

Hebrews 10:19-39: Do You Have to Go to Church, If So, Why? Part 2

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I. Introduction

How do we become better Christians, is going to church enough? What can we expect from God and what can we expect from each other? Should we be able to trust each other with our most sensitive and difficult problems? Should we be able to call each other out when we're doing something wrong?

II. Hebrews 10:19-39: Why Do We Have to go to Church and What's Our Duty as a Church?

Now that Jesus has purchased our right *and responsibility*—with His life—to enter God's presence, to refuse to do so is a great insult to God and there will be consequences.

10:26-31, this audience knows the truth, especially after the author has spent so much time and detail explaining it; that truth is this: Jesus has not only ended the sacrificial system they're tempted to return to, He's replaced it. They are not to offer any more animal sacrifices; ALL animal sacrifice is OVER! Jesus died a brutal death to end this system and to replace it with a new one that grants them intimate access to God Himself. They know this, so to willfully sin like this and refuse God's invitation and shirk their responsibility as God's heavenly priests who're required to present themselves in the heavenly tabernacle, leaves them only one option: to face God's fiery wrath. They cannot atone for this sin because "there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins!"

The question here is not concerning heaven or hell; it's a question of flagrant insult. You can't go to hell for your sins, that's the whole point of the Cross. Jesus died for your sins and everyone else's (John 1:29) and those who simply believe in Him, go from death to life instantly and they will never face the Final Judgment (John 5:24). The Final Judgment is for the dead not the living; those who show up are dead and they end up in hell because they don't have life (Revelation 20:11-15).

So this is a question of insulting God. Because think about what the Cross means: Jesus paid for ALL sin for ALL time. You cannot pay for your own sins; God will not accept your currency. The only currency He accepted was Christ's blood, which paid for ALL sin forever (Hebrews 10:10, 12, 14). And after Christ did this and thereby opened the way for you to enter where no high priest had ever entered before, into God's intimate presence where you get to ask Him for help, where you and He get to share space and time, where He encourages and guides you anytime you need it, after Christ did this for you, you say to God, "I'm going back to the old system where I offered animal sacrifices to cover my sins." Can you see how incredibly insulting this would be to God? As God puts it, it is like stomping Christ under your feet, i.e., to treat Him with disdain, with scorn. It is to treat His Son's blood—the one that sanctified you—as ordinary, as profane, and it is to insult the work the Holy Spirit has done to sanctify and cleanse you of your sin. If you do this to God, there isn't a sacrifice in the world that will cover your sin. Because the blood of bulls and goats can't take away sins (10:4), especially this sin. Additionally, the penalty for this sin is death not hell, just like those who committed a capital offense under the Mosaic Law were duly executed on the testimony of two or three witnesses (there were certain sins that couldn't be covered by animal's blood; sinning willfully was one of them. If you did this, you were executed, Numbers 15:30-31). The author then quotes Deuteronomy 32:35-36, which again shows that the penalty is death: God judged His disobedient people with death at the hands of the Gentiles, which is why "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

10:32-39, but the author is confident of his audience (cf. 6:9-12) that they won't buckle under the pressure and return to Judaism. And he has good reason to be confident: in the past his audience did exactly what he's asking them to do now! Once God opened their eyes to the truth of Christ and all that Jesus had done for them, they endured the very sufferings—perhaps even more so—that they're facing now. Because of their faith in Christ they were publically ridiculed, shamed, and oppressed. They also suffered the same for associating with other Christians who also would not turn their backs on Christ but stood up for their faith. They even aligned themselves with the author of Hebrews and helped him while he was imprisoned. And they *joyfully!* accepted the seizing of their property. Why? Because they knew that they had something much better waiting for them, a lasting, heavenly reward that could not be stolen: the rewards that Christ would give them when He returned. In light of this tremendous faithfulness, the author urged them not to cast away their confidence in Christ. They need to endure as they did before because God will reward their obedience as He promised (at Christ's Second Coming).

The author quotes Habakkuk 2:3-4, which again shows that the penalty for rejecting God's command to enter the Holy of Hollies is death. During Habakkuk's day, God allowed the Chaldeans to invade Israel and every wicked and disobedient Israelite died. The only ones who survived were the just ones who trusted God and lived by their faith. The lesson: they must realize that the just must live by faith; God takes no pleasure in those who draw back, they will be punished. The author closes with another word of encouragement: the author is confident that his audience is not made up of those who draw back and are destroyed; they are of those who believe and are saved, in this case physically from death, the imminent death that was coming at the hands of the Romans during the 70 A.D. invasion when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the temple with fire.

How do we become better Christians, is going to church enough? The command to go to church in Hebrews 10:25 is not just about attending Sunday services. Being part of the church obligates you to meet with God on a regular basis but it also obligates you to meet with your fellow Christians on a regular basis, and not just in a building called church. Every individual whether young or old, married or single is struggling or will struggle with something during their life. The business of life is challenging, messy, and heartbreaking. And God never intended for us to face it alone. Not only will He be there for us whenever we need Him, He wants us to be there for each other whenever we need it. He wants us to be there for each other when we're depressed and when we're ready to celebrate (Romans 12:15), to challenge each other when we're sinning (Galatians 6:1) and to help with each other's burdens (Galatians 6:2). We're supposed to reveal our deepest struggles to each other so that we can overcome them (James 5:16). He wants us to succeed in life the way His Son did, thus, He's there and He wants us to be there too. If we refuse all this, our lives will be a constant struggle filled with anxiety, frustration and hopelessness.

III. Conclusion

But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings: partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated; for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven. Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: "For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him." But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.