Looking Unto Jesus

Wednesday Evening Bible Study
Beginning September 15th, 2026
Series: The Life and Writings of the Apostle Paul
The Letter to the Hebrews – Looking unto Jesus
Chapter Ten – "A Superior Sacrifice"

Memory Verses – Hebrews 10:23 - 25

"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." (Hebrews 10:23-25)

Introduction

We have been discussing in the previous chapters the superiority of our Great High Priest and His eternal sacrificial offering of Himself over the priests and sacrifices of the Old Covenant. In chapter ten this discussion will conclude, and we will transition into a more practical application of the principles that we have learned.

I. An Enduring Sacrifice (vs. 1 – 10)
   A. The Problem with Old (vs. 1 – 4)
      1. It Was a Shadow (v. 1)

The problem with the Old Testament sacrificial system contained within the Law was that it wasn't real in the sense that it only pictured or typified the only Sacrifice that could actually take away sin. Notice the word "shadow" (σκιά - skia) in verse one. It is used by Paul twice besides this occurrence:

"Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are ***a shadow*** *of things to come; but the body is of Christ."* (Colossians 2:16-17)

"Who serve unto the example ***and shadow*** *of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount."* (Hebrews 8:5)

Notice that the word "shadow" is associated with the words "example" and "pattern." The Old Testament system contained many shadows, examples, and patterns that pictured and pointed directly to the Lord Jesus Christ. There was nothing wrong with the types or pictures contained in the Old Testament system if it was understood that they were merely representations of the reality and not the genuine article. Our Lord's Supper observances are also pictures or types of the broken body and shed blood of the Lord on the Cross of Calvary. If we remember that the Lord's Supper is merely a memorial or remembrance, we do fine; but if we attempt to elevate it

beyond that we become guilty of the same doctrinal error that these Old Testament Jews were guilty of.

"And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me." (1 Corinthians 11:24-25)

2. It Was Short-Term (vs. 1 – 3)

These Old Testament sacrifices on the Day of Atonement, as well as all the other sacrifices and offerings had a short–term effect on the participants. They could never take away sin because they were merely shadows, but they also could not salve your conscience for very long. Every year when the Day of Atonement came around there was a fresh reminder that the sin problem was still around. In other words, if the blood of animals could pay for our sins, then why do we have to continuously go through this process. Thank God that we, as New Testament believers, never have to worry about the penalty for sin ever again.

3. It Was Powerless (v. 4)

The only practical purpose for the Old Testament sacrificial system was to prophesy and picture the death of Christ, and to remind Israel that the wages of sin is death. The blood of bulls and goats were powerless against sin, but the blood of Christ contains all the power that is needed to atone for every sin, past and present, now and forever.

"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." (1 John 1:7)

When Christ was on the Cross, He said, "It is finished," meaning that our sin debt had been paid in full.

Wiersbe says this regarding the inferiority of the Old Testament sacrificial system:

> Animal sacrifices could never completely deal with human guilt. God did promise forgiveness to believing worshipers (Lev. 4:20, 26, 31, 35), but this was a judicial forgiveness and not the removal of guilt from people's hearts. People lacked that inward witness of full and final forgiveness. They could not claim, "I have no more consciousness of sins." If those worshipers had been "once purged [from guilt of sin]" they would never again have had to offer another sacrifice.
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> So, the annual Day of Atonement did not accomplish "remission of sin" but only "reminder of sin." The annual repetition of the ceremony was evidence that the previous year's sacrifices had not done the job. True, the nation's sins were *covered;* but they were not *cleansed*. Nor did the people have God's inward witness of forgiveness and acceptance.

> Yes, there was a desperate need for a better sacrifice because the blood of bulls and of goats could not take away sins. It could cover sin and postpone judgment; but it could never effect a once-and-for-all redemption. Only the better sacrifice of the Son of God could do that.[1]

B. The Perfection of the New (vs. 5 – 10)

This passage is referencing Psalm 40:6 – 8:

> *"Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart."* (Psalm 40:6-8)

You will notice in the Psalms it says, "mine ears thou hast opened," but in the passage in Hebrews it says, "but a body hast thou prepared me." Paul may have been quoting from the Greek Septuagint rather than from the Hebrew text. I have no conclusive explanation for the difference except to say that Paul often paraphrased from Old Testament passages. Both passages are correct as they are rendered in the King James Bible. Exodus 21:1 – 7 offers a possible explanation. If the servant loved his master, his wife, and his children and chose to stay permanently, his ear was bored through at the doorpost as the mark of willing, lifelong service. The Hebrew text pictures the opened ear of the willing servant; the Greek text, which Hebrews quotes, brings the whole prepared body into view. Both describe the same obedient self-offering. Christ did not have His ears opened, but He did pay for His Bride (the Church) with His broken body and shed blood.

