



The Reverend Jeff Lee
Hebrews 10:1-18

April 26, 2015
English Standard Version

“A Better Sacrifice”

Introduction & Scripture Reading:

Good morning everybody. I’m glad you are here with us this morning because, this Sunday each year, the whole youth group gets a chance to serve the Lord and you by leading all of us in worship of our Triune God. Youth Sunday is a special Sunday because it is a wonderful opportunity for our students to use their gifts that God has gifted them with for His glory. Church, today’s students and student leaders will be tomorrow’s leaders in the church, as well as the community so please be praying for them and their parents. Continue to encourage them and pour time and energy into their lives because when our time ends, when we look back on our lives, we won’t look back saying I wish I hadn’t spent all that time praying and encouraging our youth, but we might say I wish I would have done more...

cared more... loved more... while you have the time, energy, and resources, so use them church to care for our youth, and for God's glory because you won't be sorry you did. (pause)

Today we will be looking at a passage in the book of Hebrews. We will be in chapter 10 and will cover verses 1 through 18. The title of this sermon is "A Better Sacrifice."

If you have a bible in print or have it electronically, please open to Hebrews 10:1-18. Let's begin by reading what the Lord has for us. Our author writes, *"1 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.*

5 Consequently, when Christ 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, 'Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.'" 8 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 have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

11 And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. 12 But when Christ 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. 14 For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

15 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.” Let’s go to the Lord in prayer.

Prayer:

Father, thank you for sending your Son, Jesus Christ to be a better sacrifice... to be the final sacrifice for us... so that there is forgiveness and

no longer any offering for sin. Jesus, we love you and thank you for going to the cross and taking on the punishment that we rightly deserve. We don't deserve to be free, but through your sacrifice, you offer us freedom and forgiveness. Holy Spirit, help us to taste and see that the forgiveness that is offered in Jesus Christ is ours, now and forevermore. Give us ears to hear and hearts to receive what you would say to each of us this morning, and everybody says, Amen!

Opening Illustration: "Flee At Once!"

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the author of the Sherlock Holmes detective novels, was a practical joker, as well as a gifted writer, and one time sent a cruel telegram to a couple of his famous friends. One night, Doyle, bored and idly toying with wicked thoughts, decided to send a note to five of his friends. The note would be delivered anonymously. It would have no signature, and would contain no information. It would only say this in bold black lettering, **"We have been discovered. Flee at once!"** He was saying to his friends, "You have been found out, get out of here!" Now this letter didn't provide a context as to why they needed to flee, it just suggested you know yourself why you need to flee. How messed up is that! Even though these famous friends were upright citizens, they all quickly fled. Why? (pause) Well... because a guilty conscience is a common thing.

Now... that story that has been circulated about Sir Arthur Conan Doyle may not actually be true... **but it illustrates something... the fact that a guilty conscience is a common thing.**¹ The reality is that many of us on the outside may look squeaky clean because we aren't presenting ourselves terribly to people or doing heinous crimes like murder... but the reality is that many of us have things in our lives that if were found out, we would feel ashamed, we would feel guilty. **Maybe that thing in your life that you keep hidden has to do with** (1) something bad that you did when you were younger that nobody knows about, (2) maybe it is a secret porn addiction (3) maybe it is a serious lie that you've told your wife or husband, (3) maybe it is a secret account that your spouse doesn't have access to, (4) maybe it's something you watched on TV the other night, (5) maybe it's a re-occurring fantasy that plays out in your mind that doesn't include your current spouse, (6) maybe it's something unethical that you did to get ahead at work, or (7) maybe it's shame or guilt that you have tucked away because you said something behind someone's back that was malicious or untrue just to make them feel pain. **The list could go on and on about the types of things that we keep hidden away in the shadows but as you can see, most of us have something in our lives now or in the past that we would**

¹ Sermon illustration adapted from: Steven J. Cole. Pastor of Flagstaff Christian Fellowship. *Total Forgiveness: Hebrews 10:1-18*. August 1, 2004.

rather keep hidden from others.

And so it is a fear of being exposed, being discovered that either drives us inward... putting up walls and boundaries to keep others out or we flee from people and relationships when things get too intimate.

And because we keep this shame and guilt so well guarded, we fail to experience and taste the forgiveness that the Lord has for us. We miss out on the freedom to be ok with knowing that we are broken people before Christ!

