

The Supreme Sacrifice

Hebrews 9:1-10:18

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Scripture Reading: Hebrews 9:1-14, 9:22-10:4, 10:10-18

Introduction

Jesus said something once, something, after I read it for the first time, I knew that I would never forget it. He was speaking to some religious leaders of his day who were concerned very much with external ceremonies they carried out in devotion to God, including ceremonial washings of the utensils they ate with. But Jesus had noticed that, though everything looked squeaky clean on the outside of their lives, things on the inside, in the heart, were not so good. So he said to them, **“You clean the outside of the cup, but the inside is full of greed and self-indulgence . . . First clean the inside of the cup . . . and the outside will also be clean” (Mt 23:25-26).**

First clean the inside of the cup. Makes sense doesn't it? It doesn't make sense to scrub the outside clean again and again when the inside is dirty and it is from the inside that what is actually important comes. And this passage grabbed on to me, **“Who can clean the inside? Can it really be clean? [Use an actual cup]**

Julie said something to me this week that stopped me in my tracks. I was heading off to the shower one evening and she said to me jokingly, “So you're off for another therapeutic earth thrashing.” I was stunned. She was referring to the long hot showers I sometimes take. 15-20 minutes later the environment has paid an unneeded cost. I need to reform my ways! But in my mind the shower is good for so many things: the muscles in your back relax, you can be alone and think and review the day, and all the while you get clean!

But I distinctly remember standing in the shower as high school student after I had been apart of something I regretted and wishing the water could wash that away. There are some things that all the hot water in the world can't clean. ***Who can clean the inside?***
Context of the passage: He is lifting up Jesus and exhorting us to keep our eyes fixed on Him, to hold fast to Him.

And as we heard in the reading, as we come to chapter nine and the first half of chapter ten, the question of cleansing comes front and center. **It is so important to him because being cleansed on the inside is actually right at the heart of being in relationship with God.** There is great encouragement here. This passage has a message that

gives deep hope to the heart that has lost all hope of ever being clean and accepted in relationship with a Holy God. *It turns out Jesus and His New Covenant can do up the dishes far better than Moses and his Old one ever could, given by God though it was.*

It turns out the Holy Spirit is trying to tell us something about inner cleansing and relationship with God through the Tabernacle and the worship that surrounded it. As we see in the opening verses of chapter 9, it has a twofold message: **[PP: The Message of the Tabernacle: God desires to dwell with us, but there is a problem . . .]**¹

First, God desires to dwell with us, but there is a problem . . .

The chapter begins with the author's abbreviated description of the Tabernacle, which served as the center of Israel's worship until the Temple was built. In the law given to Moses on Mt. Sinai, God commanded that this tent be built, giving specific instructions for its construction. He said, **[PP: "Have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you" (Exodus 25:8-9).]** The word for Tabernacle, *miskan*, means "dwelling" (it is also called, "The Tent of Meeting," and the "sanctuary," and was referred to as "the house of the Lord" (Ex. 34:26)). It served as a sign of God's dwelling with Israel.

It was a sign of grace. God did not have to come and make a covenant with Abraham, save his descendants from famine by taking them into Egypt. Display His faithful love to them by bringing them out of Egypt with great acts of power. And there was no force outside of Himself that constrained Him to make a covenant with Israel at Sinai through Moses, where He gave instructions about this Tabernacle and other instructions that would allow God to dwell in a unique way, totally unparalleled among all the people's of the earth, right in the midst of the Israelite camp. So the Tabernacle speaks loud and clear: God graciously desires to be with us. **APL. You Can't believe God wants to be with you. He does. But we learn as we look closer at the Tabernacle, the Holy Spirit has more to say to us through it.**

Description of the Tabernacle

Describe the Tabernacle. **PP: Pictures of the Tabernacle. God dwells above the mercy seat. Gold. Holiness. The Curtain. Holy Place and Most Holy Place.**

PP: "The LORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron who died when they approached the LORD. The LORD said to Moses: "Tell your brother

¹ PP stands for PowerPoint slide.

Aaron not to come whenever he chooses into the Most Holy Place behind the curtain in front of the atonement cover on the ark, or else he will die, because I appear in the cloud over the atonement cover.” (Leviticus 16:1-2).

Ministry of the Tabernacle

Ministry of the Tabernacle: Daily entrance to the Holy Place, but only annual entrance into the Most Holy Place. Speak of the Day of Atonement. (Leviticus 16).

PP: Picture of the High Priest

PP: “When everything had been arranged like this, the priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry. But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance” (Hebrews 9:6-7).

The curtain shows to us that the Tabernacle actually spoke a dual message. God wants to dwell with us, but there is a problem that presents an obstacle to the fulfillment of that desire. I want to dwell among you, but you may only come to the place I appear once a year. What’s the problem? The problem can be illustrated in this yellow truck.

