

Hebrews 10:11-25 – Our confidence is in knowing who we are in Jesus

were continually repeated. The contrast is made in repeated phrases: "one sacrifice", "for all time", "He sat down...and...waits", "holy forever".

15-16 The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First He says: "This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds."

"I will put my laws in their hearts" – as Jeremiah had prophesied, Jer. 31:31-34, by the Holy Spirit leading and guiding believers. We have a new nature in Christ, while remaining on earth a 'work in progress' – "being made holy" while also "made perfect" by the finished work of Christ, v.14.

17 Then he adds: "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more."

18 And where these have been forgiven, sacrifice for sin is no longer necessary.

"Sins...remember no more" – contrasts with "annual reminder of sins", Heb. 10:3. Under the New Covenant sins we confess and renounce are both forgiven and forgotten, Psalm 40:6-8.

19-25 Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the

Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

The incredible good news that we are positionally completely forgiven is not an excuse for passivity, but the reason to keep on meeting, encouraging one another, and going deeper with God.

"Draw near... with..." – there are conditions e.g. sincerity of heart, unhesitating assurance and freedom from guilt.

IN PRACTICE A key word in this passage is 'confidence'. This is a key value in living above all that pulls us down as witnesses to the life of the Spirit of Jesus in us, knowing who we are, as viewed by heaven. We might not feel it polite to speak vehemently of the blood of Jesus and how it has transformed us – but speak it out we must! The devil, one of the actors in all of these passages, has no manners and certainly doesn't respect ours – but will run scared every time when we declare the power of Christ's blood, and the joyful New Life we have in Him and Him alone. These passages all tell stories of conflict and difficulty, but also speak of God's salvation plan coming through the chaos. That presents us with a choice. Who do we agree with? The destroyer and chaos, or the Saviour and what He is doing? For us, speaking out words of faith and truth about God's purpose are not just words, but the force that tips the balance.

QUESTION *What seems to be going badly for you right now? What is God's good purpose in it, and how do you pray, knowing that?*

PRAYER Lord, no one knows the time of Your return but we know that at the end of the book, the Lamb wins! Fill me afresh with the Holy Spirit and His holy confidence that I may maintain a spirit of praise for the final outcome and Your victory in pain and blood. Amen.

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The Bible readings for Sunday, November 18, 2018, with commentary

Revised Common Lectionary readings for **Sunday, November 18**, in Bible order

Prepare for Sunday by reading the Bible passages beforehand – read again to reflect on Sunday's teaching

Theme: **The devil's works are overturned by faith in God's purpose**

1 Samuel 1:4-20 – God's answer to a desperate prayer impacts history

Daniel 12:1-3 – End-times resurrection: either everlasting life, or shame

Mark 13:1-8 – Jesus foretells the destruction of the temple

Hebrews 10:11-25 – Our confidence is in knowing who we are in Jesus

Also: 1 Samuel 2:1-10 (Hannah's prayer), Psalm 16

1 Samuel 1:4-20 – God's answer to a desperate prayer impacts history

Hannah's failure to conceive does not dampen her trust in God's goodness

4-8 Whenever the day came for Elkanah to sacrifice, he would give portions of the meat to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters. But to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her, and the Lord had closed her womb. Because the Lord had closed Hannah's womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her. This went on year after year. Whenever Hannah went up to the house of the Lord, her rival provoked her till she wept and would not eat. Her husband Elkanah would say to her, "Hannah, why are you weeping? Why don't you eat? Why are you downhearted? Don't I mean more to you than ten sons?"

"Hannah" – meaning 'grace'. The wider story is God's miraculous intervention with a faithful woman, Hannah, to raise up a righteous judge at a time of crisis for Israel.

9-11 Once when they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah stood up. Now Eli the priest was sitting on his chair by the doorpost of the Lord's house. In her deep anguish Hannah prayed to the

Lord, weeping bitterly. And she made a vow, saying, "Lord Almighty, if you will only look on your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head."

"Shiloh" – the original settled location of the tabernacle, about 20 miles north of Jerusalem, later destroyed, Psalm 78:60; Jer. 7:12-14. 1 Sam. 4 gives the context. "Eli...on his chair" – the chair denoted his authority.

"Deep anguish" – barrenness in OT times was considered a failure and a social embarrassment for her husband, on top of the natural disappointment.

12-14 As she kept on praying to the Lord, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard. Eli thought she was drunk and said to her, "How long are you going to stay drunk? Put away your wine."

