

A Grasp of the Gospel

by Alistair Begg

Alistair Begg emphasizes the importance of understanding the Gospel as the fulfillment of the Law and the source of true assurance and forgiveness for believers.

Duration: 52:28

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Ephesians 3:8, Hebrews 10:16-18, Hebrews 10:22-23

Topics: "Gospel"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the achievements of Christ's priestly work. He emphasizes that Jesus has done everything necessary in relation to sin, contrasting it with the continual and repetitious work of the priests in the Old Testament. Once Jesus offered a one-time sacrifice for sin, he sat down, signifying that all that God desires has been accomplished and all that we need has been provided. The speaker also highlights the contrast between the law and the good things that Christ brings, explaining that the law was only a shadow of the benefits Christ would bring and was incapable of perfecting the souls of those who offered sacrifices. The sermon concludes by mentioning the hope and prayer of the speaker to teach the Bible with clarity and relevance, leading to conversion, strengthening of believers, and the establishment and encouragement of local churches in the work of the gospel.

Transcript

I invite you to turn with me, if you have a Bible or if you would like to use one of the Bibles that you'll find around you there in the pews, to the tenth chapter of Hebrews--to Hebrews chapter 10. And it may be helpful for some--I don't know--if you're using one of the church Bibles to know that Hebrews 10 is found on page 850 in these particular Bibles. Hebrews chapter 10, and I'm going to read the first eighteen verses.

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. 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.

But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said, Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me. With burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased.

Then I said, Here I am. It is written about me in the scroll. I have come to do your will, O God.

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. You see, the writer now is doing his own exposition from Psalm 40. That's why he's repeating it here.

All preachers repeat themselves. Then he said, Here I am. I have come to do your will.

He sets aside the first to establish the second. And by that will we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Day after day, every priest stands and performs his religious duties again and again.

He offers the same sacrifices which can never take away sins. But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says, This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.

Then he adds, Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more. And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin. Amen.

Now, just a brief prayer as we turn to the Bible. Father, what we know not, teach us. What we have not, give us.

What we are not, make us. For your Son's sake. Amen.

Each study that we have together, excluding Sunday morning, which will be within the framework of our Sunday-by-Sunday work here at Parkside--each of these studies, tonight and tomorrow morning and tomorrow night--I plan to use to emphasize the purpose statement of Truth For Life. I'm not going to ask anybody to stand up and recite that. I'm not sure that I can recite it accurately myself, but I think I do know well enough the bones of it.

We've said that it is our hope and prayer at Truth For Life to teach the Bible with clarity and with relevance, so that as a result, believers--unbelievers--may be converted, secondly, that those who believe may be strengthened and make progress in the faith, and then thirdly, that local churches might also be established and encouraged in the work of the gospel. And so I thought, since that is our purpose statement, and since I've never really given any thought to it beyond having written it down at the very inception of the ministry, it would be good for us to approach our studies in that way. And I'm really thinking about it in terms of each of us as truth partners--those of us who are committed to Christ and to one another and to the work of the gospel, in some measure, via Truth For Life.

And so we'll be asking the question, What does a truth partner look like? And one of the things that we'll say tomorrow evening is that a truth partner certainly ought to be somebody who is fully committed to and involved in their local church, because of what Truth For Life's about. In the morning, we will recognize that a truth partner is surely supposed to be somebody who is growing in grace and in a knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. And this evening, in our opening study, we're going to say that a truth partner is someone who ought to have solid experiential grasp of the gospel and who, in turn, is then able to share that gospel with others.

And I begin there--and happily so, and I think rightly so--with the emphasis on the gospel. And we could, of course, have turned to a variety of passages in the Bible. Really, we could go just about anywhere in the entire Bible in order to reinforce this truth.

But I've chosen to come to Hebrews chapter 10. One of the books that we have offered in the past over the program is the book by Jerry Bridges, *The Gospel for Real Life*. And those of you who have availed yourself of that book will perhaps remember that in introducing his thesis, he has this very brief paragraph--just a couple of sentences--and he says this, The reality of present-day Christendom is that most professing Christians actually know very little of the gospel, let alone understand its implications for their day-to-day lives.

