

## EXPOSITION OF HEBREWS

### Message #20

### Hebrews 10:1-10

As I shared with you last week, we had to put down our horse, Sheffy. He was a horse we loved. Many times I literally entrusted my life to that horse in the Rocky Mountains and he never failed me. He gave many children rides at our VBS week. I have many wonderful memories of a very special horse. But I also have many pictures and movies of him. I am thankful that over the years we took many pictures of that horse in a variety of contexts. That is what we have left now, memories and pictures. Naturally, if I had a choice between having pictures of the horse versus having the horse back, I would take the horse over the pictures any day. The horse is the real thing and the pictures of the horse are just images of the real horse.

As crazy as it may seem, back when Hebrews was being written, the people had a choice between the O.T. law and N.T. grace. The law sacrifices were just pictures and images of the real sacrifice of Jesus Christ. You would naturally think that if you had a choice between the picture of something that would not give you access to God and the real Person who would give you access to God, you would take the real thing. But apparently when Hebrews was written there were those who were clinging to the law and not Jesus Christ. So when we come to this part of Hebrews the writer says this:

**JESUS CHRIST IS THE ONETIME SACRIFICE AND OFFERING FOR SIN THAT CAN TAKE AWAY YOUR SINS AND GIVE YOU PERSONAL ACCESS TO GOD, AND NEVER COULD THE O.T. LAW SACRIFICES AND OFFERINGS ACCOMPLISH THAT.**

When we think in terms of salvation, we must think in terms of a right relationship between Holy God and sinful man. Sin, which starts in the book of Genesis, put a big breach in man's relationship with God. Once man sinned, there was nothing he could do that could put this relationship back together. So God, in pure grace, came up with a solution and the solution was the sacrifice of His own Son. His is the only sacrifice that can actually take away sin and give us access to God.

Now you will notice that the first word in English in **Hebrews 10:1** is the conjunction “for.” This immediately connects us to the preceding context in which the value of Christ's onetime blood sacrifice had been discussed. In this next section this writer is going to compare and contrast that with the O.T. law sacrifices. People were thinking that they could be right with God by keeping the law and God says, impossible. In fact, in these verses there are two main themes that are developed:

**THEME #1** – The O.T. law sacrifices and offerings could not take away sin. **10:1-4**

Now there are at least six law realities brought out in this text:

**Law Reality #1** - The law was a shadow reflection of good things to come. **10:1a**

The entire O.T. law was a shadow of good things to come. Kent Hughes said it was a “silhouette outline” of the grace to come. The law was actually a foreshadowing of the only real thing that could take care of the sin problem.

**First** of all, the law showed that all were sinners, which meant that something would have to come into existence that could take away sin. Since we cannot meet the law requirements, One would have to come who could. The law pointed to that One. **Second**, the sacrifices and offerings pointed to the fact that man could not get out of his sin status on his own; there needed to be a substitutionary sacrifice. **Third**, nothing a person did under the O.T. law could give a person intimate access to and fellowship with God. The law at its best was a shadow of the only One who would come who could take away sin, Jesus Christ.

I saddled up a horse and rode for awhile this week and the sun was shining and I could see the silhouette shadow of the horse and me on the north side of the field. In the shadow you could see somewhat of an outline of the horse and of me, especially my cowboy hat. But you certainly could not see any specific details. You could not see the saddle or the reins. You could not tell if I was wearing a jacket or glasses. What you actually had was a shadow outline that did not reveal the true picture.

So it is with the law. You get a shadow outline of God’s grace, but you do not get the true picture until Christ comes into this world.

**Law Reality #2** - The O.T. law was not the actual form of God’s grace. **10:1b**

This is important to see. The word “form” (εἰκόνα) means that the O.T. law was not the exact, identical image and likeness of the grace that would come in Jesus Christ (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 131). Although there is a shadow and picture of Christ in the O.T. law, it is certainly not an identical form of the whole grace package Christ would bring.

Since the law was just a shadow reflection of the grace to come, then it could not possibly be the actual form of the grace system. Something cannot be a shadow and be the form from which the shadow comes.

Sometimes we will see someone and say, well they kind of look like so and so. There are some features that resemble another person but it certainly is not identical. So it was with the O.T. law; it had certain features that kind of looked like grace, but it certainly was not identical to grace. For example, only one person one time per year actually went into the presence of God, and that does not look like grace at all.

**Law Reality #3** - The O.T. law sacrifices, which had to be offered year after year, could not make anyone perfect so they could draw near to God. **10:1c**

I love what W. H. Griffith Thomas said, “The old sacrifices involved repetition, not remission” (*Let Us Go On*, p. 123).

Now the idea behind being “perfect” is the idea of being so completed and perfect in one’s status and standing with God that one could approach God and have access to God (10:14). In order to have access to God and to draw near to God, one had to be totally perfect and have a complete righteous status that has resolved all sin issues.

