Jesus is the Perfect Sacrifice Once for All

Hebrews 9:23-10:18

Key Verse: 10:14 “For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.”

 When we Christians pray, we always finish with the name of Jesus. We pray in Jesus’ name. This is because in John’s gospel, Jesus asked his disciples to pray in his name, then whatever we ask for in his name, the Father God answers us (Jn 14:13,14). This also teaches us that Jesus is the mediator between God and us. Jesus intercedes for us when we pray. Last week, we studied that Jesus is the mediator of the new covenant. Moses was the mediator of the old covenant and Jesus is the mediator of the new covenant which was established in his own blood. God established the new covenant in Jesus’ blood because this is God’s great wisdom and demonstration of his love for us. In short, God removed the old, complicated, and imperfect salvation system and provided a new, simple, and perfect salvation system, not only for Jews, but also for all people in this world, and not only for a specific generation, but for all generations. God made the way of salvation simple, easy, universal, and eternal. Today’s passage mainly talks about this, and we will study what we should do as the recipients of this blessing as the conclusion of this passage.

Look at verse 23. “***It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.***” In this verse, the copies of the heavenly things are the tabernacle, its furnishings, the Levitical priesthood, and all sacrificial systems of the Old Testament. According to the Leviticus, high priests had to purify themselves and all the furnishings in the tabernacle with the blood of animals before they entered the Most Holy Place. Then, why were they purified with the blood of animals? It was from the sacrificial law. Verse 22 says, “*In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness*.” The law requires a blood sacrifice for the forgiveness of sin. Blood represents life. We can live without one eye or one leg, but we cannot live without blood. We all die without blood. In this way, God treats our sin seriously as a matter of life and death. We often treat sin lightly, thinking that it is unnoticeable. But the Bible says the price of our sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Ro 6:23).

Last week, Dr. Melissa West explained well about atonement. The word ‘atonement’ is very related to the words ‘forgiveness of sin.’ Atonement is to make one with God. Through the forgiveness of sin, we become one with God. Through the forgiveness of sin, we become children of God and co-heirs with Christ Jesus. (Ro 8:17). Christ Jesus made this possible on the cross. He paid the price of our sin on the cross with his blood. He propitiated the wrath of God by his sacrificial death. He reconciled God and sinners by offering himself as the atoning sacrifice. He redeemed us from the slavery of sin by the power of resurrection. There is no forgiveness of sin without shedding blood. It is amazing that the Son of God shed his precious blood for the forgiveness of sinners like us who do not deserve it at all. Romans 5:8 says, “*But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us*.” Amen! Remember that God loves us as much as he let Christ die on the cross!

The author of Hebrews says that all earthly systems are copies of heavenly things. High priests, according to the earthly law, entered the tabernacle which was made with human hands every year with animal’s blood. But Jesus entered heaven itself, the true one, once for all by his own blood. (24,25) Look at verse 26b. “***But he has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.***” Dr. Billy Graham said that Christ died on the cross for ALL our sins; the sins we committed in the past, the sins we commit now, and the sins we may commit in the future. Christ died even for the sins of Adam. Christ died for the culmination of the ages, nations, peoples, nature, and history. He made it once for all on the cross!

Look at verse 9:27-28. “***Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.***” We often understand and appreciate verse 27 as the inevitability of God’s judgment after death. This is true. We all die without exception and face God’s judgment after death. But the author originally wanted to talk about the sufficiency of Christ’s sacrifice for our salvation. As we all die once, so Christ died once. As we all die once and stand before God’s judgment, so Christ died once and stands for our salvation.

