

(Hebrews - Part 28): The Shadow of Christ

by A.W. Tozer

A.W. Tozer's sermon emphasizes the transition from the Old Testament shadows to the reality of Christ's sufficient sacrifice and our moral right to approach God through Him.

Duration: 22:06

Scripture: Hebrews 10:5

Topics: "Expositional"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher addresses the issue of boredom and dissatisfaction in life, particularly in the context of religion. He emphasizes that our time on earth is limited and that we should seek assurance that everything is right with us before we pass away. The preacher contrasts the Old Testament sacrifices, which had to be repeated year after year, with the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which was offered once for all sins. He argues that through Jesus, we can find forgiveness and assurance of salvation, and that there comes a point where we can confidently say, 'It is done.' The preacher also criticizes ritualistic churches that repetitively seek forgiveness and mercy without acknowledging the completeness of Christ's sacrifice.

Transcript

Now, these talks on Hebrews may be a little bit repetitious, and if they are, I would like to explain that I am following the text, and the Holy Spirit's method is, here a little, there a little, line upon line, precept upon precept, until we get it. For the Holy Spirit knows that we don't get truth by looking at it once or hearing it once. We get it by having it repeated very often until our slow hearts gradually get on to it.

So I'm not apologizing for repeating. I only want to be sure that we don't get bored with it. I have long had a conviction that one of the difficulties with modern Christians is that we are bored.

We act bored in church, we look bored when we sing, we're bored. I believe we're bored with God generally, but we're too pious to admit it. I think God would love it if some honest soul would get down on his knees and say, God, I'm going to pray because I know I ought to, but I don't want to because you bore me.

I believe that God wouldn't get angry at all. I think that God would say, well, there's hope for this fellow. He's telling the truth.

Most people are bored with me and won't admit it. But we get bored. We get bored with prayer.

I think that prayer is boring to some people. I think the Bible is. I've had lots of people tell me that the Bible bored them.

They didn't use that word. Only I would think of that real word. They had nicer words for it, but that's what they meant.

They said, I read it, don't get anything out of it. How do you explain it? Well, they're bored. There's nothing so terrible as boredom.

People just have nothing to do. That's why rich women usually aren't happy, because they don't have anything to keep them busy. Women who aren't rich aren't happy either because they have to be busy, and women that are rich are unhappy for a different reason.

They don't have enough to keep them busy. They're bored. They get bored with living, and bored with their husbands, and bored with the same thing all the time.

And it's so in religion, we're likely to get bored with things. Let me say to you, friends, that here is the hope and the glory of the race. You and I won't be around very much longer, really.

Even you young people who never had a pain in your life and never had anything wrong with you after you got through teething, you'll nevertheless one of these days be gone. And when you go, you want to know everything is all right with you. And you'll never know that except you know it through the thing that I'm preaching to you here now, that this is the hope and the glory of the race.

Listen to it. The law of Moses, the Old Testament law, having a shadow of good things to come and not the things themselves. Now, what did he mean here? He meant that the light of God fell across Jesus Christ, and the shadow that it cast was the Old Testament economy.

The Old Testament ritual, the Old Testament ways, they were the shadow of Christ, the things of Christ, thrown by the light of God across. That's all the Old Testament was, the Old Testament ritual and economy, Levitical economy, was a shadow. Now, you can't live on a shadow.

A loaf of bread may cast a shadow, but you can't live on the shadow. You have to have the bread. If you stood a loaf of bread on end and put a light behind it and you had a veil that a man could not see the bread, he might see the shadow of the bread and smile and say, Well, it's on its way.

The bread will be next because the shadow falls across the table. But you can't live on the shadow. So they could not live there in those Old Testament times on what they had.

They had to live by looking forward to what was coming. The Old Testament things were shadows. You can't live in the shadow of a house.

You have to have a house to live in in cold weather. The sun shines on the side of a house and casts a shadow, the shape of a house, over on the lawn. But you can't live in that shadow when frost and snow comes.

You have to have a house to live in. So we can't live on shadows. We have to have the reality, and the glory of the book of Hebrews is that the glory of the reality has come and that the shadow is now fulfilled in the reality.

This is what it teaches here. It says here and explains and argues that if the Old Testament law with its sacrifices, its lambs, its bulls and goats and pigeons and the blood of a heifer sprinkling, if that had been enough, then they wouldn't have had to do it year by year all the time. They could have had it over with.

After you have done a thing, you don't continue to do it. A man builds a house and turns it over to the owner and says, Now I've built it, it's finished, and the last thing was done last night at 4 o'clock. Move in.

He doesn't come back the next day and tap and cut and saw, and then the next day come back and tap and saw and cut, and then wait a year and come back and saw and tap and cut some more. It's done. He says, Finish now, I've got another job.

