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Hebrews 10:4-25

Hebrews 10:4-7

4. *For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins.*

The blood of bulls and goats don't take away sins. Only the grace of God does that.

5. *Therefore when (Christ) comes into the world, he says, "Sacrifice and offering you didn't desire, but you prepared a body for me; 6. You had no pleasure in whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin. 7. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come (in the scroll of the book it is written of me) to do your will, O God.'"*

In these verses, the author takes the words of the Psalmist and ascribes them to Christ.

5a. Therefore when he comes into the world, he says, "Sacrifice and offering you didn't desire"

Jesus is quoting from Psalm 40:6-8. In that psalm, the Psalmist is addressing God. It is God who didn't desire sacrifice and offering.

This doesn't seem right to me considering that God prescribed in great detail the sacrifices and offerings that he expected the Israelites to offer.

To understand this statement, we would do well take a look at Psalm 51, which says:

"For you don't delight in sacrifice, or else I would give it.
You have no pleasure in burnt offering.
The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit.
A broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise" (vv. 16-17).

5b. "but you prepared a body for me"

The author doesn't quote Psalm 40 exactly in this verse. The Hebrew of the psalm says, "You have opened my ears". The meaning seems to be that God has opened the psalmist's ears to hear God's word.

But the author of Hebrews has changed that line to read, "but you prepared a body for me." (John 1:14, 17)—so that he could be tempted as we are—so that he could die on the cross as a once-for-all sacrifice so "that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

6. You had no pleasure in whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin

This repeats the thought of verse 5a—but a bit more emphatically.

7. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come (in the scroll of the book it is written of me) to do your will, O God.'"

The psalmist would have given first priority to the Pentateuch—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

The entire Old Testament refers to the Messiah, so the OT is the "scroll of the book that is written of (Christ)."

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Hebrews 10:8-10

8. Previously saying, “Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin you didn’t desire, neither had pleasure in them” (those which are offered according to the law), 9. then he has said, “Behold, I have come to do your will.” He takes away the first, that he may establish the second, 10. by which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

8. Previously saying, “Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin you didn’t desire, neither had pleasure in them” (those which are offered according to the law)

This verse sets up a contrast to the following verse—verse 9. In this verse, the author states that God, even though he had established the sacrificial system, found no pleasure in it—for several reasons.

First, God intended the law to be a “tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (Galatians 3:24), so it was intended to be temporary—until the Messiah came.

Second, while quite detailed, the law did not cover every situation. Jesus’ gave a short summary.. “love God...love your neighbor”

Third, the law served the Jewish people, but left out the rest of the world.

Fourth, the law lent itself to rote observance. It was too seldom engraven on people’s hearts.

Fifth, the law required recurring animal sacrifices, but “it was impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins” (v. 4). God wanted a once-for-all sacrifice—his Son—whose death and resurrection would be truly effective.

9. then he has said, “Behold, I have come to do your will.” He takes away the first, that he may establish the second

It is Christ who has come to do God’s will and takes away the first (the law), so he might establish the second (his one-time sacrifice on the cross so “that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

10. by which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all

To become holy, a person must separate him/herself from what is common. To be holy is to be “called out” from the sinful world into a deep and abiding relationship with God so that the person becomes more God-like—holier—less like the sinful world-at-large.

Hebrews 10:11-13

11. Every priest indeed stands day by day serving and often offering the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins, 12. but he, when he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God: 13. from that time waiting until his enemies are made the footstool of his feet. 14. For by one offering he has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.

11a. “Every priest indeed stands day by day serving and often offering the same sacrifice”

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The priest stands day by day. In verse 2, the author will contrast that with Christ, who “sat down on the right hand of God” (v. 12b).

The priests were expected to oversee: Burnt offerings, Peace offerings, Sin and purification offerings, Guilt offerings, Tresspass offerings, Cereal or grain offerings.

11b. “which can never take away sins”

This statement appears to be in conflict with Leviticus 1:4, which says that the burnt offering “shall be accepted for to make atonement for him.” ??? who is him?

Why would God command Israel to observe an elaborate system of sacrifices, knowing that they would be only marginally effective? Your thoughts? What are some options?

12a. “but (Christ), when he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever”

Christ’s “one sacrifice,” effective “forever,” contrasts the repetitive nature of the animal sacrifices.

12b. “sat down on the right hand of God”

Verse 11 portrayed priests as standing to make sacrifices at the temple. The did that “day by day,” a ritual repeated over and over even though it “could never take away sins.”

What did the Christ do?

