



GRACE

REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH

SOLI † DEO † GLORIA

## THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

### Sermon Notes

### *Christ's Once for All Sacrifice, Part II*

Hebrews 10:11-18

November 15, 2009

<sup>11</sup>And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. <sup>12</sup>But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, <sup>13</sup>waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. <sup>14</sup>For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

<sup>15</sup>And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying,

<sup>16</sup>‘This is the covenant that I will make with them  
after those days, declares the Lord:

I will put my laws on their hearts,  
and write them on their minds,’

<sup>17</sup>then he adds,

‘I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.’

<sup>18</sup>Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

- ❖ One of the most important principles upon which we founded Grace Reformed Baptist Church over five years ago was the centrality of Expository Preaching in weekly worship. Unlike Topical Preaching, Expository Preaching forces the preacher to focus on what the Scriptures focus on. That is, rather than jumping from topic to topic, based upon what the preacher and/or congregation what to hear, Verse-by-Verse exposition places the expositor in a position of letting the Scriptures speak for themselves.
- ❖ In many cases, then, the preacher will be forced to preach on topics that he normally would not touch on. Also, **the preacher may be forced to preach on a topic more often than he normally would.** This is the case this morning.

- ❖ The author of the Book of Hebrews has gone to great lengths to emphasize the superiority of Christ’s sacrifice to that of the Old Covenant. It may seem to the casual reader, however, that the author has made his point clearly, and to continue on would be “beating a dead horse.” However, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the author repeats himself yet again. And as such, it is incumbent upon us as believers, to pay close attention. In other words, **there must be a valid reason why the author feels it necessary to emphasize these truths over and over again.** Therefore, we will examine them again.

I.	<b>The Position of the Priest</b>
II.	<b>The Frequency of the Sacrifice</b>
III.	<b>The Efficacy of the Sacrifice</b>

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- The theme of this passage is, once again, the superiority of Christ’s sacrifice. This fits into the overall theme of the epistle:

Richard Phillips comments, “The primary purpose that motivated this letter was to warn the Hebrew Christians not to fall back into the ways of the old covenant. They were experiencing persecution – either from the Jewish community or the Roman authorities, or both – and the pressure made a denial of Christ in favor of Judaism a tempting option.”

<b>I. The Position of the Priest</b>
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- The author of Hebrews begins this section in **Verses 11-12** by stating, “And every priest stands daily at his service...But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God...”
  - The position of the High Priest underscores the most significance difference between the nature of Old Covenant priests’ work and the work of Christ.
  - The position of being **seated** demonstrates several points:
    - Christ’s work is **finished**. The position of “seated” is also the position of God after His work of Creation. Yet, the Old Testament priests were never done with respect to their sacrifices. Therefore, they never **sat**. There was no furniture in the tabernacle / temple, since it was never permitted for the priests to sit.

Franz Delitzsch writes, “The priest of the Old Testament stands timid and uneasy in the holy place, anxiously performing his awful service there, and hastening to depart when the service is done, as from a place where he has no free access, can never feel at home; whereas Christ sits down in everlasting rest and blessedness at the right hand of the Majesty in the holy of holies, His work accomplished, and He awaiting its reward.”

- Next, the **seated position** is the position of a sovereign ruler...a monarch...a **king**. Christ is the *enthroned King of kings*.

William Barclay comments, “The priests stand offering sacrifice; Christ sits at the right hand of God. Theirs is the position of a servant; his is the position of a monarch. Jesus is the king come home, his task accomplished and his victory won.”

- Finally, as the true king of the cosmos, **Christ is in absolute control**. Nothing takes Him by surprise, and nothing is outside His control.

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- Also, consider *where* Christ is seated: **at the right hand of God**. This is the place of power and intimacy. It is only because Christ is the eternal Son of God, and the righteous Son of Man, that he has the privilege of such position. He is equal with the Father in His essence, and in His humanity, He has perfectly obeyed the will of His Father.

**II. The Frequency of the Sacrifice**

- Next, we observe the contrast between the frequency of the sacrifices.
- Once again, **Verses 11-12** state, “<sup>11</sup>And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. <sup>12</sup>But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God...”
  - As we saw before, the priests of the Old Testament never sat because their work was never done.
  - They continually labored, yet never finished.

In Greek mythology, Sisyphus was the son of the king of Thessaly, and was the founder of the city of Corinth. According to tradition he was sly and evil and would way-lay travelers and murder them. He betrayed the secrets of the gods and chained the god of death, Thanatos, so the deceased could not reach the underworld. Hades himself intervened and Sisyphus was severely punished. His punishment was tortuous: In the realm of the dead, he was forced to roll a stone up a steep hill. Once it reached close to the top of the hill, however, it would roll back down. Then the whole process would start all over again, lasting for all eternity. His punishment was depicted on many Greek vases. <http://www.pantheon.org/articles/s/sisyphus.html>

- ❑ This was similar to the plight of the Old Covenant high priest: he worked continually, but never finished.
- ❑ However, the author of Hebrews states, “**But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sin...**”
  - Once again, we see a fundamental difference between the sacrifice of Christ and that of the Aaronic priests.
  - Christ offered a sacrifice **once**, and it was perfectly sufficient.

John Calvin writes, “There is, indeed, no book in Holy Scripture which speaks so clearly of the priesthood of Christ, which so highly exalts the virtue and dignity of that only true sacrifice which He offered by His death, which so abundantly deals with the use of ceremonies as well as their abrogation, and, in a word, so fully explains that Christ is the end of the Law.”

- This also highlights the distinction between **quantity** and **quality**.
  - The **quality** of Christ’s sacrifice was of such superiority to the Old Covenant sacrifices, that He only offered it **once**.

Andrew Murray comments, “The once of Christ’s work is the secret of its being forever: the more clear the acceptance of that divine once for all, the more sure the experience of that divine forever...His forever is one of victory, and of the blessed expectation of its full manifestation.”

- However, the Old Covenant high priests offered the blood of bulls and goats (which could never take away sin), a sacrifice of such **low quality** that they had to be offered again and again.

<b>III. The Efficacy of the Sacrifice</b>
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- ❑ The main emphasis of this passage is the efficacy of Christ’s sacrifice.
- ❑ Looking back at **Verses 11-12** we see the weakness of the Old Covenant system: “And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, *which can never take away sins*. But when Christ had offered *for all time a single sacrifice for sins...*”
  - The author’s point here is clear: **Christ’s one sacrifice took away the sin of all believers for all time.**

□ Yet, this truth not only demonstrates the superiority of Christ’s sacrifice to the Old Covenant, but to all other religions as well. For, no religion deals with man’s fundamental problem: sin.

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- Consider the words of the author in Verse 12 once again, “When Christ **had offered** for all time a single sacrifice for sins, **he sat down** at the right hand of God...”
  - The verbs *offered* and *sat down* are in the Greek aorist tense, referring to **completed past action**.
  - Yet, consider as well Verse 14: “By a single offering *he has perfected*” us.
    - The verb here translated *has perfected* is in the Greek perfect tense, denoting a completed past action that has an ongoing effect into the present and future.
    - In other words, something hugely significant has occurred (**Christ offered up Himself!**), and the effects of this are felt to the present and into the future – indeed forever!
    - Certainly the ongoing **effect** of the completed past action is that **we have been perfected** (i.e., this is **completed** action).
- Yet, consider again Verse 14, “For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are *being sanctified*.”
  - This is a **present participle**: *being sanctified*.
  - When we view all this together, we see a picture begin to emerge:

❖ Since Christ **offered** Himself up and **sat down** (both Greek aorist/past tense), then *we have been perfected* (Greek perfect tense – completed past action) **and we are being sanctified** (present, ongoing action).

- Yet, how can this be?
- Let us look back at two Verses in the Book of Hebrews:

Hebrews 2:10: “<sup>10</sup>For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, *should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering*.”

**Hebrews 5:8-9:** “<sup>8</sup>Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. <sup>9</sup>And *being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him,*

- From these Verses, we learn that **Christ was “made perfect” through His sufferings.**
- This can lead to great confusion, since **Christ as the eternal Son of God has always been perfect. Furthermore, Christ was righteous, never sinning, so He was always perfect in His humanity as well.**
- Yet, the idea is NOT that Christ was made perfect *in His nature*, but rather, in his office as the **Davidic Messiah Priest-King.**
- Further, the idea of “perfecting”, here, is similar to that of “consecrating.” For example, priests in the temple “perfected” or “consecrated” themselves before God as the representative of the people.
- Consistent with this understanding, Donald Guthrie writes, “The meaning [of ‘perfecting’] is rather ‘to bring to completion’ in the sense that suffering was necessary before Jesus could be the complete pioneer of salvation, or the perfect high priest.”
- Therefore, it was through the infinite sufferings of Jesus Christ that God the Father *perfected* His Son – in His High Priestly function. What is beautiful here is that the *means* whereby God the Father consecrated the Son was His sufferings.
- Again, F.F. Bruce writes, “The perfect Son of God has become his people’s perfect Savior, opening up their way to God; and in order to become that, he must endure suffering and death.”
- William Lane states, “Jesus learned experientially what obedience entails through his passion in order to achieve salvation and to become fully qualified for his office as eternal high priest.”

