

# JESUS ONLY

Hebrews—Chapter 10

Study 11

## A Better Sacrifice

In Hebrews 10, Paul launches into an explanation of why the law, as it applied to sacrifices for sin, is no longer valid. This is one of the most concise revelations of truth concerning law and sacrifice found anywhere in the Bible. The basis of Paul's argument is that Christ has made a one time sacrifice for all sin that perfects forever all who exercise faith in Him. Therefore, everything in the law that had anything to do with the sacrifice of animals for sin has been replaced. That is, it has been completely taken away by the all-sufficient sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

## Shadow and Reality

Here are Paul's first thoughts on the subject: "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? Because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins" (Hebrews 10:1-2, KJV).

The idea that this law, given by Moses, the Jews and their fathers for generations back had been taught to observe was now no longer to be practiced was very difficult for the Hebrew mind to fully accept. Paul was often harassed by Jewish converts who insisted that the Gentile believers observe the shadowy types of the ceremonial law. At one point, the contention grew so intense among believers that a special counsel had to be held in Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-29). Later, in his letter to the believers in Rome, Paul called both the Jewish and Gentile converts to lay aside needless judging and despising and allow room for individual conviction and growth (Romans 14:1-13). As His ministry drew to a close, Paul made an earnestly pointed out to the Hebrews that this law of sacrifice, along with its earthly sanctuary service and priesthood, was taken away so that the reality of Jesus Christ could be established. Paul understood the danger of continuing to follow types that were powerless to accomplish God's purpose. Paul's approach in Hebrews is to compare the law of types with the reality in Jesus, and by comparison show the futility of the former. Each animal sacrifice, though it was ordained by God and commanded in the law of Moses, was only to remind us of our sins.

## Forget Sin

"But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year" (Hebrews 10:3, KJV).

Who wants to keep remembering their sins every year? It is the very thing we want to forget—our sins. Yet, it simply was not possible for the blood of animals to cleanse the conscience from sin. This is why Jesus came to the world. What was needed was a sacrifice that would cause believers to forget their sins—to see them as cast into the very depths of the sea. This was the sacrifice Paul now referred them to, the gift of Jesus Christ.

"For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; Then said he, Lo, I

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*"God having provided something better for us."* —Hebrews 11:40

All Scripture references are from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second” (Hebrews 10:4-9, KJV).

### Two Laws

In Hebrews 10:9, Paul is specifically speaking of the sacrificial system. This is the system that God set up of animal sacrifices and an earthly priesthood. It is described in verses 1 and 8 as the “law.” It included special sabbath days, new moon feasts and other divine ordinances (Leviticus 23:32-39). It is unfortunate that some today have confused this law of sacrifices with the Ten Commandment Law of God. One reason for this confusion is likely the fact that the Christian church today is not mostly made up of converts from Judaism as it was in Paul’s day. Therefore, it is a challenge for believers today to define and separate these two laws.

Any present controversy over the law can be distilled down to one clear biblical teaching. The law spoken of in Hebrews 10 was taken away, God’s moral law never was, not by Jesus, nor Paul, nor James nor John (Matthew 5:17-18; Romans 3:31; John 14:15; James 2:8-12; 1 John 2:3). That said, there is a very important truth that must be kept in mind when a believer talks about the Ten Commandment Law—it cannot save us either! It is “holy, just and good,” Paul contends, “if a man uses it lawfully” (Romans 7:12; 1 Timothy 1:8). The lawful use of it is to convict us of sin (Romans 3:20; 7:7). Once the Ten Commandment Law has its proper place, it leads us to Jesus where we find salvation through His life and death (Galatians 3:24).

“By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Hebrews 10:10, KJV). The law makes us aware of the sinfulness of our lives. Once we gain insight into the true nature of our hearts, we recognize the hope we have in the last three words of verse 10—“once for all.” Praise God! There is nothing that can, or needs to, be added to the sacrifice of atonement Jesus made for the world. It is complete, and it is perfect. Animal sacrifices cannot aspire to it. Our works of obedience to the law can never equal it. Nothing can add one iota to this “once for all” sacrifice. “Sacrifices . . . can never take away sins, but this man!”