My perception, writes Bridges, is that most of them know just enough gospel to get inside the door of the kingdom. They know nothing of the unsearchable riches of Christ. And he goes on to make the point--and to do so very engagingly and informatively and helpfully, as you will know if you've read the book--that as believers, we need to preach the gospel to ourselves every day of our lives.

So with that, by way of an introduction, let's look together here at Hebrews chapter 10, where the writer of Hebrews makes it absolutely clear that the ground and foundation of a Christian's assurance--both in terms of experience and in terms of evidence--that the ground of the Christian's assurance lies in the finished work of Jesus Christ. It is a long time now since I did children's talks. I kind of miss them, actually.

But when I did the series for the first time on the life of Hudson Taylor back with our church in Scotland, I remember finding to my great delight that the pivotal moment in Hudson Taylor's coming to faith in Jesus Christ was when he had gone out into a barn amongst chickens and various other creatures, and there, in reading his Bible, he notes in his biography, it was there in that barn that I discovered the finished work of Christ. And he said, When I understood what Jesus had accomplished on the cross, then suddenly my life was revolutionized. And so it is that the writer to the Hebrews, in various passages all the way through his book, turns back to the Old Testament and then into the post-Christian experience, or the experience of Christ after the resurrection, in order to make this point.

And in verses 1-4, he points out a clear contrast. A clear contrast. He begins, The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming.

And the contrast, he makes, is between the law and the good things. When I read J. B. Phillips today--which I often do, just as a cross-reference--I found his paraphrase of these opening four verses very helpful, and I think you may as well. Let me read the first four verses by Phillips.

The law possessed only a dim outline of the benefits Christ would bring and did not actually reproduce them. Consequently, it was incapable of perfecting the souls of those who offered their regular annual sacrifices. For if it had, surely the sacrifices would have been discontinued, on the grounds that the worshipers would have been really cleansed and would have had no further consciousness of sin.

In practice, however, the sacrifices amounted to an annual reminder of sins, for the blood of bulls and goats cannot really remove the guilt of sin. And it is with this contrast that the writer begins. And he points out--and I hope you will note it, if you have your Bible open in front of you--that the work of the law could foreshadow but couldn't accomplish.

Could foreshadow what was accomplished, but in itself could not accomplish it. Now, for many of us, this is an immediate dilemma, because we find ourselves saying, well, then, what possible benefit was there in the law? What possible use was it to the Old Testament saints? And when we go back, of course, and when we read the Old Testament law--and I'll just quote to you a couple of verses from Leviticus chapter 1 and verse 4, where the direction is given for the offering of a burnt offering, and then, outside the tent of meeting, he says, and the priest is to lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him. So, in other words, this wasn't a rigmarole that was irrelevant.

It actually was effectual. And when, of course, you come to the Day of Atonement, as is recorded in Leviticus chapter 16, and which some of our Jewish friends have been referencing in the past few days, then you find the selfsame thing that's written in there. And if I can just see, when Aaron had finished making atonement for the most holy place, the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall bring forward the live goat.

The phrase to notice is, when Aaron has finished making atonement. Because the fact of the matter is that the acceptance of this sacrifice on God's part gave to the people the assurance of their being cleansed from their sins. So, for example--and this is the only other Old Testament cross-reference I'll give you--in Psalm 130, the psalmist writes, If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O LORD, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness.

He doesn't say, But with you there will be forgiveness. But with you there is forgiveness. And in this ceremony of transference, where the hand of the priest was laid on the scapegoat and then it was cast out into the wilderness, the sins of the were passed on to the head of the innocent.

And the Old Testament saints used these ordinances of God and were justified, just as we are, on the basis of faith. So I've often said to my congregation that if we think about it, when the people came back from the temple, when the children asked, What were you doing there, Grandpa? or What were you doing there, Dad? and he said, Well, I went up because we were making a sacrifice for our sins. And why did you do that, Dad? Well, because God has asked us to do that.

And why has God asked you to do that, Dad? Well, because God has said that he will forgive our sins if we do that. Well, do you believe, and are your sins forgiven, Dad? Yes, my sins are forgiven, son. Well, on what basis do you believe that your sins are forgiven? Answer, Because God promised to forgive my sins on the strength of this.

