

Hebrews Study

Session 15 - Chapter 10:1-18

Chapter 9 brought out the effectiveness of the blood of Jesus as the preeminent sacrifice of all time and now in chapter 10 the stress is upon the once-for-all nature of that sacrifice. The author is going to make a sharp contrast between shadow and reality or substance. The ancient system which was so meaningful to the Jews was nothing more than an unsubstantial shadow. Christ is shown to be the real thing - the substance. To leave Christ for Judaism would be to forsake substance for shadow as the Jewish system has been shown again and again powerless and completely ineffective in dealing with sin at the heart level. And the heart level is where God is concerned as it reflects our relationship with Him.

On a doctrinal note, this passage contains probably the most vivid teaching of our truth in the New Testament of “once saved, always saved”. If you understand this chapter, there is absolutely no way one can miss the bedrock truth of the permanence of God’s work of saving grace in a person and the security of the believer through Christ.

This section is divided into two parts: Shadow vs. substance and one sacrifice was sufficient for the salvation of mankind.

1. Shadow vs. Substance

Read Hebrews 10:1-4

Some artists paint the outline first of the object they are painting and then after that they fill in that outline with color to complete the picture. In this section the author compares the law to a preliminary sketch or outline made by an artist. The Law was just the rudimentary outline of God’s design not the finished piece of art in all of its glory.

Q: What was the defect of the Law the author points out? (*v.1 - it cannot make perfect those who draw near*)

This is the second time the author uses the word “shadow” (the first time was in 8:5). The word means something unsubstantial, without substance, not real. Keep in mind that shadows are formed by blocking the light. The law, with its barriers to keep people from God, represent nothing but shadows - blocking the full glory of Christ to come.

Q: What are “the good things to come” mentioned by the author in v.1? (*these are the things that accompany salvation*)

The word “continually” means to “carry through or bear through” something. As here, it often carries the meaning “endlessly”. It describes an act that ushers in a permanent result. In this case, since the word “never” is used before it to describe the sacrifices under the Law, it means that those worshipers under the Law were bearing through those sacrifices endlessly but it was nothing more than the shadow of what was to replace it. The author’s use of “the Law” in v.1 is really a reference to the entire Old Testament including the sacrificial system. The entire system of was incomplete, by God’s design. The problem was that the same limitations the

sacrifices of last year possessed, are the same limitations that the sacrifices of this year will possess. Animal sacrifices could not ever bring perfection to the person offering the sacrifice.

Q: What is the answer to the rhetorical question of v.2? *(yes, the sacrifices would have ceased to be offered if those making the offerings had been made perfect by them.)*

Q: Why would those sacrifices ceased to be offered? *(the worshipers would no longer have been conscience of sins)*

This is a huge deal to the author. He has repeated this thought several times now. If a sacrifice under the Law would have been able to cleanse the person, they would have ceased to be offered. The repetition shows their ineffectiveness. Here's a quote on the subject: *"An atonement that needs constant repetition does not really atone; a conscience which has to be cleansed once a year has never been truly cleansed."* Living with partial atonement or partial forgiveness is nothing less than trying to live under the Old Testament. However, as we'll see, that covenant doesn't even exist any longer.

In v. 3 the word "reminder" (NASB) is better translated "remembrance" as it is elsewhere in the New Testament. It's used by the Lord when He instituted the Lord's Supper. It's an event which calls us to remember something else. In this case the author is referring to how the Day of Atonement brought to remembrance the sins of the people yearly.

Q: What can the blood of animals never do? *(v.4 - take away sins. The word "take away" is the same word used when Peter lops off the servant's ear in the garden. In other words, the blood of animals cannot sever us from our sin.)*

Q: By these statements, what is the author saying about the Day of Atonement? *(it's no longer necessary - it's part of the shadow)*

Now let's go back to v.1 for a moment. The phrase "form of things" actually is just one word which is usually translated "image" (eikon). When a coin is made, it described the image stamped permanently on that coin. It also was used to describe the image a child had to its parent. Christ is the true image of the Heavenly Father. He is the permanent image of God. While the Law was the rudimentary sketch, Christ is the finished piece of art in all of its glory. He is the completed portrait of God concerning redemption.

