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Sermon 25

Hebrews 10:1-18

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Go ahead and open your Bibles to the book of Hebrews, chapter 10. We will continue on our chapter-by-chapter study of this epistle. I intentionally asked Zach to do our corporate reading from Psalm 40, because it factors into our chapter tonight. In fact, it’s really kind of at the center of what the writer of Hebrews is revealing about Christ and His work as our high priest. Which is – if you’re joining us right now, we’re ten chapters in, so you’re a little behind, but we’ve been looking at, primarily, through the book of Hebrews, the writer’s desire that we, as believers, would persevere faithfully to the end of our life; that we would follow Jesus, that we would remain faithful, that we wouldn’t drift away from Him by the deceitfulness of sin, or be intimidated by the world, and quit, and give up our witness, but that we would hold fast to our confession. He’s been pointing out that we primarily do that together, corporately, as a body – we hold fast to Jesus by looking to Him, by listening to Him, by considering Him. So, we’ve gotten these awesome, kind of unique glimpses of who Christ is through His role as prophet, as king, and then, primarily, as our Great High Priest. So, chapter 10 really becomes the final word that he’s going to give us on the high priestly work of Christ.

So, this passage factors in and – if you could put Psalm 40 on the screen again – in verse 6 he says this,

In sacrifices and offerings you have not delighted, but you have given me an open ear. Burnt offerings and sin offerings you have not required.

We’ve been discussing how everything in the Old Testament pointed to Christ and it was like a shadow. It was a foreshadowing of who Christ would be and what He would accomplish. The whole ceremonial law, with the Levitical priesthood, and the bulls, and the goats, and the lambs, and the Tabernacle, and the Ark, and the Mercy Seat on top of the Ark, and the Day of Atonement, and all of this pointing to Christ. We’ve already talked about, we’ve already discussed, how the blood of bulls and goats was never actually given to cleanse our conscience, to actually remove sin, and to do away with guilt. It was all pointing to something greater, namely, the perfect work of Jesus. So, why does he say… This is Old Testament, right? This is David, some 1000 years before the incarnation of Jesus, when Jesus enters this world. Why is David saying this and then in the middle of it going, “You don’t desire sacrifices. You’ve given me an open ear”? What’s he talking about?

I’ll interrupt that thought with this story. So, I’ve got a wife, and two daughters, and two sons. One of my daughters and my wife have a gluten allergy. My wife had a good run. She didn’t really develop that until into her 30s and I think, “You had your moment in the sun,” you know? But my daughter was around seven or eight. And I always felt so bad. One, when it was first happening and you were wondering, “Why is this kid writhing?” which, if you’re a good parent you will try to think through. Then, I just felt sad seeing how she was missing out. It's gotten better, but at the beginning she’d be like, “Here, try my pizza,” and I’m just not good at acting or lying, and I’d be like, “Oh, yeah, that tastes just like the other pizza I’m about to go back to.” So, I just felt bad.

So, I remember, this lady came to camp one summer and she told us about this doctor that she had gone to for something. Uh, not a doctor - - a practitioner of sorts. There was a condition that she had, and I won’t go into all of that, but this guy got rid of it through this practice, and I was like, “You know what? If it won’t hurt her, I’ll give it a go.” There’s no known cure and there’s no pill to take to eat gluten, so I was like, “I’ll give it a go for her to not have to worry about it.” So, there were two doctors. I forget where the one was but the other one was in Virginia Beach and I was like, “We’re going to the one in Virginia Beach, because in case it doesn’t work…we’ll go to the beach.” So, we packed up and went to Virginia Beach and we went and saw this guy, and about five minutes in, I was beginning to be not as optimistic. What he does – I shouldn’t even tell you this – he was going to put these pins in my daughter’s ear, like acupuncture type stuff. I thought, “That’s an ancient practice – sure.” Then, I made a mistake and I said, “Why the ear?” and he said, "Well,” and he got way too excited, and he took me over to a drawing, and there was a picture of an ear and a picture of a baby, of a fetus. And the ear had been drawn, in shape and form, to look like the fetus, the baby. And he said, “Do you see how the fetus is represented in the ear?” And I said, “Yes, I do, in this drawing. I do see that.” I didn’t even have to squint. And he started walking through how the ear forms and develops in this same shape, because it’s like – and then he made this tiny, tiny step – he said the ear is like the breaker box to the whole body, and when something goes wrong you can heal it through the ear. Then, I started thinking, “When can we get to the beach,” right? So, he gently put these tiny little pins into my daughter’s ear. You had to wear them a year and then take them out – and she still has to eat sub-par pizza.

