

Once for All  
Hebrews 10:11-18

John 17:1-12  
John 17:13-26  
Responsive Once for All.

This morning we are going to be continuing through Hebrews chapter 10 focusing primarily on verses 11-18 which as you will notice when we read this passage this morning that the Author here is continuing to talk about Christ who is the perfect sacrifice, and perfect high priest. So if you remember last week, we talked about God's sovereignty in all of this, it was God who made man, it was God who gave man the law, and it is God who provided for mankind salvation through his Son. Throughout the entire scripture everything which came before Christ was pointing to the messiah to come, was pointing to Christ and the fulfillment of all of that which was spoken of in the law and the prophets. And it is just the same after the arrival of Christ, all things since then have pointed back to his work on the cross, to the culmination of God's sovereign plan of salvation to reconcile his children from a rebellious and fallen world back to himself.

As we saw last week in verses 1-11 this very thing, that the law was not given to redeem, nor to save, or even create righteousness. Not only was it incapable of doing so, the Author here quoting Psalm's and attributing it to God saying, burnt offerings and sacrifices he had no pleasure. God did not desire them, they did not truly atone for the sins of Israel as we have seen this argument made throughout this book of Hebrews, for the blood of bulls and goats could not atone for the sins of man. Yet, this was all part of God's sovereign plan, yes, the law that was given to Israel was a part of God's plan. We must be careful as those who adhere to what is known as New Covenant Theology that we don't belittle the law to the point making it worthless, or silly. It was given by God, it played a part in God's sovereign plan to reveal his nature, and man's standing before such a Holy and mighty, Just God. So, when we start saying things such as the law has passed, it is no longer needed, it is no longer necessary, it is not because it failed, nor is it because it was useless, but rather because it has been replaced by something better.

It served its purpose, for the time that God allotted it to serve, no longer, and no less. But as we have seen with the writings here in Hebrews and I think one of the reasons this Author here has been hammering so hard on the issue of the law, and the traditions is because at the time of writing they were still in full effect. We see this by the fact that when he is referring to the practices of sacrifices, or other such things it is in the present tense, giving us a hint that all of these practices are still going on. And if that is the case, we can see why he has been spending so much time instructing that such things are no longer necessary, for the one in whom they were given to us to learn about, has come and has fulfilled them. As he argued in verse 1 here of chapter 10, these things were shadows and not the substance. I think of it this way as if you are walking down a hallway and you are coming up to an intersection. You don't know if anyone is around the corner or not, unless you happen to see their shadow broadcasting their arrival around the corner. So it is the same with the law, the shadow was cast so that man can see that the promised one was indeed coming, but now that he has come, he turned the corner sort a speak, we no longer need to be looking for the shadow.

As verse 9 says, "Behold I have come to do your will oh God, He takes away the first so that he may establish the second." Christ has come and has been revealed to be greater, brighter, and more glorious than the shadows even predicted. Being both God and Man, perfect, holy, and without blame, yet willing to die to take our punishment upon himself to fulfill and do that which the law and sacrifices could never accomplish. Which is to bring atonement and remission of sins. The sacrifices and the law convicted, they condemned, and they revealed man's sinfulness even at its very core being unable to accomplish their requirements. For even in their attempt at gaining righteousness through the law, what do we see in the religious leaders of Israel by the time Jesus comes. We see Greed, Pride, a lust for power and control. All sinful desires, all sinful thoughts largely spurred on by the requirements of the law, for they used it to accomplish their own gain, and their own glory. In their self righteousness, they condemned themselves breaking the very law they sought to keep. We saw it all through the book of Mark when we were going through that, even plotting to kill Jesus, being full of anger, jealousy, and wrath, seeing that he had come and his ministry was taking away their empire they built.

So I ask, in light of that, did the law fail? If the law was given to make one righteous and holy, yet we see these men full of anger, pride, jealousy, these men who were the authorities, who were the ones who were committed to keeping this law, yet they themselves were some of its worst offenders. It did not bring righteousness and justification to them, but the law did not fail either, it accomplished exactly what God intended, to expose and reveal sin and to condemn. Our passage today shows just how weak and temporary all of this was. As it says in verse 11, "Ever priest stands daily and repeatedly offering the same sacrifices. Which can never take away sins." The law did not bring righteousness, and the sacrifices did not bring atonement, but the substance of which they foreshadowed did, verse 12. "But this man, after he offered one sacrifice for sins forever. Sat down by the right hand of God" It is finished, it is complete, it is over. God's redemption plan for mankind has been revealed, and fully realized in his Son Jesus Christ. That is what makes the continuation of the temple worship that was going on here when the Author wrote this book such a horrible and vial thing. They have chosen the shadow over the substance, and my fellow Christians, if you seek to find your guidance from the law you are committing the same error.

