

Title: What can wash away my sin?
Text: Hebrews 10.1-18
Theme: The once and forever sacrifice of Christ
Series: Hebrews # 25
Prop Stmt. There is nothing left for me to pay.

There are a few people in this room who know how computers actually work. Most of you do not and do not care to know. You only want it to work. There are a few people in this room who know how to design and build web pages. Many of you do not and do not care to know. You only want the web sites to be easy to navigate, quick and full of the information that you are looking for. There are some people in this room who know how cars work. They understand the relationship between the various systems of a car and can hear a sound and tell what is wrong. Many of you do not and do not care to know. You only want it to start when you turn the key and go when you press the accelerator.

That is fine if you are dealing with computers, web sites and cars but, what about people and more importantly, what about God? God has created us for his pleasure and glory and for our pleasure. The advancement and enhancement of our pleasure gives God great joy because true pleasure is found in knowing Him and enjoying Him. In order for us to know God, he has given us His Word. In these pages God reveals his purposes and his plan for the world. When you know how it works, and then you see it work, your pleasure and joy is exponentially increased. When you know what it takes for a computer or a car to work, and then you experience a sophisticated and brilliant piece of engineering or technology, your amazement and appreciation is so much greater than that of more ignorant people like me who just want it to work or run.

The book of Hebrews is full of details about the amazing work that Christ accomplished in our place in order to purchase and secure our pardon. From every angle that you look, Christ is magnificent. We look back over the story line that God presents to us in the Bible and see that even in the details of the events of the Old Testament that God was preparing this world for the coming of Christ. But, we are not done. This text brings to a finale, the major theological argument of this book and basically summarizes much of what has already been presented because the Author of Hebrews is about to shift gears. Today, we are looking at 10.1-18. Next week we hit a very big “therefore” and we move from explanation to exhortation, that is, the book shifts from giving helpful, reasoned and logical arguments to getting in your face and calling you out. Hebrews does not begin with the “here’s what to do” section. It starts with theology, but neither does it end with lecture material which is just further evidence that information is no substitute for obedience. God wants you to know about the gospel so that your obedience is an informed and faith-driven obedience. God does not call you to simply do, he calls to think, to understand, so that you obey with joy and with insight.

Read Text:

Now, I recognize that in this text, like much of Hebrews, there are many references to offerings, sacrifices and sin. It would be very easy to gloss over this because we have

heard this so much before. But stop with me for a second and consider again why this is here. The people to whom this book was written, were facing difficulties and pressures, and were considering walking away from the gospel because, following Christ is not easy. It is not easy to deal with the truth about our sin. It is not easy to help others deal with the real issues of life. It is not easy to forgive. It is not easy to face the pressure from others who do not understand the gospel or love Christ. If you examine life to any depth, you are faced with realities that will weigh you down and will give you excuses to run away. But, if you run away from the gospel because of the challenges that you are facing, or the pressure that you are under, what are you going to run to? We have a problem with sin. We all have a problem with sin. The fact that I say it, does not make it so, it is so, whether I say it or not. Those who try to ignore that and try to live blissfully agnostic about it, are simply cowards who are trying not to face the music. But the music is playing anyway. We all have a problem with sin. That means that we sin and that means that others sin. So, this morning, here you are and you are either dealing with the fact that in the past few days you have sinned against someone or that someone has sinned against you. But that is what I love about the gospel. It enables us to face the rawness of life with robust truth that helps us deal with it. This is what we find. Christ is not a genie in a bottle whose job is to give us your best life now. That is a distortion and corruption of the gospel. Christ is our Redeemer who has provided for us, real life – forever. This text breaks down into four parts, all of which answer the question – “What can wash away my sin?” But don’t just think of this in terms of yourself, but also in terms of others. What can wash away the sins of others? The answer is...

1. **Nothing good that I can do** (10.1-4)

But wait a minute. Back in the Old Testament days, didn’t God command that his people offer sacrifices for their sins? So, weren’t they “doing” something that earned forgiveness? Actually, no! In fact there is evidence of this throughout the Old Testament. God never wanted the animal sacrifices, because they were not at the heart of what would satisfy his justice. But he established the animal sacrifices as a picture of what was to come. But, even those who offered the animal sacrifices learned that this was not what God was really after. David made this clear in Psalm 51 following his sin of adultery and murder. What sacrifice can you offer God that would take care of that? You do not have one. So, what do you do? (hold that question for a minute)

- The law is a shadow (promise) – therefore (1a)
- The law cannot accomplish what the real thing will do. (1b)
- If the law was so good, why does it have to be repeated?

