

The Christmas Sacrifice

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[0 : 00] Hebrews chapter 10. Maybe a strange passage to some to look at for Christmas, but I hope it becomes clear. Hebrews chapter 10, verses 1 through 10.

For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come, instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near.

Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins.

But in these sacrifices, there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me.

[1 : 09] In burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, Behold, I have come to do your will, O God. As it is written of me in the scroll of the book.

When he said to the above, you have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings. These are according to the law now, the Old Testament.

But then he added, Behold, I have come to do your will. He does away with the first. In order to establish the second. And by that will, we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

That is the word of the Lord. You may be seated. Thank you, family.

Thank you so much. Thank you. In 2001, Jim Collins wrote the now classic book that many people have read called Good to Great.

[2 : 28] Especially if you're in business, Good to Great. It's an examination of how you can take a good company, a company that's been consistently doing well, and turn it into a great company, making it an exceptional company.

Even churches have used some of the principles in that book to help them grow and mature. However, Collins sought to answer the question, can a good company become a great company?

And if so, how? How? You could say then that the New Testament answers the question, how can a good covenant with God become a great covenant with God?

A covenant is a relationship established by two parties. In this case, God establishes relationship with people, with families, all through the Old Testament into the New.

He established these relationships by a sacrifice, by blood. How can a good covenant become a great covenant?

[3 : 44] So the answer to my question, how do we go from a good covenant to a great covenant, is simply this, we must have a Christmas sacrifice.

Now, the book of Hebrews is a very powerful book. And the funny thing about it, we don't know who wrote it. It was written to encourage Jewish, or what we call Hebrew Christians, not to return to Judaism.

They had become Christians, right? Here they were, obeying the law of Moses, and going along and making sacrifices like they were supposed to do. But then they saw Christ.

Then they believed in Jesus. Then they realized he was the end of the Old Testament, and something, he was the point that everything was pointing to. And they became Christians, the followers of Jesus.

Some today we call them completed Jews. That's what they called themselves. But they were being squeeze. They were being pressured.

[4 : 47] They were being persecuted by their Jewish neighbors to come back to Judaism. Stop playing around with that Jesus guy. He did, y'all.

We saw him die. Leave that Jewish guy, that Jewish dissident, that Jewish rebel. Come back to us.

And so the writer of Hebrews writes to encourage them not to go back. You see, he wants to show them that the new covenant is far superior to the old.

That Jesus is superior to Moses. That Jesus is superior to Aaron, the high priest. That Jesus is superior to the law and all of his sacrifices.

He even writes in the book, if you want just to have it in your mind, Hebrews 7.22. He says, this makes Jesus the guarantee of a better covenant. Hebrews 8.6 and 7.

[5 : 48] But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better since it is enacted on better promises.

For if the first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second. You know, it's funny. Whenever I hear of Christians converting to Judaism, or some groups going like the black Hebrew Israelites, they're turning back to the old covenant, what they don't understand is that they're leaving the better for the lesser.

The author is going to explain why. Why is the new covenant better than the old? Spoiler alert, again, it's about Christmas. First of all, the old covenant gave us imperfect pre-Christmas sacrifices.

That's the first four verses I read. The law, he says, is but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities.

The law could never, by the same sacrifices, make perfect those who draw near. Otherwise, they wouldn't have to be offered, right? But you're reminded of your sins, the writer says.

[7 : 23] Every time you sacrifice a goat or something, you're reminded that God is holy and you are not, and your sins are on you. And then he says, it's impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

Those are the reasons why the old covenant is not as good. It's still the word of God, but it's not as good as the new covenant.

Now, why is it not as good? Well, because of the reasons, but the problem is us. The problem is not the old covenant. It's the word of God. It was how God revealed how people could relate to him.

Because he is holy and sinners are sinners, and the Bible says the soul that sins shall die, in order to approach God, something had to be done.

And so God in mercy enacted the sacrificial system to remind the people that their sins are serious.

[8 : 33] And so an animal would die in your place. Death had to come. But an animal would die in your place so that you might approach God. But as the writer of Hebrews says, those sacrifices didn't take away your sins.

They were still there. They were covered, but they're still there. Now, he uses a word. I want to just take time with this. He says the old covenant was a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of the realities.

A shadow. Think of it this way. Jesus on the cross. And the glory of God's grace shines on him.

When you shine light on something of substance, what gets cast behind them is called a shadow.

Right? So here's Jesus hanging on the cross, the eternal son of God, and the light of God's glory and grace shines on him.

[9 : 44] What's behind him is what? The old covenant. With all of his sacrifices, all of his laws, all of his rituals, the old covenant is behind them. And when the light of God's glory hits him, what happens?

