

Jesus: The More Excellent Work

The Excellence of Jesus

By Don Green

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Truth Community Church
4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road
Cincinnati, OH 45255

Website: truthcommunitychurch.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm

It has been a special month in our pulpit, both on Tuesdays and on Sundays over the past few weeks, to give our exclusive attention to expositing on the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. On Tuesdays we have seen the predictions of Christ, his life predicted, his death predicted, and in a sense taking the posture of the Old Testament and looking forward to Christ and seeing how Christ fulfilled what the old prophets said would occur in his life, death and resurrection, and we see the broad sweep of Scripture in those things. Here on Sunday, last Sunday and today, we take the posture of the book of Hebrews looking back, as it were, at Christ and seeing how he is the fulfillment of everything that the Old Testament spoke of, how he is more excellent than everything that was represented in the Old Testament, and how we will see today, how his work is more excellent than anything that ever occurred by Old Testament priests in those days.

So we're just doing a brief survey of Hebrews that we are finishing here this morning and last week we saw that Jesus is more excellent. He is greater than the prophets, than angels, than Moses, and Hebrews is now going to show us in the chapters that we look at this morning, that he did a more excellent work than Old Testament priests ever did. What we're going to see is in the broadest of strokes the sheer magnificence of Christ, and the sheer magnificence comes out in the book of Hebrews by way of contrast with what preceded him in the Old Testament system. So by way of contrast, you see the excellence of Christ so much more clearly.

We could summarize it this way and these will be our points as we prepare our hearts for communion: Christ is a better high priest, through a better covenant, in a better tabernacle, by a better sacrifice. Christ is a better high priest, through a better covenant, in a better tabernacle, by a better sacrifice. And what this does, it teaches us to look at the Old Testament and see the ceremonies, they are not as things that we are to perpetuate in the church now, these were signposts pointing forward to something better, something greater, and now that we see Christ and now that we have him, we realize his surpassing excellence and we let the shadows recede into the background in order to embrace the fullness of who Christ is and realize what has gone before is overshadowed, is put away by the greatness of Christ. And we're going to do this in the briefest and most quick survey of several chapters of Hebrews, just looking to survey these themes in a way that gives us a basis to go forward with a better appreciation for our Lord as we do.

So first of all we want to look at this: Christ is a better high priest. That's our first point for this morning. Christ is a better high priest. At the conclusion of last Sunday's message we looked at the end of chapter 4, look at verse 14, as Hebrews speaks about the great priesthood of Christ, he is the one Mediator between God and man and in verse 14 it says, "Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God," he gives us an exhortation, "let us hold fast our confession." Don't move away from Christ. Don't give into temptation, to abandon him simply because persecution is on the doorstep. Hold fast, he says, and in verse 15 he says, "we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin." And in this he gives us a great encouragement that Christ being the Mediator, his purpose to being to mediate between us and a holy God, since that's his purpose and that's what he has accomplished as our high priest, what can we do in response? We can come to him in faith and know that we will be well received. Verse 16, he says, "Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Christ has been elevated by the writer of Hebrews to see the greatness of his priestly ministry here at the end of chapter 4, and now he goes into chapter 5 and he contrasts that with the Old Testament priesthood that preceded him and he's going to show us that Christ is far more excellent than any Old Testament priest ever could have been.

Now, the Old Testament teaches us that the high priest came from the line of Aaron who was Moses' brother. You can read about his appointment in Exodus 28 and 29 and other places. Hebrews picks up and presumes that familiarity at chapter 5, verse 1. Look at it with me, he says, "For every high priest taken from among men is appointed on behalf of men in things pertaining to God, in order to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins; he can deal gently with the ignorant and misguided, since he himself also is beset with weakness," talking about the Old Testament priests, the Old Testament priest was a man of human flesh, he was a sinner just like everyone else and the fact that he was a sinner meant that he could sympathize when simple people came to present their offerings. It says in verse 3, "because of it he is obligated to offer sacrifices for sins, as for the people, so also for himself." Verse 4, "no one takes the honor to himself, but receives it when he is called by God, even as Aaron was." You couldn't say, "I think I'll take up the vocation of being a priest." God had to appoint you to that. And what the writer is telling us here and reminding us of is that in the Old Testament the high priest had the responsibility to direct the sacrificial system. The high priest oversaw that system. It was the high priest who alone – follow the chronology here and follow this because what it teaches us about Christ is so important – it was the high priest alone who was allowed to go into the Holy of Holies once a year. You read about that in Leviticus 16 on the Day of Atonement where the place and the presence of God was especially manifested. The high priest could go in there once a year and only the high priest could do that. Well, think about what that means. What that means is that the Old Testament system had not opened access to the full presence of God to everyone, it was simply the high priest representing the people as he went in there only once a year. And with that memory in mind, the writer of Hebrews is showing us that Jesus Christ is a much greater high priest than anything that the Old Testament ever had to offer.

