

Jesus is a BETTER SACRIFICE
(Hebrews 9:15 – 10:18)

Fort Knox the high security underground vault on a U.S. military base, guards the largest stockpile of gold on the planet, 147 million ounces of gold – a current value of 232 trillion dollars!

Picture yourself at the Fort Knox vault door.
If you can open it, you're promised: *all that's inside is yours!*

You find out that a fingerprint scanner is required to open the vault door.
But instead of putting your finger on the scanner,
You hover the **shadow** of your finger over the scanner.

Even if you have the correct finger print . . . will it open? *No!*

What if you try again and hold the shadow over it longer? Will it open this time?
What if you use the shadow of your *left* finger?
Or if you try the shadow of your *thumb*? Will it open? *No!*

No matter how many times you **repeat** the attempt, a **shadow** NEVER gets the job done!

This analogy is very relevant to our passage today in the book of the Bible called "Hebrews", since many of its readers had a Jewish background, and were well acquainted with the animal sacrifices of the old covenant under Moses.

The readers had embraced **Jesus** as the *Messiah*, the *Christ* – the theme of the book of Hebrews is that Jesus is Better! The fulfilment of all the promises of God.

But the readers were trying to wrap their heads around no longer practicing those familiar offerings & sacrifices.

Why no longer? Because those sacrifices were **SHADOWS!**
Shadows that just **repeat** – daily, yearly.

Those old covenant animal sacrifices could not "*open the door*" to **HEAVEN**,
because they *did not deal* with what keeps us out of heaven – our **sin**.

The passage this morning declares,
*"It is **impossible** for the blood of bulls and goats to take away **sins**" (Heb 10:4)*

This is why the writer uses "shadow" language and 'repetition' language
*"[Old covenant] law had but a **shadow** of the good things to come instead of the true form of these [new covenant] realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices continually offered, make perfect those who draw near." (10:1)*

The main point of our passage is this:

ONLY the sacrificial blood of Jesus "opens the door" to heaven! {repeat}

And that's because **ONLY** the sacrifice of Jesus deals with our sin!

So our Title is: *Jesus is a Better Sacrifice*

This is something we, too, need to wrap our heads around:

Why we need a sacrifice – precisely Jesus' Sacrifice of Himself – to open Heaven's door.

We see the writer's burden that we understand this:

- 9:26
Christ **has appeared** once for ALL . . . to put away sin by the **sacrifice of Himself**.
- 9:28
Christ...**will appear** a second time, not to bear sin, but to save THOSE who are eagerly waiting for Him.

From these two appearances, I've made conceptual **Outline**

- 1] Jesus Has Appeared – Offering Himself!
- 2] Jesus Will Appear – Opening the Books!

His 1st appearance was about His opening the way *Into* Heaven for us, by His sacrifice
His 2nd will be about *Returning* from Heaven, opening the Books, on the Day of Reckoning,
to welcome into Heaven those trusting in His sacrifice!
Yet what about those who do not?

We will spend the majority of time on our point #1, because the author does.
(we only have time to consider *some* of the many verses 9:14 – 10:18)

Our passage this morning is a continuation & development of the topic we looked at last week, that *Jesus brings a Better Relationship (Covenant) with God*.

A covenant is a very *personal, meaningful relationship* that is **binding** (like marriage)
And in Jesus' new covenant, instead of writing His law on Tablets of stone,
God, by His Spirit, writes His law onto our *hearts & minds*,
so that we would be *transformed* from the inside-out in relationship with God.

That's the "What" from chapter 8:

What Jesus brings: a *Better Relationship [Covenant] with God*

Chapters 9-10 show the "How":

How Jesus brings this: by a *Better Sacrifice*

For those who like memorable rhymes, here's one I came up with that summarises chapter 8:

Jesus is seated 'cause His work is completed

His sacrificial work is done!

Sitting down is the position of **completion**, a job finished. Chapter 8 began

*Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a great high priest,
One who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven (Heb 8:1)*

A high priest mediates peace between a holy God and unholy humanity, through sacrifice.
Jesus opened the way into heaven by His 1-time, never-repeated, all-sufficient sacrifice!

This glorious truth is now *developed further* into chapters 9-10.

Two 'sub-points' will help us see the absolute necessity of Jesus Offering Himself

HE HAS APPEARED – OFFERING HIMSELF

- A] The *Depth* of Our Problem
- B] The *Power* of God's Solution

A] The Depth of Our Problem

The Bible calls God 'a consuming fire' – He's pure/holy – but we are not!

➤ Bible's Big Question: How can **sinner**s dwell in the presence of the **sacred**?
Now and for eternity, that's our 'Problem'!

