

Please turn in your Bibles to Hebrews chapter 10. This morning we come together to celebrate and observe the Sabbath day, the Lord's Day, that holy day which has been appointed for us as the New Testament Church. But just as under the Old Covenant administration there were high Sabbaths corresponding with the feast days appointed by the Lord, so too do we have a high Sabbath in the New Covenant marked by a feast, which is the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Today we feast on the body and blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ through the appointed means of bread and wine in this sacramental meal. And just as the feasts of old were tied to the sacrifices of old, so too is this feast before us today tied to that once for all sacrifice of our Savior. So let us now consider this sacrifice from Hebrews chapter 10, and we'll be reading the first 18 verses. This is the Word of the living and true God.

Read Hebrews 10:1-18

Pray

What does it mean for something to be perfect? We use that term often in our day to day language. We speak about clothes being the perfect fit. We talk about a pitcher in baseball pitching a perfect game. We say that the weather is perfect for whatever activity we have planned for that day. Jewelers are in search of a perfect gemstone. And we all know what this means. If something is perfect it has no faults, no defects; it's pure; it's complete; it lacks nothing. This morning we are going to look at the perfection of Christ's sacrificial death on the cross. Did it have no faults, no defects? Was it pure? Was it complete? Did it lack nothing? Is there something other than the death of Christ that must be done to bring about salvation, or was His death all that was needed to purchase salvation for His people. We argue that there is nothing else needed to be saved besides the work of Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. This is what the Apostle Paul has just argued at the end of chapter 9. Christ's sacrifice was necessary. Christ's sacrifice was sufficient. Christ's sacrifice was perfect. Christ's sacrifice was enough. And so to prove this point of the perfection of Christ's

sacrificial death on the cross, Paul here points to the Old Testament sacrificial system and compares it to the sacrifice of Christ, showing the perfection of the cross. And he does this by showing us three things: first, the imperfection of the shadows; second, the perfection of the sacrifice; and third, the perfecting of the saints.

The Apostle begins this chapter by pointing us back to the Old Covenant sacrificial system, highlighting the imperfection of the shadows. Look with me beginning in verse 1, “For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.” The law of the sacrificial system, the law governing the ceremonies of old, was but a mere shadow. Kids, when you’re outside in the sun and you see your shadow, do you think your shadow is actually you? Do you run to your daddy’s shadow and give it a hug when you see it? Of course not. That’s because the shadow is not the real thing. It’s not the true form of the reality, which is an actual body. That’s exactly what Paul is saying here about the sacrifices of old. They were but shadows of the good things to come. They weren’t the good things, but instead pointed to the true form of the realities, which is Christ Himself. Calvin says, “The difference then which the Apostle makes between the Law and the Gospel is this, – that under the Law was shadowed forth only in rude and imperfect lines what is under the Gospel set forth in living colors and graphically distinct.”

Because of that, because of what these sacrifices were as but mere shadows, they were imperfect. They could not accomplish the job that was needed. They could not make perfect those who draw near. They were ineffectual. “For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have

had no more conscience of sins.” If they were sufficient, if they were perfect, if they were effectual, they would have only been done once, because the people would have been cleansed and their sins would be remembered no more. But we know that isn’t the case. We know that the sacrifices were not just a one time thing. We know that the sins of the people were still remembered. That is because the shadows of the sacrificial system were imperfect, insufficient, and ineffectual.

“But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.” This is referencing the most sacred of holy days in the Jewish community, the Day of Atonement. Leviticus 16 gives the law concerning the sacrifices on the Day of Atonement. The priest, after purifying himself, would sacrifice a bull for the atonement of his own sins. Next he would sacrifice one goat as a sin offering. He would take the blood of the sacrificed bull and sprinkle it seven times upon the mercy seat in the holy of holies. He would do likewise with the blood of the goat. Then he would lay his hands upon another goat, signifying the transferring of the sins of the people onto the scapegoat, which would then be sent into the wilderness. And this was to be done every year in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month. This was the sacrifice which signified the atoning of the sins of the people of Israel. But the writer says that it was ineffectual, “For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.” These were simply shadows of the good things to come. These were not the true form of the realities. And just as your shadow is powerless to do anything except point to the reality of yourself, so too were these sacrifices powerless to take away sin. This is the imperfection of the shadows.

But if the shadows of the ceremonial system of old were imperfect, there must be something greater, something which actually does take away sins. And here is. This is the perfection of the sacrifice. Let’s read on in our passage, “Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest

not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.” When we speak of the perfection of the sacrifice, it’s not the sacrifices of old. This has already been shown in the imperfection of the shadows. Bulls, goats, pigeons, these sacrifices were never in and of themselves what the Lord desired. They could never satisfy the penalty that we have incurred against our holy and righteous Lord. It wasn’t sacrifices and offering that God desired, but the body that He prepared for His Son. It wasn’t in the burnt offerings and sins offerings that the Lord took delight, but in the Son doing the will of the Father. This is the mission for which Christ Jesus came into this world, to do the will of His Father. We see this in John 6:38-40, “For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.” The salvation of His people was the very purpose for which Christ Jesus came.

And Paul explains this further, “Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” Those sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings, they all were designed to point to the reality that was to come. Their purpose was to point to Christ. But now that the perfect has come, now that the thing foreshadowed is a present reality, those old ways, those things belonging to the sacrificial system have been done away with. There’s a reason we don’t sacrifice bulls and goats in our worship services. There’s a reason we don’t bind the sacrifice to the horns of the altar. There’s a reason we don’t have an altar.