Follow the logic of it here in verses 5 and 6, he says, "So also Christ did not glorify Himself so as to become a high priest, but He who said to Him, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You'; just as He says also in another passage, 'You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.'" Melchizedek was a priest prior to Aaron, prior to Moses, that appeared to Abraham in Genesis 14. In the text, that narrative tells us that Abraham presented tithes to Melchizedek and honored Melchizedek, showing Melchizedek's greater position than Abraham. And what the writer of Hebrews is telling us is, in a sense, Melchizedek came from a different realm, he was not a priest according to the line of Aaron, he was someone different, and what this text tells us is that Christ did not come from the line of Aaron but rather he was a priest like Melchizedek, a priest from a different realm who had a greater and a different ministry than what the Old Testament priests did under the Mosaic economy. And without going into all of the detail of the argument in that in the next three chapters, we're left with this question: how is Christ better than the priesthood according to Aaron? And we're just going to look at the summary of the argument, not the full outworking of it.

Look at chapter 7, at the end of chapter 7 with me with that little bit of background, so far inadequate, but in verse 22, you see the point that he is making is that Jesus is better. Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant. Then he explains why that is. As you look back at the ministry of the Old Testament priests, look at verse 23, what can we say about them? "The former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing." There were many men that fulfilled the office of high priest because the priests served and they died and then someone took their place and they are there presenting offerings as sinners, presenting offerings in an earthly tabernacle and he says, "Look at Jesus by contrast. See how more excellent Jesus is. See how much greater his work is."

As he says in verse 24, "but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently." Look at the contrast. Stay with me, if you will. You have a human high priest who serves only until he dies and therefore holds his office temporarily. You have Jesus, sinless on the other hand with a priesthood that continues forever because he lives forever and therefore his priesthood lives forever. So by contrast of a temporary, dying, sinful priest, compared to Christ who is sinless and who has his priesthood forever, that's obviously far better. It's obvious that it is a fulfillment of something lesser to the greater and with the coming of the greater, Christ, the lesser thing passes away.

And he goes on in verse 25, "Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them." Think about it, beloved. Put yourself in the sandals of an Old Testament saint going to the priest who is going to offer an animal on behalf of his sins, and see through the system there that was going on. This was all temporary. It was all so imperfect. It was not permanent. You had to come back and offer those things again and again. You come and you're going to have to come back to this man later on and deal with sacrifices further.

Now step forward and step into your shoes as a New Testament Christian and realize how great the privilege is that you have. We come to Christ and we have a Christ who has an indestructible life; who has visibly conquered death in his resurrection; a priest who is not going to die but who lives forever and who is in the presence of God as we come to him and realize what that means: that in Christ, you have someone who saves you forever; whose ability to save you will never be diminished; who brings you into heaven and he lives and he is in the presence of God himself and when we approach him, we realize that we have a Savior who has perfectly fulfilled everything that God requires. So he is able to save us forever, not simply to make a temporary covering with the blood of an animal, verse 25, he saves us forever because he always lives to make intercession for us.

Beloved, in Christ we have a far more excellent high priest than what the Old Testament ever knew, and he goes on and he expands on the greatness of Christ and follow the logic here as he goes. He says, "For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest," what is Christlike in verse 26, "holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens." In Christ there is utter perfection in his character, utter perfection in his indestructible life, utter perfection in his ability to represent us. And he goes back to the contrast in verse 27 and says, "who does not need daily, like those high priests," like the Old Testament priests, "to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself." So look at the contrast, beloved, and let it work itself into your heart so that you understand the glory of Christ and that you appreciate it and that you rest in it. That's his point, that we would come to have a settled confident faith in Christ that we have a Mediator who is perfect who has accomplished redemption for us in a way that can never be shaken.

