

KISSING THE PICTURE

Chapter 10:1, "For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things..."

What if I came home and found my wife sitting on the couch in a romantic negligee. She's farmed out the kids and wants to spend the evening with her hubby. But instead of sitting next to her I walk over to the mantle, where I pull down a picture of Kathy, and start hugging and kissing the picture - all while the real Kathy is sitting there on the couch! You'd think I was a *nut case!*

This is what the Hebrews were doing, when they reverted back to the sacrifices of Judaism. They were kissing the symbol while ignoring the substance. They were acting nutty!

INSUFFICIENT SACRIFICES

Walk into the Tabernacle, and it was like walking into the meat department at Kroger. The job of the priest was like that of a butcher. As one author put it, "The Old Testament sacrificial system... was a gory affair indeed! During the thousand-plus years of the Old Covenant, there were more than a million animal sacrifices. So considering that each bull's sacrifice spilled a gallon or two of blood, and each goat a quart, the Old Covenant truly rested on a sea of blood."

Leviticus 17:11 had set the pace, "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul." God told Adam, the wages of sin would be death. And since the nutrients of life flow to the rest of the body through the blood - then the debt of sin cannot be paid without the spilling of blood.

In 10:1 the writer of Hebrews says the Jewish sacrifices were insufficient. They offered a reprieve, but not a pardon.

And here's the logic behind his assertion, verse 2, "For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins." The fact the sacrifices had to be repeated indicated they were deficient. As the poet says, "Not all the blood of beasts on Jewish altars slain, could give the guilty conscience rest, or wash away one stain." The blood of bulls and goats whitewashed the sinner, but it was not strong enough to remove the stain.

THE CHRISTMAS STORY IN HEBREWS

Usually at Christmas time, we read of Joseph and the wise men - or of Mary and the shepherds. We don't usually read Hebrews. But here in 10:5 we find the most dramatic scene in the Christmas story. Here are the final words of Jesus to the Father - just before He left His *eternal home* for His *embryonic home*...

It was said of Jesus... "Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me."

For centuries Jesus watched the Father *receive sacrifices*, but *achieve no satisfaction*. The animals that were offered were tainted with sin themselves. The Father knew that only a sinless sacrifice could *sanitize a sin-stained life*, and at the same time, *satisfy a sinless God*. But where would God go for a sinless sacrifice?

That's when the Son stepped up and said, "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a

body You have prepared for Me." Spirit doesn't pierce - it doesn't bruise or bleed - and that's why Jesus needed a body. Jesus was born to die! The next thing you know, "Mary had a little Lamb... and named Him Jesus!"

Verse 7 tells us, "Then I said..." And Jesus is quoting Psalm 40, "Behold, I have come - in the volume of the book it is written of Me - to do Your will, O God."

On every Bible page - buried in every ritual - seen in every sacrifice - there was a prophetic portrait of the work of Jesus. And when the time came to deliver the goods - to literally do the dirty work - Jesus was obedient to the will of God.

And now that the work has been done the rituals and sacrifices are no longer needed. Verse 10, "He takes away the first that He may establish the second."

Devotion Box - Faith Is The Key

Hebrews 11:6, "But without faith it is impossible to please Him..." He doesn't say, "*without faith it's difficult to please God*", or "*it's barely possible*" ... He is much more forceful- "*without faith it is impossible to please God.*" Faith is the key... And what constitutes true faith? We're told, "for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." Sincere faith *believes that God exists*, but it also *expects that God will bless!*

Devotion Box - The Salad Commands

Hebrews 10:19 concludes, "Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way..." The biggest blessing Jesus has given us is access into God's presence. Jesus is *a new and living way* to God.

And since we have this access we're given 3 commands. I call them "*The Salad Commands*", because they all begin, "*Let us, Let us, Let us...*"

Verse 22, "let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith..." If the door is open, then go on in. Spend time with God! Enjoy His presence! One of the great catechisms states as our duty, "To know God, and enjoy Him forever."

The second command is in verse 23, "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. If we've been given this access, let's not depart from it. Let us "hold fast".

And third, verses 24-25, "And let us consider one another in order to stir up 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." In Hebrews 3:1 we were told to "consider... Jesus". Now we're told to "consider one another". We need to stir up, and support, and encourage one another. Hey, it's much easier for us to *hang on* if we *hang out* together.

