

## Hebrews 10:1-18 – A single sacrifice for sin

### 1. Introduction

- a. The bible is a timeless book, and as such it has something to say about every time frame in history, every situation that we find ourselves in; the season we are in now is no exception.
- b. The primary message of the book of Hebrews is the superiority of Jesus – his person, his priesthood and his sacrifice – they are all superior to anything that has gone before.
- c. There is a parallel between Hebrews and where we are today in a world restricted by coronavirus.
  - i Suddenly, almost overnight, everything changed and we had to learn how to do things differently. We face the prospect of learning how to do everything with a new normal.
- d. It's the same message the writer to Hebrews has been teaching throughout the book so far. Many of his readers had been brought up living under the practices of the Old Covenant, they were familiar with how things were done with the sacrifices and the priesthood and the temple.
  - i Jesus has come and everything has changed, the old way of doing things has now become obsolete and passing away. The old covenant was deficient and didn't actually accomplish what is now promised in the new.
  - ii The new covenant totally embraces the old, but enhances it, and in the person of Jesus, fulfils it.
  - iii The writer is laying out why they need to look to the future and to understand what Jesus has come to do and what he has accomplished in his life, his death, his resurrection and his ascension to heaven as an eternal great high priest.
  - iv For Christians in every generation this has been a valuable resource to learn why understanding the old covenant helps us in our understanding of the new covenant.
- e. Chapter 9 established three important truths that give us a foundation to help us to get hold of chapter 10.
  - i **A will demands a death**
  - ii **Forgiveness demands bloodshed**
  - iii **Salvation demands substitution**
- f. In chapter 10 we will be focusing in on how Jesus' sacrifice is better. Not only is he a better high priest, not only did he secure and become the mediator of a better covenant, he then made a better sacrifice.

### 2. The blood of bulls and goats...

- a. The first 6 verses tell us about the ineffectiveness of animal sacrifices.

**Hebrews 10:1-6** *The old system of living under the law presented us with only a faint shadow, a crude outline of the reality of the wonderful blessings to come. Even with its steady stream of sacrifices offered year after year,*

*there still was nothing that could make our hearts perfect before God. <sup>2-3</sup>For if animal sacrifices could once and for all eliminate sin, they would have ceased to be offered and the worshipers would have clean consciences. Instead, once was not enough so by the repetitive sacrifices year after year, the worshipers were continually reminded of their sins, with their hearts still impure. <sup>4</sup>For what power does the blood of bulls and goats<sup>a</sup> have to remove sin's guilt? <sup>5</sup>So when Jesus the Messiah came into the world he said, "Since your ultimate desire was not another animal sacrifice, you have clothed me with a body. <sup>6</sup>Multiple burnt offerings and sin-offerings cannot satisfy your justice. [Passion Translation]*

- a. The writer in the first 11 verses is restating what he has been saying in the previous 2 chapters, because he wants to make sure that his readers fully grasp why Jesus' sacrifice was so essential for their salvation.
- b. One of the most demanding elements of the old testament priesthood was the daily work of sacrifice. With all of this slaughter there was a lot of blood being shed. At Passover the blood poured down through specially prepared gullies into the Kidron Valley, turning the Brook Kidron into a river of blood.
- c. Under the old covenant, the law required repeated sacrifices for sin. The very repetition of the sacrifices showed that they did not make sinners perfect – if they had been able to perfect sinners they wouldn't need to keep on offering sacrifices.
- d. Verse 1. The old covenant was a foreshadowing of the reality that was to come in the form of Jesus. And all of those sacrifices couldn't make men's hearts perfect before God. Shadows are not the reality, they point towards the reality, the substance. These old testament shadows are pointing to Jesus.