So he shows the contrast, he says, look at it there with me again in verse 27. You have the Old Testament high priest, what are they doing? Daily offering sacrifices, offering sacrifices for their own sins and doing so repeatedly. Compare that to Christ: holy, innocent, undefiled. By character, by virtue, by perfect holiness, infinitely better than the Old Testament priest in his character as he presents the sacrifice. And then realize the wonder and the majesty of the sacrifice. They had to repeat theirs again and again and again and what does Christ do so superior, so more excellent? He offers his sacrifice once and the work is finished. That's a much better high priest. Christ surpasses Aaron just as Melchizedek did. He's a better high priest. He lives forever. He did not sin. His offering was once for all. By contrast, those other priests were sinful. They died and their sacrifices were never finished. Do you see the contrast? Do you see the difference? A sinful priest offering an imperfect sacrifice repeatedly. A perfect high priest in Christ offering a perfect sacrifice that satisfies God once and for all. That's much better. That is much better.

Do you see it, beloved? Do you see how much better Christ is? And what this is supposed to do in your mind is to elevate Christ high and lofty in your heart, high and lofty in your affections, to draw you to worship and – mark it – to draw you to trust him, realizing that he has done the perfect work for sinners, and when your faith is in him, the work is done and you are secure in Christ, fully reconciled to God. That's far better than anything that an Old Testament priest ever did.

Secondly as you continue on in the flow of the argument of Hebrews, you find that Christ brings a better covenant. He brings a better covenant. Point 2: he brings a better covenant. He's a better high priest, he brings a better covenant, all of this showing us that Christ has done a more excellent work than anything that preceded him.

Now, the word "covenant" just in the simplest of terms, refers to a divinely established agreement by which men may approach God and by which God relates to man and blesses him. It's the basis upon which God receives men to himself, you could say. We're just speaking in simple terms here. And what the writer of Hebrews is now going to impress upon us is that in Christ we have someone who has brought a better covenant to us, a better way to approach God than what we had before, than what the Old Testament had.

Look at chapter 8, verse 6 and just notice the contrasting words found here in verse 6. There are three contrasts that are bound up just in this one simple verse, "But now He," referring to Christ, "has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises." It's a more excellent ministry. He is the Mediator of a better covenant. It has been enacted on better promises. And what you're to see in the repetition of the theme here is that it is better, it's better, it's better. It's more excellent. Christ is better than anything that preceded him. So that you understand and you are motivated to leave behind any inclination to laws, the basis upon which you approach God, so that for the sake of something far more excellent, far more better, far more surpassing, in Christ.

So let's think about the covenant, the comparison of the covenants for just a moment. What can we say about the Old Testament covenant by which they operated in that dispensation? Beloved, it was external. It was outward sacrifices. It did not produce a renewed heart. You couldn't offer an animal for sin and receive new life. And the nation, think about it this way, God implemented this system in Exodus and in Leviticus and what happened afterwards? In the book of Numbers, they went into the wilderness and they all died for their disobedience. God implemented this covenant as a temporary measure to point to Christ but you see it's imperfection by the very way that history worked itself out. External. It did not produce a renewed heart and those that were following it died in the wilderness for their disobedience.

Contrast that with what we have in Christ. First of all, look at verse 9 as the writer of Hebrews makes the point that I just summarized. Actually, go to verse 8. He said, "behold, days are coming," as he quotes from the Old Testament, "days are coming, says the Lord, when I will effect a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not like," contrast again, "not like the covenant which I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; for they did not continue in My covenant, and I did not care for them," as shown by the fact he did not care for them by the fact that they were judged in the wilderness. This was passing and it was external. The old covenant did not get the job done, not because there was any defect in God or in his revelation, but there was defect in the people who were under the

covenant, and the whole point of this is that the new covenant that Christ initiated with his blood is so much better. We are in such a preferable position than what the Old Testament saints were.

