

Hebrews Chapter Ten (vv.1-18)

Hebrews 10.1-18 continues the thought of the superior sacrifice of Christ and brings to an end the central, doctrinal argument of the whole epistle (5.1-10.18). The superior *priesthood*, *sacrifice* and *covenant* have all been clearly explained and substantiated through God's word. There can be no doubt, Christ is better. Having left the **old** things of the law (6.1) we go on to God's **new** things. We have: a new **High Priest** over us (Hebrews 7), a new **covenant** made with us (Hebrews 8), a new **sanctuary** before us (Hebrews 9) and a new **sacrifice** behind us (Hebrews 10).

The Will of God (vv.1-10)

1 For the law having a shadow of good things ~~to~~ (now) 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. **2** For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once (for all) purged should have had no more conscience of sins. **3** But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance ~~again~~ made of sins every year. **4** For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

The OT sacrifices failed in **four** respects. They were: a **shadow** (v.1), **repetitive** (vv.1-2), **reminders** of guilt (vv.2-3) and **ineffectual** (v.4). The Law was a 'shadow' or 'imperfect outline' of 'good things now come' (cf. 9.11), i.e. complete salvation under the new covenant. The 'reality' or 'image' of these things came through Christ, not the law (cf. Colossians 1.15, 2.17). The law was a shadow; Christ brought the substance. For example, the sacrifices offered under the law were 'the same sacrifices which year by year they offer evermore' (Rotherham). They were offered in **variety**, **perpetuity**, and **insufficiency!** They could not supply 'perfection' or a full and complete salvation (9.28) as far as conscience of sins (9.9, 14), eternal redemption (9.12) and access into the presence of God (10.19) was concerned. This is evident by the fact that animal sacrifices never ceased to be brought to the tabernacle and, later, the temple. Those that brought them clearly did not know complete forgiveness of sins or liberty to enter the presence of God (sin in the conscience restricts communion with God, Psalm 66.18). These offerings maintained a sense of distance. The repetition of offerings proved that sin had never fully and finally been dealt with. Smoke *always* ascended from the brazen altar. *Davidson: No repetition of the shadow can amount to the substance.* But, blessed contrast! If in the OT sacrifices there was remembrance **renewed**, in the sacrifice of Christ there is remembrance **removed**.

In fact, at the annual Day of Atonement (v.3) there was actually a 'remembrance' of sins. Ancient kings often employed a 'remembrancer' or 'recorder' (2 Samuel 20.24) to keep royal records of significant events. *David Gooding: On the Day of Atonement it was like God calling for the record books and examining His people's sins for that year. Their guilt was assessed and the penalty demanded. Only by the offering of sacrifices was the wrath of God averted. Then... the next Day of Atonement loomed on the horizon with the prospect of further investigation of guilt.* These sacrifices were therefore a constant reminder of sins, guilt and distance from God. The simple fact is this: the blood of bull and goats cannot take away sins. The best they could offer was a ceremonial cleansing (Leviticus 16.33 6, 11, Hebrews 9.13) which allowed the worshipper to continue with God, **not** a complete, conscience cleansing, forgiveness of sins. True enough, if a believing Israelite, in response to the Word of God, humble repentance and faith brought a sacrifice to atone for their sins, then they were forgiven (Leviticus 4.20, 31, 36). But this forgiveness was based on faith and the still future sacrifice of Christ, i.e. *pretermission* (Romans 3.25) not *remission* (Ephesians 1.17).

5 Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou ~~wouldest~~ (willedst) not, but a body hast thou prepared me: **6** In (whole) burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. **7** Then said I, Lo, I (am) come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.

Some of the faithful few in Israel began to realise that God's great desire was not sacrifices and offerings, but rather humility and obedience to the Word of God (1 Samuel 15.22, Psalm 51.16-17, Isaiah 1.11-20, 66.2, Hosea 6.6-7). **1 Samuel 15.22: Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.** The writer quotes from Psalm 40.6-8 to substantiate his teaching and give the great example of the Lord Jesus. Note the wisdom of the Spirit of God as He quotes from the Psalms to ascertain God's *later* word than the Pentateuch on the subject of sacrifices. These words were spoken by the Son to the Father on the occasion of His incarnation (cf. v.5, 7). The whole sacrificial system¹ did not express the will of God, nor bring Him any pleasure. Didn't God ordain this system? Why did He not *will* or take *pleasure* in it? *Jim Flanigan: God ordained and ordered them that He might be enabled, in righteousness, to go along with a sinning people. But the will of God was much more than a sinning people bringing sacrifices. The ultimate desire of the heart of God was for a life so lived that offerings for sin were not necessary. God demanded sacrifice but He desired more. He desired such dedication to His will in holiness of life, such devotion to Him that offerings would be unnecessary and superfluous. Men were unable to live like this and in consciousness of their shortcomings and failures*

