

The Whole in Our Salvation

Hebrews 10:1-18

5/27/2018

Randy Lovelace

Let me lead us in a brief word of prayer. Father, we do ask for your rich provision, for these brothers and sisters in Christ who have suffered in our suffering as a result of warfare of which they have no part. We ask that you would enable us because of your abundant grace and because you have filled our cup to overflowing to respond, to help and care for them. We thank you for the ministry and for the work of the Cokes. We pray that you would continue to establish that work for the training up of physicians for the continent of Africa. Lord, may you bring great healing, renewal, and may your strong power be known in the midst of this suffering. We thank you now for your Word. We pray that you would encourage us, that you would, by your Holy Spirit, strengthen us and give us a wider expanse, a deeper understanding, and a more fervent love for the Lord Jesus Christ and for his work. It is in Jesus's name we pray. Amen.

Do you have a hole in your salvation? H-O-L-E. My goal this morning is to demonstrate from this passage that we are called to have a whole salvation. W-H-O-L-E. It may seem like a small thing. Perhaps it may even be familiar to you. But I want to strongly encourage you to hear the words of this passage and of the deep truths that it professes, that we might go deeper and be more richly encouraged and equipped with the great salvation that we have been given. But the end or the goal of that is not that we might be self-satisfied or even that our goal would not be that we would have a greater sense of assurance of our salvation, but that it would issue forth in a greater love for the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Lord of our salvation. Because a deeper love for the Lord Jesus Christ is the goal of our salvation. A deeper love for him will bring about a deeper joy in our salvation.

So I want you to hear the words of someone far more eloquent than myself. But I give you these words to remind you that everything I say here this morning is not only from the deep words of Scripture written in the first century, but the themes of these Scriptures have been echoed out throughout the history of the church of Jesus Christ. So I give you the words of John Calvin, not writing on these verses but about the subject that these verses point us towards. Hear now these words. Calvin says:

We see that our whole salvation and all its parts are comprehended in Christ. We should therefore take care not to derive the least portion of it from anywhere else. If we seek salvation, we are taught by the very name of Jesus that it is "of him." If we seek any other gifts of the Spirit, they will be found in his anointing.

If we seek strength, it lies in his dominion; if purity, in his conception; if gentleness, it appears in his birth. For by his birth he was made like us in all respects that he might learn to feel our pain. If we see redemption, it lies in his passion; if acquittal, in his condemnation; if remission of the curse, in his cross; if satisfaction, in his sacrifice; if purification, in his blood; if reconciliation, in his descent into hell; if mortification of the flesh, in his tomb; if newness of life, in his resurrection; if immortality, in the same; if inheritance of the Heavenly Kingdom, in his entrance into heaven; if protection, if security, if abundant supply of all blessings, in his Kingdom; if untroubled expectation of judgment, in the power given him to judge.

In short, since rich store of every kind of good abounds in him, let us drink our fill from this fountain, and from no other.

What Calvin writes about, what the preacher of Hebrews is establishing for us, is that our salvation is whole. That is, wholly accomplished and applied through Christ alone. And it is through the gift of our union with Christ, our union with him in his death, in his resurrection, and in his ascension, that we then receive all the blessings, all the benefits that are in Christ alone. The question is not whether Christ has accomplished these things. The question is have we received them. And therefore, are we living by them? Or are we living based on a truncated, reduced, more simplified gospel that sounds good, that we can even repeat, but has very little play in the warp and woof of our lives?

This is what the writer of Hebrews, the preacher of Hebrews, is trying to call his congregation back to. You've heard these things. You've even believed on them. You've even professed them. But has it changed the way you live? Hear now God's Word, Hebrews 10:1-18.

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

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

“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.
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.’”

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

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, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

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

“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,”

then he adds,

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

Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.
[ESV]

This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. May the Lord bless the preaching of his Word and give mercy and grace to the teacher.

You will see in your outline this morning from these verses, first verses 5 through 9, I want you to see as he's repeating again the great theme of Christ our justification. He then moves on after verse 9 to the rest of the verses, Christ our sanctification. So this is the whole of our salvation, that Christ is our justification and our sanctification. And because of the work of the Holy Spirit through the gift of faith, we are united to Christ. So that which is said of Christ is also said of us. We are justified and we are sanctified. But what in the world does that mean, and what difference does it make? And what effect should that have on our witness to the world? Indeed, even our witness to one another? Let's consider those in just a moment.

