

Hebrews

Total Forgiveness

Hebrews 10:1-18

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INTRODUCTION:

A guilty conscience is a common thing. Even in the church many are uncertain about their standing before God because of their past sins. These ghosts from the past stay out of sight for a while, but then they come out of nowhere to haunt them. They wonder if anyone else knows what they have done. They are fearful that the truth may leak out. But even more seriously, they wonder if God has truly forgiven them. They are not sure how it will go when they stand before Him someday. Will God punish them in this life or in eternity for the terrible things that they have done? Such people need the assurance that our text hammers home:

Through Christ's obedience to God's will at the cross, new covenant believers receive what those under the Law could not receive: **Total Forgiveness**. The author of Hebrews uses repetition to drive his point home. He has already told us the bulk of what he tells us here again. This section concludes the main argument of the Book of Hebrews.

If the original readers were to go back to Judaism, with its sacrificial system, they would forfeit the tremendous benefits that Jesus Christ secured for them. His death on the cross fulfilled all that the old system pointed toward. What it could not do completely, He did. And that was to provide total forgiveness for those who draw near to God through Him. The old system, by its very design, barred the average worshiper from drawing near to God's presence. Only the high priest could go into the Holy of Holies, and that only once a year. But in Christ, every believer now has free access to God's presence because Christ's once-and-for-all sacrifice of Himself provides a perfect standing with God.

All Stand and Read Scripture

Hebrews 10:1-18 (NASB95)

10 For the Law, since it has *only* a shadow of the good things to come *and* not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near. ² Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins? ³ But in those *sacrifices* there is a reminder of sins year by year. ⁴ For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. ⁵ Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says,

"Sacrifice and offering You have not desired, But a body You have prepared for Me; ⁶ In whole burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin You have taken no pleasure. ⁷ "Then I said, 'Behold, I have come (In the scroll of the book it is written of Me) To do Your will, O God.'"

⁸ After saying above, "Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin You have not desired, nor have You taken pleasure *in them*" (which are offered

according to the Law), ⁹ then He said, "Behold, I have come to do Your will." He takes away the first in order to establish the second. ¹⁰ By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

¹¹ Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; ¹² but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³ waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet. ¹⁴ For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. ¹⁵ And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us; for after saying,

¹⁶ "This is the covenant that I will make with them After those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws upon their heart, And on their mind I will write them,"

He then says,

¹⁷ "And their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."

¹⁸ Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer *any* offering for sin.

Prayer

The author piles up a number of synonymous phrases which show either **negatively** what the Law with its sacrifices could not do, or **positively** what Christ's sacrifice on the cross did accomplish.

Negative Truths:

10:1: The sacrifices of the Law could never "make perfect those who draw near".

10:2: Those sacrifices could not completely cleanse the worshipers and take away their "consciousness of sins".

10:3: Those sacrifices provided a yearly "reminder of sins".

10:4: Those sacrifices could not "take away sins".

Positive Truths:

10:10: By God's will through the cross, "we have been sanctified" "once for all".

10:12: Christ "offered one sacrifice for sins for all time."

10:14: "By one offering He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified."

10:17: God promises to remember "their sins and lawless deeds no more".

10:18: "Where there is forgiveness" "there is no longer any offering for sin."

All of these phrases add up to news that sounds too good to be true, and yet it **is** true: In Christ we receive a complete, final, once for all pardon for all of our sins, past, present, and future! We are prone to ask, "What is the catch?" There is no such thing as an absolutely free lunch, but there is such a thing as God's absolutely free pardon from all of our sins. It is totally free to us, because Christ bore the awful penalty that we deserved to pay but could not.

Before we work through the text, let me clarify that we are talking here about our standing or position before God in Christ. In our daily walk, when we sin we need to confess our sins in order to receive what we may call "God's family forgiveness."

ILLUSTRATION:

For example, when my daughter entered into my family through natural birth, there was nothing that she could do change her standing as a family member. But if she sinned against me, she needed to confess that sin and ask forgiveness so that our relationship was not damaged.

