

The Epistle to the Hebrews

Lesson # 28 May 19, 2019

He Sat Down at God's Right Hand

Hebrews 10:11-18

A Doctrinal Conclusion

vv. 11-13

We have just concluded our look at Heb. 10:1-10, a passage which ended on a high note of encouragement in v. 10 – which relates to us through the work of Christ by the will of God, we have been “*sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*” This is of course, the body mentioned in the citation of Psalm 40:6-8 in Heb. 10:5-7.

What sort of worship is due to a Holy God who has done all of this so that we, as undeserving, and sometimes unconvinced sinners, might be gloriously saved from His wrath?

Some of the most startling passages of Scripture serve as conclusions to great doctrinal treatises. My absolute favourite passage is a good example – Romans 11:33-36;

³³ Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! ³⁴ “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?” ³⁵ “Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” ³⁶ For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

This is like the icing on the cake at the end of almost 11 full chapters of purely doctrinal teaching about our salvation by grace through faith! When it comes to Hebrews, the author is not as polished a writer as Paul, but still creates major impact as he brings his doctrinal portion of this letter to the point of transition from doctrine to practical application. Richard Phillips says this very well, “These verses may not have all the eloquence of Romans 8, or the soaring prose of Paul’s doxology in Romans 11, but they deliver the most wonderful good news ever heard by the ears of men. Indeed, all of redemptive history, from the time when God clothed guilty Adam and Eve with the skins of the slain animal at the gate of the Garden; to Abraham receiving a ram to be slain in the place of his son Isaac upon Mount Moriah; to the Israelites in the time of Moses, spreading the lamb’s blood on their doorposts lest the angel of death should come in; to generation after generation of Israel, with the priest slaying thousands and millions of lambs and goats and bulls, sacrifices the author of Hebrews insists could never have atoned for one human sin – all of that history had craned its neck to hear words such as these, with bated breath, had cried with bitter tears, “How long O Lord, how long!” to hear words like these. Where is the lamb? Where is the true sacrifice? Where is the real atonement that will not merely place an ill-fitting lid on a cauldron of boiling sin, but actually exhaust the fury of God’s wrath and justice against it? Where

is, as John the Baptist said upon spying the Lord Jesus Christ, “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29)? Hebrews 10:11-14 proclaims the one true sacrifice that takes away our sins and makes us holy.”¹

Hebrews 10 is lacking (perhaps) in the sheer eloquence of Paul’s power of logic over the Greek language we see in Romans (especially Romans 8-11), which is probably a strong indicator that Paul was not the author of Hebrews, but there is definite Holy Spirit power presiding over Hebrews 10, especially as OT passages are cited to bring the Bible ‘together’ before our eyes. So, although this passage of vv. 11-18 are not so eloquent that they are destined to become a favourite passage for most believers, the impact of what is being said here should leave a lasting impression on all of us.

While the Old Covenant offered no real satisfaction for the sin of worshippers, as proven by the repetitive nature of the Levitical system, and then, finally by its dissolution when Christ came to fulfill the Law and offer that final, long-awaited sacrifice of Himself; now, in Christ, that has all been resolved. Just read Heb. 10:11-14 to see that.

Remember, this letter was first written to first century Christians who were under the tremendous pressure of persecution, and were wondering if continued fidelity to Christ was worth the immense cost.² The author’s conclusion is in vv. 11-14 – This is a clanging Gospel bell! There is real, true forgiveness and peace promised and available to us as a result of our High Priest who paid the cost on our behalf with His life, and now reigns alive in heaven to ensure that our salvation is to the uttermost!

