

The Better Sacrifice

Hebrews 10:1-18

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, November 6, 2022,

Good morning saints of Grace Fellowship Chilliwack. It's good to see you. I hope you enjoyed your extra hour this morning. I actually took advantage of it, and went to visit one of our saints in the hospital, Mattie Fettis. She wanted me to tell everyone "Hello", and she's thinking of you. She misses being here. I do want to say you do have a biblical command as believers, to rejoice with those who rejoice, and to weep with those who weep. Which means if you know someone who's in a situation like that, hurting suffering, please visit them. Take the time to pray for them, go see them; they really appreciate it. Maddie is in good spirits, but she wants to be with you. She was telling me that. We baptized Maddie at 83 years old. We baptized her a couple years ago. And when we did, we offered to take her somewhere else to be baptized, to maybe get an assistant chair to go down into the water. And she said, "No, I want to do it in church." And so, we got four of our men to go on the baptistry with her help her down. Some of you remember that. And I've never seen anyone smile so brightly as when she came out of the water. It was a wonderful time, but you can be praying for her and others who are hurting as you do so well as a church.

And as I say that, please open your Bibles this morning to the book of Hebrews. And as you're doing that, if you're joining us for the first time this morning, we have been studying the book of Hebrews for several months now as a church; and today we come to our 30th sermon in it. If you can believe that. I wish I could tell you we're getting toward the end, but I am going to take more time in Chapter 11 on the Hall of Faith, so we're going to slow down there. I'll tell you about that in the weeks to come, but we have looked at this 30 times together. It's taught us a lot over the course of the year. In fact, when you put together a list of the doctrines that it covers, in just the first couple chapters you find that it talks about Christology, or the doctrine of Christ. It talks about soteriology, or the doctrine of salvation. It talks about pneumatology, or the doctrine of the Spirit. It talks about theology or the doctrine of God; talks about anthropology, or the doctrine of man; and Hamartiology or the doctrine of sin; eschatology or the doctrine of end times; cosmology, or the doctrine of creation; angelology, or the doctrine of angels; and bibliology, or the doctrine or the Bible. And that's just in Hebrews one and two because that's what this book is like from start to finish. It's just ology after ology after ology, doctrine after doctrine after doctrine, because it's all about the subject of how Christ fulfills the Old Covenant. The book of Hebrews tells you how He replaced all the customs and rituals and ceremonies of the Jews. And anytime you talk about that, you're going to dive into some very rich waters, which is what we've been doing in our time together.

Today, we come to chapter 10. So, if you want to look at Hebrews 10 with me, we're going to read the first several verses of this. The author writes, he says,

For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect

those who draw near. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins? But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says,

“Sacrifice and offering you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me; In whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come (In the scroll of the book, it is written of Me) to do your will, O God.’”

After saying above, “Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offering, and sacrifices for sin, You have not desired, nor have You taken pleasure in them,” (which are offered according to the Law.), then he said, “Behold, I have come to do Your will.” He takes away the first in order to establish the second. By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time onward until his enemies be made a footstool for his feet. For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us; for after saying, "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws upon their heart, and on their mind I will write them," He then says, "And 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. Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near.

We'll end the reading there. If you notice, as I just alluded to, there's a lot of references in this text from the Old Covenant. Because it talks about several things in here that the people of Israel would be familiar with. If you look back over the text that you just read, you see phrases like or words like the covenant and the law and the commandments in here. The sacrifices and offerings and how every priest stands daily ministering and offering them time after time after time, which would have been exhausting as you can imagine. The whole process would have worn them out. It talks about perfection, drawing near, cleansing, defilement, consciousness of sins, shadows and forms, and the things that cannot take away sin. Why? Because verse 20, says when Christ died, He gave us a new way out of all that. The reason it talks about these things is because it tells us that when Jesus went to the cross, He did away with the need for all of that because He fulfilled it. Because the Jews used to worship God through the law, not anymore. They used to worship Him through the priests, not anymore. They used to do it by means of the sacrifices and offerings and the death of animals that had to be slain over and over again.

Now all that's ended because of what Jesus did on the cross. Because verse 19 says, "He has given us the confidence to enter the holy place through His blood" instead of through the rest of all that.

I told you last time, we don't often talk about this as Christians, but there is a reason why we don't offer sacrifices anymore as a church. And there's a reason why you guys don't call me the priest, amen? I'm very grateful for that. I wouldn't know what to do with that. There's a reason why we don't have a temple anymore. There's a reason why we don't set up a room in this building and put a curtain in front of it and call it the Holy of Holies; and that is because Christ has come to fulfill those things, which may not seem like a big deal to you because you're not Jewish, but it was a big deal to them. They would have understood the significance of a chapter like this. And in reality, we can relate to this because your world has a lot more in common with Israel than you might think at first. Because even though you don't know what it's like to worship God through the ceremonies, you know what it's like to sin, don't you? And you know what it's like to need a sacrifice. And you know what it's like to need a Saviour. We've all experienced that before. So in reality, this is something we can all identify with.

