

# Scott's Thoughts

Attempts at explaining various  
subjects of Scripture  
from the small mind of Scott Sheridan  
go-gators-go@comcast.net



No. 4, January 15, 2007

## The Assembly

The book of Hebrews is one of the most theological books in the New Testament. The theme that runs throughout the book is ~ what we have in Christ is better: a better revelation, a better promise, a better covenant, a better High Priest, a better rest, a better sacrifice, and on and on it goes. What we have in the New Covenant is better than anything the Old had to offer.

Evidently there were some Hebrew Christians that, for various reasons, were leaving the new faith (Christianity) and going back to Judaism. Therefore, the Hebrew writer explains how much better the New Covenant is over the Old.

To properly understand any portion of Scripture we must always keep it in its immediate context. If not, all kinds of bogus beliefs can arise. Often, one or two verses are used to try and create a doctrine completely foreign to the Scriptures. The Mormons use 1 Corinthians 15:29 to try and support their practice of baptising for the dead. Some people in the RM are misusing the word "perfect" as it is translated in the English to try and teach that Christians become perfect and sinless in their Christian walk, thus becoming mini-gods unto themselves. The word translated "perfect" in reality means to be complete.

If we are going to truly understand what the Hebrew writer is teaching us about the Assembly in chapter 10, then we must look at the verse in its total context. I have chosen to start with verse 18. Up to this point the writer has been dealing with everything we have in the New Covenant that is better than the old. Immediately preceding this passage he has been dealing with the fact that the priests of the Old Covenant had to daily make sacrifices for sins. But with Jesus, the perfect sacrifice, the sins of the people would be remembered no more, and the need for the priestly sacrifice was ended. The Law would no longer be written on stone, but upon the hearts of those who would follow Jesus.

### Hebrews 10:18-39

**18 Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin.**

If sin has been forgiven, there is no longer a need for sacrifice. If there is no sin why would anyone have to

atone for it? Jesus removed all sin from a person's life. As David says, "As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us" (Ps 103:12).

**19 Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus,**

With no sin held against us, we can have full confidence to enter into the presence of God. If there is no sin God has nothing against us.

**20 by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh,**

This new and living way is the New Covenant. "Through the veil" has reference to the veil in the Temple that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. In other words, the New Covenant brings us into the presence of God in a way that was never possible before. The offerings offered under the Old Covenant did not remove the sin of the people. Only the sacrifice of Jesus could do that. What the Old Covenant sacrifices did was, in a sense, to make a pledge of faithfulness until the complete (perfect) sacrifice would come. The faith (and sacrifices) of the Old was always looking ahead to Christ. When Jesus shed His blood as the sacrifice, He brought all people of both covenants into the presence of God. Jesus was not only the sacrifice, but also the High Priest who mediated between the people and God.

**21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.**

The imagery here is of the old system in which the Priest would sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice upon those that had made the offering for their sin. Being washed in pure water also was reference to the ceremonial cleansing that took place in the Temple. The person that has been made clean by the blood of Christ is clean on the inside (having our hearts sprinkled) and the outside (our bodies washed). We are completely clean all because of Jesus.

**23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful;**

I invite you to comment on my interpretation or make comments in general. If you wish to be removed from my address list just let me know and you will be removed immediately. Thank you.

Do not abandon the faith. We must remember that this is being directed at those Hebrew Christians that were leaving the faith. However, it has as much application to us today. We too must hold fast the confession we've made without wavering.

Often times people are persecuted and mocked because of their faith. Often it is difficult to maintain our faith when the world around us is trying to force us otherwise. God is faithful. It was not an easy thing for Jesus to willingly die for mankind either. Yet He was found faithful. And so should we.

**<sup>24</sup> and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,**

Since it is not easy to live out the Christian life, we need to boost one another up. Notice the wording of this verse. He doesn't just say to stimulate each other to love and good deeds. He says to consider how to stimulate... In other words, we Christians are to think about ways to stimulate. We are to give serious thought as to how we can motivate others to love and good deeds. When a fellow Christian is struggling or weak, we are to do more than give a pat on the back. We must think up ways to motivate him to love and to perform good deeds.

**<sup>25</sup> not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.**

OK. This verse gets used quite often to beat people over the head about Church attendance. When it is used that way, is it being taken out of context? Does it really have the force that a lot of people try to use with it. To be honest, after much personal study, I have concluded that it does not carry the force that so many preachers and teachers try to give it. No, it has much, much more and if people truly understood this verse it would give them serious pause for thought.

As we will see a few paragraphs down, the seriousness of forsaking the Assembly gets explained in some detail.

