

THE PERFECT SACRIFICE

Series pt 11: Hebrews 10:1-25
Easter Sunday - Stonebrook Church, 3/31/24, Matt Heerema

Please open your Bibles to Hebrews, Chapter 10.

I'd like to offer a special welcome to those of you joining us this morning for the first time. Easter is a very significant day for Christians, and I'm glad you were able to be here this morning. We are studying through the book of Hebrews together this spring. It's providential that we are arriving at chapter 10 just in time for Easter, as today's passage is the climax of the author's message about the significance of Jesus' ministry, and the ultimate effect of his death and resurrection.

To help us understand the significance of what we're looking at today, before reading our passage, I wanted to review a bit about the book: who it was written to, and why it was written.

Hebrews is a letter written to a primarily Hebrew-Christian audience. The original recipients of this letter (sometime around the year 65 AD) had grown up in the Jewish religion, and had at some point in the previous 30 years been converted to the way of Jesus, to Christianity. They were well familiar with "The Law of Moses" - the old covenant system that God established with his people after he rescued them out of slavery in Egypt. It seems now that they were under pressure from their peers, perhaps their family members, their community, and even some friends to renounce Christianity and turn back to The Law of Moses.

Into this scenario the author writes, encouraging the Hebrew believers to hang on to their faith in Jesus. That the Old Covenant, the Law of Moses, has nothing for them, and that from an eternal perspective, it is far better to suffer and perhaps even die in this faith than to turn back from it.

It can be hard for us in Ames, Iowa in 2024 to relate to this letter, because I'm pretty sure very few of us are facing that same kind of pressure. "Give up Christianity and come back to sacrificing bulls and goats in the temple in Jerusalem!" – But I hope by the end of our 30 minutes here you'll be able to see how this relates to your life.

Here's a quick summary of what we'll see in today's passage: The Old Covenant system was only ever meant as an example, symbol, copy, shadow, model, an illustration of God's full plan for his people - not the real thing. It was meant to show us our sinfulness, and that to be right with God, faith was necessary and a substitute sacrifice was the required payment for our sin. Jesus came as that substitute and performed the final sacrifice, the one The Law was hinting at, and as such, that old covenant is no longer necessary, and therefore it is no longer in effect. As a result, we can now draw near to God through Christ with full assurance of forgiveness! Let's take a look.

THE SACRIFICES COULD NEVER REMOVE SIN

Hebrews 10:1-4 (CSB)

1 **Since** the law has only a shadow of the good things to come, and not the reality itself of those things, it can never perfect the worshipers by the same sacrifices they continually offer year after year. 2 Otherwise, wouldn't they have stopped being offered, since the worshipers, purified once and for all, would no longer have any consciousness of sins? 3 But in the sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year after year.

4 **For** it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

The law couldn't remove sin, it can only remind people of their sinfulness.

Leviticus, the book of the Bible that outlines the sacrificial system, uses the language of "atonement" and "covering" when it comes to what the sacrifice does. It does also say that the offerer would be forgiven for the sin they for which they were sacrificing, But the bigger problem still remained.

We saw last week in Hebrews 9 that sacrifice only forgave at a surface level. It only resulted in "outward" cleaning, but the "inward", real problem, the spiritual problem remained.

If it could not take away sins, why did God set it up? As a parable. To instruct us, to remind us. The sacrifices were put in place to teach the people that they had a problem.

Hebrews 9:7-9 recounts how the priest would offer the sacrifices, and then says (depending on your Bible translation) that these sacrifices were "symbolic" or an "example" – the Greek word used there is literally "parable." The sacrificial system was a parable: meant to teach us of how hopelessly sinful and hopelessly needy we were. Day after day, year after year, sacrifices would need to be made for sin.

Because the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sin.

GOD ALWAYS HAD ANOTHER SACRIFICE IN MIND

But Jesus' mission was to save his people: to take away the sin of the world. So he had to do something that would change the system: he had to fulfill God's desired outcome in the old covenant law, so that a new covenant could start.

Hebrews 10:5-7 (CSB)

5 **Therefore**, as he was coming into the world, he said:

You did not desire sacrifice and offering, but you prepared a body for me. 6 You did not delight in whole burnt offerings and sin offerings. 7 Then I said, "See— it is written about me in the scroll— I have come to do your will, God."

The author of Hebrews here quotes Psalm 40. Some of the wording is different because he is quoting from an early Greek version of the Hebrew Bible called the Septuagint.

This psalm, quoted in verses 5-7 here, is saying that God did not want High Priest Jesus to offer the burnt offerings from The Law of Moses, but God "prepared a body" for Jesus. That is, Jesus took on humanity, so that he could offer himself.

