts 2:33-34). It is from the right hand of our Father that Jesus makes intercession for us (Romans 8:34).

Jesus will remain on the right hand of the Father until His enemies be made His footstool (Acts 2:35). This too is a repetitive point in this letter (Hebrews 1:13). This statement is a quote from a Psalm (Psalms 110:1). Jesus used that Psalm in teaching about Himself (Mark 12:35-37). We know, though it is not addressed in this context, that Jesus will hold this position until His return on the Day of Judgment (Matthew 24:35-25:46 and I Corinthians 15:20-28). Man can be made ready for that day through the sacrifice of our Lord.

Perfection was not attainable through the Levitical priesthood (Hebrews 7:11; 7:19). However, the blood of Christ is powerful enough to wash away sins (Revelation 1:5). As we all should know, our part is to obey the Gospel and continue faithfully in Christ (Acts 8:12-39, Acts 18:8, Romans 6:1-23, Colossians 1:23, etc.). That includes, because the blood of Christ enables such, cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit (II Corinthians 6:14-7:1).

Then, there is the reminder that the Holy Ghost had before spoken of the New Covenant. The manner in which this is stated is wonderful. We know and have studied this in this book already (Hebrews 8:7-13), that Jeremiah prophesied about the New Covenant as referenced here (Jeremiah 31:31-34). Identifying this prophecy as being from the Holy Ghost is a great reminder to us of the inspiration of the Scriptures (II Timothy 3:16-17). Remember: *"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost"* (II Peter 1:20-21). As David said: *"The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue"* (II Samuel 23:2).

The conclusion of the Scriptures we are looking at in this study makes it clear that once sins are remitted, there is no more offering for sin. It is through the blood of Christ that we can be forgiven, have our sins remitted, and that we can be redeemed (Matthew 26:28, Ephesians 1:7, and Colossians 1:12-14). It is not difficult to understand that once Jesus made these things possible through His death that there was/is no need for any other sacrifice. This point keeps being repeated and stated in

different ways because of the struggle Jewish Christians were having in walking away from the Law of Moses. Later in this chapter (Hebrews 10:26-31), a similar point is going to be made on this matter. There is no “plan B” (so to speak). Jesus always was/is the only plan (I Peter 1:18-20).

Hebrews 10:19-22 - We have spent several of our last studies considering Jesus’ role as our High Priest. We have studied about the supremacy of Him offering Himself as the sacrifice over those lesser sacrifices of old. In our previous article we looked at Jesus offering Himself for the New Covenant and for the remission of sins (Hebrews 10:11-18). The text we are considering in this study looks back at those points and forward to what that means for saints to be able to come before God. Here is what we are going to study in this article: *“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an 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”* (Hebrews 10:19-22).

Under the Law of Moses, there was a holy place and then a most holy place in the tabernacle (Exodus 26:31-33). The same thing was true in the temple that Solomon had built (II Chronicles 5:1-10). Under the Law of Moses, the most holy place was off limits to most people. The high priest would go in once a year to offer a sin sacrifice (Leviticus 16:1-34 and Numbers 18:1-14). To enter in, the priests had to have on special garments (Exodus 28:1-43 and Exodus 29:29-30). When we studied chapter nine of this letter, after the aforementioned points were essentially made (Hebrews 9:1-7), we then read this: *“The Holy Ghost thus signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation. But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us”* (Hebrews 9:8-12). Jesus is the new and living way by which we come to the Father (John 10:1-18 and John 14:6).

Now, in our current study, we are reading that we can come boldly into the holiest place. This is because of the blood of Christ (Revelation 1:5). We have been washed and sanctified (I Corinthians 6:9-11 and I Peter 3:20-21). We have our “special

garment” (Galatians 3:27). As new creatures in Christ (II Corinthians 5:17), we as have been created in righteousness and true holiness (Ephesians 4:24). Notice this: *“Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy”* (I Peter 2:5-10).

With Jesus being our High Priest (Hebrews 3:1 and Hebrews 6:19-7:28), we can draw near to God the Father. Do you remember reading this: *“Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need”* (Hebrews 4:14-16)?

Though the door to the Father has been opened by Christ, we have our part in coming before our Father too. This letter states we have to come with a true heart. This was the case under the Old Law (I Chronicles 28:9 and I Chronicles 29:10-17). What does that mean for us though? Think about the word “true” for a moment. The point is, we have to approach God honestly, genuinely. That is the case from the beginning of the conversion process (Luke 8:15). Consider how that Peter was concerned about Simon because his heart was not right in the sight of God (Acts 8:13-24).

We have to come before God in full assurance of faith (I John 3:19-22). We can have that confidence by faith because of what Jesus did in bringing us to the Father (Romans 5:1-2 and Ephesians 3:1-12).

