

# ***THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST***

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

## **HEBREWS LESSON 7 (Chapters 10-11)**

### **Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

*THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST*. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Timothy Sparks and Ben Bailey.

### **Ben Bailey**

“For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins” (Heb. 10:4). I’m Ben Bailey.

### **Timothy Sparks:**

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### **Ben Bailey**

Hebrews 10 dramatically emphasizes the importance of Christ’s sacrifice, and the fact that the Old Law could not take away sin. In Hebrews 10:3, the writer says, “But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year.” The Old Law could not **take away** sin, but was only able to **remind** people of how sinful they were. The insufficiency of the Old Law was that it could not remove sin, which was the writer’s point in verse 4 (“For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins”). According to Hebrews 9:15-17, the cleansing available under the Old Law was predicated on the sacrifice of Christ. **All** the sacrifices of the Old Testament could not take away sin. The Hebrews writer (quoting Psalm 40:6), said, “Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: ‘Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me’” (Heb. 10:5). Jesus was the One Who came in an earthly body to make the ultimate sacrifice for our sins. Paul, in Philippians 2:5-11, talked about how Jesus came to Earth and took on the form of a human so that He could become a sacrifice for each and every one of us. The writer of Hebrews is telling the Jewish Christians to whom he is writing that they must not try to return to Judaism, since it could not take away their sins. The Old Law is inferior to Christianity, because it does not have the ability to remove sin. Only the sacrifice of Christ makes that possible.

### **Timothy Sparks:**

In Hebrews 10:7-10, the writer quotes a passage from Psalm 40:6-8, which deals with God not taking pleasure in animal sacrifices. Rather, He desired the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The psalmist wrote, “Behold, I come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me. I delight to do Your will, O my God, and Your law is within my heart” (Ps. 40:7-8). Jesus came to do His Father’s will. Even at the early age of 12, He said to His parents, “Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” (Lk. 2:49). The writer of Hebrews is encouraging those to whom he writes to do exactly the same.

### **Ben Bailey**

God wants us to obey His will. He does not ask us to do anything that we cannot do. The writer of Hebrews said, “He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him” (Heb. 5:9). Jesus Himself said in Matthew 7:21, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.” Just as it was Jesus’ desire to do the will of His Father, so it also must be our will to do God’s bidding. Jesus once asked the question of some hypocritical Jews, “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not the things which I say?” You cannot say to Jesus, “You are my Lord,” come to church on Sundays, live like a sinner the other six days of the week, and then expect everything to be all right. Jesus said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (Jn. 14:15). He also said “You are My friends if you do whatever I command you” (Jn. 15:14). In Hebrews 10:9, we find one of the most powerful statements within Scripture about the Old Testament no longer being in effect. The writer says, “He takes away the first that He may establish the second.” God took away the Old Law and replaced it with the New Covenant of Jesus Christ. As Hebrews 8:13 says, “He has made the first obsolete.” Think of it this way. Which would you rather have—an old manual typewriter, or a modern-day word processor? The Old Law is like the manual typewriter—it is obsolete. There is something available (a word processor) that is far superior to that old typewriter. And the New Law is far superior to the Old Law. Those who try to live by the Old Law are trying to live under a Law that is no longer in existence and thus is non-functional. The Hebrews writer does not want the Jewish Christians to whom he is writing to try to go back to something that is inferior, obsolete, and non-functional.

### **Timothy Sparks:**

In Hebrews 10:10, the writer says, “By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” We are sanctified under Christ’s last will and testament. In Hebrews 10:19-23, the writer says,

“Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.”

We can enter boldly into God’s presence, through Christ as our Mediator, because Jesus’ sacrifice makes such a thing possible. We are not to give up, but we are instead to “draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.” In verses 24-25, we learn that Christians are to encourage one another, and to “stir one another up unto love and good works.” We also are commanded to assemble together to worship God. In verse 25, notice the wording—“not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some.” Some of those first-century Christians apparently were not meeting with the church when it assembled. Perhaps this led to discouragement, and that discouragement-

ment led them to want to return to Judaism. Today, Christians rarely undergo the same type of persecution that the Christians in the first century did, yet they still forsake the assembly.