Devotion Box - Spiritual Grip

Hebrews 11:1, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Human beings are physical creatures largely dependent on our physical senses. We relate well to things we can touch and smell and see – but spiritual stuff slips through our fingers. It lacks texture – and is difficult to hold.

But it's faith that gives substance to spiritual things. Faith is a mitt I can wear that enables me to grab the blessings of God and pull them into my heart. It's spiritual grip. Faith is a sixth sense that sees spiritual realities and future promises. As Oswald Sanders put it, "Faith enables the believing soul to treat the future as present and the invisible as seen." Faith opens our eyes to God's work in us.

You could say, faith is the bobber you put on your fishing line, that sits on top of the water. With your eyes, you can't tell what's going on under the surface, but when that bobber goes underwater, you know you've hooked a fish. Faith is like the bobber, it alerts you to what's going on the end of the line you can't see.

Devotion Box - By Faith Moses ...

Verse 24 tells us, "By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter," It's hard for us to imagine the advantages – the wealth and power - afforded Moses as a member of the Egyptian dynasty.

Yet with the world's riches at his fingertips... we're told Moses "chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin."

Moses saw through the shallowness of Egyptian materialism and hedonism. He saw in the Hebrews a joy in the midst of

their distress - a purpose even in the face of their despair. And Moses chose to find meaning and fulfillment in what was true and eternal - even if it cost him some momentary discomfort. Real life, even in the midst of suffering, beats the hollowness and emptiness of the pleasures of sin.

And notice verse 25, sin is pleasurable, but the pleasure is fleeting - it's just for a moment - whereas God's blessing is permanent. Moses "esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward."

Devotion Box - Battling Bitterness

Hebrews 12:14, "lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled..." Notice, bitterness is the result of falling short of God's grace. When you're full of grace – when you are rejoicing in a love you didn't deserve and could never earn – you can't help but to forgive. Grace diffuses bitterness.

DON'T DRAW BACK

Verse 26 is a heavy verse, "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..."

The "*sin*" here is not a simple slip-up – a foul word, or a beer too many, or a lack of patience when my kids try me. No, this is the same sin we've been dealing with throughout the book. This is the sin of deliberately and willfully turning from Jesus - and returning your trust to the institutions of Judaism. This is the sin of renouncing your faith in Jesus.

And the writer of Hebrews assures us, since salvation comes by faith - if you stop having faith, then it's impossible for you to really be saved. If you turn your back on God's only provision for sin, Jesus - then how can you be forgiven?

Verses 32-34 mentions the persecution the Hebrews had endured. And since they had already endured so much, He tells them in verses 35-36, "do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance..." Guys, it's not enough to have faith – we need to continue in our faith.

In John 10:28, Jesus said, "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand." No one can snatch you from the hand of Jesus, but that doesn't mean you can't get up and walk out. GK Chesterton writes, "The only way to love anything is to realize it might be lost."

I believe people who teach that just because you've embraced Jesus at a point in your past – then there's never the possibility you could turn from Him and walk away – are not only wrong, but they're doing a disservice. They're promoting an apathy and nonchalance. We need to be warned and stay vigilant!

Again, verse 38, "Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who draw back to perdition (a word which can also be translated "*damnation*" or "*ruin*"), but of those who believe to the saving of the soul." We can draw back to perdition - or we can continue in our faith - but just because you've become a Christian doesn't mean you no longer have a choice.

Jesus is a new and living way – a better way to God and a better way to live – Jesus never fails! Let's continue in our faith...

GOD'S HALL OF FAITH

At the close of chapter 10 the theme is faith, but faith is something that's better *caught* than *taught*. That's why the best way to learn faith is to see it in action. Warren Wiersbe writes, "The best way for faith to grow is to walk with the faithful." That why in chapter 11 - the author of Hebrews takes us on a walk with a few faith-filled men and women... Chapter 11 could be entitled, "*God's Hall of Faith*."

Hebrews 11:2, "For by it the elders obtained a good testimony." When the Hebrew believers embraced Jesus as their Messiah, and began to walk by faith, they were accused by their family and friends and rabbis of abandoning their Jewish roots. But here the writer assures them that a life of faith is a hallmark of their Hebrew heritage - not a departure. Throughout Hebrew history people gained approval from God through faith...