In this section Paul refers to all the sacrifices and offerings that are instructed in Leviticus 1 – 7. The point of this section is that Christ is the fulfillment of all that these Old Testament offerings typified. The important phrase in this section is "once for all." Christ's sacrifice put an end to the sacrificial system, because He is the fulfillment of it.

II. An Eternal Priest (vs. 11 – 18)

A. The Faulty System of the Old (v. 11)

The conclusion to this whole discussion is that the Old Testament priests and their sacrifices could never take away our sin. They offered sacrifices of all kinds continuously, but the debt for sin remained.

B. The Flawless Saviour of the New (vs. 12 – 18)

[1] Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, p. 313). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Christ's sacrifice removed the stain of sin once and for all. His work of redemption is fulfilled; He is sitting down. We have finally been "perfected" (meaning made whole or complete) by the blood of Christ.

Notice the Old Testament references here:

Verse 13 refers to Psalm 110:1:

"The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." (Psalm 110:1)

Verses 16 and 17 refer to a prophecy in Jeremiah:

"Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." (Jeremiah 31:31-34)

Christ's finished work on the Cross of Calvary not only eliminates the need to continuously offer sacrifices for sin, but it also removes God's memory of our sin. "It is finished" – the debt has been paid – our sins are gone for good. Amen!

"As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." (Psalm 103:12)

III. An Encouraging Principle (vs. 19 – 25)

There is a threefold invitation found here in these verses:

1. Let us draw near (v. 22)

We can get close to God. We have access. All that separated us from a Holy God has been removed by the blood of Christ. Because we have been given access to enter the Holy of Holies through the blood of Christ, God says here that we should take full advantage of that privilege.

2. Let us hold fast (v. 23)

Verse 23 has to do with being secure in our faith. Notice the phrases "full assurance of our faith" and "without wavering". If we can grow or mature up to the point where we understand these truths, then we will never again wrestle with insecurity regarding our relationship with Christ. Remember the primary target of this epistle was first century Jewish believers who were

being tempted to go back to their old religious system and forsake what they now had in Christ. Paul is securing them here. He is nailing down their faith, anchoring it, so they would not be tempted to turn back.

3. Let us consider one another (vs. 24-25)

Notice that he makes a practical application here regarding our attendance in the local church. God states that we are to gather so that we can *provoke* one another *unto love and to good works* as well as exhort one another. We so often tell people that they need to come to church for what they will receive by way of preaching and teaching, but here the Bible states that every member has a part to play in helping other believers.

You will notice that our gathering together in the church should increase as we draw closer to the time of Christ's return.

IV. An Earnest Promise (vs. 26 – 39)

A. Punishment for those who turn back. (vs. 26 – 31)

The great question here that has been debated for Millennia is whether this warning is written to believers who were tempted to turn back to the traditions and sacrificial system of Judaism, or was it written to those who were exposed to the truth of the gospel and indeed, understood it, but still rejected it. Perhaps the people that fell into the latter category were even professors of Christ but not true believers.

This passage and the warning attached is very similar to the warning given by Peter in 2 Peter 2:

"For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." (2 Peter 2:20-22)

Verse 28 alludes to an Old Testament principle found in Deuteronomy 17:2-7.

"15 One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established." (Deuteronomy 19:15)

Verse 29 then makes a present-day comparison of this principle. Paul was stating that if people were put to death in the Old Testament for committing idolatry, how much worse will the punishment be for rejecting the one and only genuine sacrifice for man's sin. And, because in the immediate context of the Letter to the Hebrews, those that rejected the blood of Christ's covenant were turning back to the earthly sacrifices of "the blood of bulls and goats", which could never take away sin, they were also in fact guilty of a worse kind of idolatry.

Personally, I believe that these verses could be applied to both "seekers" and true believers. The seekers needed to be persuaded to come all the way into genuine faith in Christ, and the truly born-again Jewish believers in Christ needed to be warned to not turn back; to not be ashamed of the Lord. The punishment for unbelievers ultimately will be the Lake of Fire, but there will also be temporal and eternal consequences to genuine believers who turn away from their faith in Christ. However, the eternal consequences will be a loss of reward, not a loss of salvation.

B. Reward for those who stand fast (vs. 32 – 39)

Paul is confident that these genuine believers in Christ, though discouraged at times, will in the end, remain faithful, and will be rewarded for it. Notice verse 39:

"But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul." (Hebrews 10:39)

This passage is really an encouragement to these Hebrew believers (and us) to keep going, to endure patiently the trials of the Christian life, and to resist the temptation to turn back.

Peter may have been referring to this passage when he gave a similar warning:

"Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen." (2 Peter 3:14-18)