¹ The word 'sacrifice' (v.5) is used in the OT with particular reference to the **peace** offering. 'Offering' (v.5) is often restricted to the **meal** offering and the section further mentions 'whole **burnt** offerings' (v.6) and 'sin offerings' (v.6).

brought offerings. Where would one find such a life of obedient devotion that would bring great delight and pleasure to God? Only in Christ! God 'prepared' or 'fashioned' a body² for the Lord Jesus in which He fully and completely obeyed the divine will. In this body He would bring the full delight to God which the sacrificial system could not. He rendered both glad and heart felt devotion to His Father (Psalm 40.8). What a contrast to God's people under law. Does our obedience spring from a heart of love for Him (John 14.15, 23)? Verse 7 shows the beauty of contrast between the involuntary sacrifice of a dumb animal and that of the Son of God who voluntarily made the will of God His sole desire. The 'volume (whole) of the book', all of the Scriptures, both concern and direct Him. The will of God was set down in the book and would be manifested in His obedience. His life would be the active counterpart of the written law and fulfil all that the offerings had foreshadowed and typified: a life wholly yielded to God.

8 Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldst not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by (according to) the law; 9 Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. 10 By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Through the work of the Lord Jesus, God has taken away 'the first', i.e. the old covenant with its sacrificial system and 'established the second', i.e. the new covenant with its once for all divine sacrifice. The first is the law which commanded obedience from a stony heart; the second is the will of God which is voluntary obedience from a devoted heart. Christ has fulfilled the will of God through the offering of His entire Person or 'body' at Calvary. This body was the instrument of His obedience even unto death. The result is that every believer is now once and for all 'sanctified'. In **position** we have been entirely and completely set apart from this world unto the pleasure and glory of God. This is our **standing** and **acceptance** before God as those who have been fully and completely cleansed from sin.³ *John 17.19: And for their sakes I sanctify myself (unto death), that they also might be sanctified through the truth.*

The Work of Christ (vv.11-14)

11 And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: 12 But this man (priest), after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God; 13 From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. 14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

The Levitical priests were engaged in a continuing and exhausting work. There was no seat in the tabernacle for the simple reason that their work was never finished. They perpetually stood (Deuteronomy 10.8, 18.5) offering the same sacrifices which could never take away sins. What a contrast to the Lord Jesus! This Priest (singular), after He had offered one (not many) sacrifice for sins, forever, or 'in perpetuity' sat down (not stood) on the right hand of God. What's more, His sacrifice has 'perfected' and 'sanctified' His people for ever (v.14). In relation to sin, the work of the Lord Jesus is finished; therefore He sits (**Mediator**). As **Great High Priest**, His activity continues. It is interesting to see the risen Lord Jesus **standing** (Acts 7), **sitting** (Hebrews 10) and **walking** (Revelation 2). Sitting (to perpetuity) in a position of glory and victory, He 'awaits' the moment He shall receive from the Father His future manifestation and day of vindication and triumph (Psalm 110, Acts 17.31, 1 Corinthians 15.24-28). *AW Pink: Even in heaven, He meekly and gladly bows to the Father's pleasure.*

The Witness of the Spirit (vv.15-18)

15 Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, 16 This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; 17 And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. 18 Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.

The writer again substantiates his teaching from the OT; that which is God breathed and witnessed by the Spirit. The new covenant of Jeremiah 31 is again referenced but widened in its application from 'Israel' and 'Judah' (8.8) to 'us' (v.15) and 'them' (v.16). This illustrates the extent of the work of Christ. Praise God, the heart obedience that characterised the Lord Jesus now characterises His people. God's desires are now written on our hearts and minds so that we instinctively and willingly delight to please and live for God (**sanctification**). In addition, God chooses not to remember our sins. There is therefore no fear of condemnation, judgment, or access into His presence (**perfection**). Now, where there has been a comprehensive and decisive cleansing of sin ('remission'), the whole activity of offering sacrifices for sin can now cease. *David Newell: The perfect sacrifice has been offered and Jewish ritual concluded.* Note. Believers are to offer continual sacrifices, but not in order to gain forgiveness of sins (13.15-16, Romans 12.1-2).

² The exact quotation of Psalm 40.6 is: *Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened (or digged).* By using the phrase 'a body hast thou prepared me' In Hebrews 10.5, the Holy Spirit is adding a divine interpretation to the original verse. The link, however, is obvious. The ear is that which receives the commandments of God. *In taking a body the Lord took the form of a servant and placed Himself in a position in which He might be obedient to His Master's will (JND).*

³ Sanctification is of the Spirit (1 Peter 1.2), by the blood (Hebrews 9.14, 13.12) and through the Word of God (John 17). It is the Word of God which progressively acts upon our lives that our practice might match our position. Sanctification is therefore progressive as well as positional.