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Sermon Notes

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Christ the Final and Perfect Sacrifice

Hebrews 10:1-10

John MacArthur: There is a story of an English village whose chapel had an arch on which was written, “We preach Christ crucified.” For years, godly men preached there and they presented a crucified Savior as the only means of salvation. But as the generation of godly preachers passed, a generation arose that considered the cross and its message antiquated and repulsive. They began to preach salvation by Christ’s example rather than by His blood. They did not see the necessity of His sacrifice. After a while, ivy crept up the side of the arch and covered the word “Crucified,” and only “We preach Christ” was visible. Then the church decided that its message need not even be confined to Christ and the Bible. So the preachers began to give discourses on social issues, politics, philosophy, moral re-arming, and whatever else happened to spark interest. The ivy on the arch continued to grow until it covered the third word. Then it simply read, “We preach.” [from John MacArthur’s Commentary on Hebrews, p. 246]

How different was Paul, the Apostle!!

1 Corinthians 2:1-2 When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. ² For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

The message of Jesus Christ crucified is at the center of our gospel.

And it is the center of the Book of Hebrews as well.

I. The Powerlessness of Animal Sacrifice (vs. 1-4)

Hebrews 10:1-4 The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming-- not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. ² If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. ³ But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, ⁴ because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

A. Animal Sacrifice Only a Shadow... Not the Reality

1. The image is one we've seen before... Hebrews 8:5

Hebrews 8:5 They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven.

2. Here the author is saying that the animal sacrifices themselves were merely shadow
 - a. The heavenly reality is Christ
 - b. The light of eternity shone from the end of time backward on the time when Christ would enter the world
 - c. The Old Testament prophets saw the SHADOW of Christ before Christ ever entered the world and wrote about that shadow
 - d. The Law of Moses established that shadow as the pattern of worship... but the SHADOW is inferior to the reality
 - e. A shadow cannot be grasped, embraced, felt... a shadow cannot achieve anything of substance for it has no substance... a shadow is merely evidence of the real thing
 - f. Christ is the Reality

Colossians 2:17 These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

3. The "Good things that are coming" = "Good things that are already here"

Hebrews 9:11 When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here

- a. The "good things" are included in the work of Christ
 - b. The "good things" are the blessings of the gospel
 - i) Total forgiveness of all sins
 - ii) Free access into the very throne room of Almighty God
 - iii) The freedom of a totally cleansed conscience
 - iv) The joy of an abundant inheritance in heaven
4. The reality is CHRIST...

B. Endless Repetition of the Sacrifice Shows Impotence

Hebrews 10:1-2 For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. ² If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins.

1. The author zeroes in on a BUILT-IN evidence that the animal sacrifices could never accomplish perfect salvation
2. The Law of Moses ordained that these sacrifices be repeated endlessly, year after year
3. The author to the Hebrews picks up on this as evidence that the animal sacrifices themselves achieved nothing in terms of our relationship to God
4. The endless repetition of these same sacrifices, again and again, year after year, decade after decade, shows their POWERLESSNESS

C. Powerless to Make Us Perfect

1. The author uses one of his favorite words: PERFECT
2. The animal sacrifices had no power to make the worshipers PERFECT
3. The idea is directly connected to cleansing from sin... a perfect CLEANSING, inside and outside

D. True Cleansing Needed... Not Symbolic

1. The author is arguing from the New Covenant understanding of cleansing... a once for all, true, and perfect cleansing of the worshiper who is seeking to draw near to God
2. The author speaks in this way:

If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For then the worshipers would have been CLEANSED ONCE FOR ALL and no longer FELT GUILTY for their sins

3. No Old Testament Jew would have expected this outcome from the animal sacrificial system, and none would have seen this as the goal... but therein lies the inherent deficiency... they were just ACCUSTOMED to an inferior dealing with sin

E. Guilty Conscience Untouched by Animal Sacrifice

1. We've already established this in chapter 9... a GUILTY CONSCIENCE can never truly be cleansed by anything except the true salvation that Christ brings

2. The blood of an animal sacrifice is so obviously inadequate to reconcile a sinner to a holy God that all it does is make the worshiper crave the TRUE SALVATION that was yet to come
3. But David spoke for all the true worshipers of the Old Testament in Psalm 51:

Psalm 51:16-17 You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. ¹⁷ The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

