

20. The Perfect Sacrifice of God

May 3, 2015

As I was putting this sermon together the last couple of days, I was facing a mental brick wall for my opening illustration. So, I asked this question to the friends on my Facebook page:

“What is one thing you HAVE TO do over and over again and you feel like that you are NOT going anywhere?” Almost instantly, a good friend from Indiana replied, “Vote.” No kidding!!! In the last 7 years, we – I am talking about ‘conservative voters’ – had a bunch of losers for the offices from the President to the Congress. We didn’t have one single good Presidential candidate since the late Ronald Reagan. They were pretty much “lesser-of-two-evils.”

When you have to do something and you don’t have good materials to work with, the result is very much predictable. It means that you might have to do the same thing over and over and over.

To present a sacrifice at the temple in the ancient Jerusalem, you had to have three elements: priest, temple (a.k.a., sanctuary), and sacrifice.

In chapters 5 through 8, we learned that Jesus, our Chief High Priest was superior to any human priest, because He is High Priest in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron, another sinful human.

In chapter 9, we also learned that the heavenly sanctuary is far superior to the earthly one, because it is the real thing, not a copy.

Now in chapter 10, the author of the Book of Hebrews is about to tell us regarding the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ that was superior to all the imperfect ones that were offered under the Old Covenant.

A. LIMITATIONS OF THE ANIMAL SACRIFICES

Hebrews 10:1-4 For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. 2 For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. 3 But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. 4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.

All of you ladies have at least one cookbook at home. When your husband becomes irritable because he is hungry, open up the page that contains the most delicious looking cuisine photo out of that cookbook and give it to him so that he can eat it. Now you have a husband who is very hungry, irritable, and annoyed. It doesn’t matter how scrumptious that cuisine photo looks to us, but it cannot satisfy our taste, fill our stomachs, or nourish our bodies. The food photo only points to something beyond itself – the real food, as the OT animal sacrifices only pointed to the perfect sacrifice of God, Jesus Christ.

When the OT priests prepared, sacrificed, and presented animals to the Lord, it was not something they could do as they pleased. Everything was prescribed by the Lord – from their clothing, how the animals were sacrificed, what kind of offering was to be used for specific rituals. One time two sons of high priest Aaron got drunk and

sacrificed an animal however they wanted, the Lord fried them on the spot extra crispy with a shaft of fire from heaven.

In v1, we find the word 'image'. In Greek, it is "eikon", of course, we get our English word 'icon' from this Greek word and Latin. It actually does mean a 'portrait' with a complete representation. All the sacrifices they did in the OT, such as burnt offering, sin offering, trespass offering, meal offering, drink offering, and peace offering, typified the sacrifice of Christ and revealed some aspect of His work on the cross as they are described in the Book of Leviticus chapters 1 through 7.

Then, some of you may have this question in your mind: Why were the OT sacrifices not good enough? The Lord told them to do it and they did it for hundreds of years. Yes, thousands upon thousands of people brought their sacrifices with sincere hearts and they were blessed by the Lord, but the majority of the sacrifices were done in vain because of their idolatrous and disobedient hearts.

Besides, I find two limitations with the OT animal sacrifices:

1) The Laws of Moses could never make anyone perfect. – v1

The cleansing was ceremonial. It worked only for outside conformity, but nothing in the inner heart.

2) The Laws of Moses could never make anyone sinless permanent. – v4

The evidence of the non-permanence is annual sacrifices. If it was a one-time deal, why would they offer sacrifices over and over again?

The annual Day of Atonement, a.k.a. Yom Kippur, did not accomplish "remission of sin", but only "reminder of sins," because the previous year's sacrifices were not good enough for the present year's sins. Yes, their sins were covered, but not forgiven.

B. FULFILLED BY CHRIST

Hebrews 10:5-10 Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But a body You have prepared for Me. 6 In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. Then I said, "Behold, I have come— In the volume of the book it is written of Me— To do Your will, O God." 8 Previously saying, "Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them" (which are offered according to the law), 9 then He said, "Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God." He takes away the first that He may establish the second. 10 By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

The author of this Book is quoting Psalm 40:6-8 from the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the OT, so the wording is slightly different, but the same meaning as the original Hebrew texts from Psalm 40. Regardless, it is obvious that this verse applies to Jesus in His incarnation and He is the One fulfilling the Old Covenant sacrifices.

