

Hebrews 10:11-18 "Born to be a Sacrifice"—part two**

Main Idea: Christmas is all about making sinners holy. That's why Christ came into the world, as we're told in Hebrews 10:1-18. He was *born to be a sacrifice*. We'll take a look at two aspects of His sacrifice as we examine Hebrews 10:11-18 together.

I. Ponder the finality of His sacrifice (11-14).

- A. Christ did what no other person can do (11).
 - 1. He offered the final sacrifice.
 - 2. He took a seat at the right hand of God.
 - 3. He is waiting for the final submission of His enemies.
- B. Christ took care of our sin problem (12-13).
 - 1. He offered the final sacrifice.
 - 2. He took a seat at the right hand of God.
 - 3. He is waiting for the final submission of His enemies.
- C. Christ accomplished our sanctification (14).
 - 1. Sanctification begins as a position.
 - 2. Sanctification includes a process.
 - 3. Sanctification involves our participation.
 - 4. Sanctification will result in a product.

II. Ponder the fulfillment of His sacrifice (15-18).

- A. The Lord did what He said He would do (15-17).
 - 1. He put His laws on our hearts.
 - 2. He chooses not to remember our sins.
- B. The Lord calls us to agree with Him (18).
 - 1. He says that He won't remember our sins if we are in Christ.
 - 2. He says that there is no longer any need for sacrifices if sins are forgiven.
 - 3. The question is, will we take Him at His word?

The bottom line: There is hope for sinners this Christmas, so spread the word!

I remember a little ditty I learned as a child that went like this...

Star light, star bright,

The first star I see tonight.

I wish I may, I wish I might,

Have the wish I wish tonight.

That's what a star meant to me as a young child. It was a tiny little dot in the sky, an occasion for a wish perhaps, but not very significant in my life. Quaint, bright, interesting to look at for a few seconds, but certainly not a life-dominating object in my life. It was just a tiny little speck of light in the sky.

I learned later that I could hardly have been more wrong in my assessment. That "tiny little speck of light" is neither tiny nor little. The sun, which of course is a star, is 864,000 miles in diameter—that's four times the distance from the earth to the moon. If you could hollow out the sun, you would have room to insert a million planet earths. Yet the sun is pretty average as far as stars go.

Consider Sirius, which is the most brilliant of the evening stars. It's twice the size of the sun and its high temperature produces the light of 23 suns. But because Sirius is 8.8 light years away from us (that's the distance you'd travel if you went from the earth to the sun a half million times), to us it's but a sparkling dot overhead.

And then there are the big stars, called the *red giants*. Their diameters exceed the sun's by more than five hundred times. If you could position one of these super-giants at the center of our solar system, the four inner planets, including the earth, would be swallowed up beneath its surface. Betelgeuse, for instance, which is the right shoulder star of the constellation Orion the Hunter, has a diameter 1,200 times the size of the sun and gives off 120,000 times as much light.[\[1\]](#)

Star light, star bright? Little did I know what I was seeing and saying. What to me appears to be nothing more than a tiny little speck of light in the sky is in reality a massive, potentially blinding ball of fire that ought to take my breath away. And the only reason it doesn't is because I'm so far away from it.

I wonder if that scenario doesn't capture what's happening as we approach Christmas. To so many Christ is like a wonderful, shiny little star. They see Him there in the manger with His glowing countenance. They even sing little ditties about Him. He's quaint, bright, interesting to look at... for a few seconds anyway, but certainly not a life-dominating object.

If only they knew. If only they got close enough to Him they would discover that in reality He is massive and potentially-blinding in His brilliance and someone that ought to take their breath away!

M. R. DeHaan, the founder of *Radio Bible Class*, wrote the following poem entitled, "*Can This Be Christmas.*"

*What's all this hectic rush and worry?
Where go these crowds who run and curry?
Why all the lights -- the Christmas trees?
The jolly "fat man," tell me please!*

*Why, don't you know? This is the day
For parties and for fun and play;
Why this is Christmas!*

*So this is Christmas, do you say?
But where is Christ this Christmas day?
Has He been lost among the throng?
His voice drowned out by empty song?*

*No. He's not here -- you'll find Him where
Some humble soul now kneels in prayer,
Who knows the Christ of Christmas.*

*But see the many aimless thousands
Who gather on this Christmas Day,
Whose hearts have never yet been opened,
Or said to Him, "Come in to stay."*