The contrast is complete. The Law is the shadow. Christ is the substance or reality of God's plan for the perfection of the soul.

Q: The author has repeated this point in various ways several times already. Why do you think he continues to hammer this point home to his original audience? *(he loves them deeply and wants them to fully understand the futility of leaving Christ to return to Judaism. He wants them to experience the fulness and reality of Christ rather than the shadow of the Law, other answers possible)*

This passage actually tells us a great deal about God. It reveals to us that it was God's

will to atone for sins. The problem was that the blood of bulls and goats were not effective in accomplishing that task. It's only in Christ that this purpose of God is fulfilled. Where as the first four verses focus on the shadow and the negative side of the Law, the next passage focuses on the positive side of sacrifices, the reality that gets the job of severing us from sin done once and for all.

2. The one sacrifice that was sufficient for salvation

The author is going to go back to something he didn't do in chapter 9 and that's use the Scripture to solidify his case. Remember the Scripture was the only Bible to these early believers and so to use their Canon to make his case made his point concrete in the minds of those he was trying to influence.

Read Hebrews 10:5-10

Read Psalm 40:6-8

This is the only time this psalm is quoted in the New Testament. Now we've read both the Psalm and the quote in Hebrews.

Q: In the first verse of the Psalm (Hebrews 10:5), Who is talking to Whom? (*Jesus is talking to the Heavenly Father*)

Q: What are some of the differences in the readings between the passage in Hebrews and the Psalm? (*ears, Your law is within my heart*)

The reason for the difference in reading is one of translation. The "body" is the instrument through which divine commands are received. But the part of the body which "hears" those divine utterance is the "ears". Ears are part of a body. Think of this though, the ears hear and while that's the first step of obeying and relating to God, the rest of the body carries out what the ears hear. Thus, the New Testament is just carrying out to end what was spoken of in the Psalms by using the word "body".

Q: In what way did Christ come in opposition to animals? (*they didn't will to be sacrificed and didn't understand what was happening to them. Christ did. It was His will to do His Father's will.*)

God's will always gets done. It is never neglected, forgotten about, discarded, modified or half-way accomplished. It is fully done all the time. Since Christ came to do nothing other than the will of His Father, His life was perfectly pleasing to God and was capable of fulfilling God's will to the full extent God wanted it done. On the other hand, even though the animal sacrifices were given by God through the Law, there are obvious limits to their effectiveness.

Q: In v.9 - what is the "first" and the "second"? (*covenants, sacrificial systems, etc.*)

The word "takes away" (NASB) means to abolish something. When used of people, it

means murder. The effect is that whatever or whoever it was, is now eliminated or taken out of the way. The first covenant has been taken out of the way or abolished.

Q: In v.10, whose will is being accomplished? (*God's will by Jesus*)

Jesus came to be the Great High Priest. A body was prepared for Him to fulfill this calling. By the offering of Himself He might put away sin forever.

Q: Notice the phrase "have been sanctified". In what sense have Christians already been sanctified? (*This is an important note here. The author of Hebrews uses the word "sanctify" differently than the Apostle Paul uses it in his letters. Paul sees sanctification as a process whereby the believer grows progressively in Christian qualities and character. In Hebrews, the author uses the terminology except in here he is speaking of the process by which a person becomes a believer and thus is "set apart" by God to the new life in Christ. The writer of Hebrews and Paul are not at odds. They are just using the same word to describe different processes - one of salvation and one what happens after salvation. Both are necessary but we must be careful not to insert Paul's definitions into the writer of Hebrews words. The sanctification spoken of clearly in this passage is one brought about by the death of Christ. The author is clearly speaking of what makes a person a Christian and not developing Christian character. In short, it is the offering of the body of Jesus that saves.*)

In this truth is one of the great distinctives of our faith. In Christianity and only in Christianity does one sacrifice - one great happening - bring salvation to the whole world through the centuries. There is no need for further sacrifices ever because of what Christ did in His body for us to complete God's will in perfecting us. So, like we saw in Farley, our experiences may not be perfect in this world, our hearts have been made perfect and our consciences have been made perfect by the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ. We are perfect in our relationship to God through Christ.