We cannot come before God with defiled consciences (Romans 14:14-23). Every Christian should understand this point rather easily. We are supposed to practice this every first day of the week when we partake of the Lord’s Supper (I Corinthians 11:23-32). If any one of us came to our Father, while our consciences were defiled, that

would be presenting ourselves before God without being pure (Titus 1:15). We should know that God expects every one of His children to be pure (II Corinthians 6:14-7:1, Hebrews 12:14, and I John 3:1-3). Therefore, remember that Jesus opened the door for us to come to the Father. At the same time, don't neglect your continual part in keeping that door open (Isaiah 59:1-3 and John 9:31).

Hebrews 10:23-24 - We are clean and able to come before God in full assurance of faith (Hebrews 10:22). From those beautiful points, we read this: *"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works"* (Hebrews 10:23-24).

Earlier in this letter the point was made that the people of the Lord need to hold fast the confidence to the end (Hebrews 3:6; 3:14). The point was also made, as it is here, to hold fast to the profession [confession] the faithful have made (Hebrews 4:14). When you do a word study on "hold fast" (Strong's # 2722) you see the same word translated in other Scriptures as "seize" (Matthew 21:38), "keep" (Luke 8:15, I Corinthians 11:2, and I Corinthians 15:2), "retained" (Philemon 1:13), etc. That should help us understand what it is to "hold fast" to something. That something in our current study, is the profession [confession; acknowledgement; cf. I Timothy 6:12-13] of our faith.

If we stand in the faith that we have confessed we will not waver. Wavering was a huge issue then as it seems to always be. In a context looking forward to the ending of spiritual gifts (Ephesians 4:7-16), Paul wrote this to the saints in Ephesus: *"That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive"* (Ephesians 4:14). When Elijah was a prophet and the children of God at that time wavered, notice what was said: *"And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word"* (I Kings 18:21). Whether then, the first century, or now; Christians need to be steadfast and unmovable (I Corinthians 15:58).

One of the things that keeps us from being moved is that we know for sure that God is faithful. The word translated "faithful" means, in part, that God is sure and true (Strong's # 4103). We have seen this point made earlier in this letter (Hebrews 6:16-18). It is not in God's nature to lie (Titus 1:1-3). God's word accomplishes what He pleases (Isaiah 55:10-11). When the prophets prophesied something to come, though it may not have happened immediately, it was surely going to come (Habakkuk 2:3). We can study the Scriptures and see that. Jesus was a testimony of God's

faithfulness in this manner (Luke 24:44). Therefore, we can stand firm knowing that God will keep true to what He has said. We can live with confidence in that!

One of the tools that the Lord has given us to help us be steadfast is each other (Galatians 6:1-2 and Hebrews 3:13). The word “consider” appears in this context and it is a huge part of how we help each other. The Greek word translated “consider” [κατανοέω] means: “To observe fully: — behold, consider, discover, perceive. To perceive, remark, observe, understand; to consider attentively, fix one's eyes or mind upon” (Strong's # 2657). I have long preached and have taught that we need to know one another to be able to help one another. This is what it takes to do things such as be fruit inspectors (Matthew 7:15-20) or to even know when our brethren need our spiritual or physical help. To consider one another properly, the right motives have to be in place (Romans 12:10-16 and Galatians 5:13). When the right motives exist we will use what we see in one another to properly aid one another.

The Greek word in Hebrews 10:24 translated as “provoke” [παροξυσμός] means: “(paroxysm); incitement (to good), or dispute (in anger): — contention, provoke unto. An inciting, incitement, irritation” (Strong's # 3948). So, when we come together we need to sometimes irritate one another into the right actions. Think about that. Whether we are comforting one another or warning each other, we have responsibilities one toward another as brethren (I Thessalonians 5:11-14).

We are to provoke one another to love. That is very broad. We are supposed to walk in love (Ephesians 5:2). Christians are to be clothed in charity [love] because love is the bond of perfectness (Colossians 3:14). We are supposed to love God with all our heart, mind, and soul (Matthew 22:37). That love is shown by action. God and man knows we love the Lord when we keep His instructions (John 14:15 and I John 5:2-3). We are supposed to love one another as Christ loved us (John 13:34-35 and John 15:12-13). Our love one toward another, just as our love for God, is shown through actions (I John 3:10-18). We are taught to love our neighbors as we love ourselves (James 2:1-13). We are taught that those who do not love the truth will perish (II Thessalonians 2:10). We could go on and on with individual applications (i.e. Ephesians 5:25). The responsibility here is to get on each other to love the right things the right ways.