Which, if you think about it, is the exact same conversation between a grandfather and his grandchildren this side of Calvary. How do you know that your sins are forgiven? Because God has promised, on the strength of a sacrifice made, to forgive the sins of those who look to him and trust in him. And all that was there in the antitype in the law was pointing forward to the reality of what would then be provided in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Secondly, you will notice that the repetition of this event spoke of its inadequacy. For this reason, it can never by the same sacrifices, repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. The repetition spoke of the fact that it was pointing to something else.

And, he says quite straightforwardly, the blood of bulls and goats was ultimately insufficient. Now, I hope that it pained you a little to see this phraseology here, especially if, like me, you have Jewish friends, especially if, like me, you have watched the people this past week moving in their droves in and out of

synagogues, and you look down at the phraseology for this reason, it can never by the same sacrifices, repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. All that it actually serves to perform or to provide is an annual reminder of sins.

And just one cross-reference as I think of this. In 2 Corinthians 3, when Paul writes concerning the glory of the new covenant in comparison to the old, he says, If the ministry that condemns men is glorious, speaking of the old covenant, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness? For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory. And if what was fading away came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts? This is the great contrast, you see.

Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold. We're not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from gazing at it while the radiance was fading away. But their minds were made dull.

For to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. When it is read, the veil remains.

It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. And the writer in the Hebrews here is writing the most Old Testament of the New Testament books. He is encouraging those--many of them in their newfound commitment to Jesus, some of them who are tempted to turn around and go back to that which represents familiarity to them--back to the old stuff, back to the old way of doing things.

There is safety in all of that. And they have left all of that behind now, and they have this strange table at which they meet, and they break bread with one another, and they drink wine together with one another. But it is in the capacity that they had once known.

And the writer is writing to them, and he's saying, Now you need to realize that this is the great contrast between that which was fading away--a glory that was a fading glory, and the glory that lasts--between that which was repeated endlessly, year after year, and that which has been accomplished once and for all, and that which could never be provided in the blood of bulls and goats, but which has now been provided finally and securely in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, that's the contrast that he makes in the first four verses. And then, in verse 5, with a therefore, he takes us on into the period, as he's now reflecting on it, when Jesus came into the world.

Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said--and here we have Jesus quoting from the Old Testament, from the Psalms, and making it clear that the ultimate significance of that Psalm, Psalm 40, is found in Jesus. And Christ, says the writer, came to do what could never have been done previously. He came to do what could never have been done previously.

And the reason for that is that a person is needed to substitute for people. A person is needed to substitute for people. A beast cannot do this.

A beast can't do it. A beast unwittingly, unwillingly, may have its blood shed as a result of the actions of another outside of it. But the beast cannot enter into the experience of the sin of humanity.

It would take a person to do this. And you will notice that that is exactly the emphasis that he goes on to make. Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, ultimately, you see.

But instead of that, a body you prepared for me. And right down to the very end of it, and I have come to do your will, O God. When you talk with people about Jesus and you share with them the nature of the gospel, it's important that we get as quickly as we can to this very issue.

I had the privilege of talking with somebody the other evening, I think on Wednesday evening, and as the conversation unfolded, it was clear to me that although this man had had a religious background and although he was very interested in spiritual things, he never, ever had anyone share with him the nature of who Jesus was or why he had come. And I didn't go directly to Hebrews chapter 10, but I went pretty quickly to this fact, that it is impossible to explain Jesus apart from the fact that he has come to do the will of God. So, for example, in that classic scene where Jesus as a boy is separated from Mary and Joseph, they head back towards their home in Nazareth, discovering that he's not there, doing an about turn, coming back into Jerusalem, you will remember, and finding him there in the context of the religious Jews in the temple precincts, and watching and listening, presumably, as he engages these men in conversation.

And then when they essentially say to him, We were worried about you. We were looking for you. Remember what he says? And classically, in the King James Version, Wist ye not that I must be about my father's business? And even then, you know, Mary and Joseph must have looked at him and continued to ponder these things in their hearts.

Now, the reason that this is so important is because Jesus actually does perfectly and securely and solely perform the truth to which all the Old Testament points--namely, substitution. That Jesus was dying in the place of others. That this is the gospel--that Jesus, by his very life, by all that he did in obeying the law, by all that he did, by his sacrifice on the cross--was not simply performing something that we might emulate, but was actually proving to be a substitute for sinners.