In the era of the Old Testament, high priests entered the Most Holy Place once a year with the blood of animals for the atonement of sins. While a high priest was performing his priestly duty, people were eagerly waiting outside of the tabernacle for his reappearance. The reappearance of the high priest indicates the completion of the atonement of sin. In short, the high priest’s coming out alive gave them assurance of the forgiveness of their sins. If the priest did not come back from the tabernacle, something wrong might have happened to the high priest or his people. Insomuch, the reappearance of the high priest was important for his people. In the same way, the reappearance of Jesus Christ is very important for us. Through Jesus’ resurrection from the dead, we are sure that our sins are forgiven and our redemption is completed. This is the reason why Jesus had to rise again from the dead and reappear before his disciples. As our great and faithful high priest, Jesus finished his priestly duty on the cross and appeared again for our perfect redemption. We are waiting for Jesus’ second coming. Now he will come back not to bear our sins, but to bring our salvation in his kingdom. Amen!

Look at 10:1-4. “***The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. Otherwise, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins. It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.***” In these verses, the law, the sacrificial law, is compared to a shadow of the good things, which is the gospel of Jesus Christ. John 1:17 says, “*For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*” According to the sacrificial law, animal sacrifices had been repeated again and again as an annual reminder of sin. But how can the blood of an animal cleanse the sins of a human being, who has the image of God. The author says that it is impossible for the blood of animals to take away men’s sins. So, Christ himself came to this world as the sin offering which cleansed our sins and made our salvation perfect by his own blood. Amen.

Christ’s bodily offering did not come from nowhere, but from the Scripture. The author quotes Psalm 40:6-8 to confirm this in verses 5-7. When we study the book of Leviticus 1-7, the high priests offered five offerings to God, starting with the burnt offering, then the grain offering, the fellowship offering, the sin offering, and the guilt offering. I don’t have time to explain all these offerings now, but the instructions for each offering were complicated and strict. But as the years passed, their offerings became superficial and heartless. God rebuked their superficial and heartless offerings through many prophets such as Samuel (1 Sa 15:22), the Psalmists (Ps 40:6-8, 50:8), Isaiah (Is 1:11-15, 66:1-3), Jeremiah (Jer 6:20), Amos (Amo 5:21-23), Hosea (Hos 6:6), Micah (Mi 6:6-8), and so on. God said, “*I hate, I despise your religious festivals;…even though you bring me burnt offerings, I will not accept them*…” (Amo 5:21-22) But Jesus gave his own body as an atoning sacrifice on the cross once for all. Jesus gave up his life as our sin offering. Verses 5-14 talks about this. Look at verse 14, which is the key verse of today’s passage***. “For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.***”

Jesus’ atoning sacrifice is proven not only through the Scriptures, but also through the Spirit. Look at verses 15-16, “***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***.” Some may ask, “How can we be sure of the forgiveness of our sins?” “How can we believe that Jesus made our salvation complete and perfect?” The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, speaks to our spirit that we become children of God and that our sins are forgiven. When we believe in Jesus and the power of his blood, the Holy Spirit makes us sure of our forgiveness of sin and our salvation. In Romans 8:16 Paul said, “*The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.*” Amen!

Look at verses 17-18, “***Then he adds: “Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more***. ***And where these have been forgiven, sacrifice for sin is no longer necessary.”*** God hated superficial and religious offerings. But he loved Jesus’ offering on the cross. God promised not to remember our sins anymore because he was pleased with Jesus. Jesus satisfied God’s righteousness and guaranteed our forgiveness. What a blessing for us because God does not remember our sins anymore! What a privilege for those who come to God with confidence! Through Jesus’ once-and-for-all sacrifice, God provided a perfect way for our salvation. Next time, we’ll study what we have to do as the recipient of God’s blessing.

In conclusion, we must treat sin seriously. Here is a story from missionary Esther Lee. “One gambler decided to quit gambling. So, he cut all his fingers off as the expression of his determination to stop. But he was later found gambling with his toes. So, he cut off all his toes to stop gambling. Still, he was later found gambling with his mouth.” This is an extreme case of the power of sin. Sin has power. But the blood of Jesus has more power than the power of sin. 1 John 1:7 says, “*the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.*” The blood of Jesus has the power to cleanse all our sins, sins we committed in the past, at present, and in the future. The blood of Jesus on the cross has the power to set us free from the power of sin and death. Jesus paid it all! There is nothing but the blood of Jesus! Amen! Let us sing hymns 218 & 453.