In addition to love, we are to provoke one another to good works. We know that faith without works is dead (James 2:14-26). Like love, good works are visible (Matthew 5:14-16 and I Peter 2:12). However, good works are not supposed to become a show for others to see (Matthew 6:1-8). We were created in Christ Jesus unto good works (Ephesians 2:1-10, Titus 2:11-14, Titus 3:8, and Titus 3:14). The Scriptures furnish us to

these good works (II Timothy 3:14-17). That doesn't mean all of our good works are going to be visible though. Just like the sins of some, the good works of some will not be known by many in this lifetime (I Timothy 5:24-25). There is one other thing about visible good works that I want to mention here. Remember that visible "good works" can be deceptive (Matthew 23:5; 23:27-28). That is where examination of the fruit of what appears to be good works comes in. So, let's push each other to do good works for all the right reasons!

Hebrews 10:25 - In our previous study we discussed having unwavering faith and being considerate of each other to provoke one another for good (Hebrews 10:23-24). In this study we will consider the following passage of Scripture: *"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching"* (Hebrews 10:25).

The term translated forsaking [ἐγκαταλείπω] means: "To leave behind in some place, i.e. (in a good sense) let remain over, or (in a bad sense) to desert: — forsake, leave..." (Strong's #1459). The term translated "assembling" [ἐπισυναγωγή] means: "a complete collection; especially a Christian meeting (for worship): — assembling (gathering) together" (Strong's # 1997).

Let me first remind us that the local church does not just assemble for worship. There are various authorized reasons for the saints to come together. If a problem among the saints has reached a point wherein collective disciplinary action is necessary among the saints, the brethren must assemble together (Matthew 18:15-17). The saints may assemble together to hear of the work of the Lord (Acts 14:26-27). The congregation is to assemble for purposes of teaching and/or discussing spiritual matters (Acts 15:1-35). So, as we proceed in discussing forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, it is of great importance that we do not just think we are talking about a worship assembly.

In context, the instruction not to forsake assembling with brethren is about our work in aiding each other spiritually. Before we get into that, let's discuss why assembling was so significant for these first century saints. The key is the phrase, "so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." Jesus foretold of a time, in the first century, when judgment was going to come upon the city of Jerusalem. He spoke of signs to indicate when it was coming. He said it would be in their generation. It was a coming of the Lord, as in a judgment day such as we've seen several times in the Old Testament (Isaiah 13:1-14:23, Isaiah 34:1-8, and Jeremiah 46:1-10), that was observable (cf. Romans 13:12, James 5:8, and I Peter 4:7). At that time, even the temple was going to be destroyed (Matthew 23:37-24:34 and Mark 13:1-30). In Luke's

account we read: *“And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled”* (Luke 21:20-24).

Saints in the first century assembled together in one place (I Corinthians 14:23). In the time of coming peril that was clearly evident before their eyes, there were some that had been forsaking the assembling of the saints. That was the wrong action (Jude 1:17-19). In those troubling days, brethren needed to be in the company of one another. We do not know how often they assembled. We know it would have at least been upon the first day of the week (Acts 20:7 and I Corinthians 16:1-2). Regardless of the frequency, the instruction was to come together rather than to be apart.

Earlier in this epistle, these saints were told this: *“But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin”* (Hebrews 3:13). The word translated “exhort” in that earlier instruction is the same word that appears here in Hebrews 10:25. The Greek word in Hebrews 3:13 and Hebrews 10:25 is “παρακαλέω”. It means: “to call near, i.e. invite, invoke (by imploration, hortation or consolation): — beseech, call for, (be of good) comfort, desire, (give) exhort(-ation), intreat, pray. To call to one's side, call for, summon; to address, speak to, (call to, call upon), which may be done in the way of exhortation, entreaty, comfort, instruction, etc.; to admonish, exhort; to beg, entreat, beseech; to strive to appease by entreaty to console, to encourage and strengthen by consolation, to comfort; to receive consolation, be comforted to encourage, strengthen; exhorting and comforting and encouraging; to instruct, teach” (Strong's # 3870).

Most focus on the assembling of the saints being about worship to God. The instructions in Hebrews 10:25 helps us to understand that assembling together is about the saints too. Whether in the first century in times of extreme conditions or today in times of lesser peril, brethren need each other. Paul wrote: *“But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love”* (Ephesians 4:15-16). Like the human body,

every member is necessary for the proper working of the local body of Christ (I Corinthians 12:12-27).

For us, we learn from Hebrews 10:25 not to forsake assembling with our brethren. It is so important for us to be together, at least once per week. Even the Lord's Supper includes instruction to wait for one another before partaking (I Corinthians 11:17-34). So, let us not ever fail to assemble together as some of those in the first century did!