Paul David Tripp offers an excellent commentary on vv. 11-12;

“The OT priests were called to sacrifice for the ongoing sins of God’s people. Exhausted and knee-deep in blood, they offered sacrifice after sacrifice, day after day. If we viewed the scene, we would find it nauseating. It wasn’t just the daily offerings but dozens of daily, weekly, and seasonal offerings offered according to the religious calendar. Thousands of animals would be slaughtered every year. Yet it was never enough. Before one layer of blood dried, more was sprinkled. The stench of burning flesh never abated. This sacrificial labor was never permitted to stop, because the power of sin was never broken and the penalty for sin never fully paid for. So it is an amazing thing to read that after Jesus did His work, ‘He sat down’! The only reason he could have ever sat down is that He had done everything that needed to be done to deal with every aspect of sin. Full and complete redemption had been provided.”³

Notice the immediate contrast between the OT priests and their ceaseless work which could never effectively remove sins, and Christ *“offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins.”* The word denoting that contrast is *“But”*, which leads off v. 12.

¹ Richard D, Phillips, Hebrews, P & R, 2006, p. 345

² Philip Hughes, Hebrews, p. 346

³ Paul David Tripp, Lost in the Middle, Shepherd Press, 2002, p. 22-23

As Tripp points out, “It is an amazing thing to read...”He sat down!” This is startling because the one piece of furniture not found in the tabernacle or temple was a chair or a bench. (the exception is the Mercy Seat, the lid of the Ark of the Covenant but that was symbolic of God’s throne and no High Priest would ever dare to sit on that!) The reason is that the work was never done in the OC, so there was to be no rest inside the chambers. Very early in Hebrews, we read, 1:3, these words, *“After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high...”* Then in 12:2... *“for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”* See also Heb. 8:1.

Although it is not an outright citation of Psalm 110:1, it is doubtless an allusion to it. In fact, in Hebrews 1:13, the author does cite that verse verbatim. There is distinct importance in this idea, because it signifies and attaches to Christ the role of incredible honour and underscores His deity. What other position could ever ascribe such glory to a Person, than to be seated at the Father’s right hand on His very throne?

Notice Luke 1:5-19, and focus on v. 19. Gabriel stands in the presence of God, and from the context, this is a position of high honour! And yet, notice also Matt. 26:63-65, as Jesus is being interrogated, what the effect of the prophecy of Daniel which Jesus cites does to Caiaphas, the high priest of that day. He takes this partial citation of Daniel 7:13, and his vision of the Messiah by Jesus as the worst sort of blasphemy – Jesus is saying by citing this that He is God. Daniel does not mention the Messiah being seated at God’s right hand here, but certainly unequivocally conveys the Deity of the Messiah in no uncertain terms and Caiaphas certainly understood Jesus’ implications in citing this passage of Himself!

So, when the author of Hebrews portrays Jesus as being seated at God’s right hand, *“waiting for the time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet”* [Ps. 110:1] He is clearly identifying Jesus as God, even as he has accentuated Jesus’ humanity throughout the book of Hebrews.

Richard Phillips comments,

“Christ’s sacrifice was not offered over and over, but once for all, and in this we see the sufficiency of his blood for the forgiveness of our sins. The resulting situation could not stand in greater contrast with that of the old covenant priests. William Barclay writes, “The priests stand offering sacrifice; Christ sits at the right hand of God. Theirs is a position of a servant; his is the position of a Monarch. Jesus is the king come home, his task accomplished and his victory won.” And Andrew Murray rightly exclaims, “The once of Christ’s work is the secret of its being forever: the more clear the acceptance of that divine once for all, the more sure the experience of that divine forever...His forever is one of victory, and of the blessed expectation of its full manifestation.” Christ is seated in the heavens. His work is accomplished, established, inevitable. Our author is wrapping up all his great ideas, here returning to the theme in chapter 1, that Christ has been exalted with almighty power as he rules over history for the church.

Christ is seated and enthroned, in a position of rest like that of God on the seventh day of creation. It is a rest of sovereignty, of omnipotent rule, control, and confidence. This has the most horrible implications for Christ's enemies: for the devil and the demons, and also for every sinner who rejects his claims. He is "waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet" (Heb. 10:13). Unbelievers may deny him, mock him, and exult in their apparent freedom from his lordly rule. But all the while he sits enthroned with history racing toward the judgment over which he will reign supreme.⁴

Perfecting for All Time

v. 14

By the power of His person, His Godhead and His offering, one single offering, He has done what thousands of priests and tens of thousands of offerings could never do, even if they had continued for many more thousands of years. The OC system was never meant to conclude with effectual salvation.