In v7, it says, "In the volume of the book it is written of Me." Whether the unbelievers want to admit it or not, the Bible is the most phenomenal Book ever written. Written by about 40 men from all walks of life, they wrote over a period of approximately 1500 years and in 3 different languages – Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. But the Bible consistently has one theme and central figure – Jesus Christ. The OT prophesies the NT, and the NT fulfills the OT. How is this possible? Because all these 66 Books are inspired by one Divine Author – the Holy Spirit who is God Himself.

I want you guys to notice a phrase in v6 and 8: "had no pleasure". It doesn't mean that the Old Covenant sacrifices were wrong or the sacrifices of the sincere followers of God were not acceptable to Him. It is generally speaking, because as I pointed out to you, the majority of the sacrifices were nothing more than rituals without obedient hearts. No amount of sacrifices can substitute for obedience.

This applies to us as well. Many believers do their Christian routines – coming to church on Sunday and Midweek services, singing worship songs, giving monetary offerings, and volunteering to do work at the church. They are all good, but if we don't do them with our obedient hearts, our work and offerings are no different than the vain sacrifices the OT Jews brought to the temple.

There is a great theology in v9 and 10 – "Sanctification." It means "set apart." But set apart from what? From our own will and the carnal and worldly influence. It is NOT isolation, rather insulation. We don't need to hide away in a monastery to avoid the world. We can be where we are but not be influenced by the demonic, carnal, and pure garbage from the world, but keeping our eyes focused on the Lord Jesus. Jesus who was a 100% human had His own will to do if He chose, but He willingly discarded His will and followed God the Father's will. That's what we are supposed to do to follow Him.

Romans 12:1-2 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Now you see why Jesus' own sacrifice is so much superior to the Old Covenant sacrifices? Those animals didn't have a choice. They were bred, chosen, and brought to the temple for a sacrificial purpose. Then, against their own will, they were slaughtered. But for Jesus, He willingly did all that for us, died and overcame the death and rose again. He is the Perfect Sacrifice of God for our salvation.

C. ONE FOR ALL, ONCE FOR ALL, FREE FOR ALL

Hebrews 10:11-14 And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. 12 But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, 13 from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. 14 For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.

Instead of the sacrifices of thousands and thousands of sheep and bulls during the OT period, Jesus gave Himself as one atoning sacrifice for all mankind, once for all and free for all. Because He was the perfect Sacrifice, there is no more sacrifice for anyone to do anymore. That is one of the reasons, Jesus could declare, "It is finished," on the cross.

This brings a very important question to those who try so hard to find a favor from God with good work, "If His sacrifice was perfect and there is nothing for anyone to do, is there still any possibility that my good work or behavior going to earn a favor from God to earn my salvation to heaven?" The answer is, "Absolutely NO."

Colossians 2:8-10 Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic princi-

ples of the world, and not according to Christ. 9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; 10 and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.

When we take what man says as even near in authority to what God says, we are cheating ourselves.

The false teachers of the time of the Church of Colossi did not go out and win the lost, no more than the cultists do today. They often "spiritually kidnapped" converts from churches. Most of the people I have talked with who are members of cults were at one time or another associated with Christian churches. Like two Jehovah's Witness people who came to our home one Saturday morning long ago. One of them was a former Catholic nun. She went from a nun to none for the sake of the cult that demands work to earn a favor from their false god.

How is it possible for false teachers to capture people? There are two answers:

1) These "captives" are ignorant of the truths of the Word of God.

Hosea 4:6a My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge

A grounded, growing, and grateful believer will not be led astray from Jesus. I found this writing from somewhere, here it is:

If his spiritual roots are deep in Christ, he will not want any other soil.

If Christ is his sure foundation, he has no need to move.

If he is studying and growing in the Word, he will not be easily enticed by false doctrine.

If his heart is overflowing with thanksgiving to God, he will not even consider turning from the fullness he has in Christ.

2) These "captives" thought that they can earn their salvation from God. It's pride.

Just as the devil fell from heaven because of his pride, humans continuously sin against the Lord because of our pride. We cannot add anything upon God's grace.

D. BENEFITS TO THE BELIEVERS

Hebrews 10:15-18 But the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us; for after He had said before, 16 "This is the Covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them," 17 then He adds, "Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." 18 Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin.

We can serve our Lord out of a cringing feeling of failure to measure up, or we can serve Him out of gratitude for the work of grace He has fully brought into our life. Grace is by far a superior motivation to guilt.

The author of this Book quoted this out of Jeremiah 31 previously in chapter 8, and now here again.

E. APPLICATION

The power of God's Spirit residing within us is sufficient for us to live life fully, to live life fruitfully, and to live life freely from the shackles of sin and from the slavery of legalism.