What can wash away my sin? Currently, Muslims all over the world are commemorating Ramadan. (During the month of Ramadan) “from dawn to dusk for the entire month, Muslims must refrain from eating, drinking and engaging in sexual relations. They believe that through this physical abstinence, they are able to focus intently on their spiritual selves, atoning for their sins and recommitting to serving Allah.” Why do they have to repeat this every year? It doesn’t work. It doesn’t last.

What can wash away my sin? Buddhism has a ceremony for atonement called Fusatsu. “The exact form of the ceremony varies somewhat from one temple to another, but it usually begins with an offering of incense and proceeds through the chanting of liturgy, accompanied by bows, bells, drums, and other instruments.” As part of this, the participant renews a vow that usually goes something like this.

*Beings are numberless;
I vow to free them.
Delusions are inexhaustible;
I vow to end them.
Dharma gates are boundless;
I vow to enter them.
The Awakened Way is unsurpassable;
I vow to embody it.*

But, how can you free beings when they are numberless? How can you end delusions if they are inexhaustible? Wouldn't that be another delusion? How can you enter a gate if it is boundless or embody a way that is unsurpassable? The repeatable nature of this ceremony only reveals that it does not work.

What can wash away my sin? Some of you grew up in the Roman Catholic tradition that promoted Lent as a time to give things up in order to be forgiven and even more to the point, attempted to re-enact the crucifixion of Christ every time the mass was performed. They consider the bread to be the actual body of Christ and the wine to be the actual blood of Christ, so that over and over and over Christ keeps dying for our sins, which means that it was never good enough in the first place. The mass is an act of unbelief in the finality of the atonement. It is a ceremony based on what man can do because what Christ did was not good enough.

All of these religions are based on fear. Part of that fear is legitimate. What can wash away my sin? Is it fasting during the day for a month? Is it elaborate ceremonies of eastern mysticism and incoherent prayers? Is it sitting through a 40-minute service once a month and eating a wafer and taking a sip of wine? How exactly does that work? If you have to keep doing the same thing over and over, doesn't that mean that it doesn't work?

How can an animal pay for human sin anyway? V. 4 is the final nail in the coffin of the law. Animals cannot be credited with the sins of humans. Animal sacrifices can illustrate and point to the ultimate sacrifice, but they themselves cannot stand in the place of humans and make a final payment because they are not human! Not only are they not human, but the animal does not offer itself, it is offered. There is no willingness on the part of the animal. If you do not trust Christ to take away your sin, then you have to 1) pretend that you have no sin or 2) attempt to take away your own sin. Most people opt for option 2. That is what makes the gospel so offensive. The gospel says you cannot do it. All of your efforts and ceremonies are inconsequential. So, if there is nothing good that I can do to address my sin, what is it that can wash away my sin?

2. The Infinitely-Satisfying Righteous Life of Christ. (10.5-10)

In these verses, the Author of Hebrews refers back to Psalm 40 in order to show how perfect, how absolutely the offering of Christ was.

We know that the Old Testament sacrifices were not good enough. Even the Old Testament knew that! Here in Psalm 40, David writes that “sacrifices and offerings you have not desired.” David knew this first hand. Remember what I said earlier? David’s sin faced the limits of the sacrificial system. The death of an animal could not atone for his sin. David knew that God was not satisfied with a religion that just went through the motions. God wanted an entire life that was devoted to him. So, David is offering himself completely to God. In Psalm 40, David goes back and speaks of God’s deliverance. And then he responds to that by saying (in essence), “you didn’t rescue me so that I would have a religion in which I just go through the motions! That is not what you want! You want my entire life completely yielded to you. So, here I am. I am here, completely yielded to you, my God.” That is great and admirable! So, while David offered himself as one who really wanted love God from the inside out, there is only one who could really do that, and that is Christ. The prayer of David was fulfilled in Christ.

