



G R A C E

REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH

SOLI † DEO † GLORIA

THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

Sermon Notes

Christ's Once for All Sacrifice

Hebrews 10:1-10

November 8, 2009

¹For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near. ²Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins? ³But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. ⁴For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

⁵Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said,

‘Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired,
but a body have you prepared for me;

⁶in burnt offerings and sin offerings
you have taken no pleasure.

⁷Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come to do your will, O God,
as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.’

⁸When he said above, ‘You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings’ (these are offered according to the law), ⁹then he added, ‘Behold, I have come to do your will.’ He does away with the first in order to establish the second. ¹⁰And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

- ❖ John MacArthur tells the story “of an English village whose chapel had an arch on which was written: ‘We Preach Christ Crucified.’ For years godly men preached there and they presented a crucified Savior as the only means of salvation. But as the generation of godly preachers passed, a generation arose that considered the cross and its message antiquated and repulsive. They began to preach salvation by Christ’s example rather than by His blood. They did not see the necessity of His sacrifice. After a while, ivy crept up the side of the arch and covered the

word ‘Crucified,’ and only ‘We Preach Christ’ was visible. Then the church decided that its message need not even be confined to Christ and the Bible. So the preachers began to give discourses on social issues, politics, philosophy, moral rearmament, and whatever else happened to spark interest. The ivy on the arch continued to grow until it covered the third word. Then it simply read, ‘We Preach.’”

- ❖ And so it is in our culture today. The Apostle Paul’s model of knowing “nothing...except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2) has given way to sermons based on pop-psychology and “relevant issues.”
- ❖ Yet, one cannot engage in even an elementary study of the Book of Hebrews without coming face-to-face with the centrality of the blood-sacrifice of Jesus Christ.
- ❖ In fact, here in chapter ten of the Book of Hebrew, the focus is on the shadow of the Levitical sacrificial system. Reportedly, during the week of Passover in Jerusalem, as many as three hundred thousand lambs were slain, causing blood to run out of the Temple complex through specially designed channels into the Brook Kidron, which appeared to be flowing with blood.
- ❖ Yet, unlike the annual sacrifices of the Old Covenant, Christ’s was once for all, and this is the climax of this passage.

I. The Old Covenant Law Pointed to a Greater Reality

- a. It was a Shadow
- b. It Foreshadowed the “Good Things to Come”
- c. It Demanded Continual Sacrifices
- d. It Could Not Make the Worshipper Perfect
- e. It Could Not Cleanse the Conscience of the Worshipper
- f. It Could Not Take Away Sins
- g. It Reminded the Worshipper of Sins

II. Christ is the Substance...The Reality

- a. Christ was Human...with a Human Body
- b. Christ was Perfectly Obedient
- c. Christ Fulfilled the Entire Old Testament
- d. Christ Himself Sanctifies Us
- e. Christ’s Sacrifice was Final

I. The Old Covenant Law Pointed to a Greater Reality

a. It was a Shadow

- ❑ The author of the Book of Hebrews writes, “For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities...”
- ❑ He is clearly here drawing a distinction between the Old Testament Law and the realities of the New Covenant.
- ❑ The Greek word translated “shadow” (*skia*) “refers specifically to a pale shadow, as contrasted with a sharp, distinct one.”
- ❑ Yet, his point is straightforward: the “good things to come” are superior to the Old Covenant law.
- ❑ John Calvin writes, “The difference then which the Apostle makes between the Law and the Gospel is this, — that under the Law was shadowed forth only in rude and imperfect lines what is under the Gospel set forth in living colors and graphically distinct. He thus confirms again what he had previously said, that the Law was not useless, nor its ceremonies unprofitable. For though there was not in them the image of heavenly things, finished, as they say, by the last touch of the artist; yet the representation, such as it was, was of no small benefit to the fathers; but still our condition is much more favorable. We must however observe, that the things which were shown to them at a distance are the same with those which are now set before our eyes. Hence to both the same Christ is exhibited, the same righteousness, sanctification, and salvation; and the difference only is in the manner of painting or setting them forth...[the things of the law] were like the rough outlines which are the foreshadowing of the living picture. Before they put on the true colors with paint artists usually draw an outline in pencil of the representation which they intend.”
- ❑ John Owen states, “This therefore is that which the apostle denies concerning the law. It had not the actual accomplishment of the promise of good things; it had not Christ exhibited in the flesh; it had not the true real sacrifice of perfect expiation: it represented these things; it had a shadow of them, but enjoyed not, exhibited not the things themselves. Herein was its imperfection and weakness, so that by none of its sacrifices could it make the Church perfect.”
- ❑ Donald Guthrie comments, “The history of Israel had shown the tendency for the sacrificial system to be regarded as an end in itself, becoming a mere formality. The need for fulfilling of the will of God had been neglected...”
- ❑ I would submit that this is the essence of legalism (and, to a large degree, idolatry): the elevation of the shadow to the level of the substance. This was precisely the blasphemous error of the Pharisees. Consider us today: we often

