

(10) We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat. For the bodies of these animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. So, Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through His own blood. Therefore, let us go to Him outside the camp and bear the reproach He endured. For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.

(15) Through Him, then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God: that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge His name! Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

(17) Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

(18) Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things. I urge you the more earnestly to do this in order that I may be restored to you the sooner.

(20) Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the Great Shepherd of the sheep by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, though Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

(22) I appeal to you brothers, bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly. You should know that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom I shall see you if he comes soon. Greet all your leaders and all the saints. Those who come from Italy send you greetings. Grace be with all of you.

Think on these things:

- 1) Most animal, grain, oil and drink offerings brought in by Jewish worshippers for the sacrificial system were then given in whole or part to the Levite workers as their support (the Levites received no land inheritance in the Promised Land). Verses 10-11 speak to a specific exception: the sacrifice made annually on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16). On this day, the High Priest sacrificed a bull for himself, and a goat for all the people. Another goat was prayed over and then released into the wilderness (desert) --- the “scape” goat. After the sacrifices, the carcasses of the bull and one goat were hauled away outside the camp and burned in totality. What link is made between the Day of Atonement animal sacrifices and Jesus’ death on the cross for all people (v.12)? What are we asked to do (v.13)?

Link? **As the animal carcasses were dragged outside of the Israelite camp and burned, Jesus, too, was dragged outside of Jerusalem to the place of the skull (Golgotha/Calvary) and made the eternal atoning sacrifice for the whole world. His sacrifice was always intended for “all” people, and not just the Jews.**

What are we to do? **We are asked to go to Jesus “outside,” bearing His reproach from the whole world (v.13). We are to identify and endure with Him in His sufferings and oppositions.**

- 2) Vs. 15-16 identify 3 “sacrifices” which Christians are to make. Name these sacrifices, and for the one found in v.15, explain why this might be considered a sacrifice. See Psalm 50:14, 23 and 107:22.

3 sacrifices? 1) **We are to acknowledge and praise God “continually” (sacrifice of praise); 2) to do good to others (be a do-gooder!); and 3) to share what we have with those in need. This pleases God!**

V.15 sacrifice, why a hardship? **Some people want to keep their faith in God “private.” The Psalms passages indicate ‘sacrifices of praise’ are actually expressions of gratitude. In Mt 10:32-33, Jesus says we must acknowledge Him publicly. If we refrain, He will not acknowledge us in heaven.**

- 3) Church leaders have difficult responsibilities. As members of the church, we can bring joy or drudgery to their service for the Lord. V 17b says when we make service difficult for them it is NOT to our advantage. What two leadership tasks do they bear for each of us (v.17)? What two commands are we given (v.17)?

What tasks? **Our leaders are 1) charged to keep watch over the souls of their church congregates, and 2) they will be accountable to (judged by) God for how well or poorly they did this essential service.**

Church member commands? **Church members are to obey and submit to church leaders. This may beg the question about, "What if they ask me to do something sinful or wrong?" (e.g., adultery). The response may be that it is not blind obedience here, but scripturally supported obedience. It is similar to wondering about obeying parental directives that children believe to be wrong in God's eyes....**

- 4) As human beings, church leaders make mistakes, too! When caught up in sin, they must respond to God in the same way we all must, as described in 1 John 1:5-10. However, when our leaders falter and sin, their actions and consequences sometimes negatively and seriously affect many families within and without our specific church congregation, and what they did often becomes public knowledge. Looking at James 3:1-2, what do we learn about God's judging of church leaders? God's disappointment and concerns with leaders can be found in Isaiah 56:9-12; Ezekiel 33:1-9; Matthew 23:1-36 (skim); 1 Timothy 1:3-7; and 2 Timothy 3:1-9. Notice in v.18 that the Hebrew's writer asks for prayer that they, as leaders, will continue to serve with clear consciences and to act honorably in all things!

James clarifies that leaders, particularly teachers, are held to a "stricter" judgment by God. From the OT to the NT to the future last days, congregations of believers have had to put up with self-centered, ungodly leaders. These "under shepherds" and "lazy watchmen" lead primarily to take advantage of, and prey upon, the believers (sheep), to get for themselves (make a living) under the guise of religion.

- 5) Jesus called Himself the Good Shepherd (John 10:9-16). In v.20, He is called the Great Shepherd. Reading the John passage, what example of shepherding did Jesus leave for church leaders to follow today? What happens when church leaders fail to follow Jesus' example (Ezekiel 34:1-10)? The Hebrew writer prays, "May the God of Peace...equip you with everything good that you may do His will."

Jesus' example? **Jesus describes His role as the true Shepherd as primarily one of sacrifice on behalf of His sheep. His purpose was never to "get" but to "give."**

When leaders fail? **Ezekiel shares a warning that God knows when lazy and preying shepherds are in control of His sheep, reducing them to commodities and getting personally enriched off them. In 34:10, He states He will oppose these shepherds, stop them in their abuses, and require accountability (judgment) for the sheep they were responsible for.**

What we learn in vs. 22-25 is that Timothy was recently released from prison (v.23). Paul, as Timothy's spiritual father and mentor, never mentioned this event in any of his writings. Scholars conclude this contributes to the understanding that Paul has probably died since writing 2 Timothy and is likely not the author of Hebrews. The author then states he will join Timothy in a visit. Sharing a salutation from people in Italy leads to the perception that perhaps this letter was written from Rome, and possibly to churches in Italy outside Rome. From the early Church fathers (e.g., Clement) to today's best scholars, the concession is that the author is anonymous/unknown.

People and situations I want to pray for this week: