

Hebrews 10:1-18
Psalm 40
Psalm 40

“The Final Sacrifice”

April 11, 2021

We need to hear Psalm 40 in the voice of David
because of God’s promise to David that his Son would sit on God’s throne forever.
As Israel learned to sing the Psalms in and with David,
so also we need to learn to sing the Psalms in and with Jesus.

Of course, that means that it *does* apply to us! –
precisely because Jesus has sung this Psalm first.

In Psalm 40 we hear first how to thank God for his past deliverance –
and second how to lament and ask God for future deliverance –
all because the incarnate King is sitting on his throne.

It’s hard to wait.
It’s even harder to wait *patiently*.
It’s even *harder* to wait patiently when you are suffering.

The picture in Psalm 40 is of an old man who has suffered for many years alone –
enduring patiently the miseries of this life.
The picture in Psalm 40 is of a faithful Christian in Iraq or Syria or Egypt –
who has lived her whole life under the fear of oppression and persecution –
and now it’s a hundred times worse!
The picture in Psalm 40 is of the *Christ* who endured the cross –
patiently trusting that God would raise him from the dead!

After all the *rescue* in verse 2 is from the Pit!
It is from the grave.

Psalm 40 also speaks of how God does not delight in sacrifices.
In the ancient world, there were many who thought that the gods delighted in offerings.
If you just went through the outward rituals, then the gods would be pleased with you.
They would say that your *heart* doesn’t matter.

We live in a culture that has reversed this.
Your heart is *all* that matters!
A person can be wicked and despicable,
but many will say, “Oh, but his heart is in the right place.”

Psalm 40 rejects both the formalism of the ritualist
and the touchy-feelyism of the postmodernist.

Because God delights in his Son the King – the one who does his will!

As Ambrose said in the fourth century,
“For my sake he took on himself the combat, so that he might conquer me.
Though Christ’s flesh was strong and not liable to sin,
he nevertheless took on my sins.
He took on my weakness and infirmities,
though he himself was without infirmity...
He who is all pure took on our flesh to make it all pure.
He, the immortal one, took on our flesh to make us immortal.” (317)

That’s at the heart of what Psalm 40 is all about!

Sing Psalm 40

Read Hebrews 10:1-18

Have you been confessing your sins more often since we started working through Hebrews?

I hope so.

Have you been forgiving those who have sinned against you?

I hope so.

As we wrap up our focused study on what God has done for the forgiveness of our sins,
I hope that these principles continue to dwell in your hearts and lives.

Every week, as we confess our sins together, and as we hear God’s assurance of pardon,
we are reminded of what it means to repent and forgive.

Our passage today brings to completion

the themes that we have been exploring in the last few weeks:

the better priesthood, the better covenant, the better sacrifice.

In chapter 7, we heard about the better priesthood, quoting Psalm 110;

Today we heard echoes of Psalm 110 in verse 12-13:

“Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool”

Chapter 8 expounded the better covenant, with a lengthy quotation from Jeremiah 31.

We hear echoes of Jeremiah 31 in verses 16-17.

“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days...”

Chapter 9 expounded the better sacrifice,

by explaining the meaning of the holy place and the regulations for worship;

We hear echoes of this in the continuing discussion of the earthly priesthood.

But as this passage wraps up the central exposition of Hebrews,

it also begins to move us towards the *point* of this exposition:

the exhortation of 10:19-39.

We’ve been looking a lot at the objective work of Christ –

what Jesus did as our priest – as our sacrifice.

Now we are turning to see how Christ’s work in accomplishing our redemption is applied to us.

There are four paragraphs in our passage,

the last three of which emphasizes the finality of Christ’s work–

the very thing that the first paragraph says the law could not do.

1. The Law Cannot Make You Perfect (10:1-4)

For 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.

Shadows cannot make you perfect.

What does it mean to be “perfect”?

When you hear the word “perfect” you instantly think of “moral perfection.”

That is NOT what “perfect” means in Hebrews.

Back in chapter 7, verse 28, we heard that Jesus –

the Son of God, has been made perfect forever.

Has been *made* perfect.

That implies that he was not always perfect.

What does this mean?

How was Jesus “imperfect”?

Well, he was not yet a faithful and merciful high priest!

As 2:10 says,

“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.”

So you see, the question is not one of *moral* perfection.

Hebrews also makes it perfectly clear that Jesus was *sinless*:

4:15–“one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.”

So Jesus was morally perfect.

So when Hebrews talks about being “perfect” he is not talking about moral perfection.