In fact, just to show you what I mean, I sent out a questionnaire to our church several weeks ago, in which I asked you the question, "Can you recall the first time you met Jesus? And can you tell me what He's done for you since then?" I had several people write me back, and I just want to share with you what they said because it really demonstrates how much you have in common with these Jews. And just listen to what the first person said.

They told me that "I think the first time I experienced the work of the Holy Spirit, revealing Jesus to me was when I was a teenager. I was awake late at night, very burdened down with my sin, which was strange to me because I didn't grow up in church, so I didn't know what to do. But I'd heard the song "Amazing Grace" as a child, and God brought the hymn back to my mind; so I got out of bed and went to look at the lyrics online. As I sat there reading them, I had a realization that God saves wretches, which is what I was. So I knew it was talking to me, and in response I got down on my knees, I asked Him to save me, and that's what God did. Since then, Jesus has not only rescued me from my sins once, He's done it repeatedly because I'm a wretch today, but I'm a forgiven wretch. Amen? And I'm a mess today, but I'm a mess in progress." And I think we can all say "Hallelujah" to that. I mean, how many of you can say that you were a wretch when Jesus saved you and you're still a wretch, but you're forgiven wretch. See, that's what these Jews were experiencing in their own way. That's what they were going through in this book.

Let me read you another one of these testimonies. This one is just as powerful. It says this, it says, "It's hard to tell when I first met Jesus because I grew up in a home with a father who talked about Jesus all the time. And after years of rebelling from what he told me, I hit a point of complete desperation as a young person because I was hooked on heroin. At a point of utter despair, I remember falling to the ground and praying 'God, please change me or take my life because I don't know what to do.' And at that point something did change because He led me to the cross. My life was no longer the same, and the

reason I know it was no longer the same is because a few hours later, a friend of mine came over to my house with heroin, and as soon as I saw it, I became sick and have not touched it since.” Isn’t that amazing? One minute they wanted drugs, next minute they didn’t. One moment they wanted to get high, the next minute it made them sick. Why? Because of Jesus Christ. There’s no other explanation for that. Can I give you one more? You guys have time for another one? You don’t have a choice in the matter, by the way. Let me read you another one here that I have, that I brought with me. It says this. It says “I met Jesus during a premarital counseling session of all things. My fiancée and I did not come from a Christian background, but we knew that we wanted to get married in church. So we just opened up the phone book and called the first church that was in the phonebook. It was a small Bible teaching church. It looked very humble at first sight, but the pastor agreed to meet with us. And in our first encounter, he told us he could not marry us until we were right with God. So he walked us through the 10 commandments and showed us that we had broken them, which means we were not good people. Instead, we were sinners who lied, blasphemed, and defied the laws of God; but Jesus came to die for sinners on the cross so we could believe in Him. And that’s what we did. My husband and I were converted on the spot. Which blew me away because when I think about the fact that we called *that* church of all churches at *that* time of all times, and spoke with *that* pastor of all pastors, the only thing I could say, is ‘Thank You, Lord.’”

It’s not random. We can all put ourselves in their shoes, can’t we? It may not have been drugs for you, you may not have gotten saved in a premarital counseling session, it might not have happened when you read the lyrics of “Amazing Grace,” but that doesn’t matter. The story is still the same. You were lost, but now you’re found. You were blind, but now you see. And that’s the same thing that happens with everyone, even the Jews. Even these people in the book of Hebrews that had a life that was far apart from yours. They weren’t saved from a life of drug abuse from what we can tell. They were saved from other things like legalism, or putting an unhealthy emphasis on the outward things of the law. So in order to address that, if you look in chapter 10:11, the author says this: It says, “Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God. Why does the author say that? He says that because Jesus has come to take the place of the Old Testament sacrifices. He came to remind us that you don’t have to go through them anymore to get to heaven because it says when He came, He offered one sacrifice for sins, not many sacrifices, not multiple ones, one sacrifice, one death, one life, one cross. And it says after doing that, He sat down. Which means He went to a place of rest in order to demonstrate that the cross was finished, and you can rest in Him too. You don’t have to do a bunch of things to go to heaven. You don’t have to earn it or deserve it or work for it. You can just trust in the saving work of Christ. But the point is that this is something that we can all identify with. It’s not like these Jews were saved one way and you saved another. It’s not like they went to the cross that have been through one road and we go through another road. The road to the cross is always the same.