Hebrews 10:26-27 - After addressing the necessity of assembling together to provoke and exhort one another (Hebrews 10:24-25), the inspired writers of this letter deal with the consequences of disobedience. Again, lest we fail to remember this, faithful brethren are ESSENTIAL to our salvation (Hebrews 3:13). Faithful brethren aid each other in keeping the course. With that in mind, let's proceed with our study.

The text we are looking at in this article is this: *"For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries"* (Hebrews 10:26-27).

Earlier in this epistle the impossibility of restoration for those who experienced spiritual gifts and still fell away was addressed (Hebrews 6:4-6). Now, we have willful sins addressed. By implication, if there are willful sins there must also be sins that are not willful. Under the Law of Moses there were sins of ignorance and sacrifices that were to be made for those sins (Leviticus 4:1-35 and Leviticus 5:15). Those sins of ignorance were considered different than sins committed presumptuously (Numbers 15:22-31). Regardless, whether sins were willful or not, they were still sins. Such is true even today.

Sin has and does require the ability to know right from wrong (James 4:17). Sin then is defined as transgression of the law (I John 3:4). There is not a greater or lesser transgression today (James 2:10-13). Nor is there an excuse for ignorance (Acts 17:22-31). Therefore, we cannot infer from Hebrews 10:26 that any sin is excusable (John 5:22-29, Romans 2:1-11, Romans 6:23, Galatians 6:7-8, and James 1:13-16). Even when a babe in Christ erred from the faith there was full accountability (Acts 8:4-25). So, what is taught here?

If you will recall the context, therein is the basis of the points in this text. In chapters nine and ten, we have read about the superiority of the death of Christ over the sacrifices offered under the Law of Moses. There will be no greater sacrifice than Christ

for the sins of mankind. There is no future plan for another way. Jesus is the way (John 14:6). Again, as the context has stated, the next thing that will happen is the return of our Lord unto salvation (Hebrews 9:28). The Jewish Christians of the first century needed to understand that there is/was no "Plan C" for salvation. If they blew it with Jesus, they're done for all eternity.

Instead of thinking about some other sacrifice they could offer to appease God for their disobedience, they needed to understand what was coming next. There is no other sacrifice coming. Jesus is not coming to provide greater mercy or extended grace. What they have to look forward to is the fiery judgment of the Lord.

When Christ comes at an unknown time (Matthew 24:35-25:13), this is what there is to look forward to: *"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal"* (Matthew 25:31-46).

There is a reason why eternal damnation is know as Hell fire (Mark 9:43-48). That understanding is fuel for obedience. In fact, we will later read this in this same letter: *"Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace,*

whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire” (Hebrews 12:28-29).

The vengeance of God is scary. God does not acquit evil doers. He holds on to His wrath and executes it on His adversaries (Nahum 1:2-3). That same fiery vengeance that comes upon Christians who sin willfully is what the enemies of God’s people have to look forward to (II Thessalonians 1:7-9). Wait, consider something else. What’s the difference between an erring Christian and a rebellious person of the world? The answer is that it is worse for the erring Christian who falls (II Peter 2:20-22). Our Sacrifice said, you are either with Him or against Him (Matthew 12:30). Walk, talk, and live with Him!

Hebrews 10:28-30 - Earlier in this Hebrew epistle this was written: *“Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him” (Hebrews 2:1-3). Now, in the context we are looking at similar points are being made.*

“He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people” (Hebrews 10:28-30).

Under the Law of Moses the death penalty was carried out if a transgression was witnessed by two or three persons (Deuteronomy 17:1-6). The point in our study is not so much about the two or three witnesses. God’s judgment does not need witnesses. Having said that, since it is mentioned, I want to take a look at those points before we move forward. Throughout the Scriptures, the word of one was not enough to count as a witnessed matter. The law stated this: *“One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established”* (Deuteronomy 19:15). These principles are not gone from the Law of Christ. Notice: *“Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every*

word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:15-20; cf. II Corinthians 13:1 and I Timothy 5:19-20).

Now, we are going to come back to the main points of our study. With more given to us there is a greater expectation and level of accountability (Luke 12:35-48). The death penalty for transgressions of old were carried out with no mercy (Deuteronomy 19:1-13). The same was true for God’s condemnation on the unjust under the Law of Moses (Deuteronomy 29:19-20 and Jeremiah 13:1-14). With that in mind, consider what Paul preached in Athens: *“Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man’s device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead” (Acts 17:29-31).*

All of the things stated in this context stand out. There is one point that maybe should have been and should be considered a bit more highly. How could anyone think that God is going to dismiss the mistreatment of His only begotten Son? Take into consideration something written later in this letter: *“And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven: Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire” (Hebrews 12:24-29).*

The point about having “done despite” unto the Spirit of grace is interesting. The word translated “despite” [ἐνυβρίζω] means: “to insult” (Strong’s 1796). The point about counting the blood of the covenant an unholy thing should have hit home for the

Christians addressed in this letter. Their knowledge of the Law of Moses and former practices under the Law of Moses make these points very impactful. They were taught the differences between holy and unholy (Leviticus 10:10). They knew better than to consider that which is holy as unholy (Isaiah 5:20 and Malachi 2:17). When those of old profaned the things of God there was a sure punishment that came upon them (Jeremiah 23:10-12).

