

“Accepted”
Exodus 28:36-38
(Preached at Trinity, January 4, 2009)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In **Chapter 28** we’ve been examining the clothing of the priesthood.
Exodus 28:4 – “And these *are* the garments which they shall make; a breastplate, and an ephod, and a robe, and a broideder coat, a mitre, and a girdle: and they shall make holy garments for Aaron thy brother, and his sons, that he may minister unto me in the priest’s office.”
2. In **Verse 6** we looked at the definition of the ephod. Upon the shoulder straps were placed two semi-precious stones containing the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. Every time the high priest entered into the Holy of Holies to offer the sacrifice he carried the names of the children upon his shoulders.
3. Beginning with **Verse 15** we read of the breastplate.
 - a. Upon it were four rows of precious stones, three in each row for a total of twelve. Each of these stones had engraved upon it the name of one of the tribes of Israel.
 - b. Each time the priest went into the Holy Place he carried the children of Israel upon his heart.
 - c. Again, we can see in this the glorious work of Christ who has us permanently upon His heart. The love of Christ for His people is unshakable.
4. With the breastplate we also saw the Urim and Thummim, mysterious stones through which God’s will was made known to His covenant people.
5. From **Verse 31** to the end of the chapter we find the remaining pieces of the priestly garment
 - A. **Verse 31** - The priestly robe.
Exodus 28:31 – “And thou shalt make the robe of the ephod all *of* blue.”
 1. It was worn under the Ephod. It was a single piece of fine linen that extended down to the ground. It was sleeveless and had a hole in the center through which the head was placed. The hole was carefully bound with thread so it wouldn’t tear when placed over the head.
 2. Around the bottom hem were pomegranates and bells alternating around the entire robe.
 - B. In **Verses 36-38** we find directions for the mitre or priestly turban.
 1. The turban was made of fine linen like the ephod – **Verse 39**. It was wrapped into a ring and attached so that it would not become unwrapped.
 2. Upon the front of it was a plate engraved with the words, “Holiness to the LORD” or “Holy to the LORD.”
 - C. **Verse 39** adds directions for the coat and the girdle along with the mitre.
 - D. Finally, in **Verses 42-43** we find directions for the undergarments that covered from the waist to the thigh. They were designed to protect the priest from any possibility of exposing his nakedness which would result in sudden death.

6. Last week we focused primarily on the bells around the hem of the priestly robe. They stood as a continual reminder of God's holiness and majesty. It was a dangerous thing to approach God.
Exodus 28:35 – “And it shall be upon Aaron to minister: and his sound shall be heard when he goeth in unto the holy *place* before the LORD, and when he cometh out, that he die not.”
7. Tonight I want to direct your attention to the mitre or turban and the special gold plate fastened to the front. . . worn upon the forehead.
Exodus 28:36-38 – “And thou shalt make a plate *of* pure gold, and grave upon it, *like* the engravings of a signet, HOLINESS TO THE LORD. ³⁷ And thou shalt put it on a blue lace, that it may be upon the mitre; upon the forefront of the mitre it shall be. ³⁸ And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the LORD.”
8. The high priest continually wore a plate on his forehead engraved with the banner, “Holiness to the Lord” or “Holy to the Lord”
- A. The high priest had to be a man of high character. As I pointed out last time, his life was always in danger. God is infinitely holy. Nothing impure shall ever come into His presence.
Habakkuk 1:13 – “*Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity:*”
- B. But the high priest was not holy. He was a sinner, yet God was merciful. The gold banner was an insignia that he was accepted on the basis of sacrifice. The high priest pointed forward to the One who was perfect.
9. The gold plate pointed to something more. It signified that the people of Israel were counted righteous on the basis of their mediator.
- A. **Verse 38** tells us that the children of Israel brought gifts, holy gifts, consecrated gifts dedicated to God. Yet, they were tainted by sin.
 " that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things"
- B. Their best gifts, their greatest offerings were polluted by sin.
- C. Through their high priest, their mediator, they were declared, “holy to the Lord.” Their gifts were “holy to the Lord.”
- I. When we approach God we approach as wretched sinners
- A. Everything about us is impure
1. Our hearts are impure
 Our thoughts are impure
 Our motives are impure
 2. Our best works are plagued by sin
- B. This leaves us in a wretched condition
1. Last week I set the one true God before you
 - a. He is infinitely holy – nothing polluted shall enter His presence
 - b. It is a dangerous thing to approach Him
 - c. Who is worthy to come before such a God and live to tell about it?
 2. To approach God in our sinful state means certain death
 The wages of sin is death

3. Only a perfectly holy man can approach God
Psalm 24:3-4 – “Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? ⁴ He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.”
Psalm 15:1-2 – “LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? ² He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.”
 - a. Who meets these qualifications?
 - b. Who has clean hands and a pure heart? Who walks uprightly and works righteousness?
 - c. The Apostle gives us the clear answer
Romans 3:10-12 – “As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: ¹¹ There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. ¹² They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.”