And so what many of us do... is we work hard, go to college, get married, have children, pay our bills, pay our taxes, go to church, and sprinkle in a little service (but not too much) to others from time to time in hope that our moralistic lives and good deeds will somehow be enough to cover the guilt or shame that we have accrued throughout the years. **In other words, even if we know in our heads that there is grace to be found in Jesus Christ, that we are safe to be vulnerable with Him, we still live... most days of our lives as if we have to do things to earn and feel the Lord's forgiveness.** And our passage today is here to destroy that notion and to tell you that there is freedom and total forgiveness to be found in the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ... and the best part is... it costs us nothing... and we have to do nothing... to receive it... Amen!

Point 1: Limitations of the Law (vv. 1-4)

Let's take a look at verses 1 through 4 to see this truth. This is our first point, "Limitations of the Law. These verses say, *"1 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.*

What the author of Hebrews wants to show us is that the old system, the old covenant, which was given to Moses, was insufficient to eradicate sin. The laws that God prescribed, the sacrificial offering of bulls and goats, were insufficient to remove or take away the sins of God's people. **The sacrificial practices of the Old Testament Priest at the Tabernacle and eventually the Temple were but shadows or types² of a better sacrifice prophesied to come.** These practices of slaughtering animals and spilling their blood wasn't actually cleansing the people, making their sins white as snow, they were **merely pointing** people to a

² Graeme Goldsworthy. *According To Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible*. 1991. Pg. 68.

sacrifice to come... **that would finally cleanse God's people...** and make their sins white as snow.

I believe the reason our author is making a big deal about this is because these folks, who the author of Hebrews is writing to (probably Jewish Christians) have been told this truth already (the truth of a better sacrifice that has come) but because of pressure or possibly persecution from the Jews or Romans, they are now turning back to these former practices... these sacrifices that cannot remove sin but rather only remind them of their sin. **I imagine, the author if he was there in person he would have grabbed them by the collar and shaken them, asking, "What are you doing?** You know that each year on the Day of Atonement the Priest has to offer these sacrifices on your behalf and on his own behalf. Haven't you realized the fact that he has to **offer them every year** means that the sacrifices aren't actually removing your sin? The fact that he has to stand up there and **remain standing** as he offers those sacrifices proves to you that **Priest's work isn't done. He doesn't sit down** as if his work is finished, so why are you turning back to these shadows, these replicas³, these former practices, which cannot make you perfect in God's eyes?" **In essence, why are you turning from freedom back to bondage? Why are you still trying to earn forgiveness?** Don't you know that there has been a better

³ F.F. Bruce. The Epistle to the Hebrews. 1990. Pg. 235.

sacrifice? A sacrifice that once and for all has removed the need for any more sacrifices? (pause)

The Apostle Paul addressed this kind of issue with the **Galatians** in chapter 3. He said, “*10 For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse... (where there is no forgiveness) for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them (perfectly).” 11 Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.” 12 But the law is not of faith... rather “The one who does them (meaning all the Levitical laws) shall live by them.” 13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”— 14 so that... in Christ Jesus... the blessing of Abraham (the unilateral promise of grace, freedom, rest, and security) might come to the Gentiles (us), so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.”* **Friends, Paul and our author here have made it crystal clear, Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the prophesied Savior has come and the blessing of His Holy Spirit has been poured out for us!** So why are you turning back to the law, the sacrifices, which only condemn you and remind you of your sins, your guilt, your shame? **Or in today’s terms, he would be asking, “Why are you striving to earn your own forgiveness? Why are you living your daily lives, whether it’s consciously or sub-**

consciously, thinking that if you just do more good or continue to get better at _____ fill in the blank, that you will cover over your known and hidden sins? Why are you attempting to earn your right to be apart of God's family? Don't you know that is impossible? (Pause)

Point 2: A Better Sacrifice (vv. 5-10)

Well here in point 2, "A Better Sacrifice," our author puts forward wonderful truth about this kind of work's righteousness and earned forgiveness... and responds by proclaiming the finality of Jesus' once for all sacrifice. He tells us, "5 *Consequently, when **Christ 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, '**Behold, I have come to do your will**, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.'*" 8 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 have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.**

What these verses show us is a stark contrast between the limitations of the law in verses 1-4 and the unlimited power of Jesus' once for all

sacrifice in verses 5-10.⁴ For in verses 5-10, we see Christ's obedience to God's law and Christ's obedience to His Father's will. **Jesus Christ doesn't just come to make a sacrifice for us, He literally descended to Bethlehem in human form to become the final sacrifice for us.**

You see **Jesus cares about you** so much that **He left perfection**, being with the Father and the Spirit, in perfect communion, to come take on our **broken flesh**, to enter into our **broken world**, and to serve us, who are **broken people**. Jesus came into the world to make right, that which we cannot make right... and haven't been able to make right... since the time of Adam and Eve. He came to be light, which enters into our darkness. He came to live a perfect life because we cannot... And Jesus, despite facing all earthly temptations fulfilled the law, which demands perfection by never sinning, even once. He fulfilled all the prophecies about Himself and was obedient to His Father's will... so that you and I could have **total forgiveness!** Total access to the King of Kings with all the benefits that come with being apart of His royal family!