Now, the reason this is so important, when we think about sharing the gospel, lies here. The human dilemma--the problem of contemporary men and women in twenty-first-century Western culture and beyond--the human dilemma--and correct me if I'm wrong--is almost constantly cast in terms of man's failure to live up to his own potential. The reason we're in the predicament we're in is because man is just not living up to his potential.

Therefore, if we can find ways to show him where his potential lies and if we can enable him in some measure, then he will become this foolhard man, and we will be done with all these dreadful, heinous murders and crimes and stealing and lying and so on. And right along with that, the human dilemma is cast in terms of the downward drag of a poor self-image. So, if you believe that that is the human dilemma, then there is no need for the gospel.

You may simply go to all the self-help books that are available in Legion throughout all of our bookstores. Because there, there is the antidote to the absence of human potential, there is the answer to the predicament the modern man is said to face because he just doesn't really care about himself or love himself as he should. That view, which is prevalent, fails to take into account what the Bible says, and fails also to take into account what men and women, if we are honest, know about ourselves.

And what we know about ourselves, if we're honest, in Martin Luther's phraseology, is that we are turned in upon ourselves. We are curved in upon ourselves, is how Luther put it. We're turned in on ourselves.

And our fallen nature is crooked, it's twisted, it's self-absorbed, and it's self-obsessed. And you will never find that unless you turn to the Bible. Even the other religions of the world, whatever they have to say about the predicament of humanity, do not define man's problem in these terms.

It is only when we go to the Bible that we discover this dreadful news of our condition, which takes the ground out from underneath people. And that's what makes the gospel so amazing. Because the gospel says that to this fallen creature, to this man curved in on himself, to this self-obsessed character who deserves nothing from God, God comes, although we are unfit for his presence, and in Jesus he makes us the object of his love--that it is the very reverse of the idea that if we could clean up and fix up and do a little better and realize our potential, we will be far better able to approach God.

No! In fact, the predicament that we face is such that we're unfit for heaven, and we're unable to rectify our problem. Therefore, unless there is one who has come to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves, then our predicament is absolutely grave. Indeed, it is impossible.

And that's the benefit, I think, of many of our hymns and our songs and our children's songs. I'm so concerned that children keep singing good songs. And of course, I guess every generation thinks our songs were the best songs.

But I find myself routinely singing, Wide, wide as the ocean, High as the heavens above, And deep, deep as the deepest sea, Is my Savior's love. Remember the next line? For I, though so special... No. For I, though so unworthy, Still am a child of his care.

How does this work? For his word teaches me That his love reaches me Everywhere. And it is one of the tragedies of the contemporary church, as it loses sight of the gospel, that in an attempt to make everything far more palatable to contemporary men and women, it soft-shoes the dire predicament of humanity, and either wittingly or unwittingly, it takes the very ground out from underneath the nature of what Jesus has done. Because a sensible person says, I don't see why you're making all that fuss about substitution.

What is this substitution thing? Why does somebody have to die in my place? Why can't I just read the Bible and say, There are a lot of good ideas in the Bible. I think I will try my best to fulfill those good ideas in the Bible. And we say, No, it won't help you at all.

No! Bearing shame and scoffing rude, In my place condemned he stood, And sealed my pardon with his blood. Then I say, Hallelujah! What a Savior! This is amazing! This is the gospel. I have come, he says, to do your will.

That's the significance of the phraseology, A body you have prepared for me. A body you have prepared for me. It's as though God in Christ has extended his arms that we might be caught up in his irrevocable goodness.

People say, How could I ever know God? How could I ever meet God? Contemporary religion says, Well, if you go up this hill, or if you sit and hold your fingers in the right position, if you gaze into your navel, if you do certain things, there is a possibility that you may reach some level of transcendence and nirvana, and you may meet him. And people are signing up for that all over the place. Why? Because they can do it.

It makes them feel good. I sat there in the terminal like this, you know, and I did something. What modern man doesn't want to hear is that there's nothing you can do.

Because then that means we're gonna have to rely on someone else. No, he says, A body you have prepared for me. God has had compassion in sending Christ, and in Christ he is pleased to pardon and accept all who believe in him, who trust him, even though we have sinned and deserve condemnation.