### **Ben Bailey**

It is interesting that even in the midst of serious persecution, Christians made it a point to assemble. Today, we enjoy religious freedom—yet assembling seems to be too much trouble for some people. How sad a commentary that is about our devotion and dedication to God! These people's lives were in danger. If anyone could be considered as having a legitimate excuse to **not** assemble with other Christians, it would be these people. Yet the Hebrews writer says for them not to forsake the assembly. Today, we have nice cars to transport us, alarm clocks to wake us, and comfortable buildings in which to assemble. Yet we just can't seem to manage making it to worship with other Christians. We need to be sure that we are committed enough to the Lord to do the things that He wants us to do—and that includes assembling with other Christians when the church meets. This is not an option; it is a command!

In Hebrews 10:26, the writer says, "For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins." He goes on to point out that under the Old Law, people who sinned were stoned to death. He then comments in verse 29 about how much worse things will be for us because we live under a better Covenant. In verse 31, the writer says, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Verse 26 could be a passage that becomes discouraging to us if we are not careful. When we ponder the phrase, "if we sin willfully," we might think, "Well, I've probably sinned willfully. Thus, I must be lost." The word "sin" in the Greek is a present-tense durative, which indicates continual action. This is not a one-time sin. The idea has to do with the person who lives a life of sin, and who refuses to repent. When that becomes the case, then there is "no more sacrifice." If we sin, if we recognize that we have sinned, and if we then ask for forgiveness, God will forgive us. This is not what the passage in Hebrews 10:26 is addressing.

### **Timothy Sparks:**

The word for "willfully" carries with the idea of "hearingly"—meaning that if we have our ears attuned to opportunities to sin, then there will be no sacrifice left to help us get out of our sins. If people persist in sin and forsake the Lord, then they have lost the only means of their salvation. Jesus is the perfect sacrifice, and the only sacrifice. If you do not come to God through Him (Jn. 14:6), then you cannot come to God at all. Jesus provides not only the best for us in this life (Jn. 10:10), but also the best throughout all of eternity. In Hebrews 10:38, the writer says, "The just shall live by faith." This statement (which is quoted three times in the New Testament—Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11, and here in Hebrews 10:38) is a reference to Habakkuk 2:4. Living correctly before God requires a life of continual faithfulness. If God's Word abides in you, continuing to live in sin is not an option. This is not to say that we will **never** sin. That is not the point. We know from 1 John 2:1 that when we sin, we have "an Advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ the righteous." In Hebrews 10, the writer is speaking of people who slowly begin to drift away from the church. They first may choose not to assemble with the saints. Then they may become weak, and fall into a life of continual sin. Eventually, they fall out of God's grace. Verse 38 ends with this statement, "My soul has no pleasure in him."

### **Ben Bailey**

Chapter 10 ends with this encouraging statement, “But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.” The writer wants these Christians to **not go back**, but to **press forward** instead. Some of these Christians were enduring severe persecution—and no doubt were even dying for their faith. No doubt some of them were wondering how they would fare if they ended up having to give up their lives. So, the Hebrews writer is trying to impress upon them that they must keep their faith strong. The only way any of us will ever make it to Heaven is by keeping our faith strong and intact. When the writer of Hebrews speaks of “living by faith,” he is referring to the fact that Christians must exhibit **faithfulness**. They must exhibit perseverance or endurance. The idea is: “Don’t get out; don’t give up; and don’t give in!” These Christians needed to know that only by their faithfulness would they eventually be able to overcome the trials, tribulations, persecutions, and sufferings they were experiencing. In Hebrews 11:1, the writer tells us what faith is when he says, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Faith is not a leap in the dark. Nor is it something that is mystical, magical, or “better felt than told.” Rather, faith is based on evidence—evidence such as that found within God’s Word. Hebrews 11:6 says, “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.” Christians **can** overcome—if their faith is based in the Word of God and if, out of that faith, we develop faithfulness to serve the Lord.

### **Timothy Sparks:**

Hebrews 11 shows us how vital the Word of God is to our faith. In fact, in Hebrews 11:3, the writer says, “By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.” We know from Romans 10:17 that “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” In Hebrews 11, we find what is frequently referred to as “the hall of fame of faith.” Numerous examples are provided here of people from Old Testament times who had an exemplary faith. These examples are provided so that we can pattern our lives after the faith of these people. We see, for example, Abraham. We have frequently heard the phrase, “the faithfulness of Abraham.” James says of Abraham, “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness” (Jas. 2:23). We are to imitate the strength of faith possessed by Abraham, and all the others mentioned in Hebrews 11.