We have seen that God takes disobedience personally. He considers such an insult to Himself, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. From that, we read about His vengeance. Vengeance belongs to God (Deuteronomy 32:35, Psalms 94:1, Nahum 1:2, and Romans 12:17-21). God will recompense [repay] (Isaiah 65:1-7, Jeremiah 16:14-18, and II Thessalonians 1:4-10). Lest we think we can get away with something because we are His children, He makes that clear too. The Lord will judge His people (Psalms 50:4 and I Peter 4:17-19). So, be faithful!

Hebrews 10:31 - The context we have been studying is putting those to whom this letter was written on notice about God's wrath. We have already read in this context about *"a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation"* (Hebrews 10:27). What we are going to be considering in this article is this statement: *"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God"* (Hebrews 10:31).

The fear of God is a challenging subject of study throughout the Scriptures. In both the Old and New Testaments there are clear instructions to fear God. Moses taught Israel to fear God: *"Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it: That thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged"* (Deuteronomy 6:1-2). A Psalmist wrote: *"God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him"* (Psalms 89:7). Jesus taught about fearing God: *"And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell"* (Matthew 10:28). Paul taught about fearing God: *"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God"* (II Corinthians 7:1).

There are great lessons that are taught about the benefits of fearing God. For example, fear helps in learning and obedience. Notice: *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever... The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but*

fools despise wisdom and instruction... Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil... Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Psalms 111:10, Proverbs 1:7, Ecclesiastes 12:13-14, and Philipians 2:12).

All of those Scriptures cited above are clear and show us that we are to fear God. We can see even in the brief sample of Scriptures I have provided thus far, the benefit of fearing God. Having said all of that, there is a reason that I wrote about this being a challenging subject matter. Notice: *“And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love” (I John 4:14-18).*

When you study this subject matter out entirely, you are left to conclude that our relationship with God should not be one of constant fear, but rather of love (Mark 12:29-30 and I Corinthians 8:3). The kind of love that obeys Him (I John 5:1-3) and thus we are confident in our salvation rather than fearful of destruction (I John 5:13). If you will recall, we learned earlier in this epistle that Jesus came and provided a means whereby they and we can escape the fear of physical death that existed under the Law of Moses (Hebrews 2:9-18).

In the first century, when the Holy Spirit was given to those whom obeyed the Gospel (Acts 8:12-24, Acts 19:1-7, and Ephesians 1:13-14); that is what the Spirit confirmed to those saints (Romans 8:15-17). Proper fear exists when we consider what would happen if we disobeyed Him (Hebrews 12:28-29). Proper fear is the kind of fear a child should have of his or her parents if he or she were to disobey their rules (Leviticus 19:3). If we were to only fear the Lord, and fear Him in all ways, terror would take hold of us (Psalms 119:120). God does not desire us to walk about every moment of our lives fearing the return of Christ and the Judgment Day (John 14:1-3, II Peter 3:10-14, Jude 1:21, and I John 3:1-3). The Lord wants us to be of good comfort (II Corinthians 13:11). So, where is the balance? How do I fear and remain joyful?

In a Psalm we read: *“Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling”* (Psalms 2:11). Fear is intended to keep us obedient (Exodus 20:18-20 and Jeremiah 32:36-40). If you know you’re going to be saved (I John 2:28), through your obedient love (John 14:15); you’ll fear consequences of sin. Yet, you’ll not be afraid of the Lord. What you should be afraid of is disappointing Him, by violating His will (II Thessalonians 1:7-9). Therefore, fear brings joy because fear moves you to obey the Lord and continually serve Him. Such obedience brings happiness and joy to your life (Psalms 35:9, Proverbs 29:18, Isaiah 61:10, and I Peter 1:3-9).

Keep in mind, the context in which Hebrews 10:31 is written is about willful disobedience (Hebrews 10:25-30). If you are faithful, there is nothing to fear about your current spiritual state. The only fear you should have is concerning what would occur if you were to choose to be disobedient to the will of God. Remember always, God does not intend for His people to be miserably afraid. Remember this: *“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee”* (Isaiah 26:3; cf. Colossians 3:15).

Hebrews 10:32-33 - *“But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used”* (Hebrews 10:32-33).