"Kept on praying" – mocked by a woman who shared her husband and by the high priest who failed to understand her motives, Hannah did not give in to discouragement but kept her focus on

God and opened the way for Him to work.

15-16 "Not so, my lord," Hannah replied, "I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the Lord. Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief."

"Not been drinking" – a grave offence in the tabernacle precincts.

17 Eli answered, "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him."

18 She said, "May your servant find

favour in your eyes." Then she went her way and ate something, and her face was no longer downcast.

19 Early the next morning they arose and worshipped before the Lord and then went back to their home at Ramah. Elkanah made love to his wife Hannah, and the Lord remembered her. 20 So in the course of time Hannah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, "Because I asked the Lord for him."

"Samuel" – means 'name of God' but also sounds like 'heard by God'; Hannah's way of remembering that God had heard her prayer.

Daniel 12:1-3 – End-times resurrection: either everlasting life, or shame

The archangel Michael will arise to protect those whose name is written in the book of the saved, in the final conflict

1 "At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people – everyone whose name is found written in the book – will be delivered.

"At that time" – the events of the Dan. 11:36-45, the antichrist's attempt to annihilate the Jewish people. A time of great distress, at the same time tempered with hope for true believers. "Michael" – the archangel Michael prevailed over a principality demon

IN PRACTICE The story of Hannah speaks loudly of God's goodness, to all of us who have been misunderstood, disappointed again and again and put down by others. Her self-esteem had been shredded, but her faith said that God is good, even if it didn't feel that way to her. God's purpose is to grow us in faith and spiritual maturity, and he will allow difficulties that root out the barriers of pride and self-sufficiency. Hannah's story reminds us that at a time of national vulnerability – weak faith, lax rule – God is working for His salvation purposes, on a bigger picture. When you are mocked for your faith, be encouraged by this story to keep on keeping on, for heaven's reward in heaven's time.

PRAYER Lord, open my eyes to Your bigger picture that I may see beyond my fight of faith and pray from knowing that You are just and Your purposes are good.

controlling the Persian empire, after a 21-day struggle.

"Name... written in the book" – the book of the saved, Mal. 3:16-4:3; Luke 10:20; Rev. 13:8.

2-3 Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.

"Multitudes who sleep... will awake" – first reference in the Bible to physical resurrection of the righteous; with a different outcome, also the wicked.

For further study, read Job 19:25-26; Psalm 16:10; Isaiah 26:19; John 5:24-29.

Mark 13:1-8 – Jesus foretells the destruction of the temple

The end-times birth pains will come in wars, disasters- and widespread spiritual deception

1 As Jesus was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!"

"Massive stones" – on the scale of a double-decker bus.

2 "Do you see all these great buildings?" replied Jesus. "Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down."

"Every one... thrown down" – the temple and city was destroyed by the Romans in the 70 AD uprising. The authorities were 'rebellious tenants marked for destruction', Mark 11:9-11, Mark 11:18, 27-33.

3-4 As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately, "Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all

about to be fulfilled?"

"What will be the sign" – the disciples saw the foretold temple destruction as heralding the last times. Jesus is speaking of close future events but also more distant times. Prophetic foretelling in Scripture often applies to more than one future time.

5-8 Jesus said to them: "Watch out that no one deceives you. Many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and will deceive many. When you hear of wars and rumours of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains.

"Watch out... be on your guard" – Jesus commands vigilance, spiritual discernment with awareness of the Scriptures, because deception is a primary danger for the disciples – and us.

IN PRACTICE Jesus teaches that there is cause and effect in the spiritual realm, specifically consequences for those who rejected their Messiah. Their 'sign of the end times' came 40 years later with terrible bloodshed as Jerusalem and the temple, with its massive foundations, was destroyed by the Romans. The kingdom message of 'knowing God's love – loving Him and others' is so straightforward people dismiss it. Living in our own 'end times' we are to watch for the ways love is twisted into an ugly caricature, and recognise which kingdom is dark, and which is light.

QUESTION Do our attitudes and actions play out with effects now, or effects later, or in eternity – or not at all?

Hebrews 10:11-25 – Our confidence is in knowing who we are in Jesus

The Holy Spirit witnesses to us the New Covenant in Jesus' blood and the finality of Jesus' sacrifice for us

11-14 Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this Priest had offered for all time

one sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God, and since that time He waits for his enemies to be made His footstool. For by one sacrifice He has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

"Every priest stands... this Priest... sat down" – Christ is seated because His work is finished, whereas regular priests stood for religious duties which