F. Sacrifice an Annual Reminder of Sin

Hebrews 10:3 But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins

Illus. Like DIALYSIS does not affect genuine healing of the kidneys and a FINAL CLEANSING of the blood... the weekly trips to the dialysis machine are a constant reminder that you are not truly healed but have a deep disease that keeps you in a weakened and dependent state... so this calendar of ANNUAL SACRIFICES just served as an annual reminder of sins

Every time the worshiper would make the thrice-annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem, he would be reminded of the continual presence of sin in his life... there would be four or more months worth of sin to be addressed... and the blood of bulls and goats could NEVER do this

G. Summary: IT IS IMPOSSIBLE for the Blood of Animals to Remove Sin

Hebrews 10:4 because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

1. I have been quoting this one verse for the last three chapters in Hebrews... again and again!!
2. The IMPOTENCE of the Old Covenant sacrifices for truly addressing the poisonous problem of sin is clearly summarized here in Hebrews 10
3. The entire religious system is set up CENTERED AROUND animal sacrifice
 - a. The Tabernacle was designed and set up to offer animal sacrifices, and they are IMPOTENT, POWERLESS to remove our sins
 - b. The Levitical Priesthood, with the ornate robes for Aaron and his sons was set up to offer animal sacrifices, and they are IMPOTENT, POWERLESS to remove our sins
 - c. The Jewish religious calendar, with its three-times a year pilgrimages and its morning and evening offerings... the whole system was set up around

these animal sacrifices... and they are IMPOTENT, POWERLESS to remove our sins

H. The Final Piece is In Place to Understand the Lessons of the Sacrificial System

1. All Sin Deserves the Death Penalty
2. The Death Penalty Can be Paid by a Substitute
3. The Substitute CANNOT BE AN ANIMAL!!!

It was all just WAITING FOR CHRIST... the reality that the animals were symbolizing

II. Christ's Body and Mind Prepared for Sacrifice (vs. 5-7)

Hebrews 10:5-7 Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; ⁶ with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. ⁷ Then I said, 'Here I am-- it is written about me in the scroll-- I have come to do your will, O God.'"

A. Christ Speaks Before Entering the World

1. This is the mystery of prophecy... Psalm 40, written by King David, about 1000 years before Christ was born
2. The Author to the Hebrews ascribes the words of Psalm 40 to Jesus at the time of His incarnation... at the time of His entry into the world
3. He says that Jesus spoke these words "when Christ came into the world"
4. We must imagine that the Author means that He spoke them BEFORE entering the world by way of explanation as to WHY He was entering the world
5. Christ CHOSE to be born of a virgin, He CHOSE to leave His throne of glory and enter the world as a tiny human baby
6. It would have been impossible for Christ to speak these words at the day of His birth into the world, because like any human baby, He had to grow into the ability to speak
7. So these words were spoken by Christ UPON MAKING THE DECISION to enter the world, in the fullness of time
8. They also beautifully characterize His attitude throughout His ministry
9. Again, this is an INTERTRINITARIAN CONVERSATION... something Christ said to God the Father... he speaks to Him saying "You..."

B. Christ Says God Did Not Desire Animal Sacrifice... Nor Was He Pleased with Them

1. Christ discusses the purpose of animal sacrifice with the Father
2. He would enter the world as a High Priest, but not to offer animals... sacrifices and offerings God DID NOT DESIRE from Christ... nor were they ultimately pleasing to God
3. This is a fact that would have been well-known to Old Covenant worshipers... the sad limitations of the animal sacrifices

Psalm 50:7-13 "Hear, O my people, and I will speak, O Israel, and I will testify against you: I am God, your God. ⁸ I do not rebuke you for your sacrifices or your burnt offerings, which are ever before me. ⁹ I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens, ¹⁰ for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. ¹¹ I know every bird in the mountains, and the creatures of the field are mine. ¹² If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world is mine, and all that is in it. ¹³ Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats?"

Isaiah 1:10-12 Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom; listen to the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah! ¹¹ "The multitude of your sacrifices-- what are they to me?" says the LORD. "I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats. ¹² When you come to appear before me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of my courts? ¹³ Stop bringing meaningless offerings!"

4. The Prophet Malachi speak of how the people themselves tried to cheat God by bringing LOW QUALITY, blemished animals... God calls down a curse on any CHEAT who tries to pull one over on God... but that is not the issue here! No, the animal sacrifice ITSELF is in question... even if it were the highest quality animal, given with the deepest faith and contrition... GOD IS NOT PLEASED WITH IT in the sense that it is IMPOTENT to atone for their sins

C. Christ's Body Prepared by the Father for Sacrifice

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

1. God the Father PREPARED A BODY for God the Son
2. This is the infinite mystery of the incarnation

John 1:14 "The word became flesh and made his dwelling among us..."