### This Man

“And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified” (Hebrews 10:11-14, KJV).

These verses are very significant because they bring us a clear declaration of the gospel in relation to sanctification or holiness. They state very clearly that in the process of “being made holy” (NIV), we are perfect through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. We are perfect, not at the end of the process of being made holy, but by the life and death of Jesus Christ. He is our perfection; Christ is our righteousness. Those of us who are being made holy, being sanctified, have been (past tense) perfected forever by Jesus Christ. The lifelong process of our personal sanctification does not replace the one time perfection we receive from Christ. We have been perfected forever—period. Salvation consists of our receiving by faith the perfect right doing of Jesus Christ. He is our title and our fitness for heaven. Our being made holy is the outworking of the gift we have received from Him. There should never come a time in our experience when we think “I am good enough, nice enough, patient enough or perfect enough to make it to heaven.” That type of religious confusion belongs solely to Babylon. At the same time, the gift of salvation in Jesus Christ that has forever perfected those who “are sanctified” is a motivator for sanctification. We live holy lives because we have been given the holiness of Christ forever. As Christians, we identify ourselves with Jesus. We reveal His spirit, work His works, live His life. This is what it means to be a Christian—to be Christlike.

## A Better Covenant

“Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, this is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more” (Hebrews 10:15-17, KJV).

Here is the Holy Spirit’s witness of the fact that we are perfect in Christ. Our sins and iniquities have been forgotten by God. According to the new covenant, sin in the heart has been displaced. God’s law is now written on our hearts. This is also further evidence that under the new covenant, the Ten Commandment Law is for new testament Christians, while the ceremonial law of Moses is not. Described in these verses is the inauguration of the new covenant. The new sacrifice, the new Priest, and the law of God written on our hearts—are all based on the better, stronger promises of God.

“Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin” (Hebrews 10:18, KJV).

That is to say that Jesus has been offered for sin once and for all. He does not need to be offered again . . . and again and again.

“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. By a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh” (Hebrews 10:19-20, KJV).

The Holiest of All refers to the sanctuary in heaven as opposed to the sanctuaries that were once ordained by God on earth. This is again inauguration or “dedication” language (Hebrews 9:18, KJV). Jesus is establishing something new and better in heaven. He is cutting the ribbon, so to speak, and having a grand opening for the new and living way. According to Paul, this inauguration introduces:

- 1) A new priest
- 2) A new sanctuary
- 3) A new sacrifice
- 4) A new covenant

We should enter in boldly, says the apostle Paul. Christ does not need to be offered again and again. Neither do we need to trust an earthly priest or temple for forgiveness. Move away from the old system and enter into the new by the blood of Jesus Christ—the new and living way that He has “inaugurated” (Hebrews 10:20, NAS) for us.

“And having an High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering (for He is faithful that promised)” (Hebrews 10:21-23, KJV).

We have a High Priest who presides over the house of God in heaven. He calls us to draw near to Him through faith with full assurance. And though we could be opposed, let us hold fast, not wavering back and forth, because Jesus is faithful. He has promised to cleanse our hearts and wash our bodies from all evil. Paul’s repeated call to go to Christ as Priest in heaven for sin makes manifest how challenging this truth was for the Hebrew believers.

## Willful Sin

“And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Hebrews 10:24-25, KJV).

By pointing believers to Jesus as the one time sacrifice for all sin and High Priest in the heavenly temple, Paul did not discount the fellowship of the church. Yet, it was clearly not to direct us to an earthly priesthood or temple for forgiveness of sin. As we examine this next text, let’s consider what it means to “sin willfully.” “For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He

that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know Him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto Me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge His people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:26-31, KJV).