place higher demands upon keeping the “shadow” will caring little about the “substance.” For example, several years ago, Kimberly and I, along with Mike Thompson and Tim Yates traveled to Riga, Latvia to meet with a missionary family who was supporting several churches in the Baltic region. Unfortunately, a few of the churches had divided over the issue of women wearing headcoverings. How unfortunate this was, as the Apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 11, is dealing with the “reality” of male headship within the local church. However, in the Corinthian culture, the “sign” (or “shadow”) of that female submission was women covering their heads.

- Another example may be the reverence with which we give the Word of God. The Word of God cannot be destroyed; however, we often elevate the physical biblical text to an idolatrous level. Yet, God’s Word is not merely the physical print on the page, but rather the Truth that points to the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

b. If Foreshadowed the “Good Things to Come”

- The author expressly states one of the purposes of the Old Covenant Law: **to foreshadow “the good things to come” instead of the true form of these realities...**
 - F.F. Bruce writes that the “good things to come” “embrace the unrepeatable sacrifice of Christ and his present high-priestly ministry, which carry with them eternal redemption and uninhibited access to worship the living God.”
 - Indeed, the “good things to come” is the “good news” or the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Notice the contrast here between the “shadow” and the **true form of these realities.**

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

- The word here translated “form” is the Greek word *eikon*. It is probably better translated “the very image” or the “exact replica” of the realities. The reason for this is because the Greek work *eikon* literally means “an exact replica, a complete representation, or detailed reproduction.”
- In fact, the Apostle Paul refers to Christ as the *eikon of God* (2 Corinthians 4:4; Colossians 1:15).

“He is the image (*eikon*) of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.”
Colossians 1:15

- Furthermore, Paul states that believers should be conformed to the *eikon of the Son of God* (Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Colossians 3:10).

c. It Demanded Continual Sacrifices

- Next, the author of Hebrews writes, “...it can never, by **the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year...**”
- There was never an end to the required sacrifices of the Old Covenant. There was never a point when the problem of sin had been dealt with. Therefore, the worshipper was continually having to sacrifice.
- This idea of continual sacrifices is a common theme here in the Book of Hebrews. This fact revealed the futility of this system to fully satisfy the requirement for sin.
- John MacArthur rightly says, “You can pile shadow on shadow, and you still have no substance. Repetition of a symbol is like multiplying by zero. No matter how many times you repeat the process, the result never increases.”

d. It Could Not Make the Worshipper Perfect

- Next, our author states, “...it can never...make perfect those who draw near.”
- The word here for *perfect* is the Greek word *teleioo* which comes from the root *telios*, meaning “brought to its end, finished.”
- The idea is that although the Levitical system *pointed to a certain end*, i.e., Christ, who would give the worshipper full access to God, it could not, in itself, bring anyone to that particular end.

e. It Could Not Cleanse the Conscience of the Worshipper

- The author continues, writing, in **Verse 2**, “Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshippers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any *consciousness* of sin?”
- The root Greek word here for *consciousness* is the same word used in **Hebrews 9:9**, translated, “conscience.” *The meaning of the word carries with it the idea of one’s awareness of sin and its associated guilt.*
- Recall **Hebrews 9:9**, “According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshipper...”