You see **King David in Psalm 40:6-8 foreshadowed of Jesus** saying, *"In sacrifice and offering You have not delighted, but You have given me an open ear. Burnt offerings and sin offerings You have not required... 7 Then I said, "Behold, I have come; in the scroll of the book it is written of Me: 8 I*

⁴ George H. Guthrie. The NIV Application Commentary: Hebrews. 1998. Pg. 327.

delight to do Your will, O my God; Your law is within My heart.”

The author of Hebrews quotes King David because even though God prescribed the **sacrifices in the Old Testament**, God knew they could **never fully satisfy the cost of sin!** They merely **pointed to the satisfaction that would come** from the One who would have the law (the Torah) written on His heart... and the One who would delight in doing God’s will... perfectly. **And who is it that could accomplish God’s will perfectly?** Is it King David, as it seems written in this Psalm? No... remember how David treated Bathsheba, and how he sent Uriah, Bathsheba’s husband, to the army’s front lines to die just so he could marry her! **No, David is not the central focus of this Psalm. He could not accomplish God’s will perfectly. Jesus is the future focus!** Jesus is the one with whom the scriptures have been written about and prophesied of! Jesus is the one who has the law perfectly written on His heart, and who fulfilled it to the T!

The will of God that David and our author are referring to here is the will of God to offer a better sacrifice! A better sacrifice that would complete the old order, and establish a second order! **A better sacrifice that would once and for all eradicate the penalty, the guilt, and the shame of the sins of God’s people... past, present and future!**

Jesus knew what He was born to do! He understood the full weight of what God willed for Him to do here on earth. Remember what Jesus prayed

in the Garden of Gethsemane just before He was arrested, “*41 And (Jesus) withdrew from them (the disciples) about a stone's throw away, and knelt down and prayed, 42 saying, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me... Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.” 43 And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. 44 And being in an agony he (Jesus) prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.*”⁵ (Pause)

Jesus knows the depths of your guilt, your shame, and your sin...
He experienced them physically, emotionally, and spiritually... more deeply than you could ever imagine... He sweat blood friends... as He took them on... yet... **He willingly went to the cross to bear our darkest secrets, our most ugly desires and our most vile sins... so that we wouldn't have to!** He literally is the light that shines in our darkness and the darkness even though it has tried valiantly, has not overcome it!⁶ **Meaning there is nothing that you have done in the past, or could ever do now or in the future, that is too dark or too evil... to be forgiven!** (Pause) **To think that your mess is too much for Jesus is arrogant.** He went to the cross once and for all so that you could be free, so that you would no longer have to thirst!

⁵ Luke 22:41-44.

⁶ John 1:5.

So my friends... why do you put up emotional walls? Why do you flee from intimacy? Why do you hold on to your guilt, your shame, and your darkness? Why do you keep it hidden away? Why do you try to live as if you have it all together? Why do you strive to earn what has already been earned for you?

Please here me when I say this... surrender your guilt, your shame, your hidden sins to Jesus... because He is safe... and because He humbled himself to set you free. Total forgiveness is yours in Jesus Christ! (Pause) Church, when you love Jesus and accept Him as your Lord and Savior you join God's family. And when you join God's family, you are accepted with all of your guilt, shame, and sin. (Pause) Just like a good earthly father loves his children and cares for them... no matter how far they may stray in their lives... so too our Heavenly Father loves you even though you struggle with sin today, tomorrow and till the day you pass from this life to the next.

You see because of Jesus' better sacrifice you are eternally forgiven... **So say with me, "I am forgiven" (wait for response). (Pause) Yes you are, and so am I in Jesus Christ! (Pause) But do you feel like it? Do you live like it? Do you share with others the darkness in you that is forgiven? Do you feel the freedom to be transparent with others? To know that it is ok... to not be ok? Do see God's grace changing you**

because of His forgiveness? Do you forgive others out of the depth of understanding that you are totally forgiven?

Point 3: Total Forgiveness (vv. 11-18)

Well if you struggle, like I do, fully accepting God's total forgiveness and living a life that is consistent with that truth, then this last section of text is for you. This is point 3, "Total Forgiveness." Let's read verses 11 through 18 together. *"11 And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. 12 But when Christ 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. 14 For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.*

15 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."