That’s not the moral of the story. The moral of the story is that I don’t believe that the ear is the breaker box to the body. But why does David say this? Why does he say, “You don’t desire bulls and goats and actual sacrifice,” even though God is the one who set up this system? The sacrificial system was God’s idea. It was His gracious provision. And how and why does it relate to the perfect work of Jesus. For that, we’ll look at Hebrews 10. In verse 1, he says,

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. **2**Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins? **3**But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. **4**For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

He's really kind of summarizing everything we’ve come to up to this point about the sacrificial system and saying this was all shadow. It was never designed to actually take away your sin. But he’s getting back to the point. There was beauty in the Old Testament system. God was drawing near to His people. He was making provision for us to be back in a relationship with Him, but even in that provision there was a constant reminder of two things – our sin and the separation that exists between us and God. We did not have – and ‘we’ being the nation of Israel – so not really ‘we’ but ‘they’ – they did not have full access to God. Every time they went to worship, what they could remember is, “This animal doesn’t really take away my sin, but I have to keep offering it. And I don’t have full access and relationship to my God, and I can see that by the sets of curtains and the tribe that, alone, is set apart to even serve in the Temple. Let alone, the one person, one day a year, who can go into the Holy of Holies and not stay for any length of time, but has to come right back out. Reminding us that we don’t belong, we’re sinful, we’re separated from God by our sin.” But that’s God’s grace. That was God’s grace. Even the moral law and what it does.

When he says “law” right here, he’s talking about the ceremonial law. Sometimes in the New Testament, you have to, by the context, distinguish or determine if he’s talking about the whole Law or if he’s just talking about the moral law, that we typically refer to as the Ten Commandments, or if he’s talking about the ceremonial law, the priests and the sacrifices. Here, he primarily has in view the ceremonial law, but even the moral law, right? The Ten Commandments, in and of itself, wasn’t given to show us how to be saved but that we need to be saved. The sacrifices weren’t given so that we could have our sins removed but that we could understand the work that would have to be done when the Messiah came, when the Suffering Servant would really come, when the shadow would give way to the reality of Christ. It could never do it – the blood of bulls and goats could never actually take away sin. We’ve seen this. We’ve talked about this. But they would do this all the time. Day-in-and-day-out, year-in-and-year-out, they would offer these sacrifices.

Jump down to verse 11 – we’ll come back – and he talks about this some more. He says,

And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. **12**But when Christ[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+10&version=ESV#fen-ESV-30129b)] had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, **13**waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet.

Yes, they stood all the time and there’s this contrast. They’re always standing and always serving, and always sacrificing, because it never actually atoned for anything. He says, “You know this because it never cleansed your conscience.” He said earlier, wouldn’t they have stopped if it could actually cleanse your conscience? They would have stopped with the sacrifices. They would have been like, “You’ve given enough. You don’t have to bring a lamb here anymore. Your conscience is now cleansed.” He’s saying that the mere fact that they continued to do it shows that it was pointing to something greater, and then he spells it out: Jesus has come and He offered the once-for-all, perfect sacrifice – himself. We saw earlier that it brings eternal redemption. He’s able to save to the uttermost because of who He is and what He’s accomplished. And He still serves as our Great High Priest.

Back up to verse 5. The blood of bulls and goats can’t save, and here we’re going to get into our quotation from Psalm 40, and maybe get our ear question answered. It says, “Consequently,” because the blood of bulls and goats can’t save…

Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said,…

So, go ahead and get the picture in your mind. It’s talking about the incarnation. Now, we know that the incarnation happened. Jesus was formed in the womb of Mary and on Christmas morning He was born. The star was shining and angels were singing. But here, what the writer of Hebrews wants us to picture is not so much that moment in history, but this conversation outside of that, between the Eternal Son and the Father. There’s this work of redemption to be done and this conversation takes place.

