

Hebrews 10:1-18 "The Once-for-All Sacrifice"

James Thompson - In this section the author comes to the conclusion of the "Word" that is "hard to explain" (5:11), preparing the way for the exhortation that begins in 10:19. Having attempted to rebuild the community's shattered world in this description of the high priestly work of Christ, his final words are not the occasion to break new ground but to summarise and draw a climactic conclusion. (Hebrews Paideia).

The argument continues the motif of *synkrisis* that has shaped it from the beginning. In 10:1-10, he again contrasts the Levitical sacrifices (10:1-4) with the sacrifice of Christ (10:5-10) before moving to a new contrast in 10:11-14. The quotation of Jer 31:33 in 10:15-17 forms an *inclusio* with the earlier citation of the same passage in 8:8-12, providing a frame for the entire discussion and indicating that the entire section is an explanation of the new covenant, under which God would remember sins no more (8:12).

Outline of 10:1-18

The once-for-all sacrifice (10:1-18)

A shadow of the coming good things (10:1)

A reminder of sins (10:2-4)

I have come to do your will (10:5-10)

Perfected forever (10:11-18)

A shadow of the coming good things (10:1)

The author begins the new comparison with a reiteration of the argument that he has consistently given. As the foundation for the sacrificial system, the law is **unable to perfect those who draw near** because it has only a **shadow of the good things to come rather than the form of these things**.

1. **Make perfect those who draw near...** The author is restating the earlier argument that these fleshly sacrifices could not perfect the conscience. Remember it is not only the priests who draw near, but the worshippers as well. Only the listeners who benefit from Jesus' entry into the heavens into the sanctuary can now draw near (the author will tell us why in vs5-10).
2. **Offered every year...** Is an allusion to the DOA, and is the focus of the author's argument in 10:1-14. It shows the incompleteness of the Levitical sacrifices and is the basis for the comparison to the finality of the work of Christ.
3. **Shadow of the good things to come... it can never... by sacrifices... make perfect...** shows us again the problem of the sacrifices. They couldn't perfect anyone. Perfection seems to include the cleansing of the conscience, drawing near to God, and even the goal of being brought to glory. The author will tell us why in vs2-4 (...they couldn't cleanse the conscience).
 1. Compare with 9:11-12 "But when Christ appeared as the high priest of the good things that have come... through... more perfect tent... by means of his own blood... thus securing an eternal redemption" and even vs14 "how much more will the blood of Christ... purify our conscience from dead works to serve(worship) the living God."

A reminder of sins (10:2-4)

The author reinforces the case for the limitations of the old sacrificial system, pressing the implications of sacrifices offered "each year." In 10:2-3, he draws the logical conclusion that the repetition of sacrifice each year indicates their ineffectiveness at the deepest level

1. **having once cleansed... consciousness of sins...** as long as they who are cleansed still have a consciousness of sins it shows that their purification was not once-for-all. Consciousness of sins = an evil conscience.
2. **Reminder of sins each year...** these sacrifices don't remove sins, they remind of them. Hence they actually help to give them an evil conscience. "remember what you did..." - we often tell a person, "if you forgave me, stop bringing it up...!"
 1. thus the Old Covenant brought sins to *remembrance*, the New Covenant *remembers them no more*. (but why? Is the NC simply God being ignorant? Why are they remembered no more?... vs5-10)
3. **For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins...** Contrast that with 9:22 "...without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins". Again shows us the problem with the OC, it couldn't perfect men because it couldn't take away their sins.

Summary: The author has highlighted again problems with the OC. It could not perfect (bring to glory/God) anyone. Why? Because it couldn't cleanse the evil conscience since it actually brought sins to remembrance and was incapable of taking sins away.

I have come to do your will (10:5-10)

The author had previously argued that the sacrifice of Christ is the alternative to ineffective sacrifices (9:1-14, 23-28), in the same way he again describes the work of Christ through Psalm 40.

- **Therefore coming into the world, he says...** is reminiscent of earlier quotations from scripture that are introduced as the words of Christ (2:12-13). **Therefore** links us back to vs1-4, because of the inability of the OC, Jesus now says this.