Look at verses 10 through 13 in chapter 8. He says, "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord; I will put My laws into their minds, and I will write them on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall not teach everyone his fellow citizen, and everyone his brothers, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for all will make, from the least to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more." Verse 13, "When He said, 'A new covenant,' He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear." A reference to the fact that the temple was still standing and soon in a matter of a couple of short years would be destroyed in A.D. 70 and the history and the conquest of Rome would make it impossible to continue with that old system. The point here is this and think about how much better we have it, beloved, think how much more precious what we have is than what they had. They had an old covenant that they didn't have a heart to keep that led them to judgment in the wilderness for their sin. What do we have in Christ by comparison? In Christ God gives us a salvation that renews our mind, that changes us in the inner man. 2 Corinthians 5:17, "If any man is in Christ, behold, he is a new creation. The old things have passed away. Behold, new things have come." When you were saved, when Christ saved you, he put the Holy Spirit within you. He gave you a new nature that had a heart of inclination toward the law of God. That's far better than trying to work it out in your flesh when your heart is not into it. The new covenant is far better in that God has completely forgiven our sins.

Look at it there with me in verse 12. What's the nature of the forgiveness that God has granted to you in Christ? Well, it must be better than those who died in the wilderness. It must be a covenant that brings something better to us than what they had when they were judged in the wilderness for their unbelief and disobedience. What is ours like? What do you and I have in Christ? What has he given to us spiritually that is of such infinite value? What has he given to us? Verse 12, God says, "I will be merciful to their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more." In Christ what God has given you is a salvation in which he promises that he will not hold your sins against you. He will not judge you for your sins.

Can you imagine when your guilt was real and that judgment was deserved, when you did not love God with all of your heart, soul, strength and mind, when you were by nature, by individual acts and by nature a liar and an adulterer, a thief, a covetous person, multiplied guilt on your soul, by nature and by choice dead in trespasses and in sin, having no hope in this world, no hope or anticipation of being received by a holy God, rather being among all of humanity where the wrath of God abides and the wrath of God has been revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, Romans 1:18, and you and I were all part and parcel of the whole miserable fallen human lot, and in grace God brought Christ to you through the proclamation of the Gospel. In grace, God did a work on your heart to change you inside and based on the work of God you came to

Christ believing in him for salvation, leaving your old man, coming out of the world, coming to Christ, leaving yourself behind and embracing him for the fullness of salvation. Have you done that, by the way? Have you come to Christ like that? That's what true salvation is. That's what true faith is that brings true salvation.

And based on that work of God in your heart, all of your prior sins have been washed away, have been removed from your account, placed on the Lord Jesus Christ at the cross where he was punished for them in your place, and now in union with him, brought to him by the power of the Holy Spirit having put your faith in him, the declaration of Scripture is this to you: that God promises that in Christ he will never hold your sins against you again. Nothing about your sinful past or your sinful present or sinful things still to come in your life, God will never hold them against you. You will never be judged for them because the satisfaction was made in Christ at the cross.

Do you see, beloved, compared to those who wandered in the wilderness for 40 years under the old covenant and died for their unbelief and disobedience, do you see how much better you have it? Do you see how much better a program, how much better a covenant we have in Christ where God promises to receive us in Christ and to forgive all of your sins based on the work of someone else outside of you? Do you see how much better that is? A perfect salvation brought to you and your sins never to be counted by God against you ever. That's much better, isn't it? Isn't it? This is far better.

So you look at the priests and you say, "Oh, Christ is so much better." You look at what Christ brings to us in the new covenant and you say, "That's so much better. God made me someone new. He has forgiven all of my sins. He promises and he'll never break one of his promises." So much better. God dealing with us in mercy, dealing with us in love, dealing with your sin-sick soul in grace. That's what Christ has brought to us in the new covenant. It's so much better, and you understand that, you grasp the distinctions and you say, "Yeah, this is far far better." Your heart is moved to love Christ all the more as a result and you realize that what this means is that you can trust him going forward. Having already paid the price for your sin at the cross, having already brought you into his family, don't you see that he will perfect the work that he has begun? That is a guaranteed certainty and therefore your opportunity, your privilege is just to continue in faith and trusting in Christ and not to go back to the old ways that never saved anyone? We leave behind the Old Testament ceremonies. They have served their purpose. They pointed us to Christ. Now that the reality has come, we stop. We leave them behind because we realize that in Christ we have something so far more excellent, who fulfilled everything that they were intended to do, transcended them, and therefore we look up and we see Christ at the throne of God and we give him all of our attention, faith and praise.