Church... slow down and soak that in! The work of paying the debt of your sin is done. Can you taste the freedom of that truth? Just like paying

off your mortgage, your car debt, or your school loans is freeing (which it is!) **how much more so, is it to know, that the debt that you could never pay off in 1,000 lifetimes has now been paid in full!** That you are no longer judged by God. (Pause) Now, that doesn't mean He won't discipline His children, because God does discipline those whom he loves but it does mean that **your status in His family is secure.**

You can know your status is secure because we see Jesus sitting down at the right hand of the Father in heaven⁷, which is in contrast to the Old Testament priest who remains standing as he offers his sacrifices... One of the commentators I was reading this past week said, “For **the priest stands** timid and uneasy in the holy place, anxiously performing his awful service there, and hastening to depart when the service is done, as from a place where he has no free access, where he can never feel at home; **whereas Christ on the other hand sits down** in everlasting rest and blessedness at the right hand of Majesty in the holy of holies, with His work being fully accomplished, and awaiting its full reward.”⁸

So because Jesus' work on the cross has been 100% completed, we are totally forgiven. **Verse 14 tells us that Jesus has perfected those whom are being sanctified. Meaning those who love Jesus have been set apart,**

⁷ The verbs “offered” and “sat down” occur in the past tense. The Greek aorist tense is used for those verbs, signifying a completed past action.

⁸ Franz Delitzsch. Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews. Vol. 2. 1877. Pg. 161.

made holy. And being made holy, refers to our position or our status before God.⁹ It doesn't mean that we are perfect now (because our friends, wives, children, and pastor no this isn't true)... but it doesn't mean that we are holy in God's eyes and **being conformed continually** to the likeness and image of Jesus. Essentially the "already" of the infamous "already but not yet" is that we have been legally declared free of our sins by God, and the "not yet" is the continual sanctification process that we are going through now and will be going through till the day we die. **We are holy, but we are not finished products.**

The good news of this is that we are forgiven and will continue to be forgiven, as we continue transform into who Jesus has already made us to be. **The problem is... most of us have a hard time buying the truth that forgiveness is free.** Because everything in this life screams... there is a cost! There is a debt to be paid. There is work to do! And what we do is take that mentality and apply it to our daily lives. We may assent that there is forgiveness in Jesus but we don't live like it. We don't live free; we don't put our beliefs so to say, into action.

You say, how do I know that? Because most of us live in fear of others... in fear of their judgment, of what they might think of us... if they

⁹ Richard D. Phillips. Reformed Expository Commentary: Hebrews. 2006. Pg.348.

found out about _____ fill in the blank. **I can say most of us have a ways to go in truly getting at the depths of feeling and experiencing God's forgiveness because of the way we talk. You see most of us don't feel free or forgiven enough to talk about our dirty laundry with others, or how the Lord is healing and redeeming wounds in our lives.** (Pause)

And so as a litmus test, the ability to which you can name and understand your sins... and process them with safe people, is usually an indicator to the depth in which you truly grasp the depths of the Lord's forgiveness.

Because those folks who are tasting the Lord's forgiveness are those folks who are willing to talk about their guilt, their shame, and their sin and how the Lord is healing them and helping them work through those issues. That's the sanctification that we are talking about... **And you if cannot... or will not do that... then I'd probably say you may understand forgiveness up here (head)... possibly, but down here (heart) it hasn't translated yet.** You see, Jesus came to be a better sacrifice so that His truth would connect from here (the head) to here (the heart). Forgiveness has been accomplished but most of us have a ways to go in learning how to accept it.

Conclusion:

Church, rest in the truth that Jesus is a better sacrifice... the final

sacrifice. And if you love Him, know that He accepts you just as you are.

For Jesus loves people who know they are broken... so stop trying to sell to others something that isn't true about you. We don't have it all together. Stop trying to earn his forgiveness... because in Christ you are forgiven... so please ask the Holy Spirit to help you to grow in that truth... and believe what the prophet Jeremiah spoke of as He pointed us to Christ in his prophecy. He said, *“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 he adds, *“I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more. 18 For where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for our sins.”*¹⁰ Church we know this is true because *“When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, **“It is finished,”** and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.”*¹¹ God is good, Amen! Let's pray.

¹⁰ Prophecy of the New Covenant from Jeremiah 31:31-34.

¹¹ John 19:30.

Benediction: Hebrews 13:20-21

“20 Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, 21 equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”