- This seems to be a reference to Jesus' incarnation, when he was “a little while lower than the angels” (2:9).
- In the original context, Ps40, the psalmist expresses gratitude for God's mercy in saving him from death or severe illness (40:2). Although the usual response in such cases (being saved from death/severe illness) was a sacrifice of thanksgiving (Psalm 50:23; 56:12; 107:22; 116:14,18), the psalmist declares that **God does not require the offering** (cf. Amos 5:21-24; Hos 6:6).
- According to the *Hebrew text*, God has given the psalmist an open ear instead of demanding a sacrifice. (lit. *ears you have dug for me*). Ears being dug could refer to the making of a bond-slave through piercing the ear, or the power to listen attentively, or even possibly the creation of man.
- Hebrews follow the *LXX* which reads “**a body you have readied/prepared for me**”. With this citation the author suggests that the body of Jesus has replaced all sacrifices of the Levitical system.
 - **David Moffitt:** *In keeping with the surrounding context, the psalmist's salvation out of the pit correlates with his remaining alive, and specifically being present in a body, rather than sinking forever in the pit and clay— language that seems to connote death. With his rescued life he now desires to do God's will and internalize God's Law so that his life can please God in ways that sacrifices do not do. Put differently, the psalmist hints that as a result of his salvation he desires to make his body his offering to God—i.e., to internalize God's Law such that he can live out God's will.*
 - All of this made me think that this “world” was a reference back to 2:5, the heavenly world. And that this was speaking about Jesus exaltation once again. When God saved him out of death and Jesus offered himself to God in the heavenly holy of holies – but this cannot be certain.
- In **8-10**, the author shows us his primary focus is on the fact that **(1)** God does not desire or take pleasure in the offerings, and **(2)** Jesus has come to do God's will.
 - The **offerings** are all the offerings and sacrifices under the Levitical system. **Not desired** shows us God's attitude towards them, he doesn't want them. **Taken pleasure in** shows us their failure. The sacrifices when offered did not result in pleasing God; God was not pleased. ==> Propitiation could not happen, no sacrifice, no resulting pleasure. Guilt and an evil consciousness remains, no one can draw near yet.
 - **I have come to do your will** shows us the purpose of Jesus work. To do God's will. That **will** brings us back to 2:10 “*in bringing many sons to glory*”. It also shows us that the OT offerings and sacrifices have been superseded/ replaced with the offering of Jesus body.
 - **Problem:** OC offerings/sacrifice could not make men perfect, fulfil God's will. **Solution:** NC Jesus has come to do God's will, his offering can make men perfect! (cleans them and bring them to God).
 - **David Moffitt:** *...The Son's coming into the world clearly highlights the incarnation of this heavenly figure. A body was prepared for him and with that body he lived and died with perfect faith, without sin. As such, Jesus became the first one to receive the full and perfect inheritance of resurrected life. He was therefore able to take his body into heaven where it was presented before God.*
 - **And by that will we have been sanctified... by** means of that **will** of God (to bring many sons to glory) we have been sanctified. God's plan/will is the thing which made our sanctification possible. Because God wanted to bring many sons to glory we have been sanctified.
 - **Sanctified** = made holy/dedicated. It seems to include the cleansing of the conscience and being able to draw near to God. It is in the perfect tense; ACTION COMPLETED at a SPECIFIC POINT of TIME in PAST (●) with results CONTINUING into the PRESENT (—►). We were dedicated/made holy to God and as a result we now still are dedicated and holy to God. When did this happen?
 - **through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all...** The offering of Jesus' body is the event in which we were made holy/dedicated/sanctified to God, with the result that we are still now dedicated/holy to God. ==> He made propitiation. (took our punishment/wrath, secured God's favour).
 - Because of what Jesus has done, you have been made holy/dedicated in God's eyes. Your conscience is cleansed from guilt, and you are now able to draw near to God, follow Jesus into the Holy of Holies.
 - **David Moffitt:** *throughout the ...homily the author employs three different terms to denote the object that Jesus offered to God as a sacrifice. These are “himself” (7:27; 9:14, 25), his “blood” (9:12, 14; 13:12), and his “body” (10:10).*
 - It is because of the body of Jesus offered once for all that we can be cleansed of our evil consciences and draw near to God, and follow Jesus into the holy of holies.
 - For the author, the only blood which takes away our sins, brings forgiveness, is the blood of Christ. Why? In Chapter 9, the author has spoken about the need to cleanse the heavenly tent. No earthly sacrifice can cleanse that, because it is earthly/fleshly.
 - No religion, no sacrifice, nothing in this earth can bring forgiveness, cleanse the heavenly tent and take away our sin and cleanse our consciences from guilt. They belong to this earth and will pass away. Jesus' offering goes into the heavenlies, to the presence of God and secures an eternal redemption.