So, here in Hebrews 10, the Author of Hebrews takes the Psalm and applies to the incarnation of Christ. It is Christ who speaks this Psalm back to the Father. And look at how this fits together. Christ is saying that I did not come to offer sacrifices and offerings. No, you have prepared a body for me. It is not burnt offerings and sin offerings that you desire, you desire a life that is lived in perfect conformity to your will and that is what I have come to do. In fact, the life that you have prepared for me to live is spelled out in your Word. This statement summarizes the mission of the life of Christ. He came here to in obedience to the Father, to secure our redemption, but in order to do that, he had to become one of us. But, when he became one of us, he actually became fully human, which means that, though he was God, he experienced life as a human, and as a human he had to learn. The Scriptures do not give us all of the details of that, but we know some. By the age of 12, Christ knew that he had a mission from his divine Father that he had to carry out. I have often wondered when and how he came to realization as a boy growing up under the Old Covenant, that he was the fulfillment of all of those sacrifices.

Psalm 40 presents Christ, as one who is reading the Scriptures and realizes his mission to be the sacrifice for sin. At some point in his human consciousness he realizes that the entire OT was written about him. He is here on this earth in order to fulfill the Father’s plan. It is as if he is sitting in the synagogue one day listening to a Rabbi speak and the pieces come together for him. He asks to look at the scroll after the gathering, and after reading it again, he rolls it up, puts it back in its place and says, “I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.”

So, this body that was prepared for him by God so that Christ could live on this earth in such perfect conformity to the Father, that he perfectly showed what God had intended for us, when he made us. His life was an infinitely satisfying life to the Father. That is

what God wants, not animal sacrifices. By living a perfect life in our place, and then dying in our place (v.10), he abolishes the Old Covenant. The Old Covenant was a temporary means that God had set up until one could come who did not need to offer sacrifices because he was perfect. But that is what sets us up for the Author's next point. Christ not only lived a perfect life in our place, but he then offered up himself and died in our place and because his life was so infinitely satisfying, his death, as the payment for our sins was infinitely sufficient. That is why you see such strong emphasis here on the once, single, and final sacrifice for sin. It is done! Christ's offering eternally secured our sanctification.

3. **The Infinitely-Sufficient Death of Christ.** (10.11-14)

Notice the contrast that the Author of Hebrews sets up for us between the Levitical priests and Christ. The priest stands and performs his work; Christ has sat down at the right hand of the Father. The work of the priest is never completed because people keep sinning; but the work of Christ is completed because his sacrifice is bigger than all of our sin. There is nothing left for him to pay, which means, there is nothing left for me to pay.

v.13 – Do not think that Christ is just sitting and doing nothing. He is eagerly waiting, that is anticipating the moment that he can return and bring history to its conclusion under his reign. Meanwhile, though he sits enthroned as king, he powerfully and personally intercedes for us before the Father and saves complete all who come to him by faith. That is the point of v.14. The redemption that he accomplished is so complete, that it keeps forever everyone who truly believes. “He has perfected (that is how God sees you positionally) FOR ALL TIME those who are being sanctified.” Practically, sanctification (becoming more and more like Jesus) is a process, but it is a process that has a guaranteed result, all of which is a fulfillment of promises that God made.

4. **The Eternally-Standing Word of God.** (10.15-18)

This section begins with the Author of Hebrews quoting Jeremiah 31 and now concludes with it as well. He is showing how Christ perfectly fulfilled God's promise to establish a new covenant that would be written on our hearts so that now we would love him from the inside. The ceremonies could only tell them of the day when sin would be finally dealt with. And it has! One day, it will finally be removed from the earth.

So, what can wash away my sin? Nothing but the perfect life and sin-bearing death of Christ in my place. In my place condemned he stood, sealed my pardon with his blood. There is nothing left for me to pay. “Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.” (18)

Conclusion:

When you sin, do you have to pay God back? When others sin against you, is it your job to punish them and demand relational payment from them? Are you living under the burden of trying to pay God back? If so, do you realize that you are acting as if Christ's

life and death was not sufficient? When will your good, be good enough? Who is it that has sinned against you? Are you treating them as judge, demanding payment?