*In countless homes the candles burning,
In countless hearts expectant yearning
For gifts and presents, food and fun,
And laughter till the day is done.*

*But not a tear of grief or sorrow
For Him so poor He had to borrow
A crib, a colt, a boat, a bed
Where He could lay His weary head.*

*I'm tired of all this empty celebration,
Of feasting, drinking, recreation;
I'll go instead to Calvary.*

*And there I'll kneel with those who know
The meaning of that manger low,
And find the Christ -- this Christmas.*

*I leap by faith across the years
To that great day when He appears
The second time, to rule and reign,
To end all sorrow, death, and pain.*

*In endless bliss we then shall dwell
With Him who saved our souls from hell,
And worship Christ -- not Christmas!^[2]*

Beloved, the Christ of Christmas did not come to earth to be a tiny little star in the sky in our lives. But if we don't know the truth about Him, and if we don't keep that truth in mind, that's what He will be to us.

The question of questions is this. *Why was Christ born?* Sadly, many don't know. And just as sad, many who say they know aren't living in light of the truth they profess. The fact of the matter is this...

Think about it: Christmas is all about making sinners holy.

Gift-giving, carol-singing, family times, no, those may be by-products of Christmas, but not its essence. Here's why Christ came into the world, according to the text we began to investigate last week, Hebrews 10:1-18. Verse 5 begins, "Therefore, when Christ came into the world." Those words indicate that this passage is answering the question for us as to *why Christ came*. And the answer? Christ was *born to be a sacrifice*. As we learned last week, Christ came to earth and became a sacrifice for two basic reasons, one, to do His Father's will (verses 5-9), and two, to make sinners holy (verse 10). As verse 10 declares, "And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

That's what Christmas is all about, *making sinners holy*. But what is it about Christ's coming to earth and specifically His sacrifice that can assure us that Christ indeed can make a sinner holy? We'll find the answer in today's text, Hebrews 10:11-18, as we ponder together two points regarding His sacrifice.

I. Ponder the finality of His sacrifice (11-14).

We've come to a key point in the letter to the Hebrews. In these verses the writer is pulling together various themes addressed thus far—concerning the superiority of Christ's person and work—and preparing them for a challenge to persevere which will begin in 10:19 and go to the end of the book. In verses 11-14 he highlights three things about Christ that speak to the *finality* of His sacrifice. First he wants us to know that...

A. Christ did what no other person can do (11). "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."

Specifically, this verse is talking about the priests of Israel and what they did under the Mosaic covenant. For starters, they *stand*. As we've commented before, there were *no chairs* in the tabernacle. The priests didn't go there to sit, but to work, and the fact that the priest *stands* points out that the priest's work was never finished.

It's hard for us to appreciate just how *unending* the priests' task was. To put it in perspective, let me remind you of what happened in the tabernacle, and later in the temple *every day*. According to Numbers 28:3-8, a one-year-old male lamb was offered in the morning as a burnt offering, followed by another in the evening. Along with this was a grain offering of fine flour and oil, and along with that was a drink offering of fermented drink. And those were just the *daily* offerings. Besides the daily offerings there were weekly Sabbath offerings, and monthly offerings, and then special holy day offerings for Passover, the Feast of Weeks, the Day of Atonement, and so on. As William Barclay summarizes, "There was a kind of priestly tread-mill of sacrifice."^[3]

Well said. A treadmill of sacrifices. And what effect did this treadmill of sacrifices have on the people? Did it remove their sins? No. It reminded them of their sins, but couldn't take them away.

Is taking away one's sins important? Extremely. You cannot enter God's presence with sin staining your life. Remember the garden of Eden? For *one* sin Adam and Eve were cast from the presence of God. For the wages of *sin* is death (Rom. 6:23).

As a temporary remedy for sin, God graciously provided Israel with the priesthood and the sacrificial system, and for fourteen centuries the priests offered those sacrifices. But the fact remained that offering sacrifices to take away sins was something that even the God-ordained Levitical priests could *not* do.

Thankfully, Christ did what no other person can do. And what was that?

B. Christ took care of our sin problem (12-13). “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.”

Notice the sequence of three events mentioned here that Christ accomplished to take care of our sin problem.

1. *He offered the final sacrifice.* “But when this priest [speaking of Christ] had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins.” Other priests offer sacrifices—that’s what priests do. But this priest, Christ, offered *one sacrifice*. Why only one sacrifice? What was it that He offered that was so extraordinary, so sufficient, so *final*, that no other subsequent sacrifices were needed? He offered *Himself*. He was the lamb that was slain. Hebrews 9:26—“But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.” Hebrews 9:28—“So Christ was sacrificed once, to take away the sins of many people.”