The cross of Christ is shadow cast back on the Old Testament. The Old Testament exists in the shadow of the cross of Jesus.

So when we read the Old Testament, what do we see? You have to see the shadow of the cross all over the Old Testament. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. But a shadow can't do anything to save you, can it? Right. Right. Right. It's not the substance.

Right. It's not the true form, the reality. It took Christmas for the old covenant, as it were, to catch up to the reality.

[10 : 46] Right. And now we see Christ. Christ couldn't save us, but he can. The Old Testament were, I call them like opening present or two before Christmas.

It's like God gave us some presents that you could open before Christmas came. That was all of the old covenant. But when Christmas came, you got to open the big present.

I know moms and dads, I know how you do it. I know. You might let your kids have a one present before Christmas. You can open something small, not the big box. You open a small box.

But when Christmas comes, they get the big box. The real present. The one you spent all that money on. You know what I'm saying? God did the same.

The old covenant, pre-Christmas sacrifice. But when the day came, we got to open the big present.

[11 : 58] Hallelujah. Have you opened that present yet? The new covenant, therefore, gives us the perfect Christmas sacrifice. Now, here's the thing. If you have a Bible in front of you, I want you to notice this, that the writer is quoting from Psalm chapter 40.

That happens in the New Testament. Sometimes the New Testament quotes the Old Testament to show us how they go together. You need them both. You got to read them both. You got to understand them both.

Because the shadow points to the reality, and the reality helps us understand the shadow. Amen? And so he's quoting from a Psalm of David, Psalm chapter 40, beginning in verse 5, and the psalmist says, sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me, and burnt offerings and sin offerings.

He's talking, the psalmist is talking to God. And burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, behold, I've come to do your will, O God, as it is written to me in the scroll of the book.

So what the writer of Hebrews is doing is putting those words in the mouth of Christ. He says those words were fulfilled.

[13 : 13] They were about David. David did speak them, but there was something more going on. Those words reflect the mind and the heart of the Savior who would come.

That's Jesus speaking now. And it's funny because in that Psalm, David is under great pressure. He's crying out to God for deliverance from his enemies.

He feels trapped in a muddy pit that is sucking him down. He doesn't have any solid ground to stand on for deliverance. You ever feel like that? You ever feel like you're trapped and there's no way out?

You ever feel like you're trapped and you're sinking? And you're wondering if somebody can pull you up, somebody can get you out of this pit. That was David and that's Psalm 40. And Jesus says, he takes those words on his lips because he knows something that we don't always remember.

He's the only one that can get you out of the pit. Now, my pastor said, my pastor, Dr. Boyce, made the point that David didn't describe what the pits really were.

[14 : 28] He made the point that it could be all kinds of pits. Pits of bad habit. Pits of hard circumstances and trouble. Pits where you just feel defeated. Pits where you messed up again.

And you feel trapped and you're sinking. And Jesus comes and says, I am the one who can get you out of the pit. Why? Because I went into the pit for you. And he delights, the psalmist says and Hebrew says that this one, he delights to do God's will.

He delights to do God's will even if it means hardship. Hardship. Now, how can we delight to do God's will even if it's hardship?

Even if doing his will is going to get you in a pit. Even if doing his will is going to cost you something. How is it possible for us now to delight in the will of God?

Well, here's what was being prophesied later. Jeremiah 31, 33. For this God is speaking to the prophet. This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord.

[15 : 47] I will put my law within them. I will write it on their hearts and I will be their God and they shall be my people. How does one delight in doing God's will, God's law, even in the midst of suffering?

It's because the law has been written on your hearts. It's because the new covenant that Christ was going to bring would put the law not on tablets of stone like Moses. Now, those laws and more would be written inside of me.

It would be written in my heart. It would be written deep down. See, I can delight in the will of God now because I know that his laws are written on my heart, that my sins have been taken away and that God has promised I will be your God.

You will be my people. That's a promise from the Lord. God solved the problem and he solved that there was only one way to fix it.

The people had broken his law and God had already planned how he would save us. All of us has messed up and thought, word, and deed.

[17 : 09] There's no one leaving this room unscathed. No one leaving this room without knowing the fact that you have sinned against God. And the only hope is a Christmas sacrifice.

The only hope is that Jesus, that the Son of God would take upon himself a body. Because remember, a sacrifice has to be made to make the covenant work, to enact the covenant.

What's the sacrifice? It has to be human because animals can't take away sins. But it has to be God so that his death can count for innumerable men of people.

