

Hebrews 10:1-18

Beholding Christ Doing the Will of God

Lo, I come to do thy will, O God – v. 9

You'll notice in this portion of Hebrews that doing the will of God is a point of emphasis. V. 7 – *Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.* V. 9 – *Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.* Reference to the will of God is also made in v. 10 – *By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.* An added detail is supplied by the 40th psalm from which this statement in vv. 7 & 9 is quoted. In Ps. 40:7,8 *we read Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God.*

When we think on the subject of doing the will of God, more often than not we usually think in terms of the Christian doing the will of God. And we think in terms of following the revealed will of God as well as trying to discern the particular will of God for our lives. Our text this morning, however, is not making reference to you and I doing the will of God, it's speaking, rather, of Christ doing the will of God.

What a magnanimous statement we find in our text. It takes us into the past and brings us into heaven before the blessed persons of the Trinity. As the plan of redemption has been thought out by God the Father and agreed to by the Son and the Holy Ghost the time arrives for Christ to launch out, as it were. He who thought it not robbery to be equal with God must take to himself the form of a servant and be found in the likeness of men. He must make himself of no reputation and humble himself by becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. This is the will of God for Christ.

With complete understanding of this humiliation and his rejection and torment and all the suffering that awaited him leading to a most painful death we are able by our text to picture him stepping forward, as it were, at the fullness of time and announcing to his Father – *Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.* Our salvation is contained in that statement and was contingent on the successful accomplishment of those words.

You and I, you see, have failed to do the will of God. Our Father, Adam, failed to do the will of God. And following Adam's failure we lost the ability and the desire to do the will of God. Take Christ out of this scene and replace him with any of Adam's lost race and the testimony would have to read – *Lo, I turn away from thy will to do my own will, O God. I come to do what pleases me. I come to choose my own ways over God's ways. I come to decide for myself what's right and what's wrong.*

How grateful we should be that the declaration in our text is Christ's declaration and not our own. I think a parallel could be drawn between the scene our text presents and the scene we find in Revelation 5 where John sees in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the back sealed with seven seals. A proclamation goes out from a strong angel. He asks *who is worthy to open the book, and to loose its seals?* You remember the scene? No man in heaven or on earth neither under the earth, was able

to open the book neither to look on it. This gives cause for John to weep. Now if you take the unfurling of that book or that scroll to be God's plan of redemption then you would have to say no man could be qualified to do the will of God in such a way that redemption could be accomplished. We all have sinned. We all have come short of the glory of God.

The one who could step forward to unfurl the scroll was Christ, who appears in that scene as a lamb that had been slain. And the reason Christ could step forward to open the book was because Christ had said previously what no sinner could say but what only Christ alone could say: *Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.*

The first word of the text is meant to arrest our attention – *Lo*, it says, which in other places is translated by the word *behold* or *see*. Gouge refers to this word in his commentary as a calling – a calling to men and angels. A calling to us all to witness Christ that we might know the inward intention and the disposition of his heart. Behold him taking up the challenge to do God's will and I call it a challenge because the circumstances were certainly very different from the circumstances in which Adam was called upon to do God's will. Adam was given a perfect world – Christ was given a rebellious world; Adam was given every advantage – Christ would have to overcome many disadvantages.

I believe Paul's aim in this section of Hebrews is to impress upon the Hebrew believers that Christ really did come to accomplish God's will. It might be hard to understand how a man sentenced to death by their own authorities could have accomplished God's will but if they would see the connection between the shadows of the law and the substance of the shadows in Christ then the truth would be too plain to miss.

This morning I would like for us to heed the exhortation of the text – *lo* or *behold!* And we'll see in the course of our study that in order for you and I to even attempt to do God's will we must first see the one who came – who came for the express purpose of doing God's will himself. *Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.*

We must Behold Christ Doing God's Will.