➤ God's Solution, His earthly old covenant solution: The **Tabernacle**

*"Let them make Me a Tabernacle/Tent/Sanctuary SO THAT I may **DWELL** among them" (Ex 25:8)*

Hebrews 9:21-22 states that God commanded the old covenant high priest to

"sprinkle with blood both the Tabernacle tent and all the vessels used in worship.

*Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and **without** the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins."*

This was God's way of showing that the unholy cannot approach Holy God without blood.

Did you know, for the old covenant high priest to enter the most holy place in the Tabernacle, he'd have to pass 3 altars!

1. Altar of Burnt Offerings in the courtyard, where you'd present an animal substitute, it's blood in your place.
2. Altar of Incense, behind the 1st curtain, in the Holy place.
3. Behind the final curtain, in the Most Holy Place, the Altar of the Mercy Seat – that's the lid of the Ark of the Covenant, which had to be sprinkled with blood of a spotless goat on the Day of Atonement.

Blood, blood and more blood!

The unholy cannot approach Holy God without blood.

Why not? Does God has a bloodlust? Is He blood-thirsty? No!

"the Lord God declares, 'I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live'." (Ezekiel 33:11)

➤ POSITIVELY speaking, blood is the essence of **LIFE**.

You simply cannot live without blood!

The point is not blood itself, as though blood has inherent powers to cleanse/purify.

The point is that blood *represents* life, and so the *shedding* of blood, death:

Giving of Life – the **highest** cost imaginable, b/c sin against God = the highest offense.

Requiring Blood of a substitute sacrifice, tells us our sin problem is **DEEP**.

➤ NEGATIVELY speaking, blood is a symbol of **GUILT**.

➤ "You have blood on your hands"

➤ "Your blood be on your own head!" are sayings we use for guilt.

And blood leaves a stain – a guilty stain.

Our problem is not just *education*, or political *liberation*, or economic *equalisation*.

No! It's far deeper – a problem of the soul.

The Bible asks a profound question, then answers it:

Q: *What causes quarrels & conflicts among you? Is it not the lust **WITHIN you** waging war?*

A: *You desire but do not have, so you fight.*

You covet but cannot get what you want, so you murder." (James 4:1-2)

We lie & manipulate because we're **born** liars & manipulators. Sinful by nature.

- How many of you parents purposefully “trained” your 3-year-old to lie & manipulate? They do it naturally to get what they want!
- Did you “train” your 1-year-old: Jo, be stiff-necked, arch your back in the high chair, cross your arms, throw you food on the floor, and shout, “NOOOOO!” with attitude. No parents to this! They don’t have to, because we are sinners *by nature*.

And it’s not just the wrong we do, but the *right we don’t do*.

Jesus was asked, “*What is the greatest commandment?*”

Do you know His answer? It’s awesome:

Love the Lord God with all your heart, mind, soul & strength.

The 2nd greatest: love your neighbour as yourself.”

Awesome indeed. But **every day**, I violate the 2 *greatest* commandments.

I am too fond of the ‘blame game’, but the problem with the world is not just “them”.
– *it’s me! It’s us!*

We’re responsible for the mess we’ve made.

This is why our conscience should not be clear *without* God’s cleansing, forgiveness.

This is why, after falling into sin, Adam & Eve hid behind the rock in the Garden of Eden when God came by.

What’s the lasting solution?

Not the old Tabernacle – that was a temporary shadow, not a “real” solution.

“a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities.”

Chapter 9 verse 24 adds this detail:

For Christ has entered, not into a holy place made with hands – a mere COPY of the true one – but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.

It says the earthly Tabernacle was a “copy” of a Heavenly design.

Recall the prophet Isaiah’s heavenly vision in Isaiah chapter 6?:

*“I saw the Lord seated on His throne, high and lifted up,
And the train of His robe filled the TEMPLE!”*

God dwells in a heavenly temple, and the old testament tabernacle was built according to **God’s blueprint**, if you will His “fingerprint” (like our Fort Knox introduction) . . . but the Tabernacle & its sacrifices were only shadows, providing *external, ritual* cleansing – not internal transformation. The shadow did not ‘open the door’ to Heaven.

So get this: true worshippers in the old covenant were actually **“living on credit”** – God did grant forgiveness for those who **by faith**, trusted in God’s provision, those shadows . . . *even though* the sins of the worshippers had actually not yet been paid.

Do you know what credit card companies call the time or period between the close of a credit card billing cycle & the payment *due date*?

They call it a “**GRACE** period”.

Grace is a *undeserved* gift, and the credit card company is giving the gift of *time*, a *delay to pay* for what you’ve bought, what you’ve “banked on”.