**Colossians 2:17** *These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.*

- i We covered shadows in some detail in chapter 8. Beware because some shadows appear to be more real than what they actually are.
- ii If we are pursuing Jesus, through intimacy, prayer, his word, we can be sure that we will receive everything God desires for us. If we spend our time chasing after other things, good as they may be, they may well turn out to be shadows that lead us away from the substance.
- iii Shadows can be helpful, but only if we let them point us to the substance.
- e. The second deficiency the writer highlights is that these sacrifices that had to be repeated daily were in themselves testimony to their inadequacy to deal with the problem of sin. But no repetition of shadows can ever amount to substance.
  - i All the old covenant sacrificial system could do was to cover sin, and that covering only lasted as long as the person remained sinless. If this sacrifice system had removed their guilt and brought them into fellowship with God, it would have ceased to be necessary. It constantly reminded them that it did not remove their sin.
  - ii The purpose in all of this – verse 3 – is about remembrance. Every time a sacrifice was made for sin it reminded the sinner of God. It reminded them that their sin was covered, but not removed. See chapters 8 and 9 for fuller details of this

- f. It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. There is no relationship between the death and the physical blood of a dumb animal and the forgiveness of a man's moral offense against God. Only Jesus' death could be the ultimate sacrifice that took away a man's sin.
- g. Verses 5 and 6 – Jesus quotes from Psalm 40, which confirms that God is not looking for any more animal sacrifices, because the time has now come for the substance of the shadows to be revealed.
  - i. Jesus is given a body, which has been prepared for him by God the Father. Jesus refers to the words of Samuel, the prophet.

**1 Samuel 15:22** *And Samuel said, "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams."*

- ii. Jesus came to the world as an obedient son, who knew that the days of the blood of bulls and goats covering sin are numbered – the substance is here, the shadows are gone.
- iii. In his wisdom God wanted to prepare the hearts of his people by means of shadows, there would be a 2,000 year age of shadows to act as a lesson-book to prepare us and teach us about the reality that was the cross.

### 3. The obedient Son

**Hebrews 10:7-13** *So I said to you, 'God I will be the One to go and do your will, to fulfill all that is written of me in your Word!' <sup>8</sup>First he said, "Multiple burnt-offerings and sin-offerings cannot satisfy your justice" (even though the law required them to be offered). <sup>9</sup>And then he said, "God, I will be the One to go and do your will." So by being the sacrifice that removes sin, he abolishes animal sacrifices and replaces that entire system with the new covenant. <sup>10</sup>By God's will we have been purified and made holy once and for all through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus, the Messiah! <sup>11</sup>Yet every day priests still serve, ritually offering the same sacrifices again and again—sacrifices that can never take away sin's guilt. <sup>12</sup>But when this Priest had offered the one supreme sacrifice for sin for all time he sat down on a throne at the right hand of God, <sup>13</sup>waiting until all his whispering enemies are subdued and turn into his footstool.*

- a. In verse 7 Jesus re-states his commitment to his Father that he would be the obedient Son who would completely fulfil their plan of redemption. Jesus is saying here that in his sacrificial death he came to fulfil everything that was written about him in the old covenant scriptures.
- b. In verse 9 the writer summarises his argument in one sentence. "He does away with the first in order to establish the second." What does that mean? The Passion translation says it this way: "So by being the sacrifice that removes sin, Jesus abolishes animal sacrifices and replaces that entire system with the new covenant."
- c. Jesus' affirmation that he came to do God's will in verse 9 has a direct consequence for us in verse 10. There's a theological word for it – you have been sanctified. It means that you have been purified and made holy.
  - i. That means your guilt and shame have been dealt with and your conscience is clean and free, and there is no condemnation or accusation that can be levelled against you. That is your permanent position in Christ – the verb is in the perfect tense indicating a completed action in the past – you have been sanctified.