I don’t know about you. But this is encouraging to me because when I first read the book of Hebrews, as a young believer, I didn’t know what I was talking about. I couldn’t make a lot of sense of it. A lot of the

terminology was strange. I wasn't familiar with what he was saying. But after you dig into it, you realize the lesson of the book is very simple at the end of the day, and that's that we all need a Saviour. And that's what you have in Jesus Christ, which is what we're going to talk about this morning by looking at five ways Jesus replaces the Old Covenant sacrifices. So, if you're taking notes, that's our outline for today. But in Hebrews 10:1-18, we're going to look at five ways Jesus replaces these Old Covenant sacrifices.

The reason the author talks about this in here is because as some of these Jews read the book of Hebrews for the first time, they would have wondered what's wrong with the sacrifices? Why do you have a problem with them? We've been doing it for a thousand years. Ever since we can remember, we've been bringing offerings to the Lord. Now the author says not anymore because of Jesus. And the first way Jesus replaces them is by giving us more than a shadow.

So the first way Jesus replaces these Old Covenant sacrifices is by giving us more than a shadow, which means He gives us more than a partial or temporary offering for sin. And if you look in verse one, it says this. We're going to walk through this passage verse by verse as we typically do on Sunday mornings; I want you to see this in the text as you go through it. But the first verse says this, "For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near." Now, as you read that you can tell the author starts off with the word "for," which leads you back to the previous passage, where he says this in chapter 9:27, he says, "And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many." And what that means is that Christ has been offered once because the one offering was enough. And He died one time because His one death was all it took to take care of your sin problem. Which is why when you read the New Testament, you never see Jesus dying again. And when you turn to the Gospels, you never catch a glimpse of Him going back to the cross in order to finish the work of salvation because He didn't need to; it was finished the first time. And after saying this, verse one says, "For the law." In other words, the author puts this in here to compare Jesus with the law; or Christ's sacrifice with the sacrifice of the Old Covenant, to say the sacrifices in the Old Covenant were a shadow because they could never make perfect those who wanted to draw nearer. They couldn't do what Jesus did.

We've said quite a bit about the sacrifices of the Jews in previous weeks. So I don't want to repeat anything here other than to tell you that when you read the Old Testament, you get the impression that there were a lot of them. The Jews made a lot of offerings and sacrifices; the law continually demanded it. For example, it was said that on the day of Passover alone, the people of Israel would kill somewhere between 200,000 to 300,000 lambs. I've heard different numbers on that. And it was so much carnage that they had to divide it up into two days in order to accommodate it all. They couldn't kill them all in one day; there wasn't enough room at the altar. So in order to deal with all the sacrifices that came in, the priests set up a system whereby the northern Jews would kill their lambs on Thursday, and the southern Jews would kill their lambs on Friday, which explains how Jesus and the disciples could eat the

Passover meal on Thursday night together because they were northern Jews from Galilee. And then he could be crucified the next day on the day of Passover. It could all take place within the same holiday. And the point the author's making here is that the reason it was done that way is because the sacrifices are just a shadow of the good things to come. If they took care of the problem the first time, they wouldn't have to be repeated like that.

And the Greek word for shadow here, it's the word *skia*, which refers to a shadow or a silhouette or an outline of something. It's used to describe something that's not the light, it reminds you of the light; and is not the sun, but it just tells you the sun is out there somewhere on the horizon. That's what the sacrifices did. They didn't give you salvation. They just told you salvation was on the way. Verse one says they were a picture of the good things to come; or the good things God promised the Jews like the hope and joy and rest; and the promise of salvation and peace with God because the sacrifices didn't provide that, they just pointed to it. In fact, my children are at an age where they like to make shadow puppets. And when it's time for bed, they take out their flashlights and shine it on the wall. And they do this kind of stuff with their hands, and they make an image of a dog or a cat or a bird, which is fun for a while. But you know what? When you turn on the lights, it all vanishes. And when the sunlight comes into the room, the shadows disappear. It's the same way here. This passage is telling you that when the light of the full gospel of Christ came in and he died on the cross, all the other shadows went away. They're not needed anymore. They were needed before He came; they were there for a good reason and purpose, but once Christ died on the cross, that was the ultimate sacrifice.

The verse goes on to say that the law can never by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make anyone perfect. And the word "never" should stick out to you in that verse there. You might want to put it in capital letters in your mind because the author doesn't say that the law can by the same sacrifices *sometimes* make you perfect. And it doesn't say that the law by the sacrifices can *occasionally* make you perfect, or every *now and again* make you perfect if you try hard enough and work hard enough and strive hard enough. It says it can never do it - not now, not ever, not tomorrow, not the next day or the next day, the day after that. Sacrifices that people in church today try to make, like the Mass, they can never make you perfect. They don't have the power. God didn't set it up that way. They were meant to point you to Christ and nothing more.

