

Day 228, Hebrews 10

by David Servant

Jesus' once-and-for-all sacrifice is superior to the old covenant sacrificial system and atones for sins forever, making us holy and ultimately perfect.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 14:26, Hebrews 10:1-36

Topics: "Atonement", "Perseverance"

Description

David Servant emphasizes the insufficiency of animal sacrifices in atoning for sins and the need for Jesus' once-and-for-all sacrifice to make us holy and perfect. He highlights how the sacrificial system of the old covenant was a mere shadow of the good things to come, pointing to Christ's atoning sacrifice that ended the need for continual animal sacrifices. Servant encourages believers to hold fast to their faith, especially in the face of persecution, reminding them of the eternal reward awaiting them in heaven. He addresses the debate on the security of salvation, warning of the consequences of not persevering in faith and the importance of assembling together to stimulate one another in love and good deeds.

Transcript

God may have accepted the death of animals as a token means of atonement, but something much more was needed to ransom us forever, not only from the penalty of sin, but from sin itself. No animal's death ever atoned for every sin that a person may have committed, nor effected an inward, supernatural change in someone, making him righteous both legally and practically. But Jesus' once-and-for-all sacrifice makes us holy and will ultimately result in our perfection (10:1, 14). So we see that the sacrificial system of the old covenant was "only a shadow of the good things to come" (10:1).

The author of Hebrews boldly declares, "It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins" (10:4). When you compare the relative value of animals to that of human beings who are created in God's image, it would seem there is little comparison. So how could an animal possibly atone for the sins of a human being? When you compare, however, the relative value of Jesus to that of human beings, He is of infinitely greater value, and thus it is easy to see how He could atone for the sins of everyone.

Pointing his readers back once again to the old covenant Scriptures, the author shows how they foretold of Christ's atoning sacrifice that would bring an end to the old covenant system of animal sacrifice (10:5-7). He attributes the words found in Psalm 40:6-7 to Christ, spoken to His Father when He first entered the world. Those words show the deficiency of the old covenant sacrificial system, surprisingly revealing that God actually took no pleasure in animal sacrifices, and indicating that something that Jesus would do in

His incarnation would make up for that displeasure. We know, of course, what it was that Jesus did!

And unlike the old covenant priests who needed to offer sacrifices continually for sins year after year, Jesus' one sacrifice atoned "for sins for all time" (10:12). So He "sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet"---another reference to Psalm 110---because His work was completed.

All these wonderful truths about Jesus' once-and-for-all sacrifice and His high priestly ministry gave first-century Jewish believers reason to continue following Jesus, even under persecution. So the author admonishes his Jewish readers to "hold fast," which, incidentally, indicates that the possibility existed of their not holding fast. We also gain a glimpse of the degree of persecution that his readers had already endured for the sake of Christ. They had "accepted joyfully the seizure of [their] property," knowing that they had "a better possession and a lasting one" in heaven (10:34). Some had been imprisoned. Their faith was genuine, and it would be rewarded (which is the theme of the next chapter).

Perhaps more than any other chapter in Hebrews, this one ends the debate on whether or not a true believer can forfeit his salvation. The author writes of the terrifying ends of those who have been sanctified by Christ's blood, but who then "trample under foot the Son of God" (10:28-31). He warns of the dire consequences of those who are righteous but who don't persevere in faith, who "shrink back to destruction" (10:36-39). It couldn't be more clear to those who are honest with language.

May I stir up a little trouble? Thank you.

Pastors are often apt to quote Hebrews 10:25, reminding their flocks that the Bible says we should "not forsake our own assembling together, as is the habit of some." Yet when the flock assembles, many pastors ignore what the immediate context of Hebrews 10:25 teaches, namely, what is supposed to happen when we assemble. We are to "stimulate one another to love and good deeds" and "encourage one another" (10:24-25). When we come together, we all have something to offer from the Spirit, and gatherings are supposed to be participatory, not a one-man show:

When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation (1 Cor. 14:26).

OK, I got that off my chest!

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