First, Christ our sanctification. Or, if you will, Christ our righteousness. You see in verses 5 through 9, which I've already read, he makes very clear that the first thing which is established—that Christ came in obedience. He says in verse 5, “Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said,” and then he repeats the words of Psalm 40. And what he's establishing there is what he says very clearly—that what Christ has done, verse 9, “Behold, I have come to do your will.” And the will of the Father wasn't something that Jesus did begrudgingly. It's not as though this was the Father's will, and so he just sent Jesus out against his will. But rather when Christ says, “I came into the world to do the will of my Father,” he is establishing the fact that he did so by willful choice, not under duress, but a desire to make the glory of the Father known, which we looked at last week.

It's not that Christ's sacrifice or his incarnation or his resurrection or his ascension somehow flips the switch of God's love, and then God's love comes to us. Rather, it was God's love that sent forth Christ to begin with. And it is Christ and his love for the Father and demonstrated love for the world that Christ came. But it was in obedience. Christ was made man under the law, meaning he had to obey every jot and tittle of the law. He was obedient on Monday morning as he was on a Saturday afternoon at 6:00. Just as you and I experience life in the mundane corners of our week, or whether it is in the rest in the middle of the night, and we are helpless, the reality is Christ was made man to experience all that we experience, tempted in every way in which we are tempted, and yet he was without sin. He obeyed. He trusted. He had faith. He rested on the will of his Father. This is Christ's obedience.

And why is the preacher continuing to repeat this? It's not that he is bored or that he's lost his way. This is something which we must be reminded every single day. It is not our obedience that establishes us as worthy of the Father's love. It is never our obedience that establishes us as worthy to receive the Father's love. It is alone through Christ's active obedience from his childhood to the inth degree of his adulthood, and he ascended to the right hand of God the Father. It is Christ's obedience alone to do the will of him who sent him.

And he says even back in the Old Testament, as God would say not only through the prophets, not only in the psalms, but continually through the Scriptures, it was not in sacrifices—even David says this in his great penitential psalm, Psalm 51. It is not sacrifices that you desire, but a contrite heart. Christ recognizes that it was not in sacrifices that the Lord longed for, but a willingness and an obedience to his will. And for Christ, it meant humbling himself, setting aside his glory, and taking on human flesh, and to suffer, and to walk, but to do so in obedience.

But Christ is not only our justification because of his obedience, but also because of his accomplishment. And he says here, what was accomplished is that by this one single offering, the old was set aside. The old meaning the old covenant and its sacrifices. Not because God's grace was not operating in those sacrifices. We've established this before. God in his grace offered the sacrifices as a means by which to present our offerings to him for forgiveness. And blood was spilt because of innocent animals. The problem was, it could not remove sin from us. It could not purify the conscience. If you remember over these last several weeks, we've talked about the day of atonement. Each year, these sacrifices had to be offered by the high priest. And on that day of atonement, all the people were reminded of their sins. It could not purify the conscience.

But what Christ accomplishes here is that which the blood of bulls and goats could not do. The accomplishment is the sacrifice once and forever, never to be repeated again, was sufficient to not only to cleanse us from our sins, to remove our sin from us as far as the east is from the west, but also to purify the conscience. Is that not what it says in verse 3? "But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year." The implication and the inference is that through the sacrifice of Christ, we, as we've established, receive a clear conscience. Because we look to him who is our perfect sacrifice. We look to him, not just the cross. You see, again, if you only see the gospel as the cross, you have a truncated gospel. We believe that the gospel is creation full, redemption, and restoration. Christ's work was in his youth, in his obedience growing up, his obedience to the will of the Father to the point of the cross, his being laid in the grave, his being raised from the grave victorious over sin and death, and ascending into heaven and being seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

All of these things encompass Christ's active and passive obedience, both that which he chose to do and that which he took on by his choice. This enables you and I to come before the Lord, as the Scriptures say, boldly before the throne of grace, recognizing that we are sinners—it is still present—but we come with a clear conscience recognizing that though we are guilty of sin, that sin and that guilt is removed because of the work of another. We do not come because we are broken enough, sorry enough. We come alone because one has gone before us—Christ our justification. This is what is established by this word.