The saints that are being addressed in this epistle are being told to remember the former days. The term translated “former” [πρότερον] means: “previously: — before, (at the) first, former...” (Strong’s # 4386). The specific time they are being told to look back to was when they were illuminated. The term translated “illuminated” [φωτίζω] means: “To shed rays, i.e. to shine or (transitively) to brighten up (literally or figuratively): — enlighten, illuminate, (bring to, give) light, make to see. To give light, to shine, to enlighten, light up, illumine; to bring to light, render evident; to cause something to exist and thus come to light and become clear to all; to enlighten, spiritually, imbue with saving knowledge; to instruct, to inform, teach; to give understanding to” (Strong’s # 5461).

Thankfully, the term translated “illuminated” is used earlier in this letter and that usage gives us the clear meaning of what they were told to look back on. In the following quote, the word translated “enlightened” is the same Greek word as was translated “illuminated” in the context we are studying. Notice: *“Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal*

judgment. And this will we do, if God permit. For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame” (Hebrews 6:1-6).

When you put all of that together, these people are being told to look back at their initial conversion. To look back to when they received the knowledge of the truth and the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:36-41, Acts 8:5-25, and Acts 19:1-7). That was a powerful teaching tool in the first century for Jews that struggled with letting go of the Law of Moses (Galatians 3:1-5). When someone errs from the faith, it is important for them to look back and remember from whence they have fallen (Revelation 2:1-5 and Revelation 3:1-3).

From what is written in the context we are looking at, they endured affliction after initial obedience to the Gospel. The word translated “fight” [ἀθλησις] means: “struggle (figuratively): — fight. To contest, to combat, to strive, struggle, hard trial” (Strong’s # 119). There is not a clear contextual clue to when these things occurred. What we do know is that there are various accounts of saints facing persecution after being converted to Christ (Acts 6:7-8:4, Acts 17:1-10, I Thessalonians 2:13-14, and II Thessalonians 1:3-10). As we well know, the faithful in Christ are promised that we will suffer persecution because of our faithfulness to the Lord (Matthew 5:10-12, Luke 6:22, John 16:1-3, Acts 12:1-2, Acts 14:22, Romans 8:28-39, II Timothy 1:8-12, II Timothy 2:8-12, II Timothy 3:11-12, I Peter 3:14-18, and I Peter 4:12-19).

During those times wherein these saints suffered affliction, they were made to be a gazing-stock [spectacle; expose to contempt (Strong’s # 2301)] by reproaches and afflictions. One of the best ways I can think of to consider what this means is to look at what Paul wrote about being a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men. Notice: *“For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ’s sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised. Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace; And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day” (I Corinthians 4:9-13).*

In those sufferings wherein they were made a spectacle to the world, they were not alone. While there is not much comfort in this fact, the faithful should know that all

brethren will soon or later understand what it means to suffer for Christ. The term translated “companion” [κοινωνός] means: “a sharer, i.e. associate: — companion, x fellowship, partaker, partner...” (Strong’s # 2844). Paul told Timothy: *“Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God”* (II Timothy 1:8). Peter wrote: *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world”* (I Peter 5:8-9). John wrote: *“I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ”* (Revelation 1:9).

These saints are being reminded that they have suffered for the cause. They are being told to look back at the beginning of their faith. None of us want to come so far and suffer so much just to fall short later in life (II John 1:8). Ultimately, the comfort we look to in times of suffering is the reward of eternal life with our Lord in Heaven (I Peter 1:1-9). We need to stay faithful so that our hope is not in vain!

Hebrews 10:34 - If you will recall, it is implied that there was a plurality of individuals involved in writing this letter (Hebrews 5:11-6:3, Hebrews 6:9, Hebrews 6:11, Hebrews 8:1, and Hebrews 13:18). After writing about the saints suffering through reproaches and afflictions (Hebrews 10:32-33), one of the penmen of this letter then wrote this personal note: *“For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance”* (Hebrews 10:34).

The word translated “bonds” [δεδσμόν] means: “a band, i.e. ligament (of the body) or shackle (of a prisoner); figuratively, an impediment or disability: — band, bond, chain, string” (Strong’s # 1199). With that definition and the most common usage of the word (i.e. Acts 16:26, Acts 20:23, Acts 22:30, Acts 23:29, Acts 26:29, Acts 26:31, II Timothy 2:9, etc.); it is most likely this is in reference to imprisonment. It could also mean physical ailments. The word translated “string” in Mark 7:35 was in reference to a physical ailment. Regarding a woman who *“had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years”* (Luke 13:10-17), the same Greek word was used and translated as “bond” (Luke 13:16). Whether it was imprisonment or physical ailments, the point is that the saints were willing to look after this fellow Christian that was suffering a genuine physical need.