So that his death could count for billions and trillions of people. So the psalmist says, Jesus, speaking through the psalmist, says, you have prepared a body for me.

You didn't want any more sacrifices, no more bulls and goats, no more lambs and doves or whatever. He says, you have prepared a body for me.

[18 : 26] The anointed one, the eternal Son of God, comes at Christmas to take a body. It means he's all, it means he always existed.

The body didn't, but the person did. The Son of God always existed and he comes to take a body at Christmas. A body that would become the only sacrifice that could cleanse us fully.

That cleanse our conscience, cleanse our lives. A sacrifice that would take away our sins, not merely cover them, but take them away. Christmas is the beginning of that moment when our sins will finally be done away with.

And all of our hang-ups and screw-ups will be placed upon him. In this sacrifice, the eternal Son of God sacrifices the glories of heaven, the glories of majesty, angels bowing down in his presence, living and dwelling in glorious light and radiance and peace with his Father.

The eternal Son of God sacrifices all of that that he may come and be conceived in a womb, grow in the oven of his mother's womb, come screaming into the world to live as one of us.

[20 : 05] Now, that blows my mind all to pieces, all I can't even get my head around that. But that's what happened at Christmas. Christ's sacrifice will do what all of the old covenant sacrifices could not.

Our sins are taken away if we trust in him. He is the bodily Christmas sacrifice and the only one who can get us out of the pits we've fallen into because of sin.

And yes, you're in the pits. And he will rescue you if you will simply trust in him fully. Well, Jesus is the Christmas sacrifice.

He saves us, he says, according to the will of God. Now, this is a plan. I mean, this is not something that just happened, but it was planned and planned, but there's more to it here.

Because Jesus comes to do the will of God, which is mentioned three times, here is the punchline. Verse 10. And by that will, the will of God to send the Son of God to take away the sins of the people of God that we all might become adopted children of God.

[21 : 18] By that will, we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Sanctified.

Once for all sacrifice. What does it mean to be sanctified? That's a great word and we use it all the time, but who knows what it means? Literally, he says this, we have been and are being sanctified.

That's how it reads literally. We have been, past, and are being sanctified, continuing into the present. Sanctified means to be made holy. Here's a word we all know. Holy.

God sees you as holy, meaning you're set apart for him. That's what holiness means. Holy means to be set apart for God.

It involves moral purity because that's what it means to be set apart for God. But it means, basically, that you are his, for his use alone. Now, this Christmas, my wife had some people over to the house.

[22 : 26] She always does that. People over to the house. Eating my food. But this Christmas, she brought out some dishes I forgot she had.

I mean, you had the big dish, the big plate, and then the little plate within the big plate. You had these nice little forks. You got the big fork, little fork, and, you know, all that stuff that people do when they have class.

I have no class. And they're very Christmassy looking, red and white, beautiful plates. Here's the thing. I've seen those plates in years.

We never eat on those plates. I don't even know where she got them from. Those plates are set apart. Small h, holy.

Set apart for her use alone. No one else gets to use them until she says, okay.

[23 : 30] You're that plate to God. See, you, everybody used to eat on you. You got chipped, cracked.

You shouldn't, they weren't supposed to, to, to put you in a dishwasher, but they did anyway. Somebody knows what I'm talking about.

You all beat up. But then God comes along and says, you know something, Ethan? No, no, no, no. No more of that. The Christmas sacrifice of Christ for you now makes you holy.

Meaning, God is the only one who can use you now. You're not for everybody else's use anymore. You're not common for common use.

You now are for me. For me. And God don't share. When you belong to him, you're his alone.

[24 : 40] And so now, Ethan belongs to God and God will use him as he wants to. This is what it means to be made holy. God takes you for himself.

He possesses you. He says, you're mine, no one else can have you and I'm going to use you for my glory. I'm going to use you to make me look good and when you make me look good, you're going to get blessed. By that sacrifice of Christ, we're made holy.

All who put their trust in Jesus, all who put their trust in the Christmas sacrifice and the Son of God becoming one of us, that he might grow, that he might mature and grow and as John the Baptist said when he saw him, behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

There's a straight line from the manger all the way to the cross, a straight path. And in that sacrifice, God says, you're mine forever.

once and for all. You don't have to sacrifice anything to make God love you because it's already been done for you.

[26 : 03] but holiness is powerful. It isn't just about our position before God.

He sees you now as his. It's also about the transformation of your life. You see, when you belong to God, he will not leave you like you are.

Guys, it's like when you got married. If you've been married for any length of time, you're not the same guy you were when you got married. Your wife improves you.

I hope so. I'm serious. I'm not the man I was. Sandy, God has used her to make me a better man. And I like to believe God has used me to make her a better woman.