Loved ones, it is absolutely crucial that we keep working at this and constantly remind ourselves of this, because there is a difference between telling people the gospel--that though we have turned our backs on God, that although his wrath has been revealed from heaven, that he has come as a pursuing God and provided a substitute in our place--there is a difference between telling people that and telling people that there are benefits if you believe the gospel or there are real dangers in rejecting the gospel. And some of us have become adept at telling people, you know, the wonderful things that the gospel provides. You know, ever since I believed the gospel, this happened and that happened, the next thing happened.

What we don't tell them is there are a lot of really bad things happened as well. And so people say, Well, I don't know if I get that. Or we tell them, you know, I think you'd better be very serious about the gospel, because, you know, there's a broad road, and it leads to destruction, and, you know, that's a heck of a... You don't really want to get yourself involved in that.

The person goes away and says, Well, I guess I understand it. It's something about there's a hell here and there's a heaven there, but for the life of me, I don't know what I'm supposed to do with this information. You know why? Because you haven't told them the gospel! You didn't tell them! We have to explain to them this amazing story of substitutionary atonement--that God in Christ dies in the sinner's place, so that what I deserve I don't get, and what I don't deserve I do get.

There's no story like it anywhere else at all. And you will notice that he goes on to quote, and he says, It is written about me in the scrolls. Then I said, Here I am.

It's written about me in the scrolls. Don't you love it when the Pharisees are giving Jesus gyp for all kinds of things? And basically, what he's saying here is, If you read the Old Testament, you'll meet me. That's what he's saying.

He basically says, Hello, I'm here, and the Old Testament is all about me. That's what he says. Here I am.

You can read it. Read it for yourselves. He was led like a sheep to the slaughter.

He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. You see? Here I am.

You can read about me. It's all written in the scroll. And what was written concerning him was God's prescription for him, so that, as he says, all that was dismantled as a result of Adam's sin--when he's banished with Eve from the garden, when the flaming swords are barring re-entry into the garden, when it looks as though it's all over forever--a second Adam is anticipated.

One is going to come. That the story of the gospel is from a garden to a garden. Banished, inevitably, from the garden as a result of our being in Adam.

Welcomed into a garden as a result of our being placed in Christ. Because what Jesus has come to do when he says, I have come to do your will, O God, is he has come to undo the disobedience of Adam and to open up the way that we can go back into the garden of God. Because, remember, God made a covenant with Adam.

He essentially said to him, Now, listen, here's the deal. You can stay here in this lovely place, and you can enjoy fellowship with me if you obey certain conditions. Wasn't that it? He said, Now, I give you a really nice place, I give you a wife, give you all these animals, all this lovely stuff, and you can stay in here for as long as you like, as long as you obey these conditions.

But what happened? Adam failed to live by the agreement. And as a result, he was banished, and the way back into the garden was guarded by flaming swords. In the same way, God made a covenant with his Son, saying to him, Son, if you satisfy all of the law's demands by your perfect obedience, and if you take upon yourself the sins of many and bear their penalty, then they will be set free and pronounced just in God's sight.

And the covenant that Adam broke, Christ kept, and thereby opens up to those of us who feel ourselves to be lost and wretched and undone, opens up by means of his grace, by means of his favor, all of the benefits that he has provided for us. That's why when the epistles are written, they're always using the past tense. While we were powerless, while we were ungodly, while we were sinners, while we were enemies, Christ died for us.

For God sent his only Son into the world, so that those who believe in him may not perish but have everlasting life. And when we see Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, even though we find him shrinking, every human instinct in him shrinking from the ultimate act of obedience, what is it that he finally says? Father, if you are willing, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not my will but yours be done.

Why? Because of this. A body you have prepared for me. I have come to do your will.

And you see, what happens is that then we discover another thing that we don't like as men and women, and that is that salvation is all of God. Salvation is all of God. Everybody wants a salvation where we can make a contribution, because then we can feel a little better about ourselves.

But if grace has set your heart free, then you can sing with total abandon, not the labors of my hands could fulfill your law's demands. Could my zeal no respite know, and could my tears forever flow? For all for sin could not atone, for you must save, and you alone. Finally, in verses 10-15, having noted that the effects of Adam's sin are undone by Christ's death for sinners, he then says, And let me just tell you of the significance of what Jesus has accomplished on behalf of sinners.

And I need either to go through this quickly or save it for tomorrow. I think I shall go through it quickly. In verses 10-15, he tells us the achievements of Christ's priestly work.