In the moments that remain I'd like to draw your attention to some of the reasons why we must behold Christ doing God's will. Consider with me first of all that we must behold Christ doing God's will:

I. Because Christ Doing God's Will Ties into Our Needs

The first 4 verses of chp.10 make the point, yet again, that Paul has been emphasizing throughout chp. 8 and chp. 9 – The point being the inadequacy of the previous dispensation to meet the needs of sinners. In a sense the Jews had, to varying degrees been doing the will of God. They had offered the sacrifices that God himself had called for. They had followed the pattern that had been given to Moses in the mount. They hadn't often done so with their hearts engaged in loving God the way they should.

But even in those seemingly rare times when they truly followed the will of God in the obedience of faith there was something lacking in their devotion and worship. Notice what 10:1 says *For the law having a shadow of good things to come, [and] not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.* The word *perfect* refers to being made whole. It speaks of supplying that which is lacking in order to make a man complete.

Paul's point is that Old Testament worship could not accomplish such a thing. If it could have accomplished such a thing then there would have been no need for the sin offerings and the trespass offerings and the burnt offerings to be repeated year after year. Notice v. 2 *For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.* They would no longer have been haunted by the guilt of sin because they would have realized that divine justice had been satisfied by a sacrifice.

But rather than being set free from the guilt of sin, instead they were constantly reminded of that guilt. V. 3 *But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.* And why? – why was there such a remembrance of sins? Why could the worshippers of God in Old Testament times not be able to escape the guilt of sin? V. 4 provides the answer: *For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.* And v. 11 *And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.*

I can remember a preacher, perhaps Dr. Cairns, making the point of contrast between those priests and Christ. You always find the priest in Old Testament times standing daily to minister those animal sacrifices. The fact that he is always standing indicates that his work is never done. If his work was ever done he could sit the way we read of Christ sitting. And I hope you've noticed by now the emphasis on Christ sitting. We see that point yet again in v. 12 *But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God.* The Old Testament priest stand while Christ sits. The only time we read of Christ standing is when he stands to greet a martyr that's about to come into his presence in Acts 7.

So those Old Testament animal sacrifices could supply a picture of the taking away of sins but they couldn't actually take away sins. That's why they're referred to as shadows. And because of their ineffectiveness to actually take away sins we read in v. 6 *In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure.*

Do you begin to see, then, what the real need was and is among those that are lost sinners? The need is for sins to be taken away. The need is for the worshipper to escape sin's guilt and sin's dominion. The need is for the sinner to be made whole or complete and that wholeness requires the removal of that which keeps us away from God and supplies for us that which will render us acceptable to God.

It is in this setting, therefore, of what we lack and what we need and how inadequate any form of worship is to supply what we lack and give us what we need – in such a setting we

must hear the words of Christ *Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God.* In contrast to all those animal sacrifices in which God could take no real pleasure because those sacrifices could not accomplish what needed to be accomplished we hear Christ say *Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.*

And would you note that in order to do God's will in such a way that will meet our needs Christ must come as a man. Look again at v. 5 *Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me.* To be our Savior he must fulfill the will of God as a man.

Most willingly and most desirously then do we behold him coming to do God's will. Most anxiously and reverently should we behold him in the gospels for in the gospels especially do we see the substance of the statement of our text. In the gospels we see him having come to do God's will. And we behold him because we have a vested interest, as it were, in his successful accomplishment of doing God's will.

The eternal destiny of our souls is contingent on him successfully doing God's will. Our hope for heaven and our hope for life and our hope for acceptance with God and our desire for God's favor rather than God's wrath all hinges on Christ doing the will of God. When you gain an appreciation for that truth then what an interest you'll take in beholding Christ in the gospels doing the will of God. How you'll be moved to reverence and praise and thanksgiving as you behold him overcoming every force that would endeavor to thwart him from doing God's will.

The first reason for beholding him doing God's will, then, is because of its tie into our needs. Would you consider with me next that we must behold Christ coming to do God's will:

II. Because of Its Impact on Our Lives

And what is that impact? We can read it best by comparing what Christ accomplished to what the Old Testament dispensation did not and could not accomplish. Those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually could never make the comers thereunto perfect v. 1 tells us.