13. “from that time waiting until his enemies are made the footstool of his feet”

Christ’s enemies put him on the cross. They have considerable power yet today, as is evident every time we hear a news broadcast. MY observation...YOUR thoughts?

14a. “For by one offering he has perfected forever”

“By one offering” refers to Christ’s offering of himself on the cross.

14b. “those who are being sanctified”

At his cross, Christ perfected “those who are being sanctified.”

Sanctified isn’t a word that we use in everyday conversation, but it is central to the life of the Christian. Where does Sanctification fit in John Wesley’s Methodist teachings?

In this verse, “sanctified” is present tense, indicating an ongoing process. Our sanctification (our being made holy) is not yet complete, but is in process and will be in so throughout our lives. I believe we are a work in process. God isn’t finished with us yet.

Which raises the question, how can we have been perfected while being a work in process?

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Hebrews 10:15-18

15. *The Holy Spirit also testifies to us, for after saying,* 16. *“This is the covenant that I will make with them: ‘After those days,’ says the Lord, ‘I will put my laws on their heart, I will also write them on their mind; ‘then he says,* 17 *“I will remember their sins and their iniquities no more.”* 18. *Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.*

15. “The Holy Spirit also testifies to us, for after saying”

The word “testifies” is present tense. The Holy Spirit (God’s Spirit dwelling in us) was bearing witness to the people of the author’s time, and is still bearing witness to us today.

16a. “This is the covenant that I will make with them: ‘After those days,’ says the Lord, ‘I will put my laws on their heart, I will also write them on their mind”

An allusion to Jeremiah 31:33.

In its’ original context, Jeremiah 31:33-34 gave hope to the Jewish people who were suffering through exile as punishment for their sins. Those verses were God’s promise of forgiveness and redemption. The time would come when God would help them to integrate God’s laws and God’s will so completely that their lives would reflect their devotion to God. Has that Happened? When? How?

16b. “then he says, ‘I will remember their sins and their iniquities no more”

This verse alludes to Jeremiah 31:34.

This is the promise of forgiveness and redemption for the Jewish people.

18. “Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin”

This is the logical conclusion of the premise in verse 17 that God will remember our sins and iniquities no more. In doing so, God doesn’t just sweep our sins under the rug, where they await later discovery.

God transforms lives, so that sins, which were scarlet, become white as snow (Isaiah 1:18).

Therefore, it stands to reason that the sin offerings that were such a large part of Israel’s religious practice, are no longer needed.

Why? How?

Hebrews 10:19-25

19. *Having therefore, brothers, boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus,* 20. *by the way which he dedicated for us, a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;* 21. *and having a great priest over the house of God,* 22 *let’s draw near with a true heart in fullness of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and having our body washed with pure water,* 23. *let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering; for he who promised is faithful.* 24. *And let us consider how to*

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provoke one another to love and good deeds, 25. not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

In verses 11-18, the author laid a theological foundation for what follows.

- In verses 19-21, he personalizes it.
- In verses 22-25, he makes an appeal for action based on the foundation that he laid.

19a. “Having therefore, brothers”

This phrase ties what follows to what went before. As noted above, in verses 11-18, the author laid a theological foundation for what follows. Now the author begins to spell out the implications of that foundation.

19b. “(having)...boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus”

The tabernacle and temple had two holy chambers:

- The Holy Place and
- The Most Holy Place or the Holy of Holies—the dwelling place of God.

The author is saying that we have confidence or boldness to enter the Most Holy Place—that the blood of Jesus authorizes us to enter into the very presence of God.

I know I’ve said it 100 times before, but keep in mind that the book of Hebrews was written for Jewish Christians whose lifelong teachings emphasized the exclusivity of the Most Holy Place—that only the high priest dared to enter it, and he only on the Day of Atonement.

20. “by the way which he dedicated for us, a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh”

The veil or curtain separated the Most Holy Place from the Holy Place—the place where only the high priest could enter from the place where ordinary priests could enter. The phrase, “through the veil,” shows that the author intended “the Most Holy Place.” Jesus’ flesh, by his sacrifice on the cross created a new entry through the veil and into the very presence of God.

21. “and having a great priest over the house of God”

In 3:5-6, the author contrasted Moses, who was faithful over God’s house as a servant, and Christ, who was faithful over God’s house as a son.

Therefore, when verse 21 speaks of “a great priest over the house of God,” the author intends us to understand that those who establish the church are the house of God. Christ is our great priest, the one who intercedes for us.

22a. “let’s draw near with a true heart in fullness of faith”

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This is the first of three calls to action that follow logically from the author's statement that Christ has remitted our sins.