In my studies for this week, I came across several commentaries that tie this passage back to the book of Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament. And I don't know if you're familiar with that part of the Bible, but there in Malachi it says that the Jews had become so tired of making sacrifices at the end of the Old Testament, that they had started to bring the blind and the lame, and the sick to God. Does anybody remember that? They would just go out to the barn and find whatever lamb they were going to shoot that day and take it to Him. Or they would go to the pen and look for whatever goat was on its last leg and dying, and they would bring that to the altar, which was terrible. But when you when you read a verse like this, you can understand why they acted that way and that is because the sacrifices were so wearisome to them. They just wore them out. Sin, bring a sacrifice, sin, bring a sacrifice, sin, bring a

sacrifice, sin, bring a sacrifice - your whole lifetime. It was overwhelming. And to the point that they began to sniff disdainfully at it, Malachi says. So, the reminder the author is making here is a good one and that is that you don't have to do that anymore as a Christian, and you should be grateful. Jesus died so you can leave the shadows behind.

And we don't really have anything to compare this to today, specifically, because like I just said, we don't offer sacrifices like the Jews did. But there are physical things that we like to put too much of an emphasis on in the church; and that's one way you could relate this to our lives. Just to show you what I mean, I've met people who've told me they couldn't worship God in a place that uses PowerPoints on Sunday mornings. They couldn't praise Him in a church that uses technology that way, because they believe in hymnals only. It has to be sung out of a book or else they don't want it despite the fact that Jesus didn't sing out of a book, He used a scroll. But you know what that is? It's just a shadow. It's just a silhouette. The real thing is Christ, the most important thing is what you're singing about. I've met other people who said they couldn't go to a church that doesn't serve real bread at the Lord's Supper. They couldn't participate in a communion that uses wafers instead of the actual loaf. Do you know what that is? That's just a shadow, doesn't matter. The thing that matters is your Saviour. The whole point of the Lord's Supper is to make you think of Him. But this is what these Jews were doing at this time, they were focusing on things in the Old Covenant still, and missing the whole point of it all; and that was the Saviour.

Which brings us to another way Jesus replaces the Old Covenant sacrifices here, and that is by taking away our sins. First is by giving us more than a shadow, but a second way Jesus replaces the sacrifices is by taking away our sins which means He removed the guilt of them. Not temporarily, like the Old Covenant did, but permanently. And as you come to the next part of this, you're going to tell the author's drawing an inference from the previous verse because he's just said that the law or the sacrifices cannot make you perfect. Now he provides an application when he says in verse two, "Otherwise," he says, "would they not have ceased to be offered?" In other words, if the sacrifices made you perfect according to the law, don't you think they would have stopped? And if they brought you salvation completely, and forgave all your sins, don't you think they would have ended? But they haven't; they're still going on, which shows you they can't do that. The very fact they had to be made over and over and over again, day in and day out, demonstrated that there was a problem. Your sins were still there. Or the guilt of your sin was because whenever you made a sacrifice under the Old Covenant, yes, it forgave you from that sin, but it didn't forgive you from the next one and the next one and the next one. And whenever you brought an offering to the Lord of a sheep or a goat or lamb, it provided atonement for that evil deed, but it didn't provide atonement for the one after and the one after and the one after. And the reason is because the sacrifices were physical, while your sin is a spiritual thing. The sacrifices were earthly while your sin is eternal. And the sacrifices occurred on the outside of you, while your sin occurred on the inside. And the sacrifices were made of an animal, while your sin is a human thing. So in order for God to save you, He had to give something more. And that's what He did. If you want to read verse two through three in its entirety, it says this, it says

otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered? Because the worshippers having once been cleanse would no longer have had consciousness sins. But in those sacrifices, there is a reminder of sins year by year.

And there's a lot in here we could talk about because it tells you that the sacrifices couldn't cleanse you permanently. They couldn't wash off the guilt of sin. They couldn't remove the consciousness of it, it says, or the awareness and those types of things. And the reason why is found in verse four because it says "For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." And that's helpful because it tells you something about the way the Old Covenant was set up at the time because it was not created to take away sins. Depending on which Greek scholar you talk to, they tell you that phrase "take away" can be translated that it's impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to cut off sin. It's impossible for it to remove sin, it's impossible for it to break the hold it has over you because that's what sin does, its enslaving. And the sacrifices could do nothing about that problem. They could do nothing about the temptation of sin or the allure of it. They couldn't do anything about the guilt or the misery. They couldn't stop the punishment of it, so the Lord would have to do something more. In Christ, God took away the temptation, the guilt, and the punishment. In His sacrifice, He removed the allure, the affliction, and the judgment of sin so that we don't have to keep making these animal sacrifices over and over again.