IL. Of Judah with his yellow truck. When I express my will clearly to Judah in a way I know he understands, and he just outright defies me, he puts me in a spot. If I overlook what he has done, it is going to ultimately harm him. If he doesn’t listen to me, when he accidentally gets away and goes into the street, he is going to be harmed. So out of love, I can’t just let flagrant disobedience go. But it devalues my word and in as much as it devalues and disregards my word, it is an offence to my character. He’s saying, “You’re not the dad here.” Just for his sake alone, let alone mine, I can’t let it go. But on the other hand, I can’t sever the relationship with him. I love him. So I need some way to deal with the wrong, so that the relationship can be maintained.

There were originally no curtain rods installed in Eden. Before the fall, Adam and Eve lived in harmony with God. But they rebelled against Him, and rebellion against a Holy God is an obstacle to relationship with Him. Like our forefathers, our guilt is real before Him, our consciences witness that fact to us, and it cannot simply be overlooked. So this whole system of sacrifice was instituted, some sacrifices being simply for thanks and worship, but others, the most important ones, had to do with atonement for sin.

Acknowledging that there have been offenses against God’s holiness that need to be acknowledged and set right for the sake of the people, and to vindicate God’s honor.

“In this way he will make atonement for the Most Holy Place *because of the uncleanness and rebellion of the Israelites, whatever their sins have been*” (Leviticus 16:15-16).

I want to dwell with you, but there is a problem represented in this curtain. It reveals that God's holiness and my offenses against Him create a barrier from us dwelling together.

PP: "The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still standing. This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered *were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper*. They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings--external regulations applying until the time of the new order" (Hebrews 9:8-10).

God's gracious initiative to dwell among the Israelites in the Tabernacle was **not able to cleanse the inside of the cup**. Its ministry could not "clear the conscience of the worshiper." You can just picture the everyday Israelite on the Day of Atonement and seeing that High Priest go in. I am sure many were grateful that it wasn't their job. But I think I would have longed to go in. "Forget all this sacrifice, why can't I just go in to Him?" And my conscience would witness, "Your sin. Your sin." "Yes, if I were to go in without sacrifice I would surely die. I can't go in. My sin. My sin. **But if the Tabernacle can't take away our sin God, what can?"**

What can wash away my sin? (sung by soloist)

Second, The Tabernacle and its ministry are telling us: God want to dwell with us, but there is a problem, PP: and the Problem is Sin, and the Old Covenant Could Not Finally Deal With It

As we just heard, "The gifts and sacrifices being offered [under the Old Covenant] were not able to cleanse the conscience of the worshiper." So why was the sacrifice of blood required in the first place? Why does blood atone for sin?

Leviticus helps us here. There the Israelites are being forbidden from eating anything with blood in it, and the reason is that blood was to be held as sacred for them:

PP: "For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life" (Leviticus 17:11).

Blood was to be held in high esteem because "the life of the creature was in the blood." It epitomized the whole life of the creature. The shed blood represented the death of the whole life. And in the sacrifice of animals to atone for human sin, the message was life for life. Innocent life, for guilty life. The punishment for sin was death. When God warned

Adam not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, He added, “for when you eat of it you will surely die” (Gen. 2:17). From that point forward the guilty sinner was shown forgiveness at the cost of the just payment of his sin, the death of a life that was innocent on his or her behalf. Life for life.

So practically every sacrifice for ceremonial cleansing under the Mosaic Law required the shedding of blood representing the death of an animal. There were some exceptions, the poor were allowed to offer fine flour for example. But these exceptions prove the rule. And so later in chapter 9 the author makes the point through a play on words between the idea of covenant, and the idea of a will. Drawing the connection that just as a will requires the death of the testator before the will can be executed, so too the Old Covenant required death in order to be inaugurated and to be carried out. He mentions how Moses sprinkled everything with blood at Sinai and later, when the Tabernacle was dedicated, that blood was sprinkled there as well. **PP: “Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin” (Heb. 9:22).**

And there was a lot of blood. Day after day, year after year. Soon after I graduated high school my dad, being in the construction industry, got me a job as a construction labourer, and though I had my license, I did not have a car. So I would have to get up really way before sunrise to catch the bus into some obscure place in New West or Vancouver or Langley, to be at work for 7am. And the work was tough, but presented the same challenges every day. I can remember that alarm going off and just dreading getting up and doing it all again.

It was an awesome privilege to be a priest. But I wonder if the priests ever felt that way. Our passage seems to emphasize the wearisome nature of the work, *because the job was never done*. **That it was incomplete and therefore not able to atone for our sin is shown in a number of ways in this passage PP: A Job That is Never Done**

They offered blood that was not their own, the blood of animals.

They served in an earthly tabernacle.

The sacrifices were continual. They were “repeated endlessly year after year” (10:1). “Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.”

As this passage just noticed, the priests were always standing. They were not allowed to sit during their work.

Their work was never done. IL of LAUNDRY. And the we receive the reason for it. Their work was instituted by God, not as an end in itself, but as a pointer, a shadow, of what God was going to do to meet the problem of sin.

PP: The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming--not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins (Hebrews 10:1-4).