Even so, like Peter, we may fail the Lord badly, but our failures do not remove us from God's family. We possess our standing in the family through the new birth, which provides **total forgiveness**. We maintain in a daily fellowship as God's children by confessing our sins and asking forgiveness of the Father.

BODY:

I. The Animal Sacrifices Could Not Remove Guilt and Sin.

Hebrews 10:1-2 (NASB95)

10 For the Law, since it has *only* a shadow of the good things to come *and* not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near. ² Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins?

To "**make perfect**" refers to our standing in God's sight. It includes total cleansing from sin, so that we have a clear conscience. If our consciences are aware of sins that have not been confessed and forgiven, we will hesitate to draw near to God. This was illustrated with Adam and Eve. As soon as they sinned, they tried to hide from God's presence. They did not want to face Him because of what they had done.

ILLUSTRATION:

Every parent has had the same experience. You come home and your child avoids you. When you track him down, he will **not** look you in the eye. He doesn't want to draw near to you because he has a guilty conscience. Even dogs have this sense of guilt. When Pepper, our Pomeranian, peed in the house, which was very seldom, he would cower in front of us with sad eyes and you would know that he had not been able to wait for us to get home.

The author goes on to argue that the annual sacrifices on the Day of Atonement only provided a yearly **reminder** of sins.

Hebrews 10:3 (NASB95)

³ But in those *sacrifices* there is a reminder of sins year by year.

The fact that every year the people had to go through this ritual sacrifice again and again only showed that it had not completely removed their guilt. It put it off for another year, but just like our April 15th tax deadline, that day of reckoning kept coming around.

The author states plainly in verse 14...

Hebrews 10:4 (NASB95)

⁴ For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

Animal blood has no permanent forgiveness for human sins. God designed that system of animal sacrifice to point ahead to the sacrifice of His own Son for total forgiveness of sin. As eternal God, His sacrifice has infinite value. As man, His sacrifice atones for human sin in a way that the blood of animals never could.

It is interesting that the word “reminder” in verse 3 is the same Greek word used in the institution of the Lord’s Supper, where Jesus says, “Do this in “remembrance” of Me” While we are instructed to examine ourselves and confess our sins before partaking of the elements, the gospel transforms our remembrance from one of guilt to one of grace. The Lord’s Supper reminds us that the penalty we deserve for our sins was put completely on Jesus Christ. His death accomplished what the blood of animal sacrifices never could accomplish, namely, it took away all of our sin and guilt!

II. Christ’s Obedience to God’s Will Restored Our Relationship with God.

In **verses 5-7** he author quotes from **Psalm 40:6-8**. Follow along in our text as I read from the Psalm.

Psalm 40:6-8 (NASB95)

⁶ Sacrifice and meal offering You have not desired; My ears You have opened; Burnt offering and sin offering You have not required. ⁷ Then I said, “Behold, I come; In the scroll of the book it is written of me. ⁸ I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your Law is within my heart.”

Then he uses the quote in 5-7 along with verses 8-10 to make three points:

A. The Cross was the Direct Will of God.

The cross was not an accident or an unforeseen tragedy that took Jesus by surprise. Rather, the cross was God’s predetermined plan, before the beginning of time, to deal with our sin. The Son of God would come into this world as a man and would fulfill through His obedience, the complete Law of God, and then would die as the sacrifice that the justice of God demands as the payment for sins.

By coming into this world specifically to go to the cross, Jesus not only provided the sacrifice for sins that we need. He also provided a supreme example of absolute obedience to the complete will of God. The author twice repeats Jesus’ words from this psalm, “I have come to do Your will, O God.”

As Jesus prayed in the garden, Luke tells us...

Luke 22:41-42 (NASB95)

⁴¹ And He withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, and He knelt down and *began to pray*, ⁴² saying, “Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done.”

We cannot imagine how difficult it was for the sinless Son of God to be made sin for us. But His determined obedience to God’s will, no matter how difficult, teaches us to commit ourselves to obey His will, whatever the cost. You do not decide to obey God at the moment of temptation. It has to be a rational commitment that you make **before** you find yourself facing temptation.