The idea here is that, since we have the great privilege of access to God, we ought to take full advantage of it.

“with a true heart.”

A true heart is the opposite of a deceitful or false heart. This appeal to a true heart is derived from Jeremiah 31:33, where God promised to write his teachings on the hearts of his people.

“in fullness of faith.”

This is no academic issue. We do have access to God in prayer and in other forms of worship. That raises two questions:

1. Have we retained the sense of privilege that being admitted into God's presence should evoke?
2. How often do we benefit from the privilege?

“having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience”.

Remember, it is Jewish Christians who are intimately familiar with Jewish faith and practice. That sometimes involved the sprinkling of OIL in anointing rites (Exodus 29:21). The sprinkling of oil was also associated with cleansing of sin (Leviticus 14:14-27).

- In their minds, the sprinkling most involved with the day to day lives of Jews was the sprinkling of BLOOD for the purpose of atonement or cleansing from sin. FOR YOUR READING PLEASURE: (Leviticus 4:6, 17; 5:9; 16:14-19; Numbers 19:4; see also 1 Peter 1:2 and Hebrews 9:13-21; 11:28).

“from an evil conscience.”

In the last chapter, the author contrasted the cleansing power of the blood of sacrificial animals with the power of the blood of Christ to “cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God” (9:13-14).

“and having our body washed with pure water”

I think this refers to Christian baptism. What are your thoughts?

23. “let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering; for he who promised is faithful”

This is the second of three calls to action (see the comments on v. 22a above).

“hold fast”

Hang tight is to refuse to let go and to persevere.

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“the confession of our hope.”

In the next chapter, the author will say “Now faith is assurance of things hoped for, proof of things not seen” (11:1; see also 3:6). “Things hoped for” points to a future dimension, perhaps wonders to be realized only after our death and resurrection or the Second Coming of Christ. Your thoughts?

“without wavering”.

This is a call to stand straight and tall in the face of adversity. It is a call to keep the faith in the face of those who would sow doubt. It is a call to remember the glories yet to come, even in the face of present hardship. DOES. THIS FEEL LIKE OUR HOMES, STATE, COUNTRY, WORLD TODAY??

24. “Let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good works”

This is the third of three calls to action that follow logically from the author’s statement that Christ has remitted our sins (v. 18)—and that he is our great priest who has made it possible for us to enter into the presence of God (vv. 19-21).

25. “not forsaking our own assembling together”

This is a call to engage in corporate worship, not just occasionally, but as a regular part of one’s life. I WISH WE COULD.

“as the custom of some is”

Many people believe that they have no need of corporate worship or any kind of communal faith activity. They claim that they can worship just as well by themselves meditating alongside a lovely stream or in a beautiful woods.

In my opinion, there are at least three flaws in that kind of thinking:

- First, they don’t do it. Unless they submit to a discipline of attending corporate worship, they aren’t likely to engage in any meaningful worship.
- Second, corporate worship is a faith-builder. We grow in faith and understanding when we sing hymns, listen to the scriptures expounded, and especially when we participate in the sacraments.
- Third, corporate worship constitutes corporate witness. We witness to others by our presence in worship, and they witness to us.

There are exceptions to every rule, and that is true here. An occasional person subjected to solitary confinement has found faith by reading a Bible. Others, in crisis, fall to their knees in prayer. But those are not exceptions that disprove the rule, but rather exceptions that prove it.

WHAT PROBLEMS DO WE FACE WITH THIS IDEA NOW?

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“but exhorting one another”

As noted above (v. 25a), in corporate worship, we witness to one another and help each other to grow in faith.

“and so much the more, as you see the Day approaching”

“The day” in this verse means the Day of the Lord—a day when God will save the righteous and damn the unrighteous—

“a great and terrible day” (Joel 2:11)

a day when “The haughty eyes of people shall be brought low, and the pride of everyone shall be humbled; and the Lord alone will be exalted” (Isaiah 2:11)

a day when God will “bring...distress upon people... because they have sinned against the Lord” (Zephaniah 1:17)

So, the question is: Do we want to be among the sheep and not the goats—among those privileged to “inherit the Kingdom prepared for us before the foundation of the world” (Matthew 25:31-46).

To wrap up this chapter, **Verses 26-31 spell out the consequences of willful sin and being unprepared for the Day of the Lord. They conclude, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (v. 31).**

The Lord bless you and keep you;
the lord make his face to shine on you
and be gracious to you
and give you peace.

Numbers 6:24-26