2. We need a righteousness which is not our own

C. Approaching God requires a Mediator

1. This is what was symbolized by the priestly turban
 “Holy unto God.”

2. It was a holiness which was not truly their own

D. Through grace we have a righteousness which is not our own

Philippians 3:9 – “And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:”

1. Through grace we can now serve Him acceptably, yet still with reverence and godly fear.

Hebrews 12:28-29 – “let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: ²⁹ For our God is a consuming fire.”

2. We have now been brought to a new relationship with God.
 We have been reconciled.

II. Through Christ we have a relationship with the living God

A. The Children of Israel did not truly have a relationship with God

1. He was their God by covenant but not by reconciliation

2. They remained stiffnecked

Exodus 32:9 – “And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it *is* a stiffnecked people:”

Deuteronomy 10:16-17 – “Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked. ¹⁷ For the LORD your God *is* God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward:”

3. Stephen repeated this against the Jews of his day

Acts 7:51 – “Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers *did*, so *do* ye.”

4. They never had actual access into the presence of God. They were ever allowed any closer than the outer courtyard.
- B. Under the new covenant we have unique access and privilege
1. We are accepted in Christ
Ephesians 1:6 – “To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.”
 - a. We are received. We have a relationship with Him
 - b. What does this mean for you?
 2. An amazing thing has taken place
 - a. We are still sinful and vile.
Our best works are tainted by sin.
 - b. God accepts us even in our weakness, even in our failures.
Psalm 103:13-14 – “Like as a father pitieth *his* children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. ¹⁴ For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we *are* dust.”
 3. This is amazing. God still demands perfect obedience.
 - a. We are unable to render to God His demand for perfection
 - b. As we saw last time God is infinitely holy. He is a consuming fire.
What shall we do?
 4. We have found grace in the Gospel
- C. We have been reconciled, accepted, even in our weakness
1. Our hearts have been changed whereby we love Christ.
 - a. We are unable to perfectly meet God’s demands of perfect holiness but we desire it with our whole heart.
 - b. We sincerely desire to please Him, to honor Him. We hate our sin and love righteousness.
 2. For Christ’s sake where the heart makes a sincere and honest effort to please God, God graciously accepts it. Our works are accepted in Christ even though they are marred by sin.
2 Corinthians 8:12 – “For if there be first a willing mind, *it is* accepted according to that a man hath, *and* not according to that he hath not.”
 Samuel Bolton – “In the Gospel God accepts affections for actions, endeavours for performance, desire for ability. A Christian is made up of desires, of mournings, thirstings, and bewailings: O that my ways were directed! O miserable man that I am! Here is Gospel perfection. . . Yet, God has mercy for ‘can-nots’, but none for ‘will-nots’. God can distinguish between weakness and wickedness.
- D. Under the Gospel God looks upon our heart and is pleased by our great desire to honor and obey Him.
1. Under the Gospel God can be pleased with His children even while they are still plagued by imperfection.
 2. Under the Gospel God is pleased by our heart’s desire to honor Him even when we fall infinitely short of His perfection. This is because we are accepted in Christ.
 3. God is able to look upon our heart
 - a. When God looks upon us does He find perfect obedience? No!

- b. When God looks upon us does He see the weakness of our flesh?
Yes.
- c. Is He pleased by our heart's desire to obey? Yes.

Conclusion:

1. When God looks upon your heart what does He see?
What is the desire of your life?
2. The question isn't, are you perfect before God?
The question is are you striving with all your heart to honor and please Him with your life?
3. Samuel Bolton (*True Bounds of Christian Freedom*)– “The law looks for exact obedience in every jot and tittle. From this rigid obedience has God freed the believer. Instead of universal actual obedience, God is pleased to accept universal habitual obedience. In the Gospel God accepts affections for actions, endeavours for performance, desire for ability. A Christian is made up of desires, of mournings, thirstings and bewailings. God has mercy for can-nots, but none for will-nots. God can distinguish between weakness and wickedness. While you are under the law, this weakness is your wickedness, a sinful weakness, and therefore God hates it. Under the Gospel He looks not upon the weakness of saints as their wickedness, and therefore pities them.”
4. This is why we so desperately need Christ.