Verses 1-4, this clear contrast between the law and the good things. Verses 5-9, the significance of what happened when Jesus came into the world. Verses 10-15, what then are the achievements of Christ's priestly work? They are essentially four.

Number one, Jesus has done everything that is necessary in relationship to sin. Jesus has done all in relationship to sin. That's the distinction that he makes between the work of the priest, which was continual and repetitious, and the priest was always standing.

And he stood because there was still work to do. But you will notice that once Jesus had offered a one-time sacrifice for sin, he sat down. In other words, all that God desires has been accomplished, and all that we need has been provided.

All that God desires has been accomplished, and all that we require has been provided. Because he has done all in relationship to sin. You remember, when the high priest went in on the Day of Atonement, the bells rang.

He attached bells to the foot of his robes--right?--so that when he engaged in the activities, the people outside would know that the high priest was still alive, because the bells were ringing. But no bells rang when Jesus went into Gethsemane. No bells rang on Calvary, because he was not alive.

He was dead. The high priest went in to offer something outside of himself. Christ has entered the sanctuary himself, bearing in his own body our sins.

He has done all in relationship to sin. Number one, that's the significance of, I need no other sacrifice, I need no other plea. It is enough that Jesus died and that he died for me.

I stand amazed in the presence and wonder how he could love me, a sinner condemned unclean. Because he loves sinners. He saves sinners.

Heaven is for bad people. Heaven has been provided for bad people who are there at the expense of the one good man. He has done all in relationship to sin.

Secondly, he has done all in relation to God. He has done all in relationship to God. That's the significance of the point that when this priest is--verse 12, isn't it? I don't have my own Bible with me here, and the print here is dreadfully small--when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.

In other words, God looked at Jesus, and he was perfectly contented with everything. And until God is satisfied, there can be no salvation. Until God is satisfied, there can be no salvation.

And if you think about this--and this may stretch your mind just a little bit, but it's good, because dessert is following--it is the satisfaction of God's wrath which is the driving factor, and not our human predicament. Think about that in the way we proclaim the gospel. It is the satisfaction of God's wrath, not our human predicament.

That's why we've never sung that song by Michael W. Smith that everybody loves, and I love it as it goes along for a while, but when it gets to the final verse, the final line, I can't sing it. You remember, above all powers, above all earthly things, above all some things, above all everything, da-da-da-dee-dee-lee-da-da-da. It's wonderful, and you and things, and then the words it comes to.

And eventually, and you thought of me above all. You thought of me above all. So in other words, it's all completely man-centered at the end.

It's fabulous for America. Hey, it's all about me, just what I thought. That's it.

It's all about me. No, it's actually all about God. Because if God did not need to be satisfied, if God was complacent about sin, there would be no need for a substitutionary sacrifice.

Right? There wouldn't be! It is the satisfaction of his wrath that is the driving factor. If there was no need of satisfaction, there would be no need of salvation. He's done all in relationship to sin, he's done all in relationship to God.

Thirdly, he's done all in relationship to Satan. To Satan. Since that time, he waits for his enemies--verse 13--to be made his footstool, because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

Satan's power has been broken in terms of its effectiveness. It hasn't been wiped out in terms of its existence. But the devil is a defeated foe.

He's checkmate at Calvary. Those of you who play chess know that you can have checkmate and still play out a number of moves. In fact, if you're as bad as I am, the person who's got you in checkmate before you've even hardly got to pawn to king four or tried to crown your castle or flip your bishop or do whatever you were doing with your knight, and the person looks at you and goes, Checkmate! So, no, there's no way to checkmate.

I can do that. Look, what else I can do? I can do that. I can do one of those.

He said, You can do whatever you like, but it's checkmate. And that is what has happened at Calvary. The devil's power has been broken.

His effectiveness has been neutralized. His existence remains, and his play, as it were, in the game of life continues almost unabated. But men and women under the gospel have been set free, those who all their lives were held in the slavery and fear of death, because he has done all in relationship to Satan.

And fourthly, he has done all in relationship to us. In relationship to us, what has he done? Well, you'll notice in verse 10 that he has provided, we have been made holy or sanctified through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all, and now down in verse 14, notice what he says, because by one sacrifice he has made perfect, or he has perfected forever, those who are being made holy. The perfected forever is a perfect tense.