By virtue of the fact that these O.T. sacrifices had to be offered year after year, no such completed final status was attainable. Every year when the sacrifices were made, all were admitting we are not perfect and we cannot possibly draw near God. We must continually offer these things year after year.

**Law Reality #4** - If the O.T. law sacrifices could give complete cleansing in one’s relationship with God to the point that there is no more consciousness of sin, they would not need to be repeated. **10:2**

If there were a sacrifice that could cleanse a person from all sin so he could forever have access to God, then he would never need to repeat the sacrifice because it would be a done deal. Truth is, the O.T. law sacrifices kept people conscious of their sins and kept them conscious of the fact that they had not been completely cleansed.

In **verse 2** the writer asks the question, “If the O.T. law sacrifices could truly cleanse people to the point where they realize their sins are gone and they are completely righteous in their relationship with God, then why weren’t those sacrifices stopped? Why not quit offering them? Why offer them over and over again?”

Let us illustrate the point. Suppose you purchase a car and the car you purchase has problems. So naturally you take the car back to the dealer to fix it. Now let us say that after you take it to the dealer it has the same problem again. So you take it back again. This is repeated multiple times and every time you have the same problem. Every time you take that car back to the dealer you are acknowledging the problem has not been fixed. If the matter were settled you would not have to continually take the vehicle back over and over again; you would stop taking the car in.

That is the exact point of Hebrews here. If the O.T. sacrifices could take away sin and give you such a perfect standing with God so that you had access to God, you would cease sacrificing and not have the sacrifices over and over again. But every year you were conscious of the fact that your status with God was not complete and you needed those sacrifices.

**Law Reality #5** - The repeated law sacrifices reminded the people of their sins year after year. **10:3**

**The old sacrifices brought people a remembrance of their sins but not remission of their sins.** The very fact that the sacrifices had to be offered year after year proves the O.T. system could not take care of a person’s sin problem. The annual repetition of the sacrifices proved that the previous sacrifices had not accomplished the job of removing sin. Every year a person had to recognize how sinful, how guilty, and imperfect he really was before God. Every year he had to acknowledge “I have really not been fully redeemed.”

I do not like to hear people remembering their pre-conversion sins over and over again. I don't think that does the person good or others either. Paul said forget the things behind and press on. All you do when you remember your sins over and over again is depress yourself and your spirituality. You have been set free from your past sins and you have a perfect standing with God. That is what grace does but not what the O.T. law did. It kept saying you are guilty, guilty, guilty.

**Law Reality #6** - It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin. **10:4**

Do you see what is stated in this verse - "it is impossible" for the blood of animals to take away sin. The word "impossible" (αδυνατος) means that no shed blood of any animal has the capability or power to take away sin. It is totally and completely unable to do it (Smith, p. 10). The emphasis of the infinitive "to take away" (αφαιρειν) is to completely remove something or take it away forever. No O.T. sacrifice had the power to remove sin.

Now keep in your mind that those O.T. animal sacrifices were established by God. It was through those sacrifices that people could have a distant relationship with God. But there was no possibility of those animal sacrifices taking away any person's sin. It is not possible for the blood of animals to completely and eternally remove or take away human sin. You better understand this point because if those O.T. sacrifices could not take away sin, then your works certainly cannot do it either.

The O.T. law sacrifices were insufficient. If all we have is the O.T. law, we are in big trouble.

**THEME #2** – Jesus Christ's sacrifice and offering of Himself could take away sin. **10:5-10**

Now **verse 5** speaks of the time "when He comes into the world." This is a reference to Christ's incarnation, when He would be born as a human into this world. In other words, when Jesus Christ comes into the world, He will be the One who can take care of the sin problem. He will be able to do what the O.T. law system could never do and that is "take away" sin.

Now in **Hebrews 10:5-9**, there are several quotations which are taken from Psalm 40:6-8. Much of the quote has to do with the theme of "sacrifices and offerings." In this context of having sins removed, we may certainly understand why this theme is so important. **We pin our entire eternal salvation and destiny on one sacrifice.**

**We believe that there is one sacrifice, that of Jesus Christ, that is sufficient for the removal of all of our sins.** Our entire sense of security rests upon our trusting the sacrifice of Jesus Christ; therefore it stands to reason that this is a critical theme of Hebrews.