Summary: Unlike the offerings of the OC which could make none perfect, unable to cleanse the conscience or take away sins, Jesus offering sanctified us once-and-for-all, with the result that we still are sanctified, freed from guilt and able to draw near to God.

Perfected forever (10:11-18)

Vs11-14, The author has just contrasted the Jesus offering and the offering of the priests, now he is contrasting Jesus and the priests.

Who	And every priest	But when Christ
Position	stands daily at his service	he sat down at the right hand of God
Work	offering repeatedly	had offered for all time a single
Amount	the same sacrifices	sacrifice
Type	which can never take away sins	for sins
Result	(Makes nothing perfect)	Perfected for all time those who are being sanctified

- **James Thompson** - ...contrasting the priests who **stood** (10:11) with the one who **sat down at the right hand of God** (10:12), suggesting that the normal posture of priests is a sign of incompleteness of their work.

Vs13 shows the period of time that the church is in. Waiting for Jesus return, and His enemies to be placed under His feet.

- Being made a footstool for someone's feet has the idea of submission and humiliation. Feet are unclean. This is why shaking the dust off your feet was a sign of judgement.
- This was a serious point for the readers. They had received the promise of glory, but Christ has not come back and they were being persecuted, rejected from society. They are tired, weary, and wondering if Jesus is ever going to come back.
 - **James Thompson** - Because the community cannot see the final triumph envisioned by Ps110:1, as the author indicated earlier (2:8), the further allusion to Psalm 110:1 indicates that the exalted one continues to wait until all enemies are under his feet, just as the community continues to wait (10:36-40) for the final realization of the promise.
 - Did Christ fail? Was the promise not true? Where is the rest? Where are the good things that have come with Christ? Jesus did not fail, the promise is true. He is reigning, His enemies will be put under His feet.
 - The author pointed to the fact that Christ's glory came through suffering back in Hebrews 2:10. Now he points to the work of Christ again in vs14. This time it is Christ's suffering that has not only brought Him to perfection, but also all those who are being sanctified (this means believers). Thus since Christ's work has not only brought him to perfection but also them, they need to continue to wait until the promise comes.

In **10:15-18**, he supports what he has just said by quoting Jer31:33. It is also a contrast with vs1-4. In vs1-4 we saw that the OC brought sins to remembrance. Here we see in 15-18 that in the NC sins are remembered no more!

- His focus is on vs17-18. In vs17 he paraphrases Jer31:33, saying God will *remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more*. And in vs18 he says "*Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.*"
 - In other words, since under the NC there is complete forgiveness what need is there for any other offering for sin? This is why they can have a perfect conscience now, since they now have perfect forgiveness in the NC through Jesus.
 - Thus the author is assuring them of their forgiveness, and their future.
 - **Craig Koester** says – The assurance of forgiveness encourages listeners to turn to God with confidence, boldly passing beyond “the veil” that barred worshippers from God (10:19-22). The singularity of Christ's sacrifice also means that there is no other source of forgiveness, so that those who spurn forgiveness in Christ welcome divine judgement (10:26-31).
 - And this is what we are going to see the author say in the coming verses.

Summary: Unlike the continual work of the standing priests, Jesus work is finished. This is seen by his position “seated”. Jesus has perfected forever all those who are being sanctified because he has provided a complete forgiveness. Now we wait in expectation for all things to be placed under his feet.