He goes from it. So if the Old Testament law had been enough, why there wouldn't have had to be a repetition of it? The very fact that Israel brought a lamb today and slew it, and then a year later brought a lamb and slew it, showed that the first time the lamb was slain, it didn't do the work, it wasn't sufficient. That's what he says here.

He says, Then would they not have ceased to be offered if they had been efficacious? Because the worshiper, once purged, should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices actually there was a remembrance again made of sin every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins.

Therefore when he cometh into the world, he says, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me. God got tired of their sacrifices. Do you remember that passage in Isaiah? To what purpose is your multitude of sacrifices unto me, saith the Lord? I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts.

I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of goats, when ye come to appear before me. Who hath required this at your hand to tread my courts? We imagine that by going to church in vast numbers regularly that we impress high heaven. But God says, Who told you to do this, when ye come to appear before me? Who has required this at your hand? Bring no more vain oblations, he said.

Yet he had commanded those oblations. Incense is an abomination unto me, and yet he had commanded that incense. The new moons and the sabbaths and the calling of assemblies, I can't stand them, he says.

It's iniquity, your solemn meetings, your new moons and your appointed feasts, my soul hateth. They are trouble unto me, I am weary to bear them. God was bored, and he was bored with our everlasting sacrifices that had no finality and no meaning.

So he said, Sacrifices and offerings thou wouldst not, therefore a body hast thou prepared me. Then said I, Lo, I come. In the volume of the book it is written of me.

In the volume of the book, said Luther, what book? What book indeed? There is only one book. It is written in that book. It is written of me.

Who is the me? Who indeed? There is only one, and that is Jesus Christ the Lord. For this book is a continual setting forth of the coming one. When he said, Sacrifices and offerings, and burnt offering, and offering for sin thou wouldst not, neither had pleasure in them which were offered by the law.

Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God, by the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Every priest, he explains again, every priest stands daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices which can never take away sins. We have in our little record collection two or three masses, one Protestant, Bach, and then we have two by Beethoven.

The music is sublime and the language is beautiful, but you can't escape the feeling that here is something missing. There is a shadow here, but there is not a reality. They pray, Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, and stretch it out for a whole side of a record.

Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy. Isn't there a time where you say, tis done, the great transaction is done, I am my Lord's and he is mine? Isn't there a place as we plead, carry the issue? Isn't there a place where we say, done, put a period down, and say, now God put me to work. I am forgiven, I am cleansed, you have shown mercy? I believe so.

I think this is one of the troubles with some of our ritualistic churches, and they repeat every Sunday and between time, a plaintive effort to be forgiven and to have mercy. But there comes a time when that's over, and you can stretch your hand up to heaven and say, it's finished, it's done, fixed on this blissful central rest. But every priest, he says in the Old Testament, stands daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices which can never take away sins.

But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, notice the many little couplets we'd call them here, not really couplets, but twins, two words, two words, two words, listen. One sacrifice for sin, forever sat down in the right hand of God, from henceforth anticipating, till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he has perfected forever them that are sanctified.

And for that reason the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us, for after he said before, this is the covenant that I will make with them after these days, says the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts and in their minds while I write them. And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.

And having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh. And having a high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with the true heart and full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from the evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Now that is the text, and you will notice here the privilege that is ours.

I will mention it briefly and be finished, for this is Communion Sunday and that is the important part of the service today. Notice our privileged place here, a consecrated way to God's very presence, a way into God's very presence. Do you remember when the only way our fathers knew was the way out? God said, Take it and get out, and they got out.

And God put a sword there, turning every way by the tree of life. And our parents, hand in hand with majored steps and slow, as the whole human race has yearned to go back. Now, I don't mean to say everybody wants to be a Christian, no, because the flesh and the devil and the world are busy seeing that we don't want to be.

But in our yearning hearts there is a longing. They say that in India there is a God for every human being, every one. And all over the world there are gods.

Men don't want to be good, but they want to get back into that presence. But there never was a way back, nobody ever found a way back until it was here. When he came, Lo, I come.

In the volume of the book it is written of me to do thy will, O God. And when he went back into the heaven, he opened the way, so that now where he went through, he blazed the trail. So now anybody can get in that wants to.

So there is a consecrated way into the presence of God. And in that presence of God there is a high priest there who wears our nature. I was thinking the other day, just thinking yesterday about this, about justification.

We are given a concept of justification, an explanation of it, that I don't believe is a very sound one, scripturally at all. It is the transfer of guilt explanation. Now, I believe in the transfer of guilt, of course.

I believe that God laid on Christ iniquity of us all. I believe what the Bible says about it. But it's a little too pat to please my heart, the idea that I can be as vile as the inside of an old green mossy sewer, and that the Lord drops a mantle of judicial righteousness around me, and immediately God accepts me as being perfectly righteous.

