

## Hebrews 10:5-10

<sup>5</sup>Therefore when he entered the world, Christ said:

Sacrifice and offering you did not desire,  
but you prepared a body for me.

<sup>6</sup>You were not pleased  
with burnt offerings and sin offerings.

<sup>7</sup>Then I said, “Here I am.

I have come to do your will, God.

In the scroll of the book it is written about me.”

<sup>8</sup>First he said:

Sacrifices and offerings that were offered according to the law,  
both burnt offerings and sin offerings,

you did not desire,  
and you were not pleased with them.

<sup>9</sup>Then he said:

Here I am.

I have come to do your will.

He does away with the first in order to establish the second. <sup>10</sup>By this will, we have been sanctified once and for all, through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ.

## Sanctified Through Sacrifice

### I.

It was ineffectual, really. Even though this was what had been prescribed, there had always a sense it was inadequate. Those who were honest with themselves knew it.

The thing that had been prescribed—commanded, really—commanded by *God*, in fact—was a whole system of sacrifices.

Ineffectual? Inadequate? Things *demand*ed by *God* were not *good enough*? How could anyone say such a thing? And yet, in the words of our text the writer declares: “Therefore when he entered the world, Christ said: Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but you prepared a body for me” (Hebrews 10:5, EHV).

Now, whenever you see words like “therefore” that begin a reading you know that the appropriate thing to do is to look back a ways to get some context. As you do that, you keep finding reasons to look back even farther. If you haven’t read the entire Letter to the Hebrews recently, I would encourage you to do so.

As you look back, the writer in verse 1 states: “The law is only a shadow of the good things to come, not the actual realization of those things. It will never be able to make perfect those who continually offer the same sacrifices year after year” (Hebrews 10:1, EHV).

He was writing to people of Jewish decent. They knew all about God’s laws that dictated exactly what the people were to do for their worship. Part of those rules demanded sacrifices. There were daily sacrifices. There were special sacrifices individual believers brought at various times. And there were the big sacrifices at festival times, including the Great Day of Atonement. All these sacrifices were made year after year.

Even though God had prescribed them; even though God had *demand*ed them, the sacrifices of Old Testament worship were ineffectual. They were inadequate. Why? “The law...will never be able to make perfect those who continually offer the same sacrifices year after year. <sup>2</sup>If it could do this, would they not have stopped bringing sacrifices, because the worshippers, once they were cleansed, would no longer have a bad conscience about sins? <sup>3</sup>Instead, these sacrifices reminded them of their sins year after year” (Hebrews 10:1-3, EHV). The sacrifices would not make the people perfect. Not

only were the sacrifices necessary over and over, the purpose they served was really to make the people more aware of their sin than ever. They would recognize every time they brought a sacrifice that their relationship with God was still damaged. Sin was still a problem. Sin still had to be dealt with.

## II.

“Sacrifices and offerings...you did not desire, and you were not pleased with them” (Hebrews 10:8, EHV). We don’t follow the Old Testament system of worship—their system of sacrifice. Because of this, we don’t really think this applies to modern Christians. But we tend to feel that somehow we have offered our lives to God.

From time to time we have weeks of Stewardship emphasis. We talk about your gifts and offerings of time, talents, and treasure. We encourage you to use your abilities in service to the Lord in the congregation. We speak about giving your time to help out. Not only do we take an offering every week, we encourage you to evaluate your offering and give to God an appropriate portion of your income. Are those “sacrifices?” Do your financial offerings and your gifts of service improve your standing in God’s eyes?

Just as was the case for Old Testament believers, the sacrifices of New Testament Christians do not get you any closer with God. When the Old Testament believers made their sacrifices, as we heard moments ago, those sacrifices made them even more aware of their sins. Do your sacrifices make you more aware of your sins? Or do you gloss them over, thinking your sins are unimportant and insignificant. Do your sins trouble you, or do you just blow them off?

Perhaps *that* tends to be the bigger problem for modern-day believers. Perhaps we are more like the Pharisee who compared his worship life to that of the tax collector in the temple and thought his own personal righteousness was so exemplary that it ought to give him extra credit. God ought to be pleased with us because we have offered our lives to God.