I slip up. I know I mess up. But I think, I pray that God is using me in her life. when you're made holy, God makes you better in practice.

[27 : 12] His moral purity invades you. You want to do what is right before him now. He gives us his character.

That is, he makes us look more and more like Jesus. Now, here's the thing. You look at us and you say, he look like Jesus? Well, you stick around.

Did you know him before? If you knew the person before and now, and you know them now and they've been growing in Christ, you're going to see there's a difference there. Oh yeah, there's a big difference. Motivations, for one thing.

Why do you do what you do now? You see, before God made you his, made you holy because of the sacrifice of Jesus, you live for your own will.

You pray this way. Hallowed be my name. My kingdom come. My will be done on earth and everywhere else.

[28 : 14] That's how we pray before we're made holy, before we are in, we are engaged by the living God. It's my will be done.

Some of you are still living that way. It won't work because you're just not powerful enough.

I don't care how much money you got, Bill Gates isn't powerful enough. Elon Musk isn't powerful enough. Nobody is powerful enough to deal with the sins in their lives.

We're all slaves. But Jesus is powerful enough and his holiness is powerful enough to transform you more and more because you see he, his blood is a ransom that is paid to buy you out of slavery so that now he sets you free.

Before God takes you as holy, you are a slave. You're trapped in the pit of your own making and the pit that other people dug for you.

[29 : 42] And you're trapped and you can't get out. You're like David in Psalm 40 again and you're looking for a way out. You're clawing and trying to pull your way out and, you know, scale the muddy sides of the pit and you're trying and you get so high you may go up a little bit but then you fall.

You never quite make it out. So God in his mercy makes us holy.

He takes us out of the pit but we're covered in mud and muck and stink. You haven't been in a pit?

And so what he does now is for the rest of your life he's rinsing the mud off. As you keep living and keep walking he sees you in his presence as pure.

You're okay with him because you're covered because Christ saved you. His sacrifice is upon you but you got this dirt on you in practice. And so the rest of your life the Lord is just helping you he's rinsing you off.

[30 : 59] Just rinsing you off. But you fall down and get it's okay just rinse you off some more. You're not going to be fully clear of the muck until he comes again or until you go to be with him.

But that's what God is doing in your life because he's made you holy. And he won't stop. He's committed.

And holiness in practice is not an option. If you truly experience the Christmas sacrifice here's what Hebrews 12 says.

Strive for peace with everyone and for the holiness peace and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God. That no root of bitterness that's unholiness now. Root of bitterness unlike God root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble and by many become defiled.

[32 : 04] That no one is sexually immoral. That means using sex in a way that God has not designed. Or he uses the word unholy like Esau.

Striving means running after. God says. Strive for holiness. Strive he says.

Don't think you will grow in Christ by accident. There is no accidental holiness. He says strive. That is discipline yourself.

That involves it. Because of what he's done. Because you've experienced the Christmas sacrifice. Because you've experienced God taking you and making you holy. God saying you're no longer common.

Now you belong to me. And I'm going to walk with you. Because you've experienced that. Now he says the fruit of that is that you strive. You give yourself to the pursuit of a life that exalts him.

[33 : 07] And here's where it gets tricky. You're not saved by the pursuit. The pursuit demonstrates that you've been saved.

That the Lord is real to you. That the sacrifice of Christ and the birth of Jesus is not some Christmas tradition. No, it is by life.

I'm reminded of a story. I'm almost done y'all, so hang in there. A story a pastor told. He was a young man, wanted to see him. And so he's, okay, let's make an appointment.

Guy comes to meet him. And he said, he tells the pastor, I was on a recent business trip. I stayed too late at the bar, you know, me, you know, all my coworkers hanging out at the bar, you know, hanging out and talking and drinking.

I stayed too late and one of my colleagues, this lady and I did something we shouldn't have done. I slept with her.

[34 : 13] and he looks at the pastor and says to the pastor, now what? What happens now? What do I do? The pastor took a deep breath because when you're in those situations like that, it's tight.

It's tough even for a pastor. It's tough for the person, tougher for them, I'm supposing, but for the pastor, it's still tough because you know you got to tell them the truth. So, the pastor begins to talk with him and make sure the young man understood biblically what he must do.

He said, have you prayed to ask God for forgiveness and pardon? He asked him that question. He said, have you confessed your sin to the young woman you were involved with and told her that it would never happen again and it was wrong to happen in the first place if he told her that?

He said, did you confess to your wife and ask her forgiveness? And then he asked him, let's be honest, this is the 21st century.

Have you been tested for some kind of sexually communicable disease? Because you can't go near your wife until you've got that straight.