Since imprisonment is the mostly likely meaning of this individual being in bonds, many conclude that we are reading the writings of the Apostle Paul. That may be the case. However, the narrow-mindedness of that conclusion is troubling to me. Was Paul

the only Christian in the first century that was put in prison? NO! The Apostles were imprisoned (Acts 5:18). An unknown number of Christians were put into prisons (Acts 8:1-3). Silas was imprisoned with Paul (Acts 16:16-40). Jason was arrested (Acts 17:1-9). That is not a complete list, but it is evidence that we could be reading the words of many individuals. That is also assuming this is talking about a saint being imprisoned. If it is talking about some Christian who had been ill in some manner, who knows the number of possibilities that could arise from that. The point we need to focus on is the compassion shown by the saints addressed in this letter to another Christian that had a genuine need.

The word “compassion” brings up a clear teaching on the overall subject matter of helping truly needy saints. Notice: *“For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth”* (1 John 3:11-18).

The aid these brethren offered was referred to as “the spoiling of your goods.” This is similar to when Paul said he robbed other churches to do service for the saints in Corinth (II Corinthians 11:8). So, what does all of that mean? It shows that the recipient of this aid would have rather not needed it. This Christian did not want to burden others. When Paul was in prison, brethren from Philippi similarly cared for Paul (Philippians 1:7; 2:25-30). Included in their aid for Paul was financial support (Philippians 4:10-19). If you read that account, you find Paul saying, *“Not because I desire a gift”* (Philippians 4:17). Whether desired or not, it is comforting to know that true saints will help when such help is needed.

Having said all of that, the greatest teaching that explains Hebrews 10:34 is found here: *“When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father,*

inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eterna” (Matthew 25:31-46).

Hebrews 10:35-37 - Throughout this study, keep in mind the “*better and enduring substance*” from our previous study (Hebrews 10:34). Now, let’s consider the following Scriptures: “*Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry*” (Hebrews 10:35-37).

We are going to start our study by looking at the word translated “confidence” [πιστησία] (Strong’s # 3954) as it is used in a few other passages of Scripture. Through those verses we will get a pretty clear meaning that applies to our current study. Here are those Scriptures: “*And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have **confidence**, and not be ashamed before him at his coming... Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we **confidence** toward God... Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have **boldness** in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world*” (I John 2:28, I John 3:21, and I John 4:17). So, the saints addressed in the Hebrew letter were being taught not to do something that would remove their confidence in their salvation (cf. Hebrews 3:1-6; 3:14). They needed to continue looking forward to the reward ahead of them.

The “great recompense of reward” means: “Requital (good or bad): — recompence of reward. Payment of wages due, recompence” (Strong’s # 3405). As the definition states, this is not only a reward for good. Earlier in this letter the same Greek

terminology was used to describe a reward of punishment (Hebrews 2:1-2). Later in this letter the same Greek terminology is used to describe a reward of good. Notice: *“By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the **recompence of the reward**”* (Hebrews 11:24-26). We know our Lord rewards the good and the bad based on a person's works (Matthew 16:27, John 5:28-29, II Timothy 4:14, and Revelation 22:12). Considering the context and the wording of verse thirty-five the focus at this point was on the promise of eternal life (I John 2:25).

From those statements, they were told that they were in need of patience. The word translated “patience” [ὑπομονή] means: “Cheerful (or hopeful) endurance, constancy: — enduring, patience, patient continuance (waiting). Steadfastness, constancy, endurance; in the NT the characteristic of a man who is not swerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings; patiently, and steadfastly a patient, steadfast waiting for; a patient enduring, sustaining, perseverance” (Strong's # 5281). I love that definition. The Scriptures clearly support it.

The faithful endure with hope (I Peter 1:1-13). The faithful are steadfast (I Corinthians 15:58 and I Peter 5:8-9). The faithful are awaiting the return of the Lord (Luke 12:35-40). Therefore, these saints are basically being told to keep on faithfully until the end. Whether that was being faithful unto death (Revelation 2:10) or the coming of the Lord (Matthew 24:44-25:13); the message was to not give up.

We know that people do sometimes give up. Some walk away from the Lord. Some are led astray from the Lord. Apostasy is real. A child of God can fall away from the faith (Acts 8:12-24, I Corinthians 9:24-27, I Corinthians 10:1-12, Galatians 1:6-9, Galatians 3:1, Galatians 5:4, Galatians 5:7-9, I Timothy 4:1, Hebrews 3:12-13, Hebrews 6:4-6, II Peter 2:20-22, Revelation 2:1-7, and Revelation 22:18-19). In a Parable Jesus taught about some that fall away. This is what He said: *“They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection”* (Luke 8:13-14).