Those things pertaining to the sacrificial system of the Old Testament have been fulfilled in the death of Christ and have been done away with. They are no more. They are useless. This is why we don't have the incense the priests would use in the Temple. This is why we don't have bronze lavers. This is why we don't have a menorah. And this is why we don't use instruments. Because all of those things were directly tied to the sacrificial system which is no more. Christ Jesus has done away with the first in order to establish the second.

And we're told how this is the case, "And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool." We must understand that at this time there were certain Jews who were trying to persuade these Christians to return back to the Old Testament sacrificial system. This was a real threat to these Hebrew Christians, and it is essentially the primary focus of this letter. That's why there is the warning of apostasy and going back to the old things. That's why so much time is spent showing Christ's superiority over Abraham and Moses and Aaron. And that is why here we see the perfection of the sacrifice of Christ pitted against the imperfection of the sacrifice of the priests. "And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins." The priest's sacrificial service was a daily one that had to be constantly repeated. Why? Because it could never take away sins. It was a provision given by God pointing them forward to the sacrifice to come which would forgive sins. The Old Testament saints were saved in the very same way you are today, by faith in Christ Jesus. But God gave them a visible sign to point them toward what was to come. It was a perpetual reminder. A perpetual display of faith in the coming Messiah, the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world. The priest would stand daily offering the sacrifices. There was no chair in the Temple for the priest to sit down on when he was

finished. No, his job was never truly finished. It was perpetual and, ultimately, ineffectual.

“But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.” The sacrifice of Christ was perfect. He didn’t stand daily offering sacrifices that could never take away sins, but instead “offered one sacrifice for sins for ever.” The sacrifice of Christ had no faults or defects, because it did everything it was meant to do, namely take away our sins. The sacrifice of Christ was pure because He was the lamb without blemish, the spotless Lamb of God, the Holy One of Israel, the perfect son of God, the Word made flesh, the only one who could make the sacrifice effectual. The sacrifice of Christ was complete and lacked nothing, because it was a once for all sacrifice that doesn’t happen daily, but is a completed act. What were Christ’s words on the cross? “It must continue... This isn’t over...”? No, His words were “It is finished.” It is complete. Nothing more can be done. Nothing more needs to be done. Nothing is lacking. It is finished. And as if to put an exclamation point to the end of that phrase, Christ “sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.” His job in purchasing salvation is finished. His sacrifice is to never be repeated. And the next time He comes it will be as conquering King, crushing all His enemies under His feet. This is the perfection of the sacrifice.

And this leads to the results of the sacrifice of Christ: the perfecting of the saints. Look with me in verse 14, “For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” We saw in verse 1 that the shadows of old, the sacrifices of bulls and goats, can never make perfect those who draw near. But the good thing which has come, the true form of these realities, Christ Jesus Himself can and does make us perfect. He has perfected us for all time. It’s not a momentary thing. It’s not a one time perfecting that can be lost or tainted by a fall back into sin. No, He has perfected us

for all time. In the past, we are perfected. In the present, we are perfected. In the future, we are perfected. It is a completed action, accomplished by His death on the cross, confirmed by His words “It is finished,” and sealed by His Spirit making us new. We are perfected. But it is also a continual thing. Yes, you are perfected, but you are also being perfected. “He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” You are becoming more Christlike. You are being enabled more and more to die unto sin and to live unto righteousness. And this is possible because of Christ’s once for all sacrifice. Because your sins are forgiven, because they are removed as far as the east is from the west, because the Lord remembers your sins no more, you are being made perfect. The blood of bulls and goats couldn’t do this, but the blood of Christ does.

And we’re given the assurance of this, the promise of the New Covenant. “Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, 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; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.” This is the greatest assurance we could ever have that we are being perfected. The perfecting of the saints is the effect of the New Covenant. The law is written on our hearts. It is written on our minds. It is the Word of God, the Lord’s most perfect law, written on our hearts and minds through the work of Christ Jesus on the cross that testify to our being made perfect. It’s the Word that convicts man of sin. It’s the Word that presents the Savior. It’s the Word that instructs man in righteousness. It’s the Word that assures man of who he is in Christ. We are perfect and we are being perfected.

And we know this because of the promise of God, “And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.” This is one of the most beautiful things we as sinners could ever hear. This is the blessing that comes from the sacrifice of Christ. “Blessed is he whose

transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.” This is us. This is who we are. We are blessed. Our transgressions are forgiven. Our sin is covered. Against us the Lord counts no iniquity. And it’s because Christ Jesus bore our transgression and our sin and our iniquity upon Himself and nailed it to the cross. By offering Himself as the perfect sacrifice, He perfected us. “There is no more offering for sin.” The once for all offering for sin has been made. And because we are given the gift of His Spirit, we are empowered and enabled to grow in holiness and be perfected in righteousness. This is the perfecting of the saints.

Brothers and sisters, it’s only in Christ that salvation is found, because it is only the cross of Christ that perfectly atones for your sins. The shadows of the good things to come, the blood of bulls and goats, they could never take away sin. They were powerless. They were insufficient. They were imperfect. But they pointed toward the perfect sacrifice of Christ. Christ Jesus sacrificed Himself, shedding His blood for the remission of sins, and fulfilled every aspect of the sacrificial system, putting it away. His blood did what bulls and goats could not. He truly is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. He is the perfect sacrifice. And it is through that sacrifice of Christ that you are made perfect. Your sins are washed away and you are made new. The Spirit of Christ who dwells in you enables you more and more to die unto sin and to live unto righteousness. You are perfected and you are being made perfect. Friends this is the perfect sacrifice which is remembered today in this meal before you. This is the sacrifice of the feast which you are to partake of today. Christ Jesus’s body broken for you given in the element of the broken bread. Christ Jesus’s blood poured out for the remission of your sins given in the element of wine. Embrace Christ the perfect sacrifice and come feast in holy communion with Him.