- ❑ The Levitical sacrificial system could never cleanse the conscience of the worshipper, as the sacrifices were mere shadows of Christ, and therefore wholly unable to cleanse the worshipper *within*. The guilt of the worshipper in the Old Covenant was never dealt with through the blood of goats and bulls.

f. It Could Not Take Away Sins

- ❑ Not only could the Levitical offerings not **cleanse the conscience**, but they could not **take away sins**.
- ❑ The author makes it clear in **Verse 4**, writing, “For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.”
- ❑ The reason for this is plainly stated, “For it is impossible for **the blood of bulls and goats** to take away sins.”
- ❑ F.F. Bruce states, “Moral defilement cannot be removed by material means.”
- ❑ Richard Phillips states, “After all, these were dumb and unwilling animals that were being sacrificed for willing, volitional sins of spirit-bearing human beings.”
- ❑ The removal of sin requires that an acceptable substitute bear the sin away from the sinner.

g. It Reminded the Worshipper of Sins

- ❑ Finally, the author states, in **Verse 3**, “But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sin every year.”
- ❑ Far from removing sin and guilt, the Old Covenant system only served to remind the sinner of his sin!
- ❑ Donald Guthrie comments, “Consciousness of sin is brought about by the constant reminder of man’s need in the repeated sacrifices, the exact opposite of the effect of Christ’s offering, which leads to the blotting out of sin.”
- ❑ William Barclay provided the following analogy: “A man is ill. A bottle of medicine is prescribed for him. If that medicine effects a cure, every time he looks at the bottle thereafter, he will say, ‘That is what gave me back my health.’ On the other hand, if the medicine is ineffective, every time he looks at the bottle he will be reminded that he is ill and that the recommended cure was useless.”

- ❑ I recently read of the story of Kevin Tunnel, whose story is featured in the documentary *Dead Drunk: The Kevin Tunnel Story*. Several years ago, Kevin got behind the wheel of a car while he was intoxicated and began to drive. Tragically, he killed a young teenage girl. As part of his sentence, Kevin was

ordered to pay the family of the young girl victim \$1 every week for eighteen years. As a result, “He relives the accident and is faced with his guilt continuously.”

- ❑ The parents of the young victim certainly do not need the \$1 a week. However, the punishment was not for the family, it was for Kevin. Each time he sends the money, he is reminded of what he did. Even more tragically, however, is that **no amount of money will ever bring the young girl back.**
- ❑ And so it was with the sacrificial system. No amount of sacrifices could deal with the root problem of sin. Not amount of animals could cleanse the guilty conscience of the worshipper. **A perfect sacrifice was required.**

II. Christ is the Substance...The Reality.

a. Christ was Human...with a Human Body

- ❑ Now, in order to demonstrate the superiority of Christ’s sacrifice to the Levitical offerings, the writer quotes from **Psalm 40:6-8**.
- ❑ Our author, here in **Verses 5-7**, quotes from the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament), rather than the original Hebrew.
- ❑ The Greek-speaking Jews of the first century would have read the Septuagint (just as we today read the NIV, NASB, ESV, etc.), so this would have been natural to do so.
- ❑ However, there is a difference in wording between the original Hebrew and the Septuagint. In **Verse 5**, the Septuagint states, “Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but *a body you have prepared for me...*” However, the original Hebrew states, “...*you have given me an open ear...*”
- ❑ Yet, the Septuagint’s interpretation of the original Hebrew clearly points to **the incarnation** – when the Word became human flesh.
- ❑ Christ became **a fully rational human being in order to bear the sin of rational man.**
- ❑ The great Church Father, Athanasius wrote, in the fourth century, “As the Word who is immortal and the Father’s Son it was not possible for him to die, and this is the reason why he assumed a body capable of dying... When he offered his own temple and bodily instrument as a substitute for the life of all, he fulfilled in death all that was required.”

b. Christ was Perfectly Obedient

- ❑ Because Christ was fully human, he had the rational capacity for obedience.
- ❑ Further, because he was “conceived by the Holy Spirit” He did not inherit Adam’s sin and guilt. Therefore, Christ was born “pure” and “holy”, undefiled by the sin of man.
- ❑ Yet, in **Verse 7**, our author quotes from Psalm 40, which states, “Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.’”
- ❑ Christ was able to actively obey the Father and do His will.
- ❑ Jesus states this in **John 4:34**: “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.”

