

What Christ Has Accomplished — Brian Hand

Well, good morning. It's good to be here with you. As was said, if you've got your Bible, I would encourage you to open that up to Hebrews chapter 10. We're going to be looking at verses 1 through 18 before we do so, it's good for you to know that a unique characteristic of today's passage is that it marks the conclusion of the central doctrinal section in the Book of Hebrews. Earlier, this writer has said that these believers needed milk, not solid food. And then at the opening of Chapter 6, he said, let's leave the elementary and go on to maturity. He then closed chapter six saying, "We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor for the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf." Chapter 7 then opens with him leaving the elementary as he lays before them this feast of solid food. Jesus is a better priest over a better covenant, in a better sanctuary, with better promises, in the true presence of God because of his better sacrifice. Taken all together, these compounding truths, if we're able to grab a hold of them by faith, they become for us a massive juggernaut of an anchor for our soul, so stabilizing that you, like these Christians in Hebrews, will be able to weather whatever trial, whatever hardship, whatever persecution, as you look to, delight in, are strengthened by, and hope in your all sufficient Savior.

So let's see if we can add a little weight to our anchors today as we look to God's Word together. Reading Hebrews chapter 10, verses 1 through 18. This is God's word.

"For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near. Otherwise would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshippers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins? But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, 'sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me in burnt offerings and sin offerings you've taken no pleasure. Then I said, behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the Book.' When he said above, you have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings. These are offered according to the law. Then he added, behold, I have come to do your will. He does away with the first in order to establish the second. And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. The Holy Spirit also bears witness to us. For after saying, this is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord, I will put my laws on their hearts and write them on their minds. Then he adds, I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more. Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin."

Amen. Praise God for His word. We're going to look at this passage today under four headings, and they are first, true shadows. Second, to obey is better than sacrifice. Third, have a seat. And fourth, living debt free. So our first heading is true shadows. And there's different ways that we can think about the concept of shadows. On the one hand, you could think of the burglar kind of lurking in the shadows, and in this sense the shadow would be concealing truth and promoting falsehood. But the other way to think about a shadow is one that communicates something true without it being the full substance. So imagine I want to play a joke. I've arrived home. First, I'm going to hide around the corner inside and startle my wife when she comes in, which she loves totally. Now, if I'm going to stay hidden, I can't peek around the corner, but I can look at the floor. And on the floor I'll see a shadow. And from that shadow I'll be able to tell with confidence whether the first person coming along is my 8 year old Judah, my fifth, 13 year old David. Now my 13 year old Genevieve's getting too tall to differentiate from my wife. But either way it's going to be fun. That shadow says something true about the person coming around the corner.

And it's more in this sense that the law, the sacrificial system, and the whole Old Testament is a shadow. And so in these first four verses here, we see that the law is at the same time both incredibly effective and totally ineffective. It is incredibly effective in communicating important truths. It communicates that sin is serious, separates us from fellowship with God, and results in death. It communicates the unapproachable holiness of God. It communicates that there is nothing man can do in his own power to deal with his sin problem. And it communicates the abundant mercy and grace of God towards sinners. But at the same time, it is totally ineffective to achieve, with any sense of finality or totality, the forgiveness, the justice, the cleansing, the redemption, or the removal of the guilt and power of sins in the hearts, minds, and consciences of sinful human beings. It pointed to all those things, but it pointed to them in the future and had no power to achieve them. You see the second half of verse one. The same sacrifices continually offered every year over and over could never perfect those who draw near verse two, otherwise they would have stopped offering them.

Verse four. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. There's the ineffectiveness. Verse 3 shows us the effectiveness. Offering after offering, continually offered, served as a reminder of sin every year. So if we're to imagine the experience of the faithful Israelite confessing sin and bringing an offering, I think that they could experience the removal of the fear of immediate divine retribution for that sin. And yet the sacrifice I make today, or that the high priest makes on the day of Atonement, serves as a reminder of the ineffectiveness of my sacrifice from last week or last year, and serves as a reminder that I will find myself right back here again with another sacrifice, unable to free myself from these consequences or the consciousness of my sin and guilt as I attempt to approach a holy God. That's the shadow.

It brings us to the second heading. To obey is better than sacrifice. In verses 5 to 10, we get a quotation from Psalm 40, written by David. The author of Hebrews says that this psalm is ultimately fulfilled as these words are taken up by Christ in his incarnation. And then he explains the implications of this fulfillment, and it describes God not desiring or being pleased with sacrifices. Now, we may need to check our historical and cultural position here, because this could cause some to think kind of in the terms of animal rights and cruelty, as though this

represents a progress in a more humane religious expression. But the reality is that nearly 40 times from Genesis to Numbers, the sacrifice by fire of animals is described as bringing a pleasing aroma to the Lord. And most of those come in the form of God giving directions. Do it like this. It's a pleasing aroma to me.