3. This text says Jesus got His human body from the Father; it had been prepared in Mary's womb by the power of the Holy Spirit

Luke 1:35 "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.

Psalm 139:13-14 For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. ¹⁴ I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made

4. God the Father prepared a human body for Jesus... with muscles, bones, tendons, nerves, intestines, brain, heart... and ESPECIALLY with BLOOD
5. The purpose was clear... this human body was prepared for Christ so that He would be able to sacrifice it for our sins

NOTE: Some text problems with Psalm 40 in the Hebrew... the author to Hebrews is quoting the LXX... the Greek translation, with the words "a body you prepared for me"

The Hebrew OT that most of our English Bibles will use for Psalm 40 says literally

"My ears you have opened..." or "pierced"

Some say it refers to the action of a willing servant who chooses in the Law of Moses to remain a servant for life for a loving and good Master; such a servant would have his earlobe pierced with an awl to show that he is a lifelong slave and of good Master

Others say the words just refer to the formation of the body by looking at the detail of the opening of the ear canal... and that this open ear also refers to the willingness of the servant to listen

Christ's Attitude is the Perfect Example of a Servant of God

Vs. 7 Then I said, 'Here I am-- it is written about me in the scroll-- I have come to do your will, O God.'"

1. Christ lived out perfectly what consecration meant
2. God's word was written in His heart, therefore God's will was in His hands and feet
3. His hands were for God's will... so was His back for beating, His face for spitting and His blood for spilling
4. Christ's attitude of perfect submission to His Father's will exemplifies how the Hebrew Christians AND US should be serving God the Father
5. God's Law in our Hearts, God's will in our hands

John 4:34 "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.

D. Christ's Ministry Predicted by Scripture

Vs. 7 Here I am; it is written about me in the scroll...

1. Christ's whole ministry was laid out ahead of time, written in the Scriptures
2. Again and again, He referred to the fact that all of his life was written in the Law and the Prophets
3. Most poignant example... His own arrest and crucifixion

Matthew 26:54 But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?"

Luke 24:44-46 He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day

E. Christ's Heart Presented to God

"I have come to do your will, O God..."

Psalms 40:8 I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.

1. No one has ever lived so perfect a life in conformity to the will of God!!
2. This is the perfection of Christ's life... this is what God wanted from each of us, and Christ alone lived it out
3. This is also the essence of the New Covenant that He will give to us

Hebrews 10:16 I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds."

4. Christ came into the world to DIE according to the will of His Father; and Isaiah said in His hand the will of God would FLOURISH

Isaiah 53:10-11 Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. ¹¹ After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.

III. Christ is the End of Animal Sacrifice (vs. 8-10)

Hebrews 10:8-10 First he said, "Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them" (although the law

required them to be made).⁹ Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will." He sets aside the first to establish the second.¹⁰ And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

A. Repetition and Commentary Intensifies Christ's Actions

1. The Author goes back over these words from Psalm 40 because they are so vital to everything
2. He underscores the total IMPOTENCE of animal sacrifices to achieve real salvation from sin

B. Animal Sacrifices Required by God, but Not Pleasing to God

1. It was Almighty God Himself who instituted these sacrifices from the very beginning
2. The text says God was not pleased with them, **THOUGH THE LAW REQUIRED THEM TO BE MADE**
 - a. Simply put, God required them to bring animals and would have been **EVEN MORE** displeased with these sinners if they refused to offer up the **SHADOW** He had ordained
 - b. But it was still just a **SHADOW**
 - c. So...
3. God rebuked Cain for **NOT** bringing animal sacrifice
4. God smelled the **PLEASING AROMA** of Noah's sacrifice after the flood
5. And yet, in a very real sense, God was **NOT PLEASED** with these animals; Why? Because they had **NO POWER TO TAKE AWAY SIN**
6. Anyone who truly trusted in the animals was seriously misled

C. Christ's Purpose: to Set Aside the First to Establish the Second

1. The first statement about the animal sacrifices addresses them and **SETS THEM ASIDE**
2. The second statement about His own body establishes forever the new and final sacrifice that actually **DOES** take away our sin
3. And so the author says

Hebrews 10:9 He sets aside the first to establish the second.