He is talking about being complete or finished–

perhaps even, “mature” would be a good word to use.

After all, the central theme of Hebrews is that the *Son* is the high priest,

and in Jesus, the Son of God has matured and entered into his inheritance.

So the point is that the law could not bring Israel to maturity.

It could not make Israel grow up.

All the sacrifices did was serve as shadows and pointers to Christ.

The sacrifices reminded Israel that they were incomplete, immature,

because their sin had not been finally dealt with.
And so long as their sins held them down, they could not enter their true inheritance—
that glorious fellowship with God that had been promised to Abraham.

How do we know that the law could not make sinners perfect?

² *Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins?* ³ *But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year.* ⁴ *For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.*

For the simple reason that the sacrifices are “continually offered.”
If the blood of bulls and goats could deal finally with sin,
then you wouldn’t need to keep offering sacrifices.
The OT sacrifices were but shadows of the coming “good things”—
shadows of Christ’s own sacrifice.

Further, verse 2 points out that the worshipers themselves
demonstrated the futility of the Mosaic sacrifices,
because they would have been decisively cleansed by a once-for-all sacrifice,
but by virtue of the fact that Israel kept coming back, year after year,
we can see that they did not believe that they had been decisively cleansed.

The OT sacrifices were sacraments—
signs pointing to the real thing—the sacrifice of Christ,
and drawing their power from that once-for-all sacrifice.
But in and by themselves, the OT sacrifices could do nothing to remove sin.

If the blood of bulls and goats cannot take away sins,
what can take away my sin?

Verses 5-10 answer this question:
what can take away my sin?
the *body* of Jesus!

2. But the Offering of the Body of Jesus Sanctifies Us Once for All (10:5-10)

When Jesus, the Messiah, came into the world he sang Psalm 40, just as we did earlier.

In Psalm 40 David praises God for raising him out of the miry clay –
out of destruction’s pit—
and calls on God to deliver him from all his troubles.

It is a Psalm of the cross—and a Psalm of the resurrection.

And Hebrews tells us that it is a Psalm that Jesus sang.

But when Jesus sang it, it gained new meaning.

Or, better, it attained to the purpose for which God had inspired it!

(Read verses 5-7)

⁵ Consequently, when Christ^[a] came into the world, he said,
“Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired,
but a body have you prepared for me;
⁶ in burnt offerings and sin offerings
you have taken no pleasure.
⁷ 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.’”

One translation note:

the Hebrew text of Psalm 40 says, “sacrifice and offering you did not seek,
but ears you have dug for me”
the LXX (the Greek translation) replaces “ears” with “body.”

Hebrews follows the LXX, seeing that God did not only give his anointed one ears,
but a whole body (how do you have ears, if you don’t have a whole body!)

The point being that the Anointed One not only listens to God,
and does his will,

but his own body is the sacrifice that removes sins.

The Son must be made like his brethren in every respect—except sin.

The OT sacrifices did not create a desire to do the will of God.

That was the point of Jeremiah 31—the reason why there must be a new covenant.

The old covenant could not remove sin, and it did not change the heart.

And so Hebrews explains Jesus’ singing of Psalm 40 as follows:

(Read 10:8-9)

⁸ When 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), ⁹ then he added,
“Behold, I have come to do your will.” He does away with the first in order to establish the
second. ¹⁰ And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus
Christ once for all.

The Jews had been singing Psalm 40 for centuries,
but when Jesus sang it, it gained new meaning!
or, better yet, it found it’s true meaning!

Verse 9 says that when Jesus sang Ps 40, it had the effect of abolishing the old covenant!

Why?

Because that was the point of Psalm 40!

What God desires is not a never-ending cycle of sacrifices!

What God desires is one who will do his will.

But no one had ever arisen in all of Israel’s history who would truly do God’s will,
because God’s will was that the Son of God would offer himself
as the once-for-all sacrifice that would remove his people’s sins.

Israel always fell short of that.

Jesus came as the one who had come to do God's will—
not just in living a morally perfect life!
but to offer himself as the final sacrifice.
And so it was by the will of God that we have been sanctified
by the once-for-all offering of the body of Jesus Christ.

Do you hear that?!
*by that will we have been sanctified
through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*

Do you see, then what it means to be sanctified?
The problem with the old covenant was the worshiper was still conscious of sin—
he knew that the continual sacrifices meant that sin was still a problem.
What it means to be sanctified through the once-for-all offering of the body of Jesus,
is that we are no longer conscious of sin!

“Okay, pastor, what have you been smoking?!
We're all conscious of sin!”