❑ **Unlike the irrational and dumb animals of the Levitical system, Christ’s death was fully rational and actively obedient, even to the point of death on a cross.**

c. Christ Fulfilled the Entire Old Testament

- ❑ Christ’s obedience extend to fulfilling **all of the Old Testament**.
- ❑ For, the Psalmist writes, “Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, **as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.**”
- ❑ This echoes **Luke 24:44**: “...everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”
- ❑ This is precisely what theologians refer to as Christ’s “active obedience,” that is his active fulfillment of the entire Old Testament.

d. Christ Himself Sanctifies Us

- ❑ The author concludes, in **Verse 10** by stating, “**And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.**”
- ❑ The idea here for **sanctification** is not the ongoing process of sanctification, but rather **the setting apart of the believer**.
- ❑ The sacrifice of Christ, Himself, sets us apart unto the Father. Therefore, we are instantly, and permanently set apart, from the moment we place our faith in Him.

- The idea here speaks to our **position** in Christ...we are sanctified.

□ This also brings up yet another point of contrast between Christ’s sacrifice and those of the Old Covenant: **the bodily sacrifice of Jesus Christ actually does something – it sanctifies.** The Old Covenant animal sacrifices, themselves, did nothing...for they were mere shadows.

e. Christ’s Sacrifice was Final

- And finally, the sacrifice was final...never to be repeated.
- This is one of the strongest contrast between the Old sacrifices and the sacrifice of Christ – Christ died **once**. The reason for this was because his life was perfectly obedient and righteous, and therefore, perfectly and finally acceptable to the Father. There is no other sacrifice needed. No repetition is required, and no repetition will be accepted.

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□ Yet, the central theme in this entire passage is that **God is please more with OBEDIENCE than with sacrifice.**

- For the author states, in **Verses 5-6**: “Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure.”

- As the prophet Samuel told Saul in **1 Samuel 15:22**:

“Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices,
as in obeying the voice of the LORD?
Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,
and to listen than the fat of rams.”

- Consider as well the words of the prophet in **Isaiah 1:11-18**:

¹¹ What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices?
says the LORD;

I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams
and the fat of well-fed beasts;

I do not delight in the blood of bulls,
or of lambs, or of goats.

¹² When you come to appear before me,
who has required of you
this trampling of my courts?

¹³ Bring no more vain offerings;
incense is an abomination to me.

- Read also Amos 4:4-5; 5:21-25.
- The point of the prophet is clear: the outward motions of sacrifice mean nothing if the heart is not contrite.
- Further, **God is fully self sufficient and needs nothing! Indeed, everything is His, and He is in need of none of it (for He made everything out of nothing). Therefore, may we never believe that God needs anything we can give Him.**
- Therefore, the purpose of the sacrificial system was to lead the worshipper into a life of faith and obedience. Faith in the Messianic provision of YHWH and obedience to the precepts of God in His Word.
- In fact, as Jesus said, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” John 14:15
- Therefore, this truth of Christ goes back to the words of our Lord in Matthew 22:37: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”

□ **The implication here is clear: if we love God, we will obey Him and not seek sacrifices to cover our disobedience.**

- With respect to the sacrificial system, John MacArthur writes, “The people had taken what was meant to be a symbol of real faith and used it as a substitute for faith. Their trust was in the outward form (the shadow). It came to be seen as a form of magic, wherein the prescribed words or actions automatically produced the desired result. God Himself had instituted the sacrificial system, but as a means for expressing obedience to Him, not as a means of using Him.”

□ **Micah 6:6-8:**

⁶ “With what shall I come before the LORD,
and bow myself before God on high?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,
with calves a year old?

⁷ Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams,
with ten thousands of rivers of oil?
Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”

⁸ He has told you, O man, what is good;
and what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?