Q: How many times did Jesus need to sacrifice Himself to complete God's will? (*v.10 - once*)

Q: Who was able to be impacted by the sacrifice of Jesus? (*v.10 - all*)

Now the author looks at the finality and completeness of Christ's sacrifice from another angle. He returns to compare Christ to the Old Testament priests once again.

Read Hebrews 10:11-18

Q: What is the posture of the Old Testament priests when ministering to the Lord? (*standing*)

Q: What could those sacrifices not take away? (*sin*)

Q: What was Jesus' posture after His sacrifice of Himself? (*He sat*)

Q: Where did Jesus sit down? (*at the right hand of God*)

Jesus' work was complete so He could sit down. No priest in Aaron's line ever sat down in God's presence. But not only did Christ sit, He just didn't sit down anywhere. He sat next to God's right hand. God's right hand is the place of highest honor in the universe. Not even the angels could claim the honor to ever sit at God's right hand. This shows us the honor God has bestowed upon Jesus Christ as our Great High Priest. This same phrase is used in **Mark 14:62-63**. When Jesus was on trial and He said that they would see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, the human high priest understood exactly what Jesus was saying and he tore his robe and called an end to the trial. This would have been blasphemy if anyone but Jesus had said it and the high priest did not understand who Jesus was.

The verb "having offered" in v.12 is aorist. It is past action which is complete but the effects of that sacrifice are still in force. The effectiveness of Jesus' sacrifice extends to all time.

V.13 is a quote of **Psalm 110:1**. Christ is not passive during the time of His exaltation. We know He is interceding on behalf of the saints but also He is waiting for the complete subjugation of every power that resists the gracious redemptive purposes of God. This is an encouragement to those suffering Christians that all evil will be overthrown in God's time. This of this, God's enemies are being made a footstool for Him every time a heart turns to Him for salvation. Remember that one of these enemies is sin.

In v.14 the "one" is in an emphatic position meaning that it's the word the author is focusing on.

Q: What is so important about the word "one" in this verse that it becomes the focal point? (*It is the one way that this evil will be overthrown. It is the one way to be saved/perfected/sanctified*).

"Who are sanctified" OR "Who are being sanctified" - The best translations show this a present participle which would be best translated by "who are being sanctified". The key is the this is a timeless designation. His sacrifice confers upon those seeking salvation consecration so that they too can be in God's presence. We are perfected (saved) by this one and only this one sacrifice of Jesus. It alone has the power to put away evil and it alone sets us apart for the service of God forever.

Q: What does the phrase "all time" signify in v.14? (*that once a person has been perfected, he cannot be un-perfected. Once that person is saved, he is always saved - for all time*)

The author follows up this with more proof of what he's been teaching by quoting Jeremiah 31:33 and following. Now this is a different quote from the same passage as in chapter 8. Here he skips to the section on forgiveness which is his focus here. The new covenant of Christ was established and provides forgiveness of sin.

The author ends in v.18 with the statement that where sin has been effectively dealt with, there is no further place for an offering for sin. He's showing the original listeners that if they hold the Old Testament was divinely inspired Scripture, then they must agree with his conclusions - Christ's sacrifice was a once-for-all event.

Q: How does God expect believers to live in respect to sin according to these verses? *(not to engage in them any longer - to repent fully as believers no longer have a conscience weighed down with sin)*

Q: What does this show us about the nature of true forgiveness from God? *(it is a once and done event in the life of a person)*

The main lesson of this chapter is the once and for all nature of Christ's sacrifice but also of the salvation or perfection He and only He offers. He is the substance that shows the reality God wanted all along instead of the shadow which is all the Law was.

Q: Do you have any questions, comments, rebukes or rebuttals?