And you need to remember this. You know, I mention this because I meet Christians today who sin and they tell me that they don't know what to do about it. They don't know how to fix it. And I have to gently remind them, well, yes, you do you know exactly how to fix it. You need to run to Jesus Christ. That's how you fix your sin problem. You need to go to the cross. I meet other ones who sin and they tell me they don't know if Jesus can forgive them. And I say "Why not?" He died, didn't He? He went to the cross. Well, what else does He need to do? He can forgive you. If you trust in Him, Jesus can forgive you of your pride and your anger. He can forgive you of your greed and your lies. He can forgive you of your drug abuse, your legalism, your alcoholism, He can take it all away by His one single sacrifice. He doesn't have to die repeatedly. He dies one time, which brings us, and I'd like to say more about this but I want to move on to the next point, because it brings us to another way Jesus replaces the Old Covenant sacrifices. And that's by sanctifying us once.

A third way Christ replaces the Old Covenant sacrifices is by sanctifying us once, which means He makes us holy not through an endless array of offerings, but through one single death. And as you come to the next passage, you can see it's in quotation marks. Because it's a quote from Psalm 40. If you're taking notes, you can just write the reference there. Psalm 40 in the passage The subscript to Psalm 40 says it was a Psalm of David, which tells us very little about the context of it, but that's okay because the author uses it as a prophecy for Christ. When he says this in verse five, it says,

Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says, "Sacrifice and offering You have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me; in whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come (in the scroll of the book it is written of Me) to do Your will, O God.'"

Now the key to this is found in the opening words, when it says "Therefore, when he comes into the world." That's a reference to Christ. It means when Jesus came into the world, He showed us irrefutably that sacrifice and offering You have not desired. Because Jesus came to fulfill all of that. He came to take the place of it, like we've been talking about. Verse seven says He came to do God's will, or what was written about Him in the scroll when He offered Himself on the cross. His death was not a random thing in the mind of God. It was all done according to God's predetermined plan, which is a profound thing to say. I mean, this is one of those little statements you pass over in the Bible without giving it a second thought. But you shouldn't do this here because in the context, it's kind of giving the Jews a warning. And the warning is that if you hold on to the Old Covenant sacrifices, you're not in the will of God anymore. Because Jesus came to do God's will by dying, and if you reject that, you reject Yahweh. There's no in between here. You can't continue to hold on to the Old Testament and say "I'm in the will of God" by ignoring what He did in the New Testament because that was according to the will of God. That was done by God's plan and purposes.

I've told you before that one of the most memorable experiences of my life was the time I got to stand outside the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, which is the spot where the Jews go today to pray to God and ask Him to rebuild their temple. It's on the eastern side of the Temple Mount at street level. And the reason it was so impactful is because when you look at all those hundreds of men and women standing there, it strikes you that they're all lost. I mean, there may be some Messianic Jews or Jews that trust in Christ, but as far as I can tell, all the ones who are weeping there, and praying there, and chanting, and rocking back and forth, and crying out to God aren't saved, because if they were, they would follow the One who came to do God's will. It's a very sad thing to watch.

In fact, the passage doesn't stop here because after quoting from Psalm 40, verse nine goes on to say, "He takes away the first in order to establish the second. By this will we have been sanctified." I skipped over a little here, but you can see the word "will" being repeated in this passage, because it says by this will God has sanctified us or made us holy through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

That phrase "we have been sanctified". It's in the tense in Greek to show you this is a one-time event. Unlike it was with the Old Testament sacrifices, Jesus did not forgive us or make us holy, through a process of multiple sacrifices, He did it one time for all at the cross. This is what theologians refer to as your positional sanctification. There's a progressive sanctification whereby the Christian is made progressively holy, and he's sanctified over an extended period of time as the Spirit convicts you of sin, in order to help you grow and change and mature and produce the fruit of the Spirit. But that's not what this is referring to. This is your perpetual standing with the Lord. When Jesus died for you, the Lord

decided to take your sins and nail it to the cross for good, permanently, done. And when He was crucified, He chose to take our transgressions and permanently punish them there and sanctify us. And that's what this is talking about.

And when you think about it, this is an exciting way to continue this chapter because it paints a very vivid picture. If you remember earlier in verse one, it says "The law can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near." And then in verse three it says, "But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins," and then verse four it says, "For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." You're getting the picture here, right? And verse five it says, "Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says, 'Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired.'" And now in contrast to all that, verse 10 says that in Christ we have been sanctified through His body in order to symbolize that the sacrifice Jesus brings is different from anything Israel had ever experienced before. And not only is it different, it's life changing because that's what the word "sanctify" means. It refers to something that changes you by getting the sin out of your life. And that's what Christ has done. Because the reality is that Jesus didn't die so you could do whatever you wanted. He died so you could do what He wanted. Amen? And He didn't go to the cross so you could sin and get away with it, and go on as if nothing ever happened. He went to the cross so you could stop and repent and change because God hates your sin. And He wants you to hate it too.