**5**Consequently, when Christ[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+10&version=ESV#fen-ESV-30122a)] came into the world, he said,

“Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired,
    but a body have you prepared for me;
**6**in burnt offerings and sin offerings
    you have taken no pleasure.
**7**Then I said,

(This is Jesus speaking.)

‘Behold, I have come to do your will, O God,
     as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.’”

So, he’s quoting the same verses that we just read – so, what’s different? Did you see it? When we read it in Psalm 40, He said,

An ear you have opened for me.

But in Hebrews 10, He said,

A body you have prepared for me.

Sometimes this happens when the New Testament quotes the Old Testament and it doesn’t seem to be very consequential, but this seems to be a fairly drastic difference. What’s going on here? Well, what’s going on here is that the writer of Hebrews always quotes from the Septuagint. That’s the Greek translation of the Old Testament. Our Bibles – if you have an ESV, NIV, NAS, whatever – all the good ones – they go right from the Hebrew to English, and you would probably even see if you turned back to Psalm 40. There should be a little 1 next to, “You have opened my ear,” and if you follow that to the bottom of your page in your Bible, it will say, “Lit. ‘an ear you have dug out.’” What’s going on, is that in Hebrew it seems to be this idiom, this picture, and it’s the same idea that “you have woven together a body for me,” but in the Hebrew what is being emphasized in the creation of this body, is the ear. The ear becomes the symbol for the entire body, but why the ear? Well, the ear is obviously what we use to hear with, we know that. So, what would that have to do with, “You don’t desire sacrifices; you want me to have an open ear, so you have dug out, you have formed a body that would have ears for me.” The writer of Hebrews sees this and he understands it and he wants to emphasize this. “You don’t desire dumb animals to be killed. That doesn’t do anything.” Over, and over, and over again, you will see this in the Old Testament. Hosea 6:6 says it this way. God is speaking,

For I desire steadfast love[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hosea+6&version=ESV#fen-ESV-22174a)] and not sacrifice,
    the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

 Listen to this from 1 Samuel 15:22. This is when Samuel is confronting Saul. Saul has disobeyed God but then used the goods and animals he got in disobeying God and turned them into a sacrifice. Samuel says,

And Samuel said,

“Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices,
    as in obeying the voice of the Lord?
Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,
    and to listen than the fat of rams.

You can see this all through the Old Testament, especially in the prophets, where God is saying, “I am sick of your rams, and your lambs, and your bulls. Quit burning incense to me.” Why? “Because your heart is far from me, and that’s made evident by your disobedience. I desire obedience. I desire a broken and contrite heart, not these animals.” So, when Jesus is coming into the world, what Jesus is saying is, “You don’t want any more lambs. You don’t want any more sacrifices. The time for that is ending. You have prepared a body for me.” Jesus, in the incarnation, would take on a human body, real flesh, real blood, and He says, “I have come to do your will, O God.” What’s He saying? “I’ll obey. I will hear your Word and obey your will, on behalf of a human race that has only ever disobeyed.” Jesus has come to obey the will of God, and He’s saying, “My ear is open. Tell me and I’ll do it.”

John 12:49. Jesus is speaking.

For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak.

John 14:31. Jesus is again speaking,

But I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us go from here.

Matthew – maybe the most famous one – Matthew 26:39, in the Garden.

And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.”

Paul talks about it this way, in Philippians 2:8,

8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

The writer of Hebrews wants us to see what David understood about the Greater Son. He’s coming to obey, even though His obedience would mean the sacrifice of His life, of His own body. That’s why Jesus was put together in the womb of Mary by the work of the Holy Spirit. His ear was formed. His fingers, His toes, His mouth, His eyes, His DNA were woven together. Why? So He could lay down that life as a perfect offering to His Father.

Verse 8, back in Hebrews 10.

When he said above, “You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings” (these are offered according to the law), 9 then he added, “Behold, I have come to do your will.” He does away with the first in order to establish the second. 10 And by that will we…

And now the ‘we’ means us, the Church, all those who are redeemed.