That leads us naturally into the third point this morning: that Christ serves in a better tabernacle. He serves in a better tabernacle, a better sanctuary, you could say. The high priest, as we said, could only enter the Holy of Holies once a year and that was the Holy of Holies here on earth.

Look at Hebrews 9:6 as, again, he continues the contrast. He extends the contrast between the old and the new ministry. He says now in verse 6, "Now when these things have been so prepared, the priests are continually entering the outer tabernacle performing the divine worship, but into the second, only the high priest enters once a year, not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the sins of the people committed in ignorance." What is the meaning of this? What is the meaning of the fact that only the high priest enters and only enters once a year? Verse 8, this is so significant, "The Holy Spirit is signifying this, that the way into the holy place has not yet been disclosed while the outer tabernacle is still standing." The way into the presence of God had not yet been revealed as shown by the fact that it wasn't free and open for access. It was restricted. There was a very, speaking metaphorically, a very narrow turnstile that only one person could go through into that presence. That's what the old system was like. There was not free access to God for the people, not into his presence, and so there was this restricted area on earth that the old covenant pointed you to.

What do we have in Christ? What do we have in Christ by comparison? Look at it in verse 11 with me, "But," again contrast, do you see it? "But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood." Look at this. He entered the holy place once for all having obtained eternal redemption. What's the contrast that he's speaking about? The Old Testament high priest went into an earthly place once a year and he was the only one who could go. What has Christ done? He is in the greater tabernacle. He is in the true tabernacle. He is in heaven in the true presence of God, having entered in there forever on the basis of his completed work. Look at it there with me again in verse 12. Through his own blood he entered the holy place, not the earthly tabernacle. Once for all, not temporarily, having obtained eternal redemption. So Christ represents us. Christ has saved us and now is in the presence of God himself in the true tabernacle in heaven, not an earthly pattern that was re-created here on earth. This is far better. It's a far better tabernacle in which Christ serves.

Look at verse 24 as he expands on this theme of the greater tabernacle, chapter 9, verse 24, he says, "For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands." The earthly tabernacle was constructed with hands and human materials. Not the heavenly one. "Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one." The earthly tabernacle was just a faint representation of the glory in heaven and he says Christ didn't go into the faint representation made with human hands and human materials, he entered into heaven itself, into the presence of God where he appears for us.

Verse 25, "nor was it that He would offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood that is not his own." If any of you are struggling with the remnants of Roman Catholicism, here is the end of any concept of a Mass where Christ is offered again and again and again. Christ offered himself once for all. It was complete. There was no further sacrifice to be made, which means that the Mass is a perversion. It is a figment of human imagination. It is demonic worship done in the name of Christ in complete violation of everything that the book of Hebrews teaches. You can leave that

behind without fear of judgment or condemnation. Leave it all behind and come to the true sacrifice, the one true sacrifice that Christ made at the cross that is forever valuable, that had an infinite value to it, whose saving ability is never diminished.

He goes on and says in verse 26, "Otherwise," if it had not been thus, if Christ's sacrifice hadn't been perfect, verse 26, "He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, so Christ also, having been offered once," once, "to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him." Christ offered a one time sacrifice that was absolutely perfect. There was no defect in it. It covered it all. It did everything that was necessary. There is no further sacrifice to be made. To say that there is, is to rob the atonement of its meaning.

So what does that mean for us here today, those of us that have protested, as it were, and left the Catholic church behind and come to Christ? What does that mean? It means that we have found the one true sacrifice. It means that we can rest in that sacrifice with a certainty that our sins are fully forgiven. The sacrifice is done. It's been offered. It's over. The work is done. What did Jesus say? "It is finished." It is accomplished, paid in full, and we don't approach God now through counterfeit sacrifices as if we were trying to pay our mortgage with Monopoly money. "Oh, but I'm showing you a lot of money here." It's all fake currency. It does no good. In Christ, we have a better high priest who has brought us a better covenant, who now serves in heaven which is the better tabernacle. Far better that Christ would be in heaven than an Old Testament priest would be here on earth.