Let me tell you something, you don't need a lot of things in order to become a Christian. You don't need money. You don't need brains. Amen? You don't need muscles. There's one thing you do need, you need repentance. You need a heart that's truly sorry for the evil things you've done. And the reason is because Jesus has come to sanctify you. That was His whole intention in coming to the earth. I find this to be so important because one common question you get as a pastor is people want to know "How can I tell if someone is a Christian? How do I know if my son or daughter or loved one is with the Lord?" And the answer is what do they act like? Do they act like they've been sanctified? Then there's a good chance that they are. Do they behave like someone who hates their sin? Then it's highly likely they're a believer. That's what Christians do as a result of Christ.

It brings you it to another way that Jesus replaces the Old Covenant sacrifices, and that is by giving the priests a break. A fourth way Jesus replaces the Old Covenant sacrifices is by giving the priests a break because He came to put an end to their exhausting work. And just to give you a heads up, there's going to be some overlap in this section because a lot of these ideas we've mentioned before as we've gone through the passage. Because so far, he's been focusing on the people; or the impact Christ's death would have made upon the Jews. Now he's going to shift gears and talk about the impact that would have had on the priests. Because if you look in verse 11, it says this, "Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins."

The reason he points to the priests now is because it was their job to wait at the gates of the temple and wait in their courtyard in order to receive the sacrifice from the worshiper, and take it to the slaughter

tables, and kill it. They would cut the throat of the animal, collect the blood into a bowl, and then go to the altar in order to sprinkle it there before going back to the slaughter tables in order to skin the animals, cut it up, and then take the pieces back to the altar in order to burn. So they just did this all day long. This was the job of a priest: slaughter table to altar, slaughter table to altar, slaughter table to altar, which was pretty boring. It was a very difficult thing to do, so in order to handle the bulk of it, scholars tell us, the Jews divided the priesthood up into 24 divisions at this time. And they would put 60 priests in the temple on a two-week rotation at once because they couldn't do it all at one moment. And all the priests couldn't fit in the temple; there were too many of them. So they would work on a schedule of two weeks on, and then off again into the next year. Numbers 8 also tells us that they could only do it from the ages of 25 to 50 because that was the prime age in a man's life. Anything earlier than that, and they were considered to be too weak for the job; anything later, and they were considered to be becoming feeble. Because the animals weighed several hundred pounds, and it took an incredible amount of strength to pick them up or hold them down and butcher them day in and day out. So, they had to do it at just the right stage of life.

And when it says that “every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices,” this is one of the phrases the author repeats here, in order to highlight the fact of how frustrating or difficult this would have been. Because the Jews would make a sacrifice and then go home. They would bring their animal to the temple, and they would watch the priest take care of it, and then they would leave and go about their business. The priests couldn't do that. They had to stay there and keep offering them. They had to remain in the temple and keep killing them time after time after time. And it's because of this that some people refer to them as professional butchers. They weren't priests in our traditional understanding of the word. They were men who spent their day slaughtering animals. But on the contrary, verse 11 paints a very different picture of Christ when it says this, it says,

Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God.”

Now you can tell what the author's doing here when you read this, because verse 12 starts off with the word “but” which was used to form a contrast between Jesus and the priests in order to say, “The Levites stand daily ministering but He sat down.” After He died on the cross and paid for our sins, there was simply nothing left for Him to do to pay for them. The work was over, so He took a rest. I've read that there were no chairs in the temple because the priests could never sit down. Christ did. And it says the Levites offered time after time the same sacrifices, but He offered one sacrifice for sins because He didn't repeat anything after He died. He didn't need to go back to the cross; there was no reason to. It says the Levites' sacrifice could never take away sins as well. But verse 14 says, “For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.” Which means that unlike the priests, not only did Jesus sacrifice take away our sins, but it did it to such an extent that it perfected us. It satisfied all the righteous demands of the law.

The word “perfect” here, it's the same word Jesus used on the cross right before he died when He said “It is finished” *teleō* in Greek. It doesn't refer to something that's morally finished as much as it refers to something that's functionally finished, functionally perfect. Because the Cross did everything that was necessary to save us, so nothing needs to be added to it anymore. It couldn't be made any better. It's flawless in that sense. You may not be flawless, you're not flawless, the cross was. Your life may still have sin on it, but if you trust in Him, it's been punished there. This is why Hebrews 12:2 calls Jesus the Author and Perfecter of our faith because He is the one who has brought our faith to its final end. He completed all that was necessary to redeem us. Philippians 1:6 also says, “For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.” It's the same word. And the idea is that if God has started a good work in you, He won't leave it there. He will complete it. Because all your forgiveness and redemption and atonement was taken care of in Him. All your justification and sanctification and righteousness were provided for in His blood, so the way you have to respond to that is to put your faith in Him. It's not about you, it's about Him. It's not about you being a good enough Christian, it's about Him being a good enough Saviour; and He is.