So how can this say that he did not desire it or take pleasure in it? Let's consider it this way. Unless someone's vegan, which is fine, I'm sure you've experienced being outside of a restaurant and smelled something amazing. Or perhaps it's in your neighborhood in the summer, if you're lucky, it's your own backyard and you get that smell. Somebody's barbecuing. The kale salad doesn't ever do that. It's fire grilled meat that does that. But are we to think that the infinite God, who is entirely self-existent, self-sufficient outside of time, as a spirit without a body like us and within the perfection of the trinitarian relationship, had this unfulfilled longing that was finally satisfied when people began to barbecue?

That's ridiculous. Instead, in a similar way that the sacrificial system was a shadow communicating a greater reality to man, the smoke of the sacrifice rising to heaven had potential to reflect something that truly was pleasing to God. It could reflect a heart of devotion and worship from an individual whom God made in his own image for the purpose of dwelling in his presence and sharing in the life and joy of the Divine Trinity. Though through Adam the human race has been plunged into rebellion and enmity toward God, these sacrifices could be reflective of a heart of obedience, a forerunner to the ultimate reconciliation of God and man achieved by Christ. It's the attitude, the hearts, the obedience of worshipers made in his own image, that God is interested in. The problem is that people would treat the sacrificial system as an end in itself, formality, going through the motions. They offered sacrifices as though these things would appease God and bring a favorable outcome. And they began to do the same with the false gods of the nation. A mechanical process. Rather than recognizing the holy God and drawing near with a contrite heart in worship, it treats God as a vending machine. I put in my money and receive my blessing.

And there are absolutely ways that we still do this today, though not with burnt offerings. Is our worship pleasing to God if we are mechanically going through the motions? Are we doing good things from a heart of obedient devotion to God, or are we putting our money in the divine vending machine hoping for desired outcome? How many people in the Philadelphia area do you think went to Church on February 9 thinking it would help win a Super Bowl? It's that same kind of attitude that so infected the worship of Israel that routinely in the prophets we read of God's rejection of their sacrifices that do not come from obedient hearts. And here then is the fulfillment of Psalm 40 in Christ's sacrifice.

Earlier in Hebrews we see the value of his sacrifice is because he's the Son of God. And then it was that he was without blemish of sin. And now the value is heightened, because more than just being free of the negative default defilement of sin, he possessed the positive obedience and righteousness of an obedient heart devoted to the will of God. And this being done, the perfect sacrifice having been offered, the old covenant and its sacrificial system are done away with and the new is established. Christ has accomplished the will of the Father. And then we

come to verse 10 "by that will, that's the will of God, we have been sanctified, that is, made holy through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

A couple things here in verse 10. While it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin, here we have the offering of the body of Jesus, not a bull or a goat, but a man. Not a burnt offering of an animal, but the obedient self-offering to the will of God, even to the point of death, to remove or abolish the sins of his people. And second, because the requirement of human obedience to the will of God has been met in the offering of the body of Jesus, we have been sanctified, meaning we have been made holy. It communicates the effectiveness of something that has been accomplished in the past and endures. This being made holy does not mean that we've already received sinless perfection. I wouldn't want to limit this just to our being declared not guilty. I think it also includes the idea that we have been set apart, dedicated to or consecrated to the service of God.

In the service of the tabernacle, the priests had special clothes and there were particular washings that they would do before going in to do their service. But only the high priest had this gold plate or crown that would be attached to his turban that was inscribed holy to the Lord, so that whenever he was ministering, over his head is a reminder and declaration that he had been consecrated, dedicated to the Lord. But he would take these garments off whenever he was not ministering. For the one who is trusted in Jesus, you have been consecrated and set apart to serve the Lord. It is a declaration that you are holy to the Lord. And like the high priest, this grants you access into the holy places, into the very presence of God. The big difference between you and the high priest is that you can come before the Lord at any time with a clear conscience and without bringing the blood of sacrifice and the certainty of this standing of ours is confirmed in our next heading, have a seat.

Both the tabernacle and the temple after it were like a house for God. And if you look at the furnishings, there's a number of things that you would expect to see in a house. There's a lamp to provide light. God is envisioned as enthroned above the cherubim of the ark. There's a table with bread to picture intimate fellowship with God like a shared meal. But there's something missing. There's no place to sit down. There is no chair. Verse 11. Every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices. Because of the ultimate ineffectiveness we mentioned earlier, the priest's work of offering sacrifices, of seeking atonement, was never finished. There was never an appropriate time to sit down. Now, these verses here don't have the same kind of eloquence as a Romans 8, maybe in Ephesians 1, and you might miss it, but verses 12 through 14 are some of the most wonderful words ever recorded. Christ offered himself, and then unlike any other high priest ever before him, he sat down in the true holy place in the very presence of God. And this can mean nothing less than that redemption has been accomplished.