"He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified" – Most of the early converts to Christ, both Jews and pagan Gentiles, had come from a background in which animal sacrifices had played a key role. Now, that their form of worship needed no such sacrifices, there was a practical recognition that such sacrifices had been rendered pointless as a result of Jesus' sacrificial death. "Those who looked upon this death as a sacrifice soon ceased to offer God any blood-sacrifices at all."⁵ Jesus' sacrifice – "once for all", has purified His people from any moral defilement of sin, and assured them of permanent maintenance in a right [reconciled] relationship with God."⁶

It is difficult as a teacher to capture all that this verse is conveying because it is summarizing the Gospel in 1 verse. This verse emphasizes the complementary truths that salvation is all of grace and all of Christ. By His 'single offering', He has perfected them 'for all time'. The author uses 'being sanctified' as a synecdoche for salvation, and not only that, but a clear way to identify Christ's followers as well – they are 'being sanctified', set apart & growing in Christ.

David Peterson, as cited by Robert A. Peterson, attempts to summarize Hebrews' teaching concerning this aspect of Christ's sacrifice here; "Hebrews consistently portrays the atoning work of Christ as the fulfillment of the Day of Atonement ritual. At the heart of this portrayal is the presentation of Christ as the sinless Savior who "bears the sins of many" in his death, and delivers those who are cleansed and sanctified by his "blood" from the awesome judgment of God. Allusions to the fulfillment of other blood rituals help to expand the picture. Jesus' death and heavenly exaltation accomplish an eternally effective redemption from sin and its consequences, inaugurating all the benefits of the New Covenant.

⁴ Richard Phillips, p. 351-352

⁵ FF Bruce, The Epistle to the Hebrews, Eerdmans, 1990, p. 247

⁶ IBID, p. 247

Since he continues forever as a heavenly high priest, he is always able to apply the benefits of his once-for-all sacrifice to those who draw near to God through him. One sacrifice replaces the tiny sacrifices of the Old Covenant used to maintain a relationship with God.”⁷

The word translated “perfected” in v. 14, according to A.W. Pink means literally “completed” or “consummated”⁸. Jesus has wrought a complete expiation and propitiation which has secured for His people: full atonement, title to heaven, hope and joy, a relationship with the Father no longer being based on being His adversary & target of wrath, the blessings of fellowship and as a role as a part of His body in the church, and so much more ...consider Romans 8:28-30.

When I came across this point of seeing that “perfected” equals “completed”, I was reminded of the great hymn by Aaron R. Wolfe, “Complete in Thee”;

Complete in Thee! No work of mine may take, dear Lord, the place of Thine.
 Thy blood hath pardon bought for me, and I am now complete in Thee.
 Complete in Thee! I die to sin. Thy grace hath conquered, reign within.
 Thy voice shall bid the tempter flee, and I shall stand, complete in Thee.
 Complete in Thee! Each need supplied, and no good thing to me denied.
 Since Thou my portion, Lord, will be, I ask no more, complete in Thee.
 Dear Savior! When before Thy bar, all tribes and tongues assembled are.
 Among Thy chosen will I be, at Thy right hand, complete in Thee.
 Chorus:
 Yea justified! O Blessed thought! And sanctified! Salvation wrought!
 Thy blood hath pardon bought for me. And glorified I, too, shall be!

There is no question that the Bible teaches we are not to be saved, then, just sit back and wait for Christ’s return. “Let go and let God”, such a popular pseudo-theology of the late 20th century, although it sounds pious, is simply not good theology. Phil. 2:12 is only 1 example of verses that quash this so-called theology. Christ bought and paid for our salvation with His blood, and so it is settled. It is complete. But that does not free us from obligation to obey God’s Word. Take note of these passages as well – I Peter 1:3-5, 13-22; II Peter 1:3-11.