[35 : 32] young man listened to him. Didn't comment, no expression. When the pastor finished, the young man pushed his chair back and said, I came for grace, not for discipline.

You disappoint me, pastor. there. That's not striving for holiness.

holiness. What the young man was saying, that God and those who communicate his grace must do their part to make sure that life does not become difficult or inconvenient for me, no matter what I do.

what he was saying is that I don't want to have to obey God.

I'm saved by grace, right? It's like we say to God, if you really love me, then you would not bother me or limit me or make demands on me.

[36 : 53] But that's exactly what Christmas and Good Friday and Easter do. Next demands. If you believe in me, I will transform you.

And yes, you're going to screw up. Yes, you're going to fall. But if you confess your sins, I am faithful and just to forgive your sins and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness, that's what it means to continue to strive for holiness.

Sanctified once and forever, but the proof of it, the proof of it, that it's really happened, that you've met him, that you've been transformed, that he is at work in you, the proof of it is a pursuit of holiness.

holiness. Not making excuses for my sin, but accepting responsibility while calling upon Jesus to continue to purify and cleanse me and help me to honor him.

I said it's not popular, y'all got real quiet. It's okay, it's all right, I know you love me. Merry Christmas, that's what Christmas begins in us.

[38 : 22] It begins in us this desire to want God, to want Jesus, and to please him in every way. It produces in us a desire to sacrifice for him.

Not so that we can be saved, but we sacrifice for him because we know he has drawn us to himself.

We know we are forgiven. We know we are cleansed. The Christmas sacrifice demands a sacrifice from his people. And because I love Jesus, I limit myself.

But Kevin, you're free. Kevin, I'm free. Yes. I'm free to obey God. And that's a whole level of freedom.

I'm free to sacrifice my body, to give my body as a living sacrifice to God now. That's Romans 12, 1 and 2. I'm free now to offer the fruit of my lips, the sacrifice of praise and of doing good.

[39 : 35] That's Hebrews 13, 11 through 16, if you get a chance to read it. I'm free to give myself to God. So, have you experienced Christmas today?

Have you found that Jesus is truly that sacrifice for your sins? That he is the God man who sets you free? That his sacrifice actually means something to you now?

his sacrifice breaks your heart and transforms your life. One story, true story I heard, which is really striking, just because it's a striking story.

It was a terrible hail storm. Man, his wife were caught in it, huge hail. You've heard of those big hail stones that can fall and hurt you. It's one of those things.

The hail was as large as baseballs, according to the report. Came upon them, and they couldn't find enough shelter, so the husband covered his wife with his own body.

[40 : 48] And the hail kept falling and falling and beating upon this man, and finally he lost consciousness, and he just fell over his wife, and he continued to be pounded by the hail.

When the storm was over and they found them, the man was left with scars from where the balls had battered away at him. The remnants of sores and cuts and abrasions would forever be reminders to him of the day he saved his wife's life.

They interviewed the wife. She said, every time I look at the scar on his head, on his neck, on his ear, I love him more.

Every time I see the scar, I love him more because he sacrificed himself for me. When you get to heaven, Jesus will be the only one with scars that you see.

Your scars will be erased. You'll be totally healed. healed. Every mark, every cut, gone. Every keloid, I got some of those, gone.

[42 : 03] Every ache, every pain, healed, all done with. You will look so good. But the son of God, who gave himself and took the beating for you, he will forever have the scars of his sacrifice.

And listen saints, start now. Look at the scars. Look at the scars. Start now. The baby in the manger is about to be scarred.

The baby in the manger is about to be beaten. The baby in the manger is about to be stabbed. The baby in the manger is about to have his hair pulled out, his beard, and everything, and they put a crown of thorns.

That baby in the manger is destined for death, and a gory death. Ah, it was for you.

It was for me. And so every time you look at the manger, don't stay at the manger. Don't stay at the manger. Look at the manger and make your way to the cross.

[43 : 18] Be in awe of the manger. Be blown away by the manger. Who's in the manger? The Son of God made flesh. What?

Then keep going to Calvary and be blown away all over again, that he would do that for you.

Merry Christmas. Father, bless your word to your people's hearts and all who hear. may we deal with what we have seen and heard.

May we deal with the reality of who's in that manger and what he came to do for messed up people like us who don't deserve grace.

We don't, we never could. We don't deserve your mercy. We never could. But Father, you gave it to us because of your kindness and eternal love. Help us to respond to that.

[44 : 23] Help us to give ourselves to you today and forever, every day because of that. Not our will be done, Father.

Your will be done forever in us and through us. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.