**Now this writer of Hebrews has been trying to convince very religious Jewish people who had one time been dedicated to the O.T. law, to stop trusting in that system and start trusting in Jesus Christ.** So the writer uses quotations from the O.T. to show and prove that Jesus Christ was predicted to come into this world to resolve all the sin matters. This matter of needing a better sacrifice than animals comes straight out of the Old Testament. The writer uses Psalm 40 to make his point about Jesus Christ. **There are five key points made here:**

**Point #1** - The thing that can take away sin is not the sacrifice and offering of animals , but the sacrifice and offering of one prepared human body. **10:5**

The word “prepare” (καταρτιζω) is one that means God had completely furnished and equipped His Son with a perfect human body so that He would not be tainted by sin so that He could sacrifice Himself to take away our sin (*Ibid.*, p. 238).

Dr. S. L. Johnson said God grants superior status not to animal sacrifices “but the offering of a human body” (*Hebrews* 10:1-10, p. 7). The sacrifices of bulls and goats cannot take away sin, but God prepared the human body of Jesus Christ that could.

**Point #2** - God has no pleasure in whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin. **10:6**

The aorist tense verb “has taken no pleasure” (ευδοκησας) is one that means there was no point of time when God gave His consent or took pleasure in the thought to the idea that burnt offerings and sacrifices could take care of the sin problem. In other words, there was never a time when God thought animal sacrifices or the O.T. law could take away sin.

We may notice from **verses 5-6** and **verse 8** that four different kinds of sacrifices are mentioned:

- 1) Sacrifice that could refer to any kind of animal sacrifice that was used under O.T. law.
- 2) Offering that had to do with various kinds of offerings such as Levitical meal offerings.
- 3) Burnt offerings that had to do with the sacrifice of an animal or bird for the purpose of cleansing sin.
- 4) Sin offerings which had to do with the bull, goat, dove, pigeon, or even flour that was used as a sacrifice for sin.

By using all of these terms in this context, he is covering the entire spectrum of O.T. possibilities. Never did God consider any of these sacrifices or offerings as being able to take away human sin.

**Point #3** - God does find pleasure in the One who was predicted to come in Scripture who would do the will of God in offering Himself. **10:7**

Jesus Christ had one focus when He was on this earth - do the will of God. That was always His focus and never did He waver from that focus. As I understand the Greek phrase, “in the roll of the book” (εν κεφαλιδι βιβλιου), it means that Jesus Christ is the head of the book. He is the capital theme of the Scriptures. The Scriptures are about Him (*Ibid.*, p. 246).

In those O.T. Scriptures there was One predicted who would come into this world who could take care of all human sin (Isaiah 53). Jesus Christ had a Divine purpose of coming into this world. He was totally dedicated to doing God’s will which was to resolve a sin issue between humans and God. God found great pleasure in the fact that His Son would come to do God’s will, which would be to take a human body and offer it as an acceptable sacrifice to God.

**Point #4** - The first O.T. law system never was acceptable to God for removing sin, but the second system in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ was acceptable to God. **10:8-9**

After saying that no animal sacrifice or any offering can take care of the sin problem, the writer says there is One who came into this world to do the will of God who could. He is the One who would put an end to the first system. **Law is gone and grace is here.**

Do not miss what is stated here. It was never the will of God that the O.T. law and those animal sacrifices could take away sin, but it was always the will of God that His Son would come and take on a human body and offer Himself so that our sins could be taken away. He came to do the will of God.

**Point #5** - We are set apart by the will of God and by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ once for all. **10:10**

It is God's will and it is Christ's willingness to do God's will that sets us apart and gives us access to God. When Christ came and offered His body, He was resolving our sin issues. The sanctification being referred to here is the positional sanctification that sets us apart from our sin and opens the door for us to have access to God. W. H. Griffith Thomas said, "Sanctification in Hebrews is almost equivalent to justification in Romans, both referring to our position, not our condition" (*Let Us Go On*, p. 125).

Now I do not want you to miss the parsing of this participle, "sanctified" (ἡγιασμένοι) is a perfect passive participle. What this particular participle means is that the moment you believe on Jesus Christ you are completely set apart as sacred from all sin. The moment we believe we have an instant accessibility to God and the potential of drawing near to God in fellowship. The passive voice of the participle indicates we had nothing to do with the action and the action is forever in progress. One sacrifice of Jesus Christ did all of this. It is pure grace. God had all of this planned from before the foundation of the world. He had a plan to offer sinners grace.

When we believe on Jesus Christ, His sacrifice is so perfect that our condemnatory sin case is closed. We stand complete in Jesus Christ and we have access to God and we may draw near to God in worship and in fellowship because of the onetime sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

In these past days I have looked through some pictures of a horse we once had. All we have left now are fond memories and pictures.

When you look at the O.T. law you are looking at a picture, but it is not a picture that can give you fond memories. It is a picture that will leave you depressed. Every time you look at the law and see the multiple sacrifices, you keep reminding yourself, you cannot ever measure up to God and you are guilty.

But Jesus Christ came into this world in human form to give us the reality of a relationship with God. Those who believe on Him have their sins completely washed away forever and they have access to God.