In fact He even saves you to such an extent that if you look in verse 13, right above verse 14, it says that after saving you, “[Jesus] sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet.” And you might read a statement like that and wonder well, what is that talking about? Well, what that saying is that Jesus' death is so perfect that after making it, He went right back to the same place He started from before He died to remind you that your sin has been defeated permanently. It's been punished to such an extent that He's in heaven now, which means you're safe in the arms of Christ. No matter who you are or what you've done, if you trust in Him, your salvation is eternally secure, both now and forevermore. Amen? Even if you've done drugs, even if you've done alcohol, even if you were a legalist for years before you became a Christian, it's okay. Because if you come to Him like we've been talking about, His death has made your salvation perfect. I think a lot of people forget that today because you ask them how they became a Christian, and they have a tendency to brag on themselves. You ask them to give their testimony, like we were doing earlier, and they want to tell you about what they did, or what they said, or how they prayed a prayer, or went to a confirmation class or, or this or that; but that's not what saves you. What saves you is Jesus Christ. So anytime you give your testimony, you want to brag about Him.

I'll never forget the time a deacon and I were counseling a young man at a previous church where I served. And the young man said, “I just think I need to try harder and do more good deeds in order to become a Christian”. And the deacon who was an older fellow, he looked at the young man, he said, “Well, how many are you talking about? One? Two? Three? A million? That's not the way salvation works. Salvation comes through the good deeds of one person, and one person only; and that's Jesus Christ. He's the only one who can take credit for our redemption.”

And it brings us to a final way that Jesus replaces the Old Covenant sacrifices. One more way He does this, and that is by writing the law upon Israel's hearts. Just to review these other ones, the first one is that He gave us more than a shadow. And then secondly, He replaced the Old Covenant sacrifices by taking away our sins. Thirdly, by sanctifying us; fourthly, by giving the priests a break; but a fifth way Jesus replaces the Old Covenant sacrifices, is by writing the law upon Israel's hearts, or our hearts as well. Which means His death did something the previous system could not do, and that was to change you from the inside out. And as you come to the end of our passage for today, you're going to see another quotation here from the Old Testament. It says this in verse 15, says,

And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us; for after saying, "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws upon their heart, and on their mind I will write them." He then says, "And their sins and their lawless deeds, I will remember no more."

Now if you've been with us in our journey through the book of Hebrews, that should sound familiar to you because it's a prophecy that we looked at earlier in chapter eight. It comes from the book of Jeremiah. It was given right before the Babylonians came in and took over Jerusalem, which was a terrifying event because when the Babylonians did that, the Old Testament says they burned the city and they destroyed everything in there, including the temple and all the objects that they would make the sacrifices with so the Jews couldn't keep the Old Covenant anymore. There was no way for them to fulfill it, which left a question in every Jew's mind, and that is, "Has God abandoned us? When He did all this, does He even care anymore?" And Jeremiah says in this prophecy that He does care because He will enact a new covenant with you that won't be based on the things the Babylonians took away. It won't be based on Israel's behavior will be based on Yahweh's and Him alone.

The reason He does is because the ancient world had two types of covenants back then. They had a conditional covenant, which was based on the condition that both parties kept it; and both sides had to do their part to make it work. And they had an unconditional covenant, which was based on no conditions because one party just had to keep it by themselves. It was made solely on the basis of grace, and that's what this is referring to here. You can really get a taste of this, if you look back in Hebrews eight, starting in verse seven where this passage was quoted at length, because one thing that will catch your eye is how many times it uses the phrase "I will." It's repeated seven times in here. If you look in chapter 8:8, it says, "I will effect a new covenant." And then in verse 10, "For this is the covenant I will make with them." Then again in verse 10, "I will put my laws into their minds, and I will write them on their hearts, and I will be their God." Then down in verse 12, "For I will be merciful to their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more." But you get the picture because the Lord says, "I will do it, I will do it, I will do it. The New Covenant is about me, it's about me, it's about me." To the point that Israel's responsibilities are not even mentioned in here; the Lord talks about Himself.

And at the end of our passage for today, in chapter 10:16, the author builds on this, quotes it again for emphasis. And here's the portion that he quotes in verse 16 of chapter 10. He says, "This is the covenant I will make with them. After those days, I will put My laws upon their hearts." That means God will put His law inside of us. He'll remove all those objects like the temple, and the altar, and all the sacrifices and offerings and the things they represent, and put them inside our souls. Because the previous law was out here, this one will be in here. The previous promise was largely based on external things; this one will be internal and spiritual. In fact, if you were to translate verse 16 literally into the Hebrew, it would say that God would put his Torah within them. The word "laws" is plural in this translation, but it's singular in the book of Jeremiah to demonstrate that the Lord would not just put a few laws within them, but the whole thing, even the parts you don't like. When I preached on Hebrews 8 a couple of weeks ago, someone in our church came up to me and told me they could really identify with it because before they became a Christian, they liked to smoke and drink and party all the time. When they got saved, they didn't. And the amazing thing is no one told them to stop. They just stopped. No one had to remind them those things are wrong. They knew it because God put His law inside of them, that's why. The Lord wrote it in here. And one thing about your heart is you can't get away from your heart, can you? Anybody know how to get away from your soul? That's where the law goes now for a believer.