See Hebrews 2:10-11 [and cf. lesson 7], where the author brings up initially this idea of the Sanctifier and the sanctified, having one source. Now, here in chapter 10, “He has laid the foundation for their [the elect] complete and everlasting pardon, for the quieting of their consciences, and for the purifying of their hearts – for making them complete as the peculiar people of Jehovah, His “purchased possession.”⁹

⁷ David Peterson, cited in Robert A. Peterson, *Salvation Accomplished by the Son*, Crossway, 2012, p. 538

⁸ A.W. Pink, *Hebrews Vol. 1*, p. 570

⁹ John Brown, *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Banner of Truth, 1862, reprint 1964, p. 447

The New Covenant - Redux

vv. 15-18

This citation of parts of Jeremiah 31 is not word for word, and in fact, is not even word for word to Jeremiah 31 as cited earlier in Hebrews 8, yet the AH tells us that *“The Holy Spirit also bears witness to us...”*. The Holy Spirit, who guided Jeremiah as he wrote Scripture, also guided the author of Hebrews as he wrote this Scripture. So, we apparently need to understand that God is not bound by a slavish notion of adhering to every word in an OT citation, as long as the understanding and application of the underlying truth is being faithfully conveyed.

The AH is here doing no injustice or violence to Jeremiah’s text, as he puts out this final reminder in Hebrews of the NC language and benefits, especially as related to the law being written on believers’ hearts and minds, and the capstone benefit of complete forgiveness of sins in v. 17. Sins so dealt with, fully forgiven and out of sight have no need to be further propitiated! It is finished!

The conclusion of the whole argument, as the AH sums up his doctrinal position in the Epistles, is found in v. 18: *“Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.”* Those to whom the author is writing, cannot, after reading / hearing Hebrews 1:1-10:18, pretend to be ignorant that “any reversion to the shadowy forms and sacrifices of the Mosaic Law can only mean the negation of the Christian Gospel.”¹⁰

The Grand Conclusion of the Doctrinal Portion of Hebrews

Verse 18 ends the doctrinal portion of this epistle. It is not that there is no doctrinal content, positions or statements from this point to the end of Hebrews, but here, practical application is supplied in light of what the author of Hebrews has written up to this point.

There is still a wealth of knowledge left for us: there are still 2 warning passages to cover (Heb. 10:26-39; & 12:25-29); an entire chapter of faithful deeds of the OT saints (11); a section on advice regarding church attendance; a passage referring to God’s use of chastening & discipline He uses when His people wander off the narrow path (not to be confused with wrathful condemnation); a glimpse of heaven; exhortations to love one another; to remain free of the love of money; to honour our church leaders and to pray.

Richard Phillips writes a great conclusion to this lesson regarding how we should respond to the doctrine of Hebrews:

“There can be only one answer, and that is to draw our thoughts and our hearts, our whole spiritual orientation, upward to where Jesus Christ sits now enthroned, reigning with power for our salvation, having accomplished everything needed for us to be saved. He is at the center of it all, above it all; he is the meaning of everything we have considered in the Book of Hebrews. The tabernacle and temple were about him and his work. The priests and the rituals

¹⁰ Philip Hughes, p. 404

of the OT served only to point to him. The blood that was shed year after year and day after day spoke only of his blood, shed once for all upon the cross. The veil that was torn invites our gaze into the heavens, where now our Savior sits at rest, reigning for his own, securing us for himself forever, and ruling our hearts by the Spirit he sends. Everything points to him; everything is found in and with him; everything for us comes from him and draws us to him as his people, his own reward for obedience to the will of the Father.

This is the great conclusion we must draw from the teaching of Hebrews. It must be the profession of our faith. And Christ must be the great affection of our hearts. To know him and serve him, to grow in his likeness, must become the great ambition of all our lives.”¹¹

¹¹ Richard Phillips, Hebrews, p. 353