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❖ The point, then, in <b>Chapter 10</b> is this: <b>Since Christ was made perfect (“made complete,” “finished,” or “made fitting”) in His function as High Priest, we are then made perfect <u>in Him</u>. That is, He is perfect first, then He perfects us in Him.</b>
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- ❖ Therefore, **we are perfect and we are being made perfect. Both are true.**
- ❖ We are perfect in the sense that “we are seated with Christ in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:6), and **positionally** we are righteous. Furthermore,

because of the completed work of Christ on the cross, our complete perfection is a certain future truth. The author here does something similar to what the Apostle Paul did in Romans 8:30: "...those whom he justified he also glorified." So sure was Paul in our glorification, that he places it in the past tense.

- ❖ We are perfect, in the sense as well that God – who knows no time – has perfected us **in Christ**.
- ❖ Yet, we are also **being sanctified**. Experientially, we are being made holy as well, being conformed into the image of Christ.
- ❖ Consequently, we see the “already...not yet” aspect of our salvation here.

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- Then, our author applies an Old Testament passage to demonstrate his point:

<sup>15</sup>And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying,

<sup>16</sup> ‘This is the covenant that I will make with them  
after those days, declares the Lord:

I will put my laws on their hearts,  
and write them on their minds,’

<sup>17</sup>then he adds,

‘I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.’

<sup>18</sup>Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

- This passage is from Jeremiah 31:31-34. This was already quoted in Hebrews 8.
- However, the passage from Jeremiah, in this context, underscores two aspects of our salvation: (1) an **objective** aspect; and (2) a **subjective** aspect

- (1) **Objectively** speaking, God has forgiven our sins. “I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.” This truth certainly stands in contrast to the Old economy, where the sacrifices were a constant reminder of sin (**Verse 3**).

Yet, God’s forgiveness of sins points to our **justification** in Christ. This work is **external, objective, and final**. Roughly speaking, this refers to the “already” aspect of our perfection.

- (2) **Subjectively** speaking, God has put His law on our hearts and minds. This is **internal and subjective, referring to our sanctification**.

Roughly speaking, this refers to the “not yet” aspect of our salvation. Consider the words of A.W. Pink as he describes this aspect of our salvation, as it relates to Jeremiah 31:31-34:

A.W. Pink comments, “The ‘heart’ as distinguished from the ‘mind’ comprises the affections and the will. First, the understanding is informed, and then the heart is reformed. An active principle of obedience is imparted, and this is nothing else than a *love* for God Himself. Where there is a real love for God, there is a genuine desire and determination to *please* Him. The heart of the natural man is ‘alienated’ from God and opposed to His authority. That is why, at Sinai, God wrote the commandments upon stones—not so much to secure the outward letter of them, as to represent the *hardness of the hearts* of the people unto whom they were given. But at regeneration God takes away the heart of stone, and gives a heart of flesh (Ezek. 36:26)—pliable, living, responsive.”

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- ❑ Finally, let us return to the position of Christ, as seated on the heavenly throne: **Verses 12-13**: “...he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet.”
- ❑ This passage echoes the sentiment of Psalm 110, in that all enemies will be subject to Christ the victor.
- ❑ However, although God has drawn many men and women to Himself, He is still calling individuals to repentance through faith in Christ.
- ❑ Therefore, we remain in this “waiting period” between Christ’s enthronement and His final, ultimate, and complete victory over His enemies.
- ❑ Consequently, one author writes, “The delay should be seen rather, as the prolongation of the day of grace, and therefore as a token of the mercy and longsuffering of God.”
- ❑ From these passages, we see, as F.F. Bruce explains, “From the shame of the cross he has been exalted to the highest place of glory.” That is, Christ has gone to the lowest depths and has been exalted to the highest heights. And it is from that height that He now reigns.
- ❑ My we, therefore, exalt Christ for what He has done, what He is currently doing, and what He will most certainly one day do.

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Let us consider the words of John Bunyan: **“Sinner, you think that because of your sin and infirmities I cannot save your soul, but behold my Son is by me, and upon him I look, and not on you, and will deal with you according as I am pleased with Him!”**