That leads us to our fourth and final point that we've been alluding to all along, is that Christ made a better sacrifice. A better sacrifice. So just by way of review so we don't lose sight of where we are at: he's a better high priest, who brought a better covenant, who serves in a better tabernacle, and who does so by a better sacrifice. The superiority of Christ also represented in his better sacrifice.

Look at chapter 10 with me, verse 1, "For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near." He is showing and illustrating the inability of the Old Testament system to put away sin once for all. It didn't put sin away once for all as shown by the fact that it had to be done over and over again. If it put it away, it would be over. The fact that they kept doing it showed that it wasn't done.

Verse 2, "Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins?" Verse 3, "But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year." The mere repetition of the sacrifices showed that sin had not been fully dealt with, sin had not been fully atoned. Verse 4, "For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." You

can't substitute the blood of an animal for the guilt of a man, not to have it fully taken away, not to have it really do away with sin, is his point.

What can we say about Christ by contrast, then? What about the sacrifice of Christ, the sacrifice that we're going to remember soon at the table? What did Christ do? I appreciated the way Andrew opened the service, pointing us back to Hebrews 1. The excellence of Christ, the deity of Christ, the Creator of the universe, and what did he do? You really start to run out of human language to vindicate the greatness of the themes of which we speak here this morning. What did Christ do? Remembering who he is, the eternal Creator, the Son of God, what did he do? He didn't offer the blood of animals. What did he do? He offered blood, all right, what kind of blood was it? Well, it was the blood of a man because Christ was God in human flesh, but it was the blood of God in human flesh. It was his own blood. There is infinite value, infinite merit to that blood that he offered on the cross. What did he offer? Not like an Old Testament priest offering the blood of an animal, he offered his own blood as the sacrifice for your sin. Infinite precious value to the life blood of Christ and that was the price of your salvation. Make the comparison in your mind and see it by contrast. A bull, an animal offered in blood under the Old Testament system, compared to the blood of the eternal Lamb of God shed for sinners like you and me. There is no comparison, is there? This is far more excellent. This is of another realm. This is of a greater consequence. He offered his own blood and its eternal value means he only needed to do it once.

Look at Hebrews 10:10 and see the benefit that his sacrifice has brought to you. Verse 10, "By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." Verse 11, "Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but," here's the contrast again, "but [Christ] having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God." Sitting down because the work was done. Verse 13, "waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet. For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified."

What's he saying? That the sacrifice of Christ was all that God required. It was all that was needed. It was sufficient to secure for you eternal redemption. That your sins would never be brought to your account again. That you would be welcomed fully and gladly into the throne room of heaven itself, not with timidity, not with trembling and craven fear that perhaps God would cast you out. No, what Christ has purchased for you is this, what Christ has accomplished for you is this: is that Christ has purchased for you free and unhindered access to the throne room of God, to the holy immaculate presence of God in his name in a way that was utterly foreign to the mind of an Old Testament saint. You have privileges that they could not have dreamt of as the animals were being offered again and again and the veil kept people out. In Christ what we have is the veil rent in two from top to bottom, thrown open and the access to God is free and available and graciously offered to you in Christ. And for those of you who have believed in Christ, who have put your faith in Christ, God accepts you, God receives you on the basis of the merit of Christ and there is nothing more for you to do. You can't improve that. You

cannot diminish it. It is done in Christ. That's a lot better, isn't it? He obtained a complete forgiveness for all who approach him and come to him in faith.

And look at it in verse 17 where again he says, "their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." The things that you have vain regrets about about your past, you look back and say, "Oh, I was so wrong and I was so sinful and I can't believe I did that, I can't believe I thought that, I can't believe that I was like that," understand that one of the aspects of the work of Christ on your behalf is to put those things away. God has. God is not holding them against you any longer because he satisfied his wrath when Christ was crucified on the cross. The whole purpose is to give you a sense of a clear and clean conscience because the debt against God has been paid in full on your behalf. And what does it say? Look at the simplicity of the text there, "their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more. Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin." The excellence of Christ means that he has saved us to the uttermost.