4. He had come to do GOD'S WILL of setting aside forever animal sacrifice
 5. This was not an innovation, but the actual plan and purpose of God the Father
- D. Christ's Glorious Achievement: Making Us Sinners Holy

Hebrews 10:10 And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

1. By that will = by the will of His Father
2. It was the will of the Father that sinners such as us are ACTUALLY MADE HOLY
3. Revel in the words "we have been made HOLY...":
 - a. How could it be that sinners such as us are actually MADE HOLY
 - b. The Scripture reveals that we are desperately wicked naturally; naturally we were born sinners in Adam, and sinned every day of our lives
 - c. The Scripture says that, apart from Christ, all our righteous acts are like filthy rags
 - d. Paul says his entire life of self-righteous legalistic religion in Judaism was like manure
 - e. Isaiah cried out against Himself

"Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips

- f. Paul cried out against Himself

What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?

- g. We sinners are defiled through and through
- h. God dwells in a high and holy place... the angels around Him cry out

"Holy, holy, holy, Lord Almighty, the whole earth is full of your glory"

- i. Habakkuk says God's eyes are too pure to look on evil, he cannot tolerate sin
- j. John says

God is light and in Him there is NO DARKNESS AT ALL!!!!

k. BUT YET, by the powerful blood of Christ, WE HAVE BEEN MADE HOLY

l. We are delightful in God's sight, pure and holy

m. How marvelous is this BLOOD OF CHRIST

n. Notice that the Author includes HIMSELF...

By that will WE have been made holy

Dear friend, ARE YOU included in that????

Have you known the cleansing of the blood of Christ?

E. Once for All!!!

1. Once again, the author speaks to us of the "once for all" power of Jesus' blood
2. Unlike the animals which were endlessly repeated

IV. Applications

A. Come to Christ

1. A moment ago, I asked you if you were included...
2. I ask you again... are you MADE HOLY by faith in the blood of Jesus Christ?
3. It has infinite cleansing power; Peter, speaking of both Jews and Gentile converts to Christ, said this:

Acts 15:9 He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith.

4. Has your heart been purified from defiling sin by faith in Christ
5. Is your conscience cleansed now by this faith?

B. Believers: How is Your Conscience?

1. The lashes of a defiled conscience are terrifying, as we've been saying
2. Are you able to look at the perfect law of God, know that it requires perfect obedience and holiness, and know also that, through faith in Christ you are PERFECTLY RIGHTEOUS in His sight; are the murmurings of a guilty conscience laid to rest by coming to Christ by faith

3. AND do you now strive to keep you conscience clean before God and man, as Paul said He did

C. Marvel at the Progress of Redemptive History

1. It was God Himself who established the animals sacrifices
2. It was God Himself who has now dismantled that system forever and will never again accept animals for sin
3. God did it all to point to Christ and bring us to genuine faith in Him
4. Marvel at the ways of God
5. AND marvel that God boldly sent messengers to the Jews to tell them that in Christ all the Mosaic regulations are now obsolete... to point those people away from the shadow onto the reality
6. So for us, we have learned the lesson of the Book of Hebrews: the ministry of Christ is INFINITEL SUPERIOR to what was established as merely a shadow; His body is the perfect tabernacle; His is the perfect priest; His bloody sacrifice on the cross finished forever ONCE FOR ALL the claims of God's law against us... this is the perfect religion, and it makes Judaism obsolete forever
7. Jews in the Old Covenant were carrying out a religion that was a shadow of the good things that were coming; sadly, Jews today are carrying out a SHADOW of a SHADOW!!
 - a. They go to synagogue (or temple) every Saturday
 - b. They have their Sabbaths
 - c. They still celebrate the holidays—Passover, the Day of Atonement, the New Year, etc. But the reality is LOST TO THEM
 - d. There are no animal sacrifices, not because they believe the message of Hebrews, but because they CANNOT offer sacrifice because the temple is destroyed
8. We know based on this marvelous book of Hebrews, we have been made holy FOREVER by the single act of obedience of Christ on the cross

D. Worship Jesus TODAY!!

1. Give Him all praise and glory for His marvelous act of obedience to the Father
2. He stood before God the Father and said “Here I am, it is written about me in the scroll, I DESIRE TO DO YOUR WILL O GOD”

3. And with that, He went to the cross for YOU and ME

Romans 5:19 For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

4. Praise Him forever!!!