And please notice the reason for this sacrifice. Christ didn’t die on the cross merely to give us a moral example of selflessness to follow. No, our text states that this priest offered His one and final sacrifice *for sins*. Not His own sins, for He had none. He offered Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of condemned, hell-bound sinners, indeed for the sins of every person who would ever repent and trust in Him for their salvation.

How do we know His sacrifice was truly the *final* sacrifice? We know it because of the second event mentioned here, namely...

2. *He took a seat at the right hand of God.* “But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, *he sat down*.” Remember what the other priests were doing. Standing, always standing. But He sat down. F. F. Bruce explains, “A seated priest is the guarantee of a finished work and an accepted sacrifice.”^[4]

And where is He seated? At God’s right hand in heaven, which speaks of His authority and majesty as the Ruler of heaven and earth.

These first two events are past tense. They tell us what Christ *did*—He offered the final sacrifice and took a seat at His Father’s right hand. The third event mentioned tells us what Christ is now doing. He is *waiting*. Verse 13 says, “Since that time he *waits*.” What’s Christ waiting for right now? You say, “He’s waiting for us, His people, to come and be with Him in the place He’s preparing for us.” That’s true, according to John 14:1-3, but that’s not what our text says He’s waiting for. There’s something else that’s on His mind, something we don’t think about very much it seems, especially at Christmastime. Verse 13 says, “Since that time he waits *for his enemies to be made his footstool*.” Let that sink in. Right now...

3. *He is waiting for the final submission of His enemies.* That’s a huge theme in the prophetic Scriptures. It’s the theme of Psalm 110, the passage that the writer of Hebrews is citing here. Psalm 110 is a messianic psalm that we’ve already seen referenced back in 1:13 (Philip Hughes says the influence of Psalm 110 “pervades the whole epistle”^[5]).

In Psalm 110, David begins by saying, “The LORD says to my Lord.” So King David had someone who was his Lord, and what follows is what Yahweh said to David’s Lord (which is referring to the Messiah). Here’s what Yahweh told the Messiah, according to David, in Psalm 110:1-2, “The LORD says to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.’ The LORD will extend your mighty scepter from Zion; you will rule in the midst of your enemies.”

That’s what Christ is now waiting for, beloved, for His enemies to be made His footstool. What’s the purpose of a footstool? It’s what you put your feet on. And to be under a person’s feet speaks of subordination, even humiliation.

In a very real sense, what Christ is waiting for has already occurred. Philip Hughes explains, “Future judgment is only the application of the final judgment that had already taken place at Calvary.”^[6]

Colossians 2:15 says that Christ made a public spectacle of powers and authorities, "triumphing over them by the cross."

So He's not waiting and wondering about the outcome. The doom of His enemies is sure and certain for He defeated them at the cross. P. T. Forsyth elaborated on this connection between the cross and the coming judgment in the following quote, written one hundred years ago:

"The absolute ultimate judgment of the world took place in Christ's death. There God spoke His last word—His last endless word. The last moral reality is there, the last standard, the last judgment. The last judgment is behind us. The true judgment-seat of Christ, where we must all appear, is the Cross.... We do not realize that the prince of this world has been finally judged, and that we live in a saved world only because we live in a judged world.... Christ is not Judge merely at some future coming. He is eternal Judge in His great work as the Crucified, a work historic yet timeless and final. In Him the prince of this world has been finally and effectually judged, and the absolute condemnation passed. Satan then fell from his heaven. The absolute and irreversible judgment was passed upon evil. There, too, the judgment of our sins fell once for all on the Holy One and the Just. *The judgment Christ exercises stands on the judgment He endured* (italics mine). He assumes judgment because He absorbed it. Salvation and judgment are intertwined...."^[7]

That raises another question. If the judgment of Christ's enemies is certain, why the delay? If His enemies will take their proper place beneath His feet, what's the purpose of the delay? The answer is God's mercy, my friend, as 2 Peter 3:9 explains, "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."

It's His mercy, beloved. That's why He's waiting. And if you've not come to repentance, please don't presume upon His patience, for as Peter emphasizes at the beginning of the very next verse (2 Peter 3:10), "But the day of the Lord will come." Indeed, it will!