And what he says here, he says, in verse 10, "And by that will," that is, the will of the Father which Jesus willingly took on and obeyed, "by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus once and for all." What is meant there is temporally. Meaning, it is forever. Forever. Forever, Christian. Are you slow in asking for forgiveness? Are you slow in going before the Father acknowledging your sin because you think to yourself, "Oh, here I go again. It's the same old thing again." And the Lord will happily say to you and remind you by his Holy Spirit, "Yes, again. But I say to you, my grace is mightier than all of your sin. Because no longer does a sacrifice have to be offered again and again because of your sin again and again. It was offered once, and I will remember your sins no more." He chooses not to hold us to account because of the work of another, because we come trusting in Christ alone.

But that is a hard thing to do, is it not? Because what we begin to do is we begin to shift, not only recognizing what Christ has done for us in accomplishing our justification, our ability to stand before a holy God through the work of another. He also accomplishes our sanctification, how we live this out. In other words, how is Christ, then, our holiness—how are we to understand it? Here we see in these verses, it's mentioned first in verse 10, as I've already read. I'll repeat, "And by that will, we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus once for all. And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins." And then again in verse 14 he says, "For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified."

So when he repeats these words, he's calling us to pay attention. What is this sanctification? Because it is not in the imperative mood—be sanctified. It is in the indicative mood. It has been done for us. We are being sanctified. How we operate in that, I'll get to in a moment. But first, we have to establish

this fact. That what exactly happens with regard to our sanctification? Well, the words are here, if we're paying attention. What he says here is—notice, again, in verse 11, “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, he sat down at the right hand of God.” What is being spoken of there is spoken of in greater detail in other parts of the New Testament, and particularly with Paul in the Book of Romans.

But what is being established there is Christ has accomplished our sanctification, because we can now be dead to sin. But what does being dead to sin actually mean? It's being talked about here in regard to victory. Because the language of being seated—we've already heard that he is seated at the right hand of God the Father. It's victory language. It's language that something has been accomplished. Something has been vanquished. And the problem is, we have a truncated view of sanctification, because honestly we have a truncated view of what sin is. You see, oftentimes we see sin merely as action or inaction—what we have done which we ought not to have done, or what we have failed to do which we ought to have done. And it is that. It does involve actions. But sin is so much greater than that.

In fact, sin is talked about in the Scriptures as a tyrant or as an enemy. This is what Paul talks about in his great book Romans, when he talks about sin as an almost—we're enslaved to this tyrant king, as Sinclair Ferguson says in his work on sanctification. This idea that sin is not just action. It is actually an entity. It's like a tyrant king that wages war against the soul. And we are enslaved to this tyrant king, yet for Christ, who in offering once and forever a sacrifice for sin, going to the grave, and being raised, and ascending to the right hand of God the Father Almighty, and being seated at his right hand, is victorious over sin and death. Which means we aren't just forgiven of sin. We can be dead to it. Meaning we can be emancipated. We can be freed of it as a tyrant king.

Many Christians believe that all that Christ accomplishes for us—and they're well-meaning—is that what he accomplishes for us is forgiveness of sins, the freedom from guilt. But that is not all. Because that is to put the forgiveness of sin merely in a vacuum. But what Christ does in offering his body as a sacrifice for sins and being raised on the third day and being seated on the right hand of God the Father—takes this work and puts it on a wide plain of redemptive history. God has been at war against sin since its inception. And our first parents chose to sin against God the Father. And from that moment, God said, “I will send forth my son, and he will vanquish the evil one, and he will crush his head, but his heel will be bruised.” That is the cross. But the crushing of the head is the death to sin and its consequences, which is death.