God would have to contradict himself to do that. God couldn't do that and not contradict himself. How then does God justify a person? How does he do it? He does it by taking our nature into Christ, who is the righteous one, and his righteousness becomes ours, not by judicial imputation only, but by actually having it in our nature, because we have him in our nature, and he is in us and we are in him.

Therefore I doubt very much there is any such thing known in the mind of God as justification without regeneration. Regeneration unites us to the nature of Jesus, and Jesus being righteous imparts then to us the righteousness that God is satisfied with. And in that sense, the idea of transfer of guilt and imputed righteousness is correct.

But if we carry it too far, it becomes a mechanical, commercial thing. I prefer to believe that it is something more than a commercial transaction. I believe that it is a living thing, and that the man who has been taken up into Jesus Christ actually has in his nature that righteousness.

Is that what John meant when he said, His seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God? Is that what he meant? I think so. So that righteousness is imparted to the man who is united to Christ, and not to the man who simply stands outside and receives a judicial notification that he has been made righteous. A telegram is sent him in the word of the text saying, You are righteous now.

I believe that is a degenerate and degraded concept of justification by faith. Real justification by faith, I repeat now for the fourth time, is the taking up of the sinner's nature into Christ. And because Christ died for that sinful nature and paid the price back there, he now can receive righteousness from the one into whom he is taken.

We are accepted in the Beloved, don't forget that. We are never accepted out of the Beloved, and we cannot be. So there is a high priest there at the right hand of God, and he wears our nature and we wear his.

No angel could qualify. He took one of our own race, one that could be one with us. The New England poet says, speaking to God, Was thy Godhead not satisfied? Did thy Godhead not satisfied marry our

manhood, making it its bride? That is exactly what he did.

As though the nature of God were not satisfied, and he took man up into his nature and married it and made it his bride. So God's righteousness through Jesus Christ comes to the sinner man, by justification but by regeneration. We see here a third thing, and that is the moral right to come to God.

Anybody can come now, and he has a moral right to come. We have a moral right to come and be heard, because our Lord is there, a high priest, completely and perfectly representing us. And we have a right to come and worship and be accepted, and we have a right to hide in him and be safe.

If someone says, I don't want to hide from life, I don't feel that I want to hide from life, I want to face life, that's bold, that's a big, brave, bold way to talk. But when the temperature goes to 50 below, nobody says, I don't want to hide from the cold, nobody runs out and does a spring dance with just a thin robe on. He dresses as well as he can, gets out of it just as fast as he can, into a place just as warm as possible.

And when we face life's frigidities, life's frightful cold, and life's terrible, wearing abrasive action, it sounds awfully brave to say, I don't want to hide from life. But it's ridiculous, because what we're hiding from is not life, we're hiding from a sinful world. We're hiding from a vicious, sinister devil.

We're hiding from temptation, and we're hiding the only place there is to hide, we're hiding in God. So we have a right to hide in him and be perfectly safe. The child of God is safe in Christ.

When the lambs are safe in the fold, the wolf can snarl and howl outside, but he can't get in. And when the child of God enters the Father's house, the enemy can roar without, but he can't get in. This is our privilege, this is our high privilege.

This is our privilege this morning. In 924 and on of the chapter preceding this, Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. For if he appeared often and offered his blood often for the blood of others, then he often hath suffered since the foundation of the world.

But now once, at the end of the world, hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. I want you to know it says put away sin here. Let's not talk about covered sin.

I know what we mean when we say our sin is covered, and I wouldn't say we shouldn't use the phrase, though it is not a scriptural phrase, and we ought to know what we mean if we ever use it. For in the Old Testament, God covered sin. In the New Testament, he puts it away.

It's a vastly different thing. The Lord puts away sin by the sacrifice of himself. So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin, that is, without a sin offering unto salvation.

Notice how this perfectly ties in and harmonizes beautifully with 1 Corinthians 11, which is the great Lord's Supper chapter. For Christ appeared and died and then rose and went to God's right hand, and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time unto salvation. So when we say at the Lord's Supper that we celebrate his death till he come, we look back at his dying and forward to his coming, and it's found here in Hebrews.

You will find in the scriptures the man who wrote the Hebrews, St. Paul, St. Peter, John, and our Lord's own words, and all the New Testament is woven together in perfect harmony and utter beauty, all saying the same thing, that Jesus Christ is enough, that he is our High Priest, he is our Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, that he by his blood consecrated the way into God's presence, and that now we have a moral right to come to speak to him and be heard, to worship him and to be accepted, to hide in him and be safe. That's what we're celebrating this morning, a God-grant that we should come to this in a true heart with full assurance of faith.

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