But there's something else that speaks to the finality of Christ's sacrifice. Not only did He do what no other person can do, namely, He took care of our sin problem, but according to verse 14...

C. Christ accomplished our sanctification (14). "Because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy [in the KJV 'them that are sanctified']."

Notice the first word, "*Because*." Here's the reason why Christ is now *waiting* (as verse 13 said He is doing) instead of *working* (as verse 11 says that other priests are continually doing). *By one sacrifice*, that is, by means of His self-giving, self-sacrifice at the cross, the sanctification of sinners resulted. Sanctification, which comes from the root Greek word *hagios* meaning 'holy,' simply means, "to be set apart from sin unto God, to be made holy."

Can a sinner be right with God? That's the issue Romans addresses. Can a sinner be holy and clean before God? That's the issue Hebrews is addressing. And the answer to both questions is, because of Christ's sacrifice, yes!^[8] At the cross Christ accomplished our sanctification.

The doctrine of sanctification, wonderful as it is, has divided God's people (denominations exist because of it). That's unfortunate and in my estimation would be unnecessary if we would distinguish the four tenses of sanctification presented in the Bible. There is *preparatory* sanctification (2 Thes. 2:13), *positional* sanctification (1 Cor. 1:30), *progressive* sanctification (John 17:17; 1 John 3:3), and *prospective* sanctification (1 John 3:1-2). Or to put it another way, four things are true of the sanctification that Christ accomplished for His people.

1. *Sanctification begins as a position.* Our text says, "By one sacrifice He has *made perfect forever*." When Christ went to the cross, He perfected a people forever. To be precise, this verse doesn't say that Christ's *sacrifice* perfects people, but that *Christ* Himself does. Or to be more precise, Christ Himself *did*. This points to His very personal involvement with us, beloved. *He* has made perfect forever. *He* did it, and He did it for us.

Are you perfect? If you know Christ, you have received the merit of His perfect life. It's in your bank account, so to speak. Legally, you are perfect in God's eyes for He no longer sees your sin but His Son. "Why then do I still struggle with sin?" Good question, and that brings us to a second insight...

2. *Sanctification includes a process.* "By one sacrifice He has made perfect forever *those who are being made holy.*" That final verb is both present tense and passive. Those that Christ perfected at the cross are right now being transformed into His holy likeness, and He is doing the transforming!

3. *Sanctification involves our participation.* Please note that immediately following this teaching about sanctification, we find a series of exhortations. Verse 22—"Let us draw near to God." Verse 23—"Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess." Verse 24—"Let us consider how we may spur one another on to love and good deeds." Verse 25—"Let us not give up meeting together." And so on.

Even the teaching itself implies this. What Christ did is complete, but we must think about it and then live in light of it. In fact, one of the reasons we don't overcome sin as we ought is because we don't think enough about what Christ accomplished for us. I'll put it bluntly. If you don't begin your day reflecting on what Christ did at the cross for you, you're heading downhill before you leave the house. And if you don't begin your week reflecting on the cross with God's people, once again, you're in a vulnerable position. As Raymond Brown observes, "This kind of deliberate mental recollection is an essential part of our progressive sanctification. Without it the Christian may hardly notice that the world around him has so squeezed him into its own mould that his standards and values are no longer distinctively Christian at all."^[9]

4. *Sanctification will result in a product.* A result, a goal, an end. And what's that? Christlikeness. We read in 1 John 3:2, "Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

My friend, have you come to grips with the *finality* of Christ's sacrifice? You cannot improve upon what Christ did at the cross. You must embrace it, indeed, embrace *Him*, as if your life depended on it, for it does! That brings us to the second point in our text.

II. Ponder the fulfillment of His sacrifice (15-18).

In the next paragraph we find the writer of Hebrews doing once again what he's done over and over again previously in the letter. He roots his teaching in the Hebrew Scriptures. He wants us to know this very basic truth...

A. The Lord did what He said He would do (15-17). Notice verses 15-17, "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.'"

He's citing Jeremiah 31:33-34, a text he quoted at length back in chapter 8. It's a prophecy about the new covenant, and in it God emphasizes what *He* will do. *This is the covenant I will make...I will put my laws...I will write them...I will remember no more.*

What did the Lord say He would do when He established the new covenant? The writer here calls attention to two of the Lord's predictions.

1. *He put His laws on our hearts.* That is, He internalizes what He requires of us. He doesn't just put it on stone tablets, but inscribes it on the very hearts of His people.