The OC sacrifices could not clean the inside of the cup. It is easy to imagine the priest returning from his day of work weary. Warming up some water over the fire and pouring it into a basin and soaking his feet. Bending down, his back sore, and rubbing those tired feet. He'd be exhausted, the smell of blood maybe still lingering on him even after bathing. And as he lay in bed at night I can hear him saying, "Why does this need to go on? Why do these sacrifices need to be offered again and again? Will we ever be freed from our guilt finally? **If my ministry can't make an end to our sin, what can?**

What can wash away my sin? (Sung by soloist)

The life of bulls and goats given were simply not of great enough value to atone for human sin against a Holy God. Their purpose was to point forward to something God was intending to do all along. Their purpose was to serve as a sketch of what God was finally planning to do all along in . . . **PP: The Supreme Sacrifice of Jesus Christ**

Third, the Supreme Sacrifice of Jesus Christ

Just as the Old Covenant required blood, so too would the new.

The Author quotes Psalm 40:6-8. He sees Christ as being the speaker of it.

HEB 10:5 Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said:

"Sacrifice and offering you did not desire,
but a body you prepared for me;

HEB 10:6 with burnt offerings and sin offerings
you were not pleased.

HEB 10:7 Then I said, 'Here I am--it is written about me in the scroll--
I have come to do your will, O God.' "

HEB 10:8 First he said, "Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them" (although the law required them to be

made). ⁹ Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will." He sets aside the first to establish the second. ¹⁰ And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Sacrificed Animals – Sacrificed Himself

- ^{9:12} He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.

Sacrifice of finite value – Sacrifice of Infinite Value

- He “*through the eternal Spirit*, offered himself unblemished to God” (9:14)
- He was offered unblemished, and through the eternal Spirit.

Sacrificed Endlessly – Gave Himself Once

- ^{9:25} Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. ²⁶ Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.

Could not Remove Sin - Puts sin away

- ^{9:26} But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages *to do away with sin* by the sacrifice of himself.
- This expression rendered “do away with sin”, *eis athetesin* is a strong one, it signifies the total annulment of sin. The word is used in a technical judicial sense meaning “to annul” or “to cancel.” The guilt of sin is thus rendered totally inoperable. It is taken away.

Ministered on Earth – Ministers in Heaven

- ^{HEB 9:23} It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. ²⁴ For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence.

The OC Priests were always on their feet – Jesus Christ is now seated

- ^{HEB 10:11} Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹² But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. ¹³ Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, ¹⁴ because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.
- Jesus Christ has no need for DR. Scholls!

Oh the value of this sacrifice! We cannot weigh it. Its worth is beyond our comprehension. There is one final and effective sacrifice for our sin, and it is the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Son of God in human flesh, who offered Himself on the cross unblemished, giving His perfectly innocent life in our stead so that we may be forgiven.

It turns out that all previous sacrifice was pointing to Him, and all the forgiveness that was extended by God to those who sacrificed animals for forgiveness, was given with God's eye ultimately on the cross, where their sin too would be atoned for, though they knew it not at the time. Donald Hagner puts it well, "Forgiveness experienced during the OT period depended finally - although this was hardly understood at the time - upon an event that was to take place in the future. The sacrifice of Christ is the answer to sin in every era, past and present, since it alone is the means of forgiveness."²

? – Can you imagine the effect of this sacrifice?

Fourth, PP: By His Supreme Sacrifice, Christ Is Able to Wash the Inside of the Cup Perfectly Clean

PP: ^{9:13} The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. ¹⁴ How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

- ^{10:10} And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.
- "by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy" (10:14)

No More Guilt

In what sense have we been made perfect? No longer any guilt for my sin.

Therefore, I no longer need bear inner condemnation for my sin.

- We can come to God with unburdened conscience
- The conscience still plays an important role in our lives. We should never violate it
- We should educate it in the Word of God and listen to it as the Holy Spirit works alongside it within us
- But when it sounds a condemning note that drives us away from God, we need to sit it down for some tutoring at the foot of the cross of Christ.
- We need to help it see the value of this life that was given

- We no longer need to feel guilty for our past sins.

² Donald Hagner, *Hebrews*. The New International Biblical Commentary (Hendrickson, 1990), 141.

- Jerry Bridges put it this way with reference to sin that we have confessed and repented of, but which our conscience keeps bringing back to us again and again:
 - o “There are two courts we must deal with: the court of God in Heaven and the court of conscience in our souls. When we first trust in Christ for salvation, God’s court is forever satisfied. Never again will a charge of guilt be brought against us in Heaven. Our consciences, however, are continually pronouncing us guilty . . . Therefore, we must by faith bring the verdict of the conscience into line with the verdict of Heaven. We do this by agreeing with our conscience about our guilt, but then reminding it that our guilt has already been borne by Christ”

“This is right at the heart of our faith, transferring our trust from our own efforts to the efforts of Christ. We were relying on other things to make us acceptable. But now we consciously begin relying on what Jesus did for our acceptance with God. All we need is nothing. If we think, “God owes me something for my efforts” We are still on the outside.”
Tim Keller

PP: There is no longer any sacrifice for sin.

Freedom to Draw Near

PP: Judah lifting out the curtain.

The emphasis on the letter is drawing near. But the Tabernacle revealed a problem. What can open the way for you and me to draw near to God? There is great hope here: What can wash away my sin.

Benediction: Hebrews 10:19-23