A city slicker, on a business trip, was driving through the country when he drove his car into a ditch. About that time a farmer happened by, walking along the road with his horse, "*Buddy*". The businessman asked the farmer if he'd help him get out of the ditch. The farmer agreed and hitched Buddy up to the car.

The farmer started yelling, "Pull Nellie, pull!" - the horse didn't flinch. Next he screamed, "Pull, Daisy, pull!" - the horse never budged. Again he barked, "Pull, Rosebud, pull!" - once more the horse just stood still. Finally, he said quietly, "Pull, Buddy, pull" - and immediately Buddy pulled

the car out of the ditch.

Of course, the stranger was astonished at the farmer's weird behavior. He asked him why he had called his horse by the wrong name three times. That's when the wise, old farmer smiled and told him, "Well mister, ole Buddy is blind, and if he thought he was the only horse pulling he wouldn't even have tried."

This is the approach the author of Hebrews takes with his readers. He wants them to walk by faith - and know they're not alone - these Hebrews are not the first...

Abel shows us faith sacrificing, Enoch, faith communing... Noah, faith working... Abraham, faith seeking... Isaac and Jacob, faith obeying... Joseph, faith hoping... Moses, faith choosing... Rahab, faith helping... and the rest of the chapter's unnamed examples show faith winning, faith suffering, and always, faith enduring.

Even Chapter 12 begins, "Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses..." Who are these witnesses? The saints in chapter 11.

Some people misinterpret this verse to mean that people in heaven are looking down on us. Hey, the folks in heaven aren't worried about us. They know God has everything in control. They're at the feet of Jesus, beholding His glories! The people of faith who lived before us are witnesses - not because they are now witnessing to us - but because they have left behind a witness. Their legacy proves a life of faith is possible in a fallen world!

Devotion Box - By Faith Abraham ...

Verse 8, "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going." "Honey, pack up- we're moving. "*But Abraham, where are we going?*" "When God tells me, I'll tell you." That was the conversation.

Noah *believed without seeing*. Abraham *believed without knowing*. It's when God conceals the details... when I'm expected to *trust Him* where I can't *trace Him*... then my faith gets tested! Many of us are addicted to details. We ask *why?* But real faith doesn't need to know *why* when it is certain of *Who!*

Abraham and his wife, Sarah, were also promised a child. Abraham was 100 years old, and Sarah was 90, when she birthed the child. Abe and Sarah were the only couple in history who paid for labor and delivery from their social security!

Verse 12 tells us, "Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude..." Hey, how would you like this statement made of you? I'm sure this did very little for Abraham's male ego, "as good as dead." Not even Viagra could help him... yet God gave him strength... Perhaps tonight God wants to work a miracle in your life - you're tired, weak, and weary - you need strength - *well, you expect it... and receive it... by faith.*

Verse 17 tells us, "By faith Abraham, when he was tested..." Notice, God likes to test our faith! After providing Abraham a son, God told him "offer up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," Here he quotes Genesis 21:12.

I hope my faith never gets tested to this extreme... What would you do if God told you to offer up your son as a sacrifice? We know what Abraham did... He took Isaac to the appointed place, strapped him to the altar, raised his knife to his throat... *How did Abraham bring himself to sacrifice the love of his life?*

Verse 19 gives us insight into the inner-workings of Abraham's faith. It says of Abraham, "concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead..." The Greek word translated "*concluding*" is the word from which we derive our term "*logarithm*". It means "*to calculate*". Abraham is almost mathematical in his deliberations. Often people accuse Christians of "*blind faith*", or "*faith that denies reason*", but not so. Faith is reasonable - it just includes God in its calculations.

Abraham reasoned out the situation. God gave him a son. Isaac was essential to God's promises. Yet, Abraham was certain God had told him to sacrifice his son - He concluded, *God must be planning to raise Isaac from the dead*. There had never been a resurrection prior to this, yet Abraham figured God would do it.

And notice the end of verse 19, "from which he also received him in a figurative sense." Abraham's knife never fell, but in his heart he sacrificed his son to God.

And in doing so, Abraham was brought into the deepest possible communion with God. For he shared the heart of the Father - who would 2000 years later - offer His only Son, Jesus, on that exact same spot, just outside Jerusalem.