2. *He chooses not to remember our sins.* How can that be? How can a holy God choose *not* to remember the sins that people have committed against Him? Isn't that unjust to let sin go unpunished? No. God chooses not to remember His people's sins because those sins have already been punished.

Where, and by whom? On the cross, and by His Son.

Jeremiah predicted, "That's what *will* happen." Hebrews says, "That's what *has* happened!"

Beloved, we are living in a day, the day the Lord Himself predicted, when the Lord says He chooses *not* to remember the sins and lawless acts of sinners and law-breakers, and He chooses *not* to do that for those who have trusted in His Son and the sacrifice He made. That's what He said He would do, and He has done it. Now what?

B. The Lord calls us to agree with Him (18). "And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin." Do you hear what the Lord is saying here? First...

1. *He says that He won't remember our sins if we are in Christ.* That's because if we are in Christ, our sins have been *forgiven*. "And where these [that's referring to the 'sins and lawless acts' mentioned in verse 17] *have been forgiven*."

Forgiveness. That's what God says He extends to us, beloved, but we sadly we so often settle for deficient substitutes.

Warren Wiersbe tells the following: "I once shared a conference with a fine Christian psychiatrist whose lectures were very true to the Word. 'The trouble with psychiatry,' he told me, 'is that it can only deal with symptoms. A psychiatrist can remove a patient's *feelings* of guilt, but he cannot remove the guilt. It's like a trucker loosening a fender on his truck so he won't hear the motor knock. A patient can end up feeling better, but have *two* problems instead of one!" [\[10\]](#)

Maybe that's what you've been doing in life, just loosening the fender on the truck instead of dealing with the real problem in the engine. The problem is sin, my friend, *your* sin. You, like me and every other person on the planet, are a sinner. But God says that if you have trusted in His Son, your sins are gone, removed, remembered no more, *forgiven*. Yet there's more, for the Lord says something else to us here...

2. *He says that there is no longer any need for sacrifices if sins are forgiven.* That's why the sacrificial system existed in the first place, because men's sins separated them from God. But if sins are forgiven in Christ, then what need is there for any other sacrifice? There is no need.

Let that sink in. If your sins are forgiven, you do not need any other sacrifice for them. You don't need to go to a priest at a tabernacle. You don't need to go to priest at a mass. The Lord says there is no longer any need for additional sacrifices for sins.

Let me take it a step further. If your sins are forgiven, you don't need to beat yourself up for your past blunders. If your sins are forgiven you don't need to give yourself the "doghouse" treatment and pay for your sins by making yourself (and others!) miserable. If your sins are forgiven, you don't need to do penance, to do good deeds to help others—not that you won't *want* to do good deeds, for if you're truly forgiven you'll *want* to do those things that are pleasing to the One who forgave you. But even then the good deeds are done *because of* His mercy, not to merit it.

My friend, hear again what the Lord is saying. He says that He won't remember our sins if we are in Christ. And He says that there is no longer any need for sacrifices if our sins are already forgiven. So then...

3. *The question is, will we take Him at His word? Will we agree with Him?*

As we began this morning I suggested that to many people, the Christ of Christmas is but a tiny star in the sky. They don't know the truth about Him. He's just a quaint little baby in a manger. But today we've looked through the telescope of the Word of God and seen a much different picture, a bigger picture. We've seen why that baby was born, that He was born to be a sacrifice. We've seen both the finality and the fulfillment of His sacrifice, a sacrifice He made in order to make sinners holy. That's what Christmas is all about, beloved, *making sinners holy*.

The bottom line: There is hope for sinners this Christmas, so spread the word!

And if we are truly gripped by the meaning of Christmas, that's what we'll do. We'll not tack Jesus onto our lives once in awhile, but we'll give Him center stage 24-7. And we won't hoard Him, but share Him with others so that they too may become holy!

****Note:** This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

[1] I'm indebted to Donald DeYoung's book, *Astronomy and the Bible*, for this information about the stars; pp. 55ff.

[2] Taken from www.sermonillustrations.com

[3] William Barclay, pp. 116-7.

[4] Taken from Philip Hughes, p. 401.

[5] Philip Hughes, p. 401.

[6] Philip Hughes, p. 402.

[7] Taken from Philip Hughes, p. 402.

[8] Observation based on a comment by Raymond Brown, p. 179.

[9] Raymond Brown, p. 181.

[10] Warren Wiersbe, p. 314.