That is the entire point of the author's argument is it not? That there is nothing greater than Christ, all things have been given to him and he is the sovereign preeminence and Lord over all of creation. The angels bow to him, nature bends to his will, and it is in his mighty sovereign hand our salvation rests. Not on the law, not on traditions, not on our ability to be or act a certain way, not even on the church, but solely and completely upon Christ. Kind of a scary thought isn't it? I mean, how many people are living their lives thinking that are good enough to get into heaven, trying to earn their way. Infact if seems most people don't even try to earn their way anymore, rather they think that they can just point their fingers and say, "well, I am not as bad as that guy!" As long as there is someone worse than me, then I am pretty good. But scripture says, there none good, no, not one, single person. Really, if there was anyone who would be good enough to work their way into heaven it would have had to have been the religious leaders in Israel, but as I have already pointed out not only were they themselves breakers of the very law they swore to keep, they were condemned, and blinded by it, unable to see the truth. Christ stood in their very midst, told them that he was the one in which all of the scriptures foretold, and yet these righteous and holy men in the eyes of man, ultimately had him killed.

Look at the apostle Paul, one who was zealous for the law, yet he himself said he was the chief of sinners. He was persecuting the people of “the way” the ones who were following the teachings of Jesus. Thinking that he was doing God's holy work silencing the blasphemers...but God revealed to him, that it was he who was the blasphemer, it was he that the law condemned, and the only way out was for God's mercy and grace. Such it is for all of mankind, there is no earning your way, there is no being a good person, for not only are we in our natural state lost in our sins, we are under Adams curse, and condemned by God's righteous law. So even those who sought to find righteousness by the law, were still yet condemned by it for they were incapable of truly keeping it, and in fact it seems that all it really did was awaken sin in them.

But all is not lost, we are not hopelessly lost in judgment and condemnation for we have been freed from the law, to live in grace and love. Unlike the priests who needed to constantly offer up sacrifices, the sacrifice who came to die for us, to take our punishment was the true sacrifice that all others pointed to, and as it says in our passage this morning, “But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God.” His work was complete, it was finished. No longer is there a need for the animal sacrifices of the old covenant, for Christ has come and fulfilled them in himself. Yet, as I had already said this morning, verse 11 is written in the present tense, saying every priests stands daily, not stood, as in past tense, but stand as in it was still happening during the writing of this book. This really is the ultimate blasphemy if you think about it. Choosing to continue to worship the shadow, instead of the substance, choosing to continue in the practices that pointed to the Messiah over the Messiah himself. And to continue to do so, after he has come and fulfilled them it is no wonder why God utterly destroyed the temple in Jerusalem putting an end to all of those things.

Look at verse 14, which says, “For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.” Again a stark contrast to the levitical priests who needed to offer sacrifices daily. But not only that, look at the assurance we have here in Christ's sacrifice, “He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.” Once your sin's have been covered by the blood of this lamb, they are gone forever..the shedding of his blood on the cross perfected each and every one of us who are in Christ, who are the adopted Son's and Daughters of the Father, joint heirs with Christ to the eternal promises and heavenly kingdom. But notice it says, “those who are being sanctified.” it is not that this perfection that he has achieved for us is complete, in fact it can not be in this life because of the remaining depravity, the stain of sin on these vessels of flesh. We are being sanctified, through this life, through our trials and temptations as we through the grace of God come through them they have the effect of working in us sanctification. That is drawing us closer and closer to God, slowly peeling us away from this world and making us more and more like him.

But this sanctification is not fulfilled until death, until we stand before the judgment seat of God, covered by the blood of the lamb, being seen as spotless and sinless, not because we were, but because of Christ's atoning sacrifice on the cross, which was offered once, and for all to make us spotless the children of God. But trials, and temptations are not the only tools that God uses to build in us sanctification, look at 15 and 16, “But the Holy Spirit witnesses to us, for after he said before. This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord. I will put my Laws in your hearts, and in their minds I will write them.” God also has given us the Holy Spirit as a ministering helper, it is part of this new covenant in Christ blood, the law written in our hearts and minds. The old covenant saints did not have the indwelling of the holy spirit that the new covenant saints have, the indwelling of the holy spirit is something that was part of the new covenant promise. And again, since we have this spirit in us, ministering to us...do we need an external law for a guide and conviction? Do we need an external law to instruct us how to please God?