Are these verses saying that if you sin after you know you shouldn't, you are forever lost? If you are convicted not to lie, for example, yet you lie anyway, does that mean you have sinned willfully and there is no sacrifice for your sin? Some people believe this is the unpardonable sin. Is this the message in these passages? Not even close, for the Bible record is clear that willful sin is the very problem Christ came to save us from. From Adam's willful sin in eating the forbidden fruit, to our own failure to live up to the truth we know, we all have sinned willfully. So what does Paul mean in this context when he says "if we sin willfully?" In order to understand this phrase, we need to consider it in the context of the book of Hebrews. In it, Paul is seeking to bring the Jews from the earthly sanctuary to the heavenly, from earthly sacrifices to the heavenly, from the old covenant to the new. Over and over again in chapter 10 he refers to the word "sin." Sin, sin, sin. His major point is that all the old covenant ceremony, the earthly sanctuary, priesthood, sacrifices, and laws, cannot remove sin. This is Paul's emphasis: if, after you understand the new and living way, you keep partaking of that old covenant methodology, that old covenant approach to God, then you are willfully sinning against God.

If you willfully forsake all these new covenant realities, there is no more sacrifice for sin, and there is no other substitute. You are not going to find it anywhere else. The blood of bulls and goats cannot cleanse you. Your own works will never take away the feelings of guilt or purge your conscience from dead works. There is nothing that is sufficient to cleanse us from sin but Jesus—only Jesus the Son of God. The blood of Jesus Christ is ever there for us, ever ready to save us. But if we turn from Jesus, there is no more sacrifice for sin. Nothing else in this world, not your merits, or even your self-inflicted suffering is a sufficient sacrifice for sin. There is no other sacrifice but Jesus. This is why facing the judgment without the merits of Christ is a fearful thing.

### Remember the Experience

Paul now reminds the Hebrews to remember what it was like when they first embraced this new covenant truth. It was so powerful and wonderful that it caused them to endure major opposition:

"But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; partly, whilst ye were made a gazing-stock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used" (Hebrews 10:32-33, KJV).

Do you remember what it was like, Paul is saying. How you were talked about, gazed at, even afflicted, and yet you took it all in stride because Jesus was everything to you. Taking hold of Bible truth has never been the easy road. Sometimes affliction comes from those who profess faith in God. Cain, a professed worshiper of God, persecuted Abel. The most devout professed followers of God persecuted Jesus and His followers. It is no different today. Yet we can endure such persecution because we have embraced a new and living way in Jesus Christ. Our sins are forgiven, our hearts are unshackled, our burdens are lifted and our joy is full. Jesus is all and all to us.

"For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry" (Hebrews 10:34-37, KJV).

Jesus is coming again! Soon and very soon we are going to see the King. What a joy to have something better, something enduring in the heavens. Let's not cast away our confidence, not now, no not ever. For soon, and very soon, He will come and no longer linger.

### **Living by Faith**

“Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul” (Hebrews 10:38-39, KJV).

There could hardly be a more appropriate ending for this chapter than the call to live by faith. This was the verse that led a conscientious Catholic monk to embrace the very truths Paul was urging upon the Hebrew believers. While climbing upon his knees to earn God's favor, Martin Luther recognized the call from God's Word to embrace this new covenant truth. Today, God calls each of us to do the same.

Have you heard His voice speaking to your heart through the Word? Do not draw back, but believe. God loves you. He is coming again for you. He will finish the work He has begun in you. He can and will save your soul. Just ask Him to do it. Ask Him to make Jesus the only Priest and sacrifice for your sin. Believe in Christ to the saving of your soul.

### **Summary**

Christ is the one time sacrifice for all sin. This is the powerful reality of the gospel and the main emphasis of Hebrews 10. The ceremonial law could never cleanse the conscience from guilt; neither can our best good works. It is only Jesus who can free us from guilt and sin, and He does this for everyone who takes Him at His word. Through this personal belief in Jesus Christ, we enter a new experience, a new relationship, the new covenant with God. Persecution is hardly felt and our hearts and minds are filled with a love for God and His law of life. There is a realization that no other sacrifice will do. There is no other way of reconciliation with a holy God than the way of Jesus Christ. Amen!

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