B. Christ’s Obedience to God’s Will Fulfilled the Law.

When the Psalm states that God did not desire or take pleasure in sacrifices it reflects how God is displeased when people go through the outward motions of worship, but in their hearts they are unwilling to confess and deal with their sin. In modern terms, you can go to church and partake of communion, but if you are living in disobedience to God or if you are covering some sin in your heart, God is not pleased with your worship.

But the author's main point to his original readers is that the sacrifice of Christ on the cross permanently replaced the Old Testament sacrificial system.

C. By Christ's Obedience to God's Will Removed Our Sin Once and For All.

Hebrews 10:10 (NASB95)

¹⁰ By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

The author of Hebrews uses “**sanctified**” to refer to an inward cleansing from sin so that we can offer Him acceptable worship and allow us to stand before God in judgment with Christ's righteousness.

Then the author goes on to illustrate his main point in verses 11-14.

III. Total Forgiveness was Achieved by the Sacrifice of Christ.

Hebrews 10:11-14 (NASB95)

¹¹ Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; ¹² but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³ waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet. ¹⁴ For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.

The Old Testament priests had to offer the same sacrifices time after time, yet they could never take away sins. You can feel a sense of futility in these words! But verse 12 contrasts that with His “**one sacrifice for sins for all time**” with that. Then He “**sat down at the right hand of God.**” The standing of the priests indicates unfinished work that is never done. The sitting of Jesus indicates that His work of sacrifice is finished, and that He has been exalted to the place of supreme honor.

Then the author adds in verse 13 “**waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet.**” The day is coming when Jesus' enemies will all become His footstool, just as Psalm 110 predicted.

In verse 14 the author again repeats the effect of Jesus' one offering: “**He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified**”. This verse brings together two vital truths.

First, the **position** of believers before God is that they are perfect. God has forgiven all of their sins through Christ's sacrifice, and He has imputed Christ's perfect righteousness to them. These great facts are the basis of our standing before God.

Second, the **practice** of believers is that they are being sanctified. They are growing in holiness in thought, word, and deed. The **position** is granted instantly at the moment of saving faith. The **practice** is worked out over a lifetime of growth in obedience.

The author wraps up this section with a supporting quote from Jeremiah. Follow along in [verses 15-17](#) of our text as I read from Jeremiah.

IV. The Old Testament Prophecy Supports the Totality of Our Forgiveness.

Jeremiah 31:31-34 (NASB95)

³¹ “Behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, ³² not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the Lord. ³³ “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the Lord, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ³⁴ They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the Lord, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

Note that the author attributes Jeremiah’s prophecy to the Holy Spirit, who inspires all Scripture. This quote gives God’s own testimony to what the author has been arguing. God promises to put His laws upon His people’s hearts and to write them on their minds. God’s people are marked by obedience from the heart.

Through the blood of Christ and our obedience to His word, God will **not** remember our sins and their lawless deeds. That does not mean that God is forgetful, but rather that He will not bring up our sins against us for judgment. They will be wiped away. They are totally forgiven because of God’s covenant decree.

CONCLUSION:

And so the conclusion is found in verse 18.

Hebrews 10:18 (NASB95)

¹⁸ Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer *any* offering for sin.

If you have total forgiveness in Christ, why go back to a system that could never provide that?

ILLUSTRATION:

Imagine a young man who falls in love, but he and his lover are separated by distance. He has a beautiful photograph of her that he gazes at every day. Finally, the two get married. The photo is still there, but now he has her.

But then one day, he starts behaving rather strangely. He stands before his wife, clutching the photo to his chest. He tells her, “I’ve really missed your photo, so I’m going back to it. He passionately kisses the picture and goes out the door mumbling, “Oh, how I love you, dear photo! You’re everything to me”. We would rightly conclude that this guy’s dipstick reads a quart low!

But that guy’s weird behavior illustrates what people do when they abandon Christ for the shadow. Christ and His sufficient sacrifice on the cross provides **Total forgiveness**.

What a Day That Will Be!