

Written Copy: Hebrews 10:3-6 "The Body Prepared to Save You"

4th Sunday in Advent

Sunday, December 19th, 2021

Text: Hebrews 10:3-6

³ But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. ⁴ For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. ⁵ Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; ⁶ in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. ⁷ 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.'"

Exegetical Statement (the text's context)

We have the OT laws and regulations regarding the sacrificial system put into their proper place for those Jewish Christians who were living in the Roman Empire and were tempted to revert to their previous way of life due to pressures from Rome. Christianity was being seen as a new religion that was not permitted as Judaism was. The animal sacrifices had their place and purpose before: reminding the faithful that despite their obedience sin still remained on their account. The shed blood of animals brought temporary relief from God's wrath over sin, but a relief that always looked forward to the more perfect sacrifice to come. It looked forward to the One for whom the LORD had prepared the perfect human body, guiding and arranging His lineage to fulfill the prophecies of old. His conception, life, suffering and death, and His resurrection all are key in Jesus Christ being the fulfillment of all the sacrifices before, and the reason no more are needed afterward. In dedicating His entire life to serving the will of the Father He became the once and for all atoning sacrifice, and through that offering of His body and the faith we have in His life, death, and resurrection being "for me", I continue to be cleansed of all sin and renewed in holiness before Him. In Him I remain ready for His return and the fulfillment of the eternal life His resurrection promises me.

Focus Statement:

Christ came to be the final word in the salvation of all mankind, as the One for whom the Father prepared the perfect body. His lineage proves He fulfilled all the prophetic words about a Savior. All the previous sacrifices pointed to Him. He is our Savior by the gift of His entire life, from His incarnation and birth to His life of perfect obedience, His suffering and death, and His resurrection and ascension. Because He became human just like me His obedience given to me earns eternal life, and His suffering and death removes all that would stand in the way of me living in the presence of God now, and forever in eternity. I will rise again just as He has.

Function Statement:

Why it's important to know:

As those who trust in Jesus' death as the reason their sins are forgiven, how is it that He can forgive our continued disobedience? Doesn't my effort to obey count for something? And doesn't my failure to be obedient take away from my standing as God's redeemed and much-loved child?

What the hearer should do as a result:

Trust in God's promise that Christ is the final sacrifice, no other work is needed for us or by us. Although we continue to disobey we remain those set apart as God's holy children now by faith, and have the resurrection promise of eternal life to come.

Subject Sentence:

Introduction: Stains on My Shirt

I went out to eat the other day, and as usual I spilled some of my dinner right down the front of my shirt. Now this happens occasionally to most people, but it seems to happen to me almost every time I go out. I either have to head to the bathroom and try to wash it out, which then means I walk out with a wet stain right smack dab in the front, which is more obvious than the original stain ever was. Or I just casually try to wipe it off, maybe dabbing my napkin nonchalantly into my water in hopes of removing whatever it was I spilled before it can cause a stain. Except many times, after the water dries, the stain remains. And this makes the rest of my time in the restaurant feel like this: [*show Tide Stick Video*]. The truth of the matter is most times it's only obvious to me, but it feels so obvious that it's like that voice jabbering nonsense and drowning out not only what I have to say, but my ability to concentrate and hear what others are saying.

Just as aggravating is when you spill something on your shirt, and throw it into the laundry, only to have the wash fail to remove all of the offending stain so that it now looks like an oil spot. And you don't notice it until you put the shirt on the next time. And there it is, a sign and a voice crying out for all the world to see, just like that talking stain that won't shut up. And with holiday dinners fast approaching the likelihood of this happening, at least to me, increases.

When I worked at Hillers, I used to keep a number of pens and markers in my pocket, so I was ever at the ready to sign invoices. I had a pocket protector at one time but wearing those were at that time associated with being a nerd, so I didn't. I tried to always have a box cutter in my front pocket too. But I always seemed to misplace it. When I would need to open a case of something for a customer that was empty on the shelf, not having the box cutter, I would simply use the ball point pen to poke a hole through the tape. One time I used my pen that way and put it back in my front pocket not realizing that the entire ball point assembly had been broken off. This caused all the ink in the pen to flow out into my pocket and down the front of my shirt. The ink even soaked through to my t-shirt underneath, and beyond that onto my skin. That was a stain that not even the best stain remover could get out. I eventually, with continued work got it down to just the ghost of a stain, one that most others would hardly notice. But in my mind, it continued to scream out gibberish.

The Stain of Sin and the Guilty Conscience

Perhaps you see your sinful disobedience as a similar kind of stain on your conscience. You and I know that our faith in Jesus Christ forgives all our sins. But what about the guilt that sometimes remains over past thoughtless words and actions? Do you ever wonder if our LORD can really give you a pass on those? There are those sins that you will commit after today's Confession and Absolution, and after your partaking of the Lord's Supper. Do you ever wonder if at some point the LORD is just going to grow tired of your inability to obey Him? And what about those times when you know what your thinking, or saying, or doing is wrong, but you go ahead with it anyway, because what is more important at that time is what you want and not what God has commanded of you. These are all things that I sometimes see as stains on my conscience. How many ghosts of sinful stains of the past still cry out for your attention? Doesn't God hear those stains crying out too? How can we ever get rid of them? The answer and assurance given in our text today to you and me is nothing. We do nothing. Christ has our salvation completely in hand

The message of this text was originally preached to Jewish Christians living scattered throughout the Roman Empire. The Romans tolerated the Jews who were not Christians because they considered their religious beliefs and practices as being ancient, and they respected that. But Christianity was something new. That newness of it, and the fact that Christians refused to worship any of the Roman gods caused problems for them. Jewish Christians were being tempted by their non-believing counterparts to return to the old ways of seeking God's favor and forgiveness through obedience to the commands and through the offering of temple sacrifices like their ancestors had done during time of the Exodus and afterward.