JESUS'S SELF-SACRIFICE WAS ALWAYS THE END GOAL

God's plan was to remove his people's sin from them as far as the east is from the west. The blood of bulls and goats could never take away sin. But the blood of Jesus does!

Jesus offered the sacrifice to end all sacrifices. No more sacrifices were required. The system now had the sacrifice that would finally take away sins. This is what it means that Jesus fulfilled the law.

The Old Covenant is finished. That is what Jesus meant with his last words from the cross: "It is finished." His mission was finished. The sacrifice that ended the sacrificial system in the Law of Moses was made.

Jews and Gentiles both now have a new way of relating to God: a new covenant, a new deal! The old has gone, the new had come.

Hebrews 10:8-9 (CSB)

8 After he says above, You did not desire or delight in sacrifices and offerings, whole burnt offerings and sin offerings (which are offered according to the law), 9 he then says, See, I have come to do your will. He takes away the first to establish the second.

JESUS'S SELF-SACRIFICE GUARANTEES OUR SALVATION

Not only did Jesus finish and finalize the purpose of the Old Covenant (doing away with it forever, and making salvation possible), Jesus actually secured salvation for his people. Christians often look at the warnings in the book of Hebrews as reason to be concerned that it might be possible to lose one's salvation, but the point of Hebrews is precisely the opposite. Because Jesus did God's will, and offered Himself as the final sacrifice once for all time, we who are in Him, who trust in his saving work for us, are assured of salvation!

Hebrews 10:10-18 (CSB)

10 By this will, we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all time.

11 Every priest stands day after day ministering and offering the same sacrifices time after time, which can never take away sins. 12 But this man, after offering one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God. 13 He is now waiting until his enemies are made his footstool.

14 **For** by one offering he has perfected forever those who are [being] sanctified.

15 The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. **For** after he says:

16 This is the covenant I will make with them after those days, the Lord says, I will put my laws on their hearts and write them on their minds, 17 and I will never again remember their sins and their lawless acts.

18 Now where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer an offering for sin.

No more offerings needed, no more offerings possible. Jesus's offering of Himself in our place is the only way that sin can be removed, and we can be assured of eternal life.

HOW WE CAN RELATE TO THE STRUGGLE OF THE HEBREW CHRISTIANS

I said at the beginning that it can be difficult for us in Ames, Iowa in 2024 to relate to all this Old Covenant talk. We're not really wrestling with the idea of giving up Christianity to go back to the Law of Moses, are we?

It would be impossible to anyway. There is no more tabernacle, and no more temple. There is no place to offer a sacrifice. And even if there were, we see today, that those sacrifices did not result in the removal of sin! The problem still remains!

But here's how we can relate. We don't tend to waffle between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. We tend to waffle between the New Covenant, and our own covenant we made up ourselves. "I worship God in my own way." "I try to be a good person, and God should accept that, right?" If the Old Covenant that God gave his own people didn't remove their sin problem, how much less effective would be the plan to "be right with God" we make up on our own??

Good news. We don't have to wonder any more about how to get right with God! Jesus showed us the way. Faith in him. Trust in him. Trust in his work, in his teaching, in his sacrifice, in his resurrection that we celebrate today. He rose, and Hebrews tells us "sat down at the right hand of God." He is currently reigning as king over his kingdom. We are to give ourselves to him.

Jesus did all the work to remove our sin. If you are in Christ, when God looks at you he does not see your record of sin. He sees Jesus's record of righteousness. We don't have to fear God's gaze anymore! And so...

Hebrews 10:19-25 (CSB)

19 **Therefore**, brothers and sisters, since we have boldness to enter the sanctuary through the blood of Jesus—20 he has inaugurated for us a new and living way through the curtain (that is, through his flesh)—21 and since we have a great high priest over the house of God,

a) Draw near to God!

22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed in pure water.

Get close to him! Come to him in prayer and speak to him. Go to his word in the Bible and hear from him. Be together with his people and experience his love.

b) Hang in there!

23 Let us hold on to the confession of our hope without wavering, since he who promised is faithful.

You will be tempted to quit, to despair, to give up. Hang in there.

c) Help each other do this! Help each other hang in there!

24 And let us consider one another in order to provoke love and good works, 25 not neglecting to gather together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day approaching.

It's fun for me that our text, on Easter Sunday, when we have many visitors who just show up on this day, that the Bible tells me to tell you: come back next week. Don't give up meeting together with your brothers and sisters in Christ! They will help you hang in there.

Let's pray together.