- d. In verses 11 and 12 the writer contrasts the differences between the old covenant priests and Jesus the great high priest. Notice the contrasts:
  - i many priests vs. Jesus as our one High Priest;
  - ii many sacrifices vs. the one sacrifice of himself;
  - iii repeated offerings vs. one offering for all time;
  - iv notice that (verse 11) "every priest stands daily;" but when Jesus has made his single sacrifice he (verse 12) "sat down at the right hand of God."
- e. There are three things that Jesus sitting at the right hand of the Father tells us.
  - i **The work is done**
  - ii **God is satisfied with the sacrifice**
  - iii **Jesus, together with the Father, is the sovereign ruler over his enemies.**
- f. Verse 13: He is "waiting until all his enemies are made a footstool for his feet." In other words, everything Jesus died to accomplish will be accomplished. No enemy can hinder his work in the end.
  - i Jesus will stand above all those who were His enemies. He destroyed them at the cross. What is the greatest power that Satan has? The power of death. And he threw it all at Jesus. What happened?
  - ii He destroyed the power of death that was in Satan's hand. The one who had the power of death spent it all on Jesus, and he came out of the grave, triumphing over Satan and all his host of wickedness forever.
  - iii All of Jesus' enemies, including all who oppose him in this age will become his footstool.

#### 4. Those who are being sanctified...

**Hebrews 10:14-18** *For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying, <sup>16</sup> "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds," <sup>17</sup> then he adds, "I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more." <sup>18</sup> Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.*

- a. Verse 14 is the pivotal verse of this whole passage. There are two things here that directly relate to your life today, and they are connected to sanctification.
- b. First – Jesus has perfected his people and it is already complete. The perfecting of his people is complete and it is complete forever. Does this mean that Christians don't sin?
  - i The answer of course is "No!" This verse helps us to understand how this works by the use of two different tenses. "...he has perfected..." is perfect tense, past action, complete, nothing more to add. "...are being sanctified." present tense, passive, a continuous action that is being done to us.
  - ii Who is he talking about? Those who "are being sanctified." The tense is so important. "Those who are being sanctified" are not yet fully sanctified in the sense of committing no

more sin, or they would not need to go on being sanctified. So we see the surprising combination: the same people who "have been perfected" are the ones who "are being sanctified."

- iii What does that mean for us? Verses 15-18 – in the new covenant, which Jesus has sealed now by his blood, there is total forgiveness for all our sins. Verses 17-18 – "Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more. Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin."
- iv We are perfected now in the sense that God puts away all our sins, forgives them, and never brings them to mind again. In this sense we stand before him perfect. When he looks on us he does not count any of our sins against us, past, present or future.
- c. Second – who has Jesus done this perfecting work on the cross for. You could say it like this: Jesus has perfected once and for all those who are being perfected. Or as the writer puts it in verse 10, Jesus has fully sanctified those who are now being sanctified. Or Jesus has fully accomplished and guaranteed the holiness of those who are now being made holy.
  - i So are we sanctified, or are we being sanctified? The biblical answer is "Yes" – it's both, we have been sanctified and we are being sanctified.
  - ii It means that you can have assurance that you stand perfected and holy in the eyes of your heavenly Father not because you are perfect now, but precisely because you are not perfect now. But you are "being sanctified", "being made holy", so that, by faith in God's promises, you are moving away from your lingering imperfection toward more and more holiness.

## 5. Conclusion

- a. These verses should inspire us to a greater desire to pursue holiness and to grow in grace and faith. It means we can come by faith to the throne of grace and in the midst of imperfection we can look to Jesus and say: "You have already perfected me in your sight."
- b. These verses have helped focus our attention on how Jesus' sacrifice of himself is the substance that the shadows of the old covenant had all been pointing to. Here are seven ways that we have touched on today that give substance to the shadows, and reveal the glory of Jesus' sacrifice.
  - i It fulfilled the will of God
  - ii It replaced the old animal sacrificial system
  - iii It sanctifies the believer
  - iv It removes sin
  - v It destroyed his enemies
  - vi It perfected the saints forever
  - vii It fulfils the promised new covenant

**Romans 5:2** *Through him [Jesus] we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*