Isaiah wrote: “All of us have become like something unclean, and all our righteous acts are like a filthy cloth” (Isaiah 64:6, EHV). Paul puts it this way in the New Testament: “Those who are in the sinful flesh cannot please God” (Romans 8:8, EHV). The good things we do as believers are still tainted by sin. In God’s eyes, they are just like the sacrifices of Old Testament believers—they don’t get a person closer to God.

Just like the Pharisee, we are *not* holy. God is not pleased with our sacrifices to try to get into his good graces. He is not impressed with the size of our checks or electronic gifts. Our service projects in his name do not move him to draw us closer to himself.

## III.

“The law is only a shadow of the good things to come” (Hebrews 10:1, EHV). The whole system of sacrifices pointed ahead. None of them were good enough. Each sacrifice had to be repeated over and over again. Each sacrifice pointed to the sins of the people. Each sacrifice urged them to look inward and find that they were completely inadequate as individuals to have a relationship with God.

“Christ said: ‘Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but you prepared a body for me. <sup>7</sup>Then I said, ‘Here I am. I have come to do your will, God. In the scroll of the book it is written about me’” (Hebrews 10:5, 7, EHV). Much of today’s reading from the Letter to the Hebrews is filled with quotes from Psalm 40, written by King David. Way back then, David recognized that the sacrifices weren’t cutting it. He wrote parts of his Psalm speaking in the voice of the Messiah who was yet to come.

No, the animal sacrifices weren’t enough. What they *did* do was show the people that sin is so serious that sin demands a life as payment. Adam and Eve had learned that in the Garden of Eden, when God told them they would surely die because they had disobeyed him. Death is still a grim reminder to people that sin demands a life.

“Then [Christ] said: ‘Here I am. I have come to do your will.’ He does away with the first in order to establish the second. <sup>10</sup>By this will, we have been sanctified once and for all, through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ” (Hebrews 10:9-10, EHV). God’s will was that his only-begotten Son would be the sacrifice that was really necessary for the sin of the world.

Advent is such a wonderful season because we look forward with hope. It isn’t just the baby who fills the manger that gives us such hope, it is the God-man that baby Jesus was. He would grow up completely free from the sin that infects every other human being so that he could take on himself the debt-load of sin every human being is saddled with. We look forward with such hope because we know that he *did* become that perfect sacrifice; he *did* die on the cross, after he declared “it is finished” when he had completed the work of salvation for us.

#### IV.

We are: Sanctified Through Sacrifice. Sanctified means “made holy.” That didn’t happen through the filthy cloth of our own attempts at doing good things for God, just as it didn’t happen through the sacrifices of animals the People of Israel made on the altar of the temple, following God’s own instruction to them.

“We have been sanctified once and for all, through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ” (Hebrews 10:10, EHV). We are sanctified through sacrifice, but it is the sacrifice of *Jesus*.

Sin requires a life as payment. Paul says: “If we have been united with him in the likeness of his death, we will certainly also be united with him in the likeness of his resurrection. <sup>6</sup>We know that our old self was crucified with him, to make our sinful body powerless, so that we would not continue to serve sin” (Romans 6:5-6, EHV). Each one of us deserves death, just as God told Adam and Eve. Jesus’ sacrificial death has become *our* required sacrificial death. The sinful people we once were are put to death with Jesus.

Perfection is needed to make a person right with God; perfection is needed to get to heaven. That’s always been the case and it always will be. Because of the sacrifice of Jesus, you *have* the perfection you need. Paul says: “As many of you as were baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ” (Galatians 3:27, EHV). You wear the perfection Jesus won for you on the cross. Your relationship with God has been made right by Jesus.

Because of your sanctification through the sacrifice of Jesus, you don’t make your offerings to the Lord and give of your time and talents in service to Christ’s church to try to make yourself right with God. At least, I *hope* you aren’t thinking that way. Your gifts and offerings and your service are given *because of* the sacrifice Jesus first made for you.

You *want* to hear yet again the Christmas story of the birth of the One who came to be your Savior and King. You long to be fed every week with the spiritual food Jesus provides in the worship service and in the Supper he has declared was given and poured out for you. Every day you seek to be sanctified yet again as you strengthen your faith in your devotions and Bible study. You do these things not in some vain attempt to get right with God, but because you long to stay close to the One who has sanctified and keeps you in the faith.

The King of kings is nearly here. Our salvation is at the door, Christ Jesus, the little baby by whom God makes holy those who worship him. Amen.