… we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

He does away with the first to bring in the second. What’s he saying? That’s done. The Old Testament is done. The Old Covenant is done. We aren’t unhitched from it, as if the Old Testament doesn’t matter, and it doesn’t still speak to us, and doesn’t still inform us in how we’re to relate to God and how to approach Him in worship. But it’s done as far as the ceremonial requirements. Why? It's finished. We sang about it. It's finished. The shadow gave way to the reality. All those pictures. We’ve looked at it. It's a beautiful picture. The final, dramatic act of the Tabernacle, Temple – everything it pointed to with the candles, and the showbread, and the Ark, and the woven veils – everything it pointed to – remember the final act, the last thing it gets to do in prefiguring Christ. Do you remember what happens in the Temple? When Jesus is outside the gate, dying on the cross, and actually saying out loud, “It is finished!” the veil is torn from top to bottom. All that separated us is removed. What is God saying in that last dramatic act? He’s grabbing the top of the veil and ripping it, and He’s saying, “Come in. You now have full access through Christ. What couldn’t remove your guilty conscience has been replaced by what has removed the guilt, and sin, and the pollution, and the shame. All of it has been removed by the perfect offering of Jesus.”

Jump down to verse 14.

For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

That’s the second time he has said, “Sanctified.” The first time was in verse 10 and he said we have been sanctified by the offering of Jesus. Here he says, “Those who are being sanctified.” So, typically, when Paul, in the New Testament, talks about sanctification, when he uses that term, he’s talking about the ongoing process, the work of the Holy Spirit, that we participate in, in becoming more like Christ. In making us more like Christ, when we are being made holy in our practice, when that which has been done for us in Christ positionally, is becoming a reality in our life. This first time, in verse 10, when he says we have been sanctified, the writer of Hebrews is using it the way that he primarily uses this word, which is in the ceremonial way; that we’ve been set apart as holy, that we’ve been made fit for worship. You see this in the Old Testament. When they would sprinkle articles in the Temple with blood, it was so that it was sanctified so that it could be used in worship. What he’s saying is that that has now happened to you. That’s happened to us, definitively. It happened once in Christ and it’s over. You have now been set apart and not only given access to come into the presence of God and pray, but you have been set apart by the blood of Jesus, given full access into God’s presence, to worship, to be used for service. In chapter 9, the author said that Jesus has cleansed our conscience so that we might serve the living God. Now, he’s saying, you are still being sanctified, you are being made holy, that is an ongoing process in your life. As you, daily, obey the Lord’s call to come into His presence and receive grace and mercy, day-by-day, moment-by-moment, He’s doing the work of making you more like Jesus, making you holy.

In verse 15, he goes on and says,

And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying,

16 “This is the covenant that I will make with them

 after those days, declares the Lord:

I will put my laws on their hearts,

 and write them on their minds,”

17 then he adds,

“I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.”

18 Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

He goes back again to Jeremiah 31, which we covered in chapter 8 in an awesome sermon. He goes back to that. So, okay, how is this all fitting together? The old system is done and we’ve been talking about that in earnest since chapter 7. We got into the high priesthood in chapter 9, so detailed in how all these things are fading away and are no more, so we get that. Jesus is saying, “You’ve created a body for me, so that I can obey you and be the perfect sacrifice. Why does He then come back to this and say, “Yeah, the New Covenant, unlike the Old Covenant, which was written on stone, the New Covenant is being written on our hearts and minds.” Why is he saying that? Because Jesus didn’t only cleanse our conscience so that we would have access and forgiveness, but so that we would also serve. Jesus isn’t just our Savior; He’s also our example. What’s he saying? God still desires the same thing, what He’s always desired -- our obedience, our worship, our service. He’s saying, now, because Jesus actually accomplished that, His Law has been written – we’re not unhitching from the Law, but it’s been written on our hearts and minds so that we can now serve. Now, we have the desire to obey, and more than just the desire to obey, but the energy, the power, the work, of the Holy Spirit, to help us obey and to empower us to live a life of worship. That’s what you’ve been freed for. That’s why you’ve been forgiven.

The work is finished and perfect, and now we live our lives in the presence of Jesus. We look to Jesus. We listen to Jesus in order to become, in our moment-by-moment experience, more like Jesus. That is to say, to become obedient to the will of God in our lives. For Jesus, He said, “I’ve come to do your will.” That means He took on flesh. Because in chapter 2, He tells us, “Because the children share in flesh, he himself likewise partook of the same thing, that through death he might taste death for all of us; that through His death He might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is the Devil, and set us free.” That was God’s will for Jesus.