What those sacrifices could not do, Christ in fact could do. Look at v. 14 *For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.* This offering has perfected us. You may say to yourselves *well that's wonderful news but I still have to admit that I don't feel perfect. Indeed, if I'm honest I still have to acknowledge the presence of sin in my life.*

And that's good – I wouldn't want you to get the wrong idea about yourselves. But the realm in which you're made perfect is in the realm of your conscience. Back in 9:9 we're told that the Old Testament tabernacle *was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience.*

In contrast to that dispensation we read of Christ's sacrifice in 9:14 *How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to*

God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? So your conscience has been purged – it's been cleansed – it's been perfected not in the sense that it witnesses to you that you've attained sinless perfection but in the sense that it witnesses to you that Christ has attained sinless perfection and his atoning death provided perfect satisfaction to his Father. So there is a perfect basis of assurance that your sins have been washed away by the blood of Christ.

In the Old Testament sacrifices there was a remembrance again made of sins every year. There was a continual consciousness of sins. I find it interesting to take this term *remembrance* and think of it in terms of the Lord's supper. The Lord's supper, as you know, is a sacrament of remembrance. And in a sense the question might be raised – *isn't there a remembrance of sin in the Lord's supper just as there was a remembrance of sin continually in those animal sacrifices?*

And the answer to such a question would be – in a sense there's a remembrance of sin, to be sure, in the Lord's supper but if you never get beyond the remembrance of sin then you've missed the whole point of the sacrament. The remembrance of Christ, you see, is to bring to your heart and mind the remembrance of sins being purged by the blood of Christ – sins being propitiated – sins being expiated – sins being truly and genuinely atoned for through a once for all sacrifice.

We are set free from the guilt of sin, you see, because we understand how that guilt has been imputed to Christ. And we've been perfected in the sense that Christ's perfect righteousness has been given to us. This is what makes us whole. This is the supplying of what we lacked.

So our conscience is perfected in the sense that it's purged from dead works to serve the living God. It's perfected in the sense that it understands how God can bestow his favor upon us based on the merit of Christ. It's perfected because Christ came to do the will of God and the will of God was for Christ to make atonement for our sins.

Would you note with me from v. 10 that by Christ accomplishing and fulfilling the will of God *we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all*. Look at the entire verse *By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all*.

We don't generally think of our sanctification as being perfected once for all. We usually think of sanctification in terms of our gradual progress in dying more and more to sin and living more and more unto Christ. Sanctification, in this sense, does not become complete until we reach glory. How, then, can we read that we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all?

The solution to the seeming dilemma is found in the recognition that there's practical sanctification and there is also positional sanctification. Positional sanctification speaks to us of being set apart by God. Through the offering of Christ those who would gain a saving interest in Christ were set apart and set apart once for all.

And what this means is that God will see to your practical sanctification because God has set you apart. You will make progress in your sanctification because you are positionally sanctified. As a Christian you should expect, then, to make progress in dying to sin and living to Christ. You should expect that your desire for holiness will grow and your hatred of sin will also grow. You may be bothered by what you think is a lack of progress in your sanctification. But why are you bothered? Is it not because you've come all the more to hate the sins that still effect you and you've gained an even greater inward yearning for greater holiness? Those desires are the result of being positionally sanctified by God.

Christ's coming to do the will of God has had an impact on you, then, as a believer. It's impacted you in such a way that old things have passed away and all things have become new. It's impacted you by ministering to your conscience in such a way that you're able to be at peace with God. And it's impacted you in such a way that it motivates you to strive to be holy.

You desire righteousness because Christ has freely given you his righteousness. You desire to overcome sin because Christ has once and for all put away your sins by the offering of himself. There's one more reason for beholding Christ doing the will of God. We want to behold him doing the will of God because of the way it meets us in the point of our need. And we want to behold him doing the will of God because of the positive impact it should have on our lives.

Consider with me finally that we want to behold him doing the will of God:

III. Because of the Example it Provides for Us to Do God's Will

Nothing can light the flame of devotion in the heart of the believer more effectively than that believer beholding Christ doing the will of God. Christ doing the will of God, you see, presents to us the plainest and fullest revelation of Christ in his glory.