And so what is being talked about here—and I'll get to in just a moment, so stick with me. If you're falling asleep, stick with me. What is being talked about here is so much greater than we can imagine. It is like this. We have by choice sinned against God, not just in our action, but in our very nature. Therefore, we have chosen to be enslaved to a dictator, which is Satan himself and the tools and weapons of his war, which is sin. And sin is saying, “God, I don't want your ways. I want mine.” In all of its multi-colored disobedience, “I want to be god. I don't want you to be my Lord.” But in so doing we have to, as Bob Dylan once sang, we have to serve somebody. And the Scriptures say if we are not serving the Lord, we are enslaved to sin. It is a dictator. But in Christ's work and its accomplishment, we receive the freedom from guilt, yes, but so much more. Because the language of victory and not just forgiveness is talked about in these verses. He says, again, “But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet.” That is awaiting 'til the end time, that ultimate end of history when Christ will come again and death will be completely removed. “For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.”

So what does this mean? It means that for the Christian who professes faith and trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ and what he has accomplished, it means that we are no longer enslaved to the tyrant of sin, but we now have a new master, which is the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, I can imagine some of the questions

you might have in your mind, and I can imagine that they're there, but I'll get to those in just one moment. But before I do, I want to give you this one other quote. And I am grateful for the work of another theologian which we've talked about over these last several weeks, John Murray in his book *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*. He says these words. He says, the Christian and as Christians—

We are too ready to give heed to what we deem to be the hard, empirical facts of Christian profession, and we have erased the clear line of demarcation which Scripture defines. As a result we have lost our vision of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Our ethic has lost its dynamic and we have become conformed to this world. We know not the power of death to sin in the death of Christ, and we are not able to bear the rigour of the liberty of redemptive emancipation.

Now that's a mouthful. Let me translate it. We have a small view of sin as merely being action or inaction and not as what it is—a tyrant. And as such, we have a small view of sanctification. If it's merely discrete action, then what Christ has done for me is given to me the possibility of receiving forgiveness and the removal of guilt. It is all those things. But what Murray is pointing to is that if we recognize what Christ has done in emancipating us from the tyrant of sin, therefore our view of sanctification, our view of what Christ has done, requires a lot more work than we first imagined. Because with emancipation comes great rigor. For if I am emancipated, I must recognize that perhaps I'm still involved in a war. To be emancipated from the tyrant of sin doesn't mean that sin is not still present in the world. It very much is. That's why we still sin. That's why we still fall to temptation. That is, we're still in a war. And this tyrant continues to fight back. So therefore, if we've been emancipated from its tyranny, it still requires great rigor by God's grace and God's power to wage war so that we don't continually fall back under its dictatorial efforts. Do you see?

What I mean is this, and what Murray means is this: we are not just dead to sin, therefore we don't have anything else to worry about. No, we are dead to sin, freed from its tyranny, so that we can be alive to righteousness. So that we can then say—and Christian, let me say this to you as I say this to my own soul—we have everything we need by God's spirit and God's word to choose godliness. You are not a victim who is still under the tyranny of a dictator. You've been emancipated. You live to another kingdom. You live under a different king whose grace says to you, "Follow me. Follow in my ways. For I have written my law on your hearts." Which is why the preacher mentions the prophet Jeremiah. He says, "And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying, '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.'"

What does it mean? It means the law is not something I have to do. I now get to obey the Lord, because his ways are not my ways. His ways are filled with goodness and grace and mercy. His ways have within them flourishing in what it means to be a human being. Because I understand what it means to be a human, because I'm in reconciled relationship with my Father. I understand why I'm called to honor my parents. I understand why I'm not to steal or to murder or to covet. Even though I recognize that those things may be juicy-sweet to my senses. But I recognize that all they can do is deliver me to tyranny again. They can never deliver on what they promise.

But God now says, "I have emancipated you, and in so doing, you now belong to me. I've now made you alive to righteousness." And by my spirit, we can now choose by God's power, God's strength, guided by his word, to walk in obedience. Men and women., boys and girls, I do not pretend to know the ways in which you are tempted. But the Scriptures declare that we have been sanctified. We have been set apart. We've been emancipated. And while we still sin, because it's still present, we can by his grace say "no" to ungodliness. In other words, we now get to focus not on sin and how we're forgiven. We get to focus on the one who gives us strength to walk in obedience.