You are?
Haven't you confessed your sins?
Didn't you hear God's promise that he is faithful and just to forgive your sins,
and cleanse you from all unrighteousness?
Isn't this what your baptism reminds you of?
that your sins are *washed away!*
Why are you still conscious of something that isn't there anymore?

Yes, we all still sin.
I know all too well that I do.

But we should not be conscious of sin—
there should not be a single sin left on our conscience—
unless, of course, you are harboring one.
If there is a sin that you will not repent of—
if there are sins that you delight in—
then you have a different sort of problem

If you are still delighting in sin —
then talk with me — talk with one of the elders —
talk with Christian friend that you trust!
For we died to sin—how can we live any longer therein? (Rom 6)

Yes, we still sin.

But if we confess our sins, he is faithful *and just* to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Our sanctification means that we have definitively broken with that old life, the dominion of sin and death has been decisively broken, and you are no longer a slave to sin.

Believer in Jesus Christ, you are *free* from the guilt and the power of sin!
We say that every week, and I hope that it is sinking in!

3. His Offering Has Perfected Those Who Are Being Sanctified (10:11-14)

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

Our third paragraph contrasts the everlasting futility of the earthly sacrifices with the everlasting power of Christ's single sacrifice.

Here we have the echo of Psalm 110–

“Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool”
Christ is the priest after the order of Melchizedek,
that unique priest who offers a unique sacrifice
that finally accomplishes God's purposes.

The contrast is seen even in the posture of the priests.

The earthly priests “stand daily at his service”
but this priest sat down at the right hand of God!

Jesus has no need to stay standing.

He has finished his work, and so sits at the right hand of the Father.
For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

Notice how verse 10 said that you “have been sanctified.”

This is that definitive break with sin and guilt that we call “definitive sanctification.”

But verse 14 speaks of a progressive sanctification,

as the once-for-all break with sin becomes more and more visible in our lives.
Here the definitive work is called “perfection.”

By his single offering, he has perfected for all time
those who are being sanctified.

You are perfect!

Remember that “perfect” in the vocabulary of Hebrews, does not mean “morally perfect.”

It *never* means “sinless” in Hebrews.
So what does it mean that we have been “perfected”?
We have been brought to maturity—completeness.
The Son of God has reached maturity (perfection) and has entered his inheritance.
Therefore, all who are *in* Christ, have been matured or perfected in him.

4. So if Your Sins are Forgiven, then There Is No Longer any Offering for Sin (v15-18)

¹⁵ *And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying,*

Hebrews completes his central exposition by reminding us of Jeremiah 31 again.

This is what the Holy Spirit tells us about the new covenant:

(Read verse 16)

¹⁶ *“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,”*

And after this, then he says,

(Read verse 17)

¹⁷ *then he adds,*

“I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.”

What was the problem with the old covenant?

God remembered their sins.

What is the promise of the new covenant?

God will no longer remember our sins.

It is not that God suddenly became forgetful,
rather he will not hold our sins against us.

When he thinks of those who are united to his Son,
he does not think of their sins.

So where there is true and final forgiveness of sins,

there is no longer any offering for sin.

Verse 18:

¹⁸ *Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.*

Once your sins are forgiven, you don't need a sacrifice.

The Day of Atonement in the OT was a constant reminder of sin.

Christ's sacrifice is a constant reminder of the forgiveness of sin!

If God has forgotten your sins,

why do you still remember them?

Why do you act as though God still holds them against you?

It is because you are still holding on to some last remnant of works-righteousness.

You are still thinking that “if only I was good enough...”

“If only I was better at doing God’s will, then he would be pleased with me!”

Did you hear what God’s will was?

God’s will was that his son offer a once-for-all sacrifice for the sins of his people.

Sorry.

It’s too late to be good enough!

(And something tells me that you wouldn’t make a very good “sinless sacrifice!”)

Yes, I do realize the irony of what I’m doing.

I’m trying to make you feel guilty for feeling guilty!

There is no reason in heaven or on earth for *feeling* guilty!

If you *are* guilty, then repent!

If you have repented, then you have been forgiven,
and you are not guilty anymore!

Jesus sacrifice pays the price.

His blood covers your sins.

He took your guilt upon himself.

Which means, *it’s not yours anymore, so you can’t have it!*

And as we’ll see next week,

if you have been forgiven, and your guilt is removed,
then stop sinning deliberately!

But this is only something you can do

if you joyfully accept the new reality that is yours in Christ—
that your sin and guilt have been truly and fully removed.