So what do we do with that? How do we think about God in relation to this finished work of Christ? He shows us that in verse 19, "Therefore, brethren," here's your response, this is the exhortation that the writer of Hebrew gives in light of this presentation that he has made of Christ to us. "Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God," because all of these things are true, what do you do? He says, "let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith," let us come through Christ and in Christ knowing that God receives us well, receives us fully, receives us completely, "having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." He says in verse 23, "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near."

What he's saying is this, beloved, recognize what has been done by Christ. Recognize who Christ is and how much more excellent he is. His life and death were predicted and have been fulfilled to the uttermost. He has done a more excellent work when he offered himself on the cross for you and therefore you should leave behind, you should put away any thoughts of turning away from Christ, of abandoning him, and come with confidence in the promise of God that this is how he deals with everyone who believes in his Son; that he does not hold your sins against you, that he will remember them no more, and you are so perfectly reconciled that you have free, confident, available access to the most holy place where God himself resides. That's what Christ has done for us. That's what we're remembering at this table.

But there is a side to it that we need to remember that he warns us against to which we must take heed and this brings each of us to the point of understanding and renewed commitment of our hearts. All of these things are true. This is what Christ has done. He has purchased a perfect eternal redemption for us but, my friends, take heed, be warned,

pay attention, consider this: that if you turn away from that in indifference, if you reject that, if you despise these things that have been presented to you by the writer of Hebrews, there are consequences of the most severe sort.

Verse 26. He has exhorted us to come to Christ to rest all of our confidence in him, but there is a warning of the consequences if that call goes unheeded, if you reject that call. Verse 26, he says, "For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins." If you turn away from Christ, there is no hope for your soul. There is no sacrifice that can save you. You can't go back into the Old Testament system and find another way to God. That's done. It's over with. It is Christ or nothing. It is Christ or judgment and if you reject Christ, what is the consequence? Verse 27, all that is left for you is "a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries."

Verse 28, "Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses." Moses was lesser. That old system was lesser compared to Christ as we have seen. Well, if you rejected Moses, you died without mercy. Go from the lesser to the greater, what's the consequence if you reject Christ? Verse 29, this is his point. Look at verse 29, "How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?" What do you think is going to happen to you, my friends, if you reject Christ having heard of his great superiority over everything that preceded him? The lesser thing brought judgment. If you reject the greater, what lies ahead is terrifying.

So the consequence that you have to settle in your own heart is this: I'm not going to walk away from Christ. Maybe you're here and you say, "I've never been a Christian. I've never seen Christ like this but now I come and I put my faith in him for my eternal redemption. I submit to him. I receive him. I rest in him as my all in all, as my Savior, as my Lord, as my King. I give myself to Christ." That's the right way to respond if you're here and you don't know Christ, is to come to him. If you're not a Christian and you say, "That's not for me. I'm not interested. I don't want that," let it be known that your blood is on your own head. Scripture has made it clear and has warned you. What do you think will happen? How much severer punishment those who have seen Christ, he has been presented to them and they say, "No, depart from me." The punishment for that is terrifying.

So we are brought to a place of decision. We are brought to a place of commitment. My fellow brother and sister in Christ, in Christ you have a complete, perfect Savior. Give yourself afresh to renewing your faith in him and trusting and believing in him for that. You who are not Christians, here is Christ, come to him in faith, he'll save you just like he did me. Those of you who refuse him, understand that the consequences of that are great, they are terrifying and they are eternal. Why would you do that?

Let's bow together in prayer.

Our Father, we thank you for giving us such an excellent high priest, one who serves by a better covenant, in a better tabernacle, by a better sacrifice. We thank you for the infinite provision that you have made for our salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. And those of us who know you, give you our deep and profound thanks. Father, for those that are here that do not know Christ, have mercy on them and work by your omnipotent Holy Spirit to overcome their stubborn wills to enlighten their darkened minds so that they could turn to Christ and be truly saved. And now as we come to the table by which we remember our Lord, O God, we pray that you would help us to do so with a fresh appreciation of the superiority of Christ. It's in his name that we pray. Amen.

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