Bible Scan - Hebrews 10-13

Calvary Chapel

If you have questions on tonight's study email Pastor Sandy - sandyadams@calvarychapel.org
For back issues of Bible Scan study guides: www.calvarychapelstonemountain.com/biblescan.htm

Calvary Chapel Announcements - Wednesday, 12/11 @ 7 pm- *Praying Parents of Teens*....Friday, 12/13 @ 7 pm and Saturday, 12/14 @ 1 pm, "A Victorian Christmas Tea"...Friday, Saturday, & Sunday, 12/20-22, *Christmas Gift Wrap Outreach*—sign up at the Info Counter or in the Café... Sunday, 12/22 6-8 pm—"Reindeer Games" - Family Fun Night....Tuesday, 12/24 @ 4:30 and 6:30 pm- *Christmas Eve Services*.
Next Bible Scan - December 15, 2002 - James 1-5

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." - Hebrews 11:6

**Bible Scan
Memory Verse**

Devotion Box - Weights And Ensnaring Sins

Hebrews 12:1, "...let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us..." Here, the Christian life is referred to as a foot-race – and if we're to win in this race, we need to shed both "weights" and "the sin that so easily ensnares us..."

You'll never see a serious runner in army boots, or long pants, or carrying a backpack. He gets rid of excess baggage – anything that slows him down.

Weights are not necessarily sin – they're just unnecessary activities that bog us down - diversions that distract us from our goal. Ravi Zacharias defines a "legitimate pleasure" as, "something that refreshes along the journey without distracting from your ultimate goal." A weight is the opposite.

If you do a lot of traveling you learn that the enjoyment of the trip is in direct proportion to how light you can pack. And this is also the key to life.

As Christians, we need to always be looking to down-size. "What commitments or pastimes suck up my energies and resources without directing me or others to Jesus? Where am I investing time without getting back an eternal reward?" When you identify a weight, by all means, lay it down.

But along with weights, the runner who really wants to win the race, should also set aside "the sin which so easily ensnares us." Not everyone is vulnerable to the same temptations. Identify the particular sin that drags you down, and repent.

Devotion Box - Looking Unto Jesus

Here's how you walk by faith – you lay aside weights and ensnaring sins – then focus on Jesus. Hebrews 12:2 tells us, "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Chapter 11 is full of wonderful examples of faith, but Jesus is the ultimate example of enduring faith. He withstood the cross - while despising its shame - because He knew that upon its completion He would be exalted to the right hand of God's throne. He kept His eyes on the *joy ahead of Him*, not the *pain surrounding Him*.

Devotion Box - Don't Despise God's Discipline

God's chastening has 4 purposes: it corrects - protects – directs – perfects. At times, God's discipline hammers home a point and *corrects* an attitude. At other times it forms a hedge around me, and *protects* me from danger. It also *directs* the course of my life, and steers me back into God's will. Finally, it *perfects* my faith - teaches me patience - refines my character. Don't despise, or be discouraged, by the Lord's discipline. Yes, it's no fun at the time, but His discipline is proof of His love, and it comes with a purpose.

Devotion Box - The Marriage Bed

Hebrews 13:4, "Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge. Always remember, sex was God's idea. He created it not just for procreation, but for pleasure. And it was to protect us, and maximize that pleasure, that He restricted sex to a marriage relationship.

Sex prior to marriage, *fornication* - sex outside marriage, *adultery* – God will judge! But the marriage bed is undefiled! In other words, anything done between a husband and wife in their marriage bed— anything done that's a loving act, and a giving act, and an agreed upon act, is thus pleasing and acceptable to God.

FOLLOW THE LEADER

Hebrews 13:17, "Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive." Today's church is not only in need of good leaders, we're also in need of good followers.

A good follower knows his leader is human – yet he trusts God to work through him. He trusts the leader's wisdom, and embraces his vision. As long as a leader is *biblical in his teaching - moral in his conduct - ethical in his handling of money and people* – it's the duty of a good follower to submit to and support his leader.

It's been said, "The person who can't lead and won't follow makes a dandy roadblock." This is the problem in many churches today. Leaders can't lead, because the people won't follow. We need both good leaders and followers.