What’s God’s will for us? It's because Jesus obeyed and accomplished the work that has set us free to obey the will of God. What’s His will for your life? He’s told us. Hold fast, don’t drift, keep listening to Jesus. Don’t drift, don’t be deceived by sin. Hold fast to your confession. Encourage the other believers around you to hold fast to their confession. Keep meeting together. Keep worshipping. Keep your witness clean and pure before the outside world. Continue to look – we haven’t gotten there yet, but it’s coming – continue to look for the return of Christ. That’s His will for our life; that you continue to live your life in the presence of God and that we would hold fast. That we wouldn’t let go and that we would keep one another accountable to that.

It's fascinating. I know I’ve mentioned this before but I don’t know if I’ve mentioned it in this study. So, if I have, just play along and humor me. I just have often wondered. On that day, when Jesus yells out, “It is finished!,” and y’all remember, y’all know, it’s not just that Jesus died on the cross and He was like, “Where do we go from here?” God turned off the Sun. Dead people got out of the grave and walked around and other people saw it. Not zombies, but people were back from the dead, giving witness and testimony to the power of the perfect work of Christ. It was a crazy day and the veil was torn. This was not the Day of Atonement. The priest wasn’t behind the curtain. He would have been just outside of it because it was the Passover. They were in the Holy Place serving and the veil was torn. Maybe, for some of them, they got it, but a lot of them didn’t. I just think, what did they do? Did they stitch the veil back together? Did they replace it with a new one? And would the irony be lost on them? When God is saying, “All of this is over, it’s done, it was just a picture. Here, have full, complete access through the perfect sacrifice of my Son,” the religious people said, “No, we’ll take the separation and stitch it back. No, no, no. We like keeping our distance from you.” That’s tragic. It's tragic. Not just for Ancient Israel and anybody who would still try to consider themselves an Orthodox Jew. I don’t know what that means because there is no Temple, and there’s no priesthood, and there are no more sacrifices. Jesus has accomplished all of it.

But it’s tragic when we take that approach, because we know better. We know that the work is done, but how many days, practically speaking, in our life, do we, instead of hearing Jesus, through the writer of Hebrews in chapter 4, say, “Come boldly! Come confidently before the throne! To receive grace and mercy for your time of need.” How many of us go, practically, “Nah, I’ll just keep the curtain shut. I prefer a little bit of separation. I’ll see you on Sunday?” That’s convicting. A lot of us don’t do that intentionally. I know there are days that I don’t do that intentionally, but I act that way, and I forget the privilege that I have to live my life in the presence of Yahweh. That I can speak directly to my God with no guilt, no shame, completely forgiven. That wasn’t just so that I get to go to Heaven when I die; it was so that I can serve Him here and now. And, primarily, that’s going to look like worshipping Him, loving His Church, and encouraging other believers to this end – let’s be faithful today. Let’s finish this day faithful to Jesus, and if we will do that, day-after-day, we will get to the end of our lives and we can hear, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” We get to be crowned with that compliment from the Lord, which we will then remove and lay at His feet. Because it’s only made possible by His perfect work and His writing His Law on our hearts and minds that we would even desire to love and serve Him.

So, may we say today, and because it’s almost six o’clock, tomorrow too, like and because of Jesus, “I’ve come to do your will, O God.”

Pray with me.

Lord, we love you and we thank you for your Word. We thank you for the privilege that we have to listen to it, to hear it, to be convicted and challenged, and I pray that we would be obedient to it, and that you would, even now, in the hearts and minds of those of us who maybe have been living outside a torn veil, that we would enter in, that we would once again take the joy and the privilege to come into your presence, to speak to you, to love you, to serve you. God, I pray, for those who don’t know you, as they hear about your perfect work and your sacrifice to save us, that they would be drawn to you in repentance and faith, and that in your kindness you would save their souls. And I pray now, that as we go back into a time of worship through song, that you would be pleased, that you would be glorified, that you would be honored. In Christ’s name, Amen.