Just as Genesis tells us God rested on the seventh day from all his work in creation, so now Christ has sat down and rested from all his work in redemption. There is nothing left to do for the accomplishment of redemption. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those

who are being sanctified. And if we read through the book of Hebrews and we pay close attention, we will see that this is something that the Author of Hebrews has been kind of dropping along the way. It started in chapter one, verse three. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature. He upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high, Chapter eight, verse one: now, the point of what we're saying is this. We have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the majesty in heaven. Here in chapter 10, it gets its fuller explanation, and then it will show up again in Hebrews chapter 12: let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who, 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.

And so, for beleaguered Christians, Christians who are struggling and facing hardship, this pastor keeps on saying, implicitly or explicitly, look, look at Jesus. You have doubts or fears, look to Jesus. You have shame or guilt, look to Jesus. Don't give up now. Don't turn to worthless shadows. Look, your high priest is sitting down. Your guilt and your sin has been put away. Redemption and full salvation has been accomplished. There's nothing left to do to make it sure. We wait only for its full application.

So in effect, the author of Hebrews started in chapter one with Jesus at the right hand of God. And as he wraps up this main doctrinal section of the book, he returns again to the right hand of God only now with the firm foundation and the soul anchoring knowledge that we too you are welcome there in the very presence of God through Christ's offering that has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. Now, that word perfected may cause us some problems because we all know that we aren't perfect when it comes to this perfection, we may need to hear from Inigo Montoya of the Princess Bride, who said, you keep using that word. I do not think it means what you think it means.

This perfection is not to be without error, to be without mistakes or missteps. It's not a sinless existence free from all shortcomings. That life will come to you. But that kind of total perfection will not be fully realized until Jesus returns. As it's used here in Hebrews, the word perfect has a sense of being made whole, adequate, suited. And so Christ's offering has perfected us in making us completely suited, adequate for a right, meaningful, and true relationship with our God and Savior, one in which we may draw near to his presence without guilt or pretense, one in which we may serve him with pure motives, worship him in acceptable ways, trust him with a genuine faith, and therefore a relationship that is able to approach him with confidence that we will be received as a beloved and true child, and that we will receive from him the grace necessary to do all he's called us to and thereby meet his expectations, as opposed to our own unrealistic ones.

We saw in verse 10 the already accomplished have been sanctified, which we say was our having been set apart and declared holy. And here we see the process of being made holy, which will be explained more in our last heading, living debt free. How are we being sanctified? God is putting his laws in our hearts and writing them on our minds. It sounds similar to what we read in Deuteronomy chapter 6, "And these words that I command you today shall be on your

heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand. They shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." Obviously this is the Old Covenant, and the people failed pretty spectacularly at this. It is still wise for us to pursue these things, except now it is not left up to our efforts alone. God says he himself will do this work. And we know from elsewhere that it is done by the Holy Spirit. This process of sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit to apply the reality of Christ's sacrifice to us and renew our whole being. To be more and more like Jesus in true righteousness and holiness as he writes God's word on our hearts and stirs up, strengthens, and increases faith in us. This is work God will do.

And verse 17 says, Then he adds, I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more. And the writer of Hebrews then concludes this doctrinal section with verse 18, where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin. And that means that for anyone who has repented of their sin and trusted in Jesus alone and his finished work to forgive their sin, your debt is fully paid before God. You are right now debt free. There's nothing left to pay. You're living free. Does that mean it doesn't matter what we do? Of course not. There's three and a half more chapters in the book of Hebrews, all about what we're supposed to do and how we're supposed to live. Feel free to read on. But that application section, everything that comes after that we are to do flows from and is based upon Christ's once for all sacrifice. And there being no more offering for sin. It's only after you are equipped with the stabilizing anchor for your soul, a rock solid hope on the firm foundation of the Gospel, then we are told how to build a life that responds to this truth in faith.

And so, in closing, remember, wherever you are today in your relation to Jesus, which is unique to every single one of us, whatever you have done, I want you to know that everyone here has a past with things we would not want broadcast. But there is no sin of yours that will ever catch Jesus by surprise. And it is with full knowledge of all of these things that Jesus willingly He offered up his own life to provide forgiveness, a clear conscience, full acceptance in the presence of God and the freedom of a debt free life to all who will come to Him. And he promises John 6:37 "Whoever comes to Me, I will never cast out." So the call for each and every one of us every day is come to Jesus today. Whatever trial you face, look to him seated at the right hand of God. Everything necessary has been accomplished. Let that be your soul stabilizing anchor.

Let's pray together. Lord God, much like these Hebrew Christians, every one of us face pressures from the enemy and the world and these can hardly even be compared to the conflict of our own flesh. To distract and divert our gaze from you and seek out what can never satisfy or save. Lord, open our eyes, draw and fix our gaze to see you. Lord Jesus, seated at the Father's right hand, ruling, reigning, interceding on our behalf and calling us to confidently draw near into the holy places to receive mercy and grace in our time of need, strengthen and embolden our faith to live as those holy to the Lord. Grant to each one of us the endurance to run the race you've set before us for our joy and hope, for the good of the world in need and all for your glory, we ask it in Jesus name, Amen.