Well of course the answer to that is no. It is just like the theme of this entire book, showing how Christ is superior to everything, and in him is everything. It is he same here, now that the Spirit has come, making all things new, and is indwelling in God's children, ministering, and instructing, convicting, and reassuring...there is no need for the old. In much the same way, if we still think that we need to keep a hold of that old laws, are we not denying the Spirits power in us? How is this any different from the Jews of the bible denying Christ, and his power over sin, hell, and the grave. The still continued in their sacrifices, and in their practices blaspheming and denying the messiah. And I think in a sense we do the same thing to the holy spirit if we believe we still need the old shadows to guide us, instead of relying on the substance that was given. Any reliance upon the old Shadows really in essence is a denial of the new. Or at least a lack of trusting in God's promise. Not believing that the law written on our hearts is good enough, that we need to substitute it, or enhance it by keeping the old law it has replaced.

For myself this has been a very important distinction in the understanding of the old covenant and the new. If we are to still look to the old law as a rule and guide for our lives then we don't really have a need for the holy spirit's convictions, for the law already convicts. And likewise, if we have the holy spirit we no longer need to law to convict for the holy spirit convicts. So to me at least it seems to be complete silliness to continue to hold on to the old law, to use the 10 commandments as a basic rule in our lives for I think in doing so we are not truly trusting God's promise, and his word that such things have passed and have become obsolete because now something better has come. He has sent us a helper, who is far superior to words written on a stone tablet, the holy spirit indwells us, and ministers to us personally. Bringing us conviction of our sins, in fact even more so then a written law ever could for it goes to the heart and mind of each and every one of us. The Law was concerned with outward actions mostly, but the holy spirits conviction works upon our heart, convicts us of our thoughts, but it is not a conviction to condemnation such as the law either, for the holy spirit convicts us to work in us sanctification, to draw us closer to God.

What a glorious promise we have in this passage, what a wonderful savior and high priest we have in Christ Jesus, I know that we have already read this passage this morning, but really I want to just read it again with a fresh set of eyes sort of speak, keeping what was said this morning forefront as we read it again...and just worship and praise God for his working out our salvation in mercy, grace, and love. Seeing the fruitlessness of the old sacrifices, and seeing the fullness of Christ's. So let us read this passage again this morning. ( 11-18)

This Man Jesus Christ, offered himself as the one sacrifice for sins forever, and having accomplished that, having completed what he came to do, fulfilling all that the scripture had written of him, he sits down at the right hand of God making intercession for us, so that our sins and lawless deeds will be remembered no more. Wow, What hope, and beauty is this...the mercy and grace to us who deserve eternal death, are covered by his blood so that we may have eternal life. What hope knowing that in the event of our sin, that if we are faithful to confess, God is faithful to forgive, and not only that, he will remember it no more. It will be as if it had never happened. So with this promise how should we as Christians act when the holy spirit convicts us of sin? Do we hang our head in shame? Do we beat and whip ourselves like some would do? No, we repent, and we turn away from it believing that God not only forgives but forgets. We should not dwell upon sins of the past, they do not define who we are today. In God's forgiveness it is as if we are seen as new creatures, and I think we should act like it. Have you sinned? Did you repent? Good, now move on praising God for his forgiveness. The Christian is not defined by his sin, and should not represent one who goes about acting like a whipped puppy, always head hanging low and groveling.

The Christian is defined by the blood of Christ and God's forgiveness, therefore we should act as one sanctified, we should act as one forgiven. I am reminded of Christ's instruction about prayer, that the God who sees us in secret will reward us openly. We are not to go about with ashes on our head signifying our mourning, signifying our repentance, nor should we act as one deserving punishment. If we repent, God says he forgets, if God forgets why should we remember? Praise God for his forgiveness, Praise God that he does not keep a record of our sins against us, we should be full of this praise daily, for daily we sin, and daily we are forgiven. While Satans design is that sin is to drive a wedge between us and God, the reality is that what Satan means for evil, God uses for good. What I mean by that is the reality of sin, that is sin in the believer, is that really it draws us closer to God in the end. For when we recognize our sin, our failure it makes God's grace all the more glorious. Of course this does not mean that we should sin, to experience more grace, as we know the Apostle Paul dealt with that in Romans, Should we sin so that grace can abound? Certainly not! In fact that is counter intuitive, for a heart that yearns for the savior despises sin, and when that heart sins, the conviction is often times painful as we cry out to God for forgiveness recognizing that there is nothing good in us, but only grace and mercy in God.

So let us look to our high priest, the one who is sitting at the right hand of God, who has given us remission of sin, having fulfilled the righteous requirements for redemption on our behalf. Let us praise him for his grace and mercy toward us has it is he who has perfected us, and it is he who is working to sanctify us. Let us put our trust, our hope, and our understanding in him, not in the law, not in our abilities, but in God's mercy and grace.