



24: For Jesus, Once Was Enough

At the end of chapter 9 the writer of the book of Hebrews started to explain that Jesus' sacrifice only had to be offered once. His purpose, of course, is to show that Jesus' sacrifice is far better than any of the Old Testament sacrifices. That theme continues into chapter 10.

"For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.

Therefore, when He came into the world, He said:

"Sacrifice and offering You did not desire,
But a body You have prepared for Me.
In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin
You had no pleasure.
Then I said, 'Behold, I have come—
In the volume of the book it is written of Me—
To do Your will, O God.'"

Previously saying, "Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them" (which are offered according to the law), then He said, "Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God." He takes away the first that He may establish the second. By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.

But the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us; for after He had said before,

"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them," then He adds, "Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin."

Hebrews 10:1 – 18

Chapter 9 finished with a bold statement of fact: Jesus has entered into the true Holy Place having offered Himself once and He will not return to offer Himself again (though He will appear again for an entirely different purpose). But where did the writer get that from? The "For" of chapter 10 verse 1 leads us into his answer. Here's how he reasons.

Shadows And Reminders

The law is only a shadow which points forward to the true image. Being only a shadow, the repeated sacrifices the law requires could never make anyone perfect. If the law could have made people perfect its sacrifices would have ceased once they had done their work (verse 2). Instead the repetition of the sacrifices served as a reminder of sin. It's impossible that the laying down of an animal's life could atone for sin.

- ◆ *What do you understand by the words, "The law, having a shadow of the good things to come?"*

He supports his reasoning with an appeal to the Old Testament, quoting from Psalm 40. He puts the words of Psalm 40:6 in Jesus' mouth. His point is to show that God takes much more pleasure in the obedient life of one committed to do His will than He does in repeated sacrifices. Jesus lived in absolute obedience to the will of the Father, and it's by His offering of Himself in obedience to that will that we are sanctified (verse 10).

How can it be said that God doesn't want sacrifice and offering when it was God who came up with the idea in the first place? The answer must be that in themselves sacrifices don't give God any pleasure. Rather their value is in what they represent.

- ◆ *What was the offering of the sacrifices of Old Testament times meant to represent?*

Once For All

The word translated "once for all" in verse 10 is emphasised in the original. It's a reference to the finality of Jesus' work of atonement and not to who it's benefits extend to i.e. He offered Himself once for all time; not once for all people. And notice too, His death did not merely make it possible that we might be sanctified, it says "we have been sanctified" (see also verse 14).

- ◆ *What does the writer mean when he says we have been sanctified?*
- ◆ *What is the significance of that?*

The completeness of the Jesus' work of sanctification is emphasised further with a reminder of a statement the writer made in chapter 1 verse 3. Remember? He said that having offered His sacrifice our Great High Priest sat down, indicating that He had nothing more to do, and now waits for the fruit of His labours to be delivered.

Never To Be Remembered

In verses 15 – 18, the point is driven home with the words of the new covenant, quoted from Jeremiah 31:33 – 34. God has said, "their sins I will remember no more." If sins are not remembered, what need could there be for any further offering?

Note, in verses 17 and 18, the equating of forgiveness with "remembering no more". When God forgives He pledges never to call the thing forgiven to mind again. God's forgiveness of us is an act of His will and our forgiveness of others, which is to be modelled upon His, similarly ought to be a conscious decision.

- ◆ *What would you say to a Christian who says, "I cannot forgive..."*