It's not just grace for forgiveness. That is wonderful. That is beautiful. It is greater than all my sin. But it's grace to learn how to live. To simply see grace as a covering for sin is like looking at a telescope backwards. It's looking at the wrong end of an instrument. Grace is so much more. The Holy Spirit is present in us so that we can say "no" to gossip. We can say "no" to lust. We can say "no" to lying. We can say "yes" to love. We can say "yes" to service and humility, to gentleness and peace. We can say "yes" to the Holy Spirit as we call on him to tame our tongues. Because without his help, our tongues are a restless evil. We are no longer enslaved to that old dictator. We are now in a whole new kingdom, with a whole new way of life.

And we're going to continue to unpack this for the weeks to come. But I want to say to you, if you are a Christian, though sin is still present and we still fall, Christian, in Christ we are victorious. Christian, in Christ we are free. But that does not mean we are triumphalistic, as if there's no problem. No, it means that we are hopeful. It means we are dependent. It means we are humbled, because sin is so much more than action and inaction. But Christ is greater still.

But I end with this. So the question is, as we think about this, not only are we given power to walk into obedience, being alive to the righteousness of God by his grace alone, by his power alone—how does this change our apologetic? Because it should. What do I mean? If these things are true, if our whole salvation is in Christ our justification and Christ our sanctification, then how ought we to think about making the gospel of Jesus Christ known? I want to leave you with this idea—that the key to the reality of the gospel of Jesus Christ and to walking in relationship with him and making him known, the key to our apologetic, is not doctrinal defense of the orthodox faith. Though, that is important. Our apologetic is not only a defense of the orthodox faith through the explaining of doctrine, though it includes that. It is not arguments of logic and reason, though it may involve that.

The greatest apologetic for the reality of who Christ is, is what Jesus prayed: that you may love one another as I have loved you. Said another way, though he is controversial, I think this quote gets it. His name is Dr. Peter Leithart, when he says: "The first and chief defense of the gospel, the first letter of commendation, not only for Paul but for Jesus, is not an argument but the life of the church conformed to Christ by the Spirit in service and suffering. The church doesn't have an apologetic. It is an apologetic." The church doesn't have an apologetic. It is an apologetic. How we seek to live, how we seek to love, how we seek to walk with Christ in humility by his strength along, to live out what it means to follow Jesus, becomes the greatest argument.

And let me apply it in this way. The "me too" movement is a very easy thing to bring attention to. Sadly, there have been many Christians who have enjoyed pointing the finger at the world. There are many people who over the years have said, "Look at how awful the world is and the way they treat other people and the way they act sexually." But the reality is, one of the greatest damages that can happen to the name of Christ is when that rhetoric is turned on its head and those who uttered it are found to be hypocrites. The judgment of the Lord has come on parts of his church in the United States when leaders who have been exalted, some idolized, have been found out to be people who were living very differently in their private lives. That hurts the name of Christ. And it is completely humbling.

Instead of first pointing the finger at the world, this world calls us to point our lives, our very hearts, to Christ alone, who is our salvation, who is our life, and is the only one by whom we can live. And we are called to make a great defense for who he is by how we live. And by his mercy and by his spirit and by his grace, may he enable you and me to walk now with pointed fingers, but in humble service, loving others, serving others greater than ourselves. And that by our love, as Jesus prayed, the world will know that Jesus is real. This is our apologetic. This is our great call. And this is the purpose of the whole of our salvation—to make us more like Christ for his glory and our good. Let's pray.

By your grace alone, O Lord, by your grace alone. Not only have we received righteousness through the body and blood of Christ—we have received sanctification through the whole of Christ's

work. We thank you for our forgiveness, but we also thank you for our emancipation. But by your grace and by the work of your Holy Spirit, we can choose against ungodliness and choose godliness. Though we are still involved in a war, we recognize that our hope is in Christ, who is victorious over sin and death and who is our great King who has freed us and is now seated at the right hand of God the Father. Lord, we are still awaiting your return. We are far from perfect. We are not completely sanctified. But by your grace, we are sanctified. And we are continually being sanctified. And we can say "yes" to you by your grace alone. May you do this in us. And help us to love one another and to serve our neighbors, our coworkers, those even that we cannot stand. Help us to love them, because you loved us while we were yet your enemies. And may the life of your people, your church, be the greatest apologetic for the work of Jesus Christ. Have mercy on us, O Lord, have mercy, for we are sinners in need of grace. Now give us this grace, that we might be a people of rejoicing at the whole of our salvation. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.