We all understand that a laborer is worthy of his or her wages (Leviticus 19:13, Deuteronomy 24:14-15, Jeremiah 22:13, Malachi 3:5, Matthew 10:1-10, Matthew 20:1-16, I Corinthians 9:1-14, I Timothy 5:17-18). This principle certainly applies

spiritually (John 4:34-36). So, both they then and we now should think about the work we put in. Don't work so hard for eternal life and then throw it away. The elder later wrote: *"Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward"* (II John 1:8). We will reap what we sow, so don't get tired and give up (Galatians 6:7-9).

After those messages, they were then reminded that in a little while He that shall come would come. Earlier in this chapter, we studied about a "day approaching" that they could see (Hebrews 10:25). That was clearly the destruction of Jerusalem (Matthew 23:37-24:34, Mark 13:1-30, and Luke 21:20-24). This could be about that. Throughout various passages in the New Testament saints were looking for that day to come and knew it was near (Romans 13:12, James 5:8, and I Peter 4:7). Though, this is most likely about the end of the world that will come at a time in which no man knows (Matthew 24:35-36 and II Peter 3:9-14). We are in the "last days" (Hebrews 1:1-2). We are supposed to live as though there will be no tomorrow (James 4:13-16). Personally, I cannot say for sure that this is one or the other. The verses to come seem to be about eternity. At the same time, before the final coming of our Lord, death comes with an immediate reward or punishment (Luke 16:19-31). Either way, don't give up!

Hebrews 10:38-39 - After being told to have endurance to receive the promise of eternal life. Before reading about great men and women of faith (Hebrews 11:1-40). These are the words that brings those lessons together: *"Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul"* (Hebrews 10:38-39).

Let's think about what it means to be just. God is just (Deuteronomy 32:1-4). Noah was a just man, a perfect man, that walked with God (Genesis 6:9). When God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah Lot was a just man that was delivered from that destruction (II Peter 2:6-7; cf. Genesis 18:20-19:29). A just person is the opposite of a wicked person (Psalms 37:12, Proverbs 12:13, Proverbs 17:15, Proverbs 29:27, and Matthew 13:47-50). A just person is a student of godly wisdom (Proverbs 9:9). A just person walks in integrity (Proverbs 20:7). The way of the just is uprightness (Isaiah 26:7). A just person keeps the instructions of God (Ezekiel 18:9 and Hosea 14:9). Jesus is just (Acts 3:13-15, Acts 7:52, and Zechariah 9:9; cf. Matthew 21:1-11 and Luke 19:28-40). God chose a just man to be a parent to His only begotten Son (Matthew 1:18-25). John the baptizer was a just man (Mark 6:20). Our just Savior died so that we who were not just could be justified and brought to our Father (Romans 3:21-26 and I Peter 3:18-21). We could go on and on with these points. However, if you study the

information above, that is a pretty good definition of what it means to be a just person. So, let's take a brief look at the faith the just live by.

Belief in the existence of God is not the faith we are considering. One can know there is a Creator without ever having been taught the word of God (Acts 17:22-31). All persons of a capable mind even know basic truths about right and wrong naturally, without being taught those things (Romans 2:14-15). The faith that is taught about in these passages is an informed faith (Romans 10:5-14). That is, faith that goes beyond someone generally believing that there is a God. This faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God (Romans 10:17). That does not mean that hearing the word of God is enough to make a person just. To be a just person one has to be a *"doer of the law"* (Romans 2:13; cf. James 1:18-2:26).

Consider the reason for these things being taught in this letter. Jewish Christians likely knew that the just live by faith. That was taught by the prophets (Habakkuk 2:4). That statement has greater meaning in Christ than it did under the Law and the prophets. Notice: *"O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain. He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith"* (Galatians 3:1-14).

After establishing that the just live by faith, the point returned to apostasy. This had already been taught in this context (Hebrews 10:26-31). The point is being rephrased. From the time Jesus walked on this earth to later in the first century, some

chose to turn back to the world (John 6:60-71, II Timothy 4:10-15, and I John 2:18-19). Therefore, we can further understand that the just continue in the faith (Colossians 1:9-23). That is, the just are those who do not turn back to the world. If a just person were to fall, he or she would get back up (Proverbs 24:16). For the person who has chosen to be in Christ and then walk away, the faithful could not take pleasure in that. A child of God turning his or her back on our Father, our Savior, and the brethren is terrible. We all want to say, that is not us. What if it is though?

When a just person turns away from our Lord that person has chosen a path that is worse than never obeying the Lord at all. Notice: *“The great God that formed all things both rewardeth the fool, and rewardeth transgressors. As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly. Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him... For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire”* (Proverbs 26:10-12 and II Peter 2:20-22). True believers continue in the faith and that results in salvation (John 8:31-32 and Acts 14:22). Brethren, keep the faith!