We see this illustrated in Isaiah 6 where Isaiah beheld the glory of Jehovah. The initial impact of that vision was to bring Isaiah very low. *Woe is me!* He says in v. 5 *For I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.*

Following conviction was cleansing. *Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar. And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.* (vv. 6,7)

Is this not a similar vision to what we behold in Christ when we see him going forth to do God's will? We see one in glory who is willing to leave that glory to come into a sin-cursed world. And we see one born of a virgin who goes forth to fulfill all righteousness on our behalf. And then we see the very dying form of one nailed to Calvary's cross, bearing shame and scoffing rude taking our place bearing our sins.

Such a sight of Christ should have the initial effect on our hearts of humbling us to the dust. What he bears is what we deserve. He takes to himself our sins and then pays our

penalty for our sins. This is Christ doing the will of God. And then we behold in his atoning death a cleansing stream for our sins. Like Isaiah our sins are purged but purged by way of a heavenly vision which pictures purging – but truly purged leaving us truly cleansed.

And what do we see Isaiah doing following this vision? We see him imitating Christ going forth to do the will of God. *I heard the voice of the LORD* we read in v. 8 saying, *Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.*

Doesn't Isaiah's stepping forward to volunteer for service resemble Christ saying *Lo, I come to do thy will, O God?* This is what beholding Christ compels us to say and do. Lord, I owe you everything, my desire is to serve you. Here I am – I'll go where ever you send me, I'll do whatever you tell me. I've beheld and experienced your love to me and now my desire is to love thee in return.

When we behold Christ coming to do God's will it will be our desire to serve our God and our Savior the way our Savior served his Father. And how did Christ serve his Father?

He served him voluntarily and he served him submissively and he served him completely. There's an interesting phenomenon in the passage in Hebrews when compared to the passage in Psalm 40. Look at Heb 10:5 *Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me:* This is a statement that comes from Ps 40:6 *Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.*

There's quite a difference between Ps. 40:6 and the quotation of it in Heb. 10:5. In Heb. 10:5 the phrase reads *a body thou hast prepared me.* In Ps. 40:6 the phrase reads *mine ears hast thou opened.* The Holy Spirit led the author of this epistle to quote the Septuagint version of the Old Testament instead of the Hebrew text. The Septuagint, which is a Greek version of the Old Testament reads exactly how we have it in our English translation *a body hast thou prepared me.*

A body prepared and the ears opened, have something in common, however. The phrase *ears opened* could read literally *mine ears hast thou digged* – or *my ears thou hast pierced.* When read this way we find an allusion to Exod 21 where a servant has served his master for 6 years and has earned his freedom. But because the servant loves his master he wants to continue with him so the master bores his ear through with an awl, and that awl becomes the symbol of the servant's ongoing love and service to his master.

Mine ears hast thou opened or *a body hast thou prepared me* in either or both cases we are pointed to Christ's willingness to faithfully and forever serve his Father. Do you not find yourself compelled to do the same when you behold Christ doing the will of God? Do you not find in Christ's example the very thing your heart longs to do which is serve your Savior forever? *Here am I, send me, I'll go where ever you send me. I'll do whatever you tell me. I'll serve you in any capacity you direct me whether it be on a mission field or as preacher or as a ditch-digger. However, you direct me, O Lord, is the way I'll go.*

Such a spirit of submission is Christ-like. And so I wonder this morning – how would you serve Christ? Do you find yourself compelled to want to serve Christ? Have you seen Christ stepping forward to do the will of God in order to gain your soul forever? If you have beheld him in this way then you must confess that he's met you in the deepest needs of your heart and he's had a strong and compelling effect on your life and your desire now is to follow his example in doing the will of God the way he directs.

Lo, I come to do thy will, O God – may we so behold Christ doing God's will for our salvation that we find ourselves compelled to do the will of God the way Christ himself has done it – freely, from a heart of love to God.