Verse 17 also quotes this further when it says, "And their sins and their lawless deeds, I will remember no more." And that's another part of this new covenant that may not strike you as being unusual, but the Jews would have looked at this as a very strange thing because for them to get forgiveness this is what you had to do. You had to kill something. In Israel in order to be forgiven, this is how it would work. Something had to die; you had to bring a sacrifice. And now the passage is saying that in Christ, the new covenant is based on nothing but mercy and grace alone. It says here, "I will remember your sins no more." That's a double negative in Greek. It could be translated this way. "And I will remember their sins no, no, never, no, never, ever, ever, ever, ever again". Because the forgiveness that the New Covenant provides is so perfect that God will treat us as if we've never sinned.

We had someone say yesterday that they were talking with a friend who said that they were struggling with something they did in the past, a sin they had committed years ago. And the friend said, "Are you a Christian?" And he said, "Yeah," and the friend said, "Well then God doesn't remember it anymore. He has thrown it in the sea of forgetfulness."

And it's summarized this way in verse 18. This is how the author puts this all together. He says, "Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin." This is placed in here because this is the interpretation of the passage. He says, if you have forgiveness, what do you need a sacrifice for? Or another one? If you've already been cleansed in the blood of Christ, why do you need to bring another offering? You don't, so you can let the Old Covenant go. Now because of what Christ has done, if you sin 1000 times, God won't make you bring another sacrifice. And if you've offended Him a million times, He won't tell you to bring another offering and kill another animal. He'll just ask you to trust in Jesus. That's it. That's all. This is something you can really understand being a Gentile living

today because you didn't become a Christian by going to the temple, did you? And you didn't become a believer by going to a priest and letting him make a sacrifice. So how did it happen? How did you become a Christian? It was because of God's mercy, and that's all. It was simply because of His grace, no other reason. If you want to put it another way, you didn't become a Christian by joining this church or that church. You didn't become a believer by going to this denomination or that denomination, and signing a doctrinal statement, and doing a bunch of things, and putting money in the offering plate. It happened merely because God forgave you in His kindness.

Which leads me to ask the question, is this how you look at things today? Do you see your salvation simply as an act of God's grace and nothing more? When you look back over this passage, and you think back over these testimonies, and you reflect back on the things that the people said earlier, what do you think about the most? Do you think about yourself in salvation, or do you think about Him? Do you emphasize your good works, or do you emphasize God's good works? If you understand what this is saying here, you can't put the spotlight on you. You have to put it on Him. He's the one who writes His law on your heart. He's the one who forgives you, and shows you mercy.

Next week, we're going to look at the rest of Hebrews 10, and we're going to get to the part of the passage where it says, "Let us not forsake assembling together." That will be a very fruitful discussion for us; but for this week, I want to close in a word of prayer, and ask the Lord to drive these truths home to our lives. So let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Heavenly Father, we are so blessed to have a Saviour like Jesus. It's often hard for us to understand what was going on with the Jews because our salvation has been provided in such a straightforward manner through the death of the one perfect Saviour, Jesus Christ. So Lord, we don't want to ever take that for granted. We don't want to ever trivialize that. They understood what it meant for forgiveness to come. They knew what it took to come into Your presence. It was blood upon blood upon blood, and carnage after carnage. You hate sin, Lord. It's disgusting in Your eyes, and that's why Jesus did what He did on the cross for us.

And as we reflect on these things, Lord, we always want to apply them to our lives. We never want to walk out of here the same. So Lord, I pray that this passage would give us a reverence for what Christ has done. Lord, thank You that You've internalized these things and given us a new birth. Thank You that You've opened our eyes to new and wonderful things in Your word and changed us from our lives of sin. Lord, I just pray that that would continue to happen, that the sanctification process that was begun and perfected at the Cross would continue day by day by day. Lord, would You convict us of our sins? As we come to the Lord's table, we always want to examine ourselves to make sure that we're doing it in a manner that's proper to You. Would You give us grace in that?

And Father, if there's any here this morning who've never trusted in Christ, and yet they know they're a sinner, would You let them know that the door is open for them to believe? You've never closed the

door on any searching soul that's sincere and wanting to be saved. You've never turned away the worst sinner. I pray they would remember that. But in all these things, we want You to be glorified in the things we've talked about. Let Christ be exalted and lifted on His throne today. We pray this in Jesus name, Amen.