### **Ben Bailey**

Our lives are so much easier when we have a good example to follow. This is the point the writer of Hebrews is making. He wants the Christians of the first century, who were undergoing severe persecution, to look back to people who, in the past, also had trials and tribulations of their own—yet who overcame and became victorious. For example, the writer of Hebrews speaks of Noah who, “being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith” (vs. 7). Noah worked on the ark for years, and very likely had to endure mocking and taunting all the while. But Noah believed in God, and through that faith, he was able to save himself and seven others in his family. Consider also Abraham. Hebrews 11:8-10 states,

“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. By faith

he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”

By faith, Abraham did what God told him to do. All the people mentioned in Hebrews 11—Sarah, Abel, Joseph, Jacob, and others—were looking for what the Hebrews writer describes in verses 14-16 as “a homeland.”

“And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.”

These people “didn’t get out, didn’t give in, and didn’t give up.” They overcame because of a trusting faith in God that allowed them to persevere in every way. The same applies to us today. Perhaps as a Christian, you are going through some difficult times that include suffering, disease, or persecution of some kind. Maybe you feel worthless. Or maybe your home life is not what it should be. Maybe you feel like you do not live up to God’s expectations. Remember this: You are doing the wrong thing if you give up and quit. You need to be faithful. It is by your faithfulness that you will eventually overcome and be able to live in God for all eternity. In the midst of trials, **do not give up**. James wrote, “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience” (Jas. 1:2-3).

### **Timothy Sparks:**

In Hebrews 11:23-27, the writer mentions Moses when he says,

“By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king’s command. By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.”

He also mentions Joseph, who, “when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones.” Joseph had as much faith at the **end** of his life as he did **during** his life. And then, after the writer of Hebrews mentions numerous other faithful people, he refers to them as those “of whom the world was not worthy.” Many of these people were severely persecuted. Some of them even died. Yet these are the very people that God chose to have the writer of Hebrews mention as examples of people who refused to abandon their faith. We read in chapter 11 the repeated reference to “by faith,” “by faith,” “by faith.” This means that, “as a result of their **faithfulness**,” these people persevered. This type of faith is not mere “mental assent.” It is not hollow or shallow. Rather it is a deep, abiding trust in God that **acts!**

### **Ben Bailey**

We might call chapter 11 “a better faith.” The faith discussed here is indeed “faithfulness that acts.” We read in Hebrews 11 about the walls of Jericho falling down. The people of Israel didn’t “just believe”—and the walls of Jericho came tumbling down as a result. The people had to act. They had to march around the city once on each of six consecutive days, and then seven times on the seventh day as they blew trumpets and stomped their feet. They “had faith.” And God’s grace provided the city for them. Salvation is the same

way. God gives us salvation (Jn. 3:16). But it is “by faith” that we access that gift. We believe in Jesus as the Son of God. We repent of our sins. We confess that Jesus is our Savior. And we are baptized for the remission of our sins.

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## STUDY QUESTIONS FOR HEBREWS LESSON 7 (CHAPTER 10-11)

1. Hebrews 10 dramatically emphasizes two things. What are those two things?
2. According to Hebrews 9:15-17, the cleansing of sins under the Old Covenant was predicated on something. What was that “something”?
3. If you had to suggest one reason why the Old Law is inferior to the New Law, what would that one reason be?
4. According to Hebrews 8:13, what happened to the Old Law at Christ’s death?
5. Hebrews 10:19 states that we can approach God “boldly.” Why are we able to do such a thing?
6. What is the meaning of Hebrews 10:24?
7. What does Hebrews 10:26 mean?
8. What does Hebrews 10:26 **not** mean?
9. What is the meaning of the statement in Hebrews 10:38, “The just shall live by faith”?
10. Why did God say, “My soul has no pleasure in him”? (Heb. 10:38).
11. Explain the meaning of Hebrews 10:39, “But we are not of those who draw back to perdition....”
12. According to Hebrews 11:1, what is faith **not**?
13. Hebrews 11 is generally referred to by a particular phrase. What is that phrase?
14. In Hebrews 11, the phrase “by faith” is repeated. What is the meaning of this phrase?
15. According to Hebrews 10:3, the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament served a purpose for the people. What was that purpose?
16. There was one thing that the animal sacrifices in the Old Testament could not do. What was that one thing?
17. What did Jesus mean when He said, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.”
18. In Hebrews 10:19-23, the writer refers to the fact that Christians are to have “hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and bodies washed with pure water.” To what does the phrase “bodies washed with pure water” refer?
19. What does it mean for Christians “not to forsake assembling themselves together”?