These animal sacrifices had a purpose during the ages before Christ came. They didn't give complete and total forgiveness of sins, but they brought temporary relief from God's wrath for the present. But they always pointed forward to something better to come. They drew their ability to grant grace and forgiveness to the person offering them because they were placeholders for the better sacrifice to come. As stated in **Hebrews 10:3-4** ³ **But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year.** ⁴ **For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.** The trouble is that bulls and goats are not human beings. The wages of sin is death, so human sin requires human blood to be shed. But being sinners and far from being the perfect sacrifice ourselves means our blood could atone for nothing. We would still suffer eternal separation from the holy God. Animals after animals were sacrificed on Jewish altars year after year as a reminder that sin still remained. Nothing man could do would remove it.

Christ's Body: The Perfect Answer For Sin

But the gift that is Christ's incarnation, life, suffering and death, His resurrection and ascension is the complete and total cure for the stain of all sin; yours, mine, the whole worlds. **Hebrews 10:5-6** ⁵ **Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; ⁶ in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure.** The former sacrifices and offerings all pointed to this gift of this body and the incarnation of God the Son that took place in Mary's womb. There, God the Son was mysteriously and supernaturally joined with a human baby, so that when He was born, He had a completely normal human body, a brain, and a will. But at the same time it was joined with the divine will and presence of the 2nd member of the Trinity.

This body was prepared for God the Son from long ago. In His human nature He descended from Adam and Eve, the offspring of Eve's that would crush the serpent's head. On down through the centuries God kept a line of descendants that remained faithful to Him, all the way to Noah, whose family was the only believers left at the time of the flood. From Noah's son Shem came Abraham, who placed his son Isaac on an altar of sacrifice, who was spared death when God provided a substitute ram in his place. That ram was a place holder for a better sacrifice to come. Down through the centuries God kept faith alive all the way to David, to whom God promised that a descendant of His would sit and rule on an eternal throne. This promised one, the Messiah, descended from David down through the generations all the way to Mary and Joseph, both of whom were faithful to the LORD. With Joseph as His Stepfather, Jesus would be considered a son of David by Jewish law. Through Mary He was a son of David by blood. This is the Father's faithful preparation of this body that culminated in the coming of the baby Jesus.

Jesus' salvation work for you and for me is found not just in His death on the cross, but in His entire existence in that body. **Hebrews 10:7** **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.'**" In every stage of His life He was obedient to the Heavenly Father's commands and wishes and law. He kept all the commandments. He fulfilled all the prophetic words about who He was to be and what He would do. He was obedient to all God commands in all the ways that you and I fail to be. And it's this obedience that earns for you a right standing with God and earns for you the life of the world to come. This is something you and I could never earn no matter how obedient we tried to be. And that is where His role as the perfect Lamb of Sacrifice comes into play. He was the once and for all final sacrifice of atonement for sin that all other sacrifices look forward to. By the gift of faith you hold that Jesus' one time sacrifice forgives you of all your sins, so that you are declared right with God now and forever. No other work or sacrifice is needed

Remaining Holy and Sanctified Even as We Sin

So what about those sinful stains that you and I keep making? What about that voice of conscience that can be as loud and as obnoxious as that stain on your shirt? Don't we have to do something? Don't we at least need to demonstrate our desire for repentance through the perfect confession, or penitential acts of kindness so that God knows we are serious about changing our ways? Hebrews has an important message for us whenever we start thinking along these lines. **Hebrews 10:8-10** ⁸ **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),** ⁹ **then he added, "Behold, I have come to do your will." He does away with the first in order to establish the second.** ¹⁰ **And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.** Because God the Son came down and joined Himself in the incarnation with that perfect body, He is the absolute final offering needed. Nothing else need be done by you or me. Even the faith that you need to make His offering for you and for me comes as a free gift that you do not deserve and cannot earn, but is given freely and abundantly in your baptism, and keeps being given through the Means of Grace.

To say that you need to do something would be the same as saying that animal sacrifices need to continue to assure we remain forgiven. Hebrews spells out how wrong that thinking is. Christ came to put an end to the sacrificial system by fulfilling the demand for the perfect sacrifice. Through all He has earned for you in His body, through His incarnation, His life, His suffering and death, His resurrection, and His ascension back to the Father, you are completely covered. And by your continued faith in all that Christ has done for you comes sanctification: the lifelong process that the Holy Spirit does in you to change you into the reality that Christ declares you to be: a Saint, a beloved child of the Heavenly Father. Through the offering of Christ's body once and for all you are those things right now in His eyes, and He is at work to change you so that in your thoughts words and actions you resemble that reality. This reality will become total and perfect on the Last Day

Conclusion

When those stains arise on your shirt the best thing you can do is spray some stain remover on them ASAP. And if the stain is beyond a stain remover's power to eradicate, you can always ask for the gift of another shirt at Christmas. But when it comes to the stain of sin and guilt, especially when the devil is whispering in your ear and trying to get your heart to believe that God can't and won't forgive you, turn in faith to the offering of Christ's body: His incarnation, life, suffering and death, His resurrection and ascension. Here you have the promise of God's word the Jesus has done enough, all that is necessary for you to be forgiven, saved from eternal damnation, and given a permanent place in God's holy family. Here you have Jesus' promise that He has done what you could never do, make yourself right with God. And here you have His promise that His Spirit is keeping you right with God, even as He generates the desires in you to serve Him in obedience in His kingdom. Don't listen to the sinful stains. Listen to Jesus. Amen.