We are to consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds AND not forsake the Assembly. And we are to do so even more as we see "the day" drawing near. What is "the day"? Many commentators and scholars believe "the day" is used in an eschatological sense meaning the Day that Jesus returns. This phrase is often used having that meaning: Matthew 24:36 for example. However, I believe this phrase has to do with the Day of the Assembly, i.e., the Lord's Day, otherwise known as Sunday, the first day of the week. This is the day that the Church met, it's the day Jesus rose, it's the day the Church met to break bread, etc. This, I believe, fits the context better than the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming of Jesus. Since there will be no signs given before Jesus returns (someone should tell that to Hal

Lindsey and Tim LaHaye), why would the writer intend this to be THAT day instead of the day they were not to forsake? Do not forsake the Day of Assembly.

Now, notice the serious discussion which takes place below:

**<sup>26</sup> For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,**

What sin is he referring to? He mentions not wavering in our confession in v. 23. To waver would imply something sinful taking place. Part of what is meant by wavering is the failure to Assemble spoken of in v. 25. That is the context in which he tells us that after willful sin there is no longer a sacrifice for sin.

The sacrifice that was made to remove sins no longer remains. Why? Because of a deficient and apathetic view of what Jesus did on the cross.

Some will say that all sin is willful. And in some sense that is true. The devil did not make me do it. If I sin it's because I chose to sin. Sin, just as Peter spoke of in 2 Peter 2:20 often entangles us but it does not overcome us. The one who wavers in his faith and ceases coming to the Assembly has been overcome by his sin and, according to Peter, he is worse off than before he ever heard the Gospel. James says something similar in James 1:15. Lust gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is accomplished, meaning that when it has overcome, brings forth death.

To willfully sin is to turn your back on your confession. There is no one particular sin that will remove you from the grace of God. However, when someone continues to sin and is overcome, there is a line that will be crossed in which God removes the sacrifice.

The person that willfully forsakes the Assembly is walking down a dangerous path. The same path that any continuous, willful sin will lead: God's removal of the sacrifice. If God removes the sacrifice what is someone to expect?

**<sup>27</sup> but a terrifying expectation of judgment and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES.**

The answer is God's judgment. The one that has been overcome by sin is now God's adversary.

**<sup>28</sup> Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.**

Under the Law (Deut. 17:6) a person was convicted or acquitted on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Remember the Jewish leaders were doing their best to get two people to give the same testimony about Jesus so they could put Him to death (Mk 15:55ff). Guess who the witnesses are to willful sin.

**29 How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?**

How does a person trample underfoot the Son of God, regard the blood of the covenant unclean and insult the Spirit of grace? Willful sin, which, in this immediate context is willfully forsaking the Assembly.

The witnesses against this person is no other than the Son of God and the Holy Spirit.

**30 For we know Him who said, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY." And again, "THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE."**

**31 It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.**

In this modern day of cheap grace, it is sometimes easy to forget that God is more than a loving God. He is a jealous God. He is a God who is absolutely Holy and Just. Jesus paid a price that we cannot even begin to fathom with our minds. When we are overcome with sin, and we, in essence, trample over the blood of Jesus, God will repay with justice instead of grace. What a scary concept.

**32 But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings,**

**33 partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated.**

Here he reminds these that were leaving the faith of what they went through. Was all for nothing? They had others that were sharing in their struggles.

**34 For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.**

**35 Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.**

They are reminded of the good they have done. He is doing to them what he advocated them to do back in v. 24, i.e., trying to stimulate them to love and good deeds.

**36 For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.**

Hang tough. Don't give up. Run for the prize.

**37 FOR YET IN A VERY LITTLE WHILE, HE WHO IS COMING WILL COME, AND WILL NOT DELAY.**

This is our hope even today. Come Jesus.

**38 BUT MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY FAITH; AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK, MY SOUL HAS NO PLEASURE IN HIM.**

Here he restates what he has been discussing for some time now. Don't waver in your confession. Don't shrink back. Don't allow yourself to be overcome.

**39 But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.**

Again he is encouraging them to remain faithful. Of course what follows chapter 10 in Hebrews is the Great Faith Hall of Fame in which so many people faced difficult times and, even though they sometimes failed, were not overcome.

May we who are part of the Covenant today find our place in the Faith Hall of Fame that is continually being updated in heaven.

**SCOTT**



**Hard to believe, but I did not receive a single response from last months edition. Either I am (1) a terrific teacher and there was no need for any other comments, (2) No one knew what I was talking about, or (3) Nobody cared about the topic. I prefer to believe #1 – but maybe that's just me.**