It is that which has been accomplished in the past and which is an ongoing impact in the present. So that the actual truth about us in Christ is a quite dramatic truth. In Ephesians chapter 2, when Paul describes where these Christians are, he says, and he has made us alive with Christ, even when we were dead in transgressions.

It's by grace we've been saved, and God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus. In other words, this is the reality of the believer as contemplated by the Father, as he views the death of his Son. It's a completed picture.

We're already, if you like, in Christ in heaven. Alec Motyer, the wonderful Old Testament scholar and a good friend to many of us, refers to this as the Calvary quadrilateral. Calvary quadrilateral.

And he says, here are the four aspects of the Calvary quadrilateral--that Christ on the cross has, one, dealt with sin, two, satisfied God forever, three, defeated Satan's power, and four, established a sanctified people. And when you think about this, loved ones, this gives us an insight into what it means when the Bible talks about us having every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus. Every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus.

You know the story of the guy who goes on a cruise, and on the third day, as he's eating saltine crackers and drinking Diet Coke that he's brought for himself, somebody says, I haven't seen you in the dining room yet for these amazing meals. Oh no, he says, I can't go in the dining room. I only paid for the cruise.

Said, but the meals are included in the cruise. Oh, I didn't know that. You mean I could be enjoying all this wonderful provision? It is all granted to me in the package? Yes! Do you know how many Christians I meet who are, like, ladder Christians? Ladder Christians.

Their view is somehow or another--it goes like this. Jesus died on the cross, and that got me out of my predicament. Now I'm gonna have to do my best to climb up the ladder of whatever it is in to become a better Christian, a significant Christian, a sanctified Christian, a whatever kind of Christian.

They got it completely all wrong. In Christ, all the treasures of God are granted to us. In the bag, if you like--in the truth for life bag.

I don't know what's in the bag, but I saw you all with those bags. I hope we're not giving all that stuff away. It's very hard for me as a Scotsman to think of giving stuff away like that.

But presumably, if you're in, you get everything that's in the bag. And everything that's in the bag, you can do whatever is in the bag, you can do whatever you like with it. Because it all comes with it.

It's not like you get a bag, and that's your start, and then you've got to go out and try and fill up your bag with stuff. This is no trick-or-treating. No! It's all in the bag with the package.

And this is the Christian life, that in Christ it's all there. It's all the treasure is in there. And what God wants his children to do is to spend our lives discovering the wonder of the treasure that is ours in Jesus.

He has done everything in relationship to sin. Therefore, I need not be held in the grip of sin. He has done everything in relationship to Satan.

Therefore, get behind me, Satan! You have no place in my life, you stinking accuser! Be gone! Why? Because I'm doing so well? No, because Jesus has done everything. I go in the bag, and I find out that he's done everything in relationship to God--that I can never make myself one bit more acceptable to God if I live to be a hundred and fifty and read the entire Murray McShane Bible readings every two months. I can never put myself in a more advantageous position, nor can I in Christ put myself in a worse position.

Why? Because he has sanctified forever. He has perfected forever. Perfect tense.

All who are being made holy. We are not endeavoring to become something that we are not. We are enjoying the wonderful discovery of being who we are in Jesus.

And the completion is here. Sin has been fully dealt with. God has been fully satisfied.

Sin has been fully dealt with, and God has been fully satisfied. If you come from a tradition that takes you Sunday after Sunday after Sunday to engage in that kind of sacrificial mechanism by means of which you find yourself accepted again by God and so on, then I put it to you humbly and graciously, you have never understood the finished work of Christ. For once you understand that he has done it all, that everything is completely dealt with, that God is completely satisfied, then the glory of the gospel will pick you up on wings of eagles and will lead you on.

Well, is there a not-yet dimension? Of course there is. As far as our experience goes, we fight, we wrestle against the Evil One because he is defeated, but he has not entirely submitted. And though we have been sanctified, we are being sanctified.

Well, how can I be sanctified and be being sanctified? I don't know. Write the question on a card. Maybe somebody'll have an answer for it.

Let us pray together. Sorry to go on. I went five minutes late.

Sorry. O God, our Father, what a wonderful story! I love to tell the story of unseen things above, of Jesus and his glory, of Jesus and his love. I love to tell the story of unseen things above, of Jesus and his love.

For those who know it best seem hungering and thirsting to hear it like a rest. And when, in scenes of glory, we see

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