Likewise,

God's old covenant people, by faith in God-given shadows, "banked on" **forgiveness**, & after a very long "**grace period**", Jesus came & finally "paid the bill"!

Heb 9:15

*Therefore **Jesus** is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a **DEATH** has occurred [Jesus!] that **redeems** them from the sins committed under the first covenant."*

This is saying *Abraham, Moses & David* were saved because Jesus' blood paid their bill!
It is Christ's death that gives worth to the 'types/shadows' that pointed to Him.

We today do not have the same shadowy delay of an 'extended grace period', but we're still saved by grace, 'credited' with Jesus' righteousness, applied to our account!

B] The Power of God's Solution:

The redemptive power of Jesus' sinless self-sacrifice:

"Jesus entered the holy place once for all . . . through His own blood, thus securing eternal redemption." (Heb 9:12)

Jesus, the Great High Priest, not only **BRINGS** the sacrifice,
He **IS** the sacrifice!

This happened at the Cross, where He "secured eternal *redemption*" (9:12), "a death has occurred that *redeems*". (9:15)

To redeem is to pay one's debt/bill in full.

Jesus paid the bill for our sin in the true Heavenly Temple.

And as a sign that Jesus successfully opened the door to heaven at His crucifixion, the "veil" in the earthly Jerusalem temple separating God's presence from the people, that "*veil was torn in two from top to bottom.*"¹

Look at chapter 10 verses 11-12,

And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices that can never take away sins.

BUT when Christ had offered for all time a SINGLE sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God.

This truth a game-changer not just at a national level for Israel, but at a cosmic level.

Old covenant High Priest

Repeated sacrifices

The blood of others

Only 'Covering/Masking' sin

For Israel only

Left the earthly Holy of Holies

Came out to bless the people

New covenant High Priest

One sacrifice

His own blood

Actually Paying for sin

For All repentant sinners

Entered Heaven and remains there

Coming back to take His people to heaven

Let's unpack a couple implications this GLORIOUS good news in Jesus! . . .

1] "His **Own** Blood" means God's Grace – to All repentant sinners

¹ Matt 27:51; Mark 15:38

For those who repent & believe, Jesus pays our sin-bill & the *condemnation* sin brings.
God is fair, righteous, just.

Scripture calls Him a "God of faithfulness, without injustice" (Deut 32:4)

Please hear this:

No one ever receives injustice from God.

People either receive *justice* – the deserved condemnation sin brings: Hell
Or people receive undeserved *grace & mercy* from God – through Jesus.

In its honest moments, the world recognises this . . . society knows it's unjust, corrupt,
and people long for grace & mercy.

Please don't judge me, but I tend to enjoy "Superhero" movies.

A line from *Wonder Woman* was surprisingly relevant to the idea of God's grace.

- Steve, a soldier, is going to help his country, even though his country is morally corrupt
- Wonder Woman protests: "*But they don't deserve help.*"
- Steve agrees! But then replies, "***It's not about deserve.***"

That's the line: "*it's not about deserve*" That's GRACE: **undeserved** favour.

Eventually, Wonder Woman shows grace to others.

She's the superhero? *Being TAUGHT* about grace from a soldier with blood on his hands?

**Jesus is the real superhero, TEACHING US about grace!
SHOWING us incomparable grace!**

The good news of Biblical truth is SO different to pagan myths and man-made religions!

In Greek mythology, when King Agamemnon was trying to sail to Troy, the goddess Artemis sent a strong wind that diverted his path because he'd offended.

An oracle told Agamemnon, "*Artemis will only be appeased if you sacrifice one of your daughters*". So he sacrificed Iphigenia, and the wrath of Artemis was calmed.

Is this the God of the Bible, demanding OUR blood? No!

The point of this passage is the opposite

For us, "*Jesus . . . secured eternal redemption through HIS OWN blood.*" (9:12)

The glory of Christianity is a God who does not demand our blood, but offers His own to save us!

The "Bloodshed" God requires is not the power play of a *warlord*,
but the **self**-sacrifice of the true Lord!

EVERY other religion says "**Do!**"

"*Do this, do that, give this, offer that, live this – and that will open the door to Heaven*"

Climb the stairway to heaven by *your own merit*. That Key won't open the door!

ONLY Jesus says, "**DONE!**"

I have opened Heaven's door, by the infinite cost of My blood, My merit.

But I welcome any & all rebels, who'll humble themselves & repentantly trust in Me!

Instead of *deserved disfavour* (condemnation)

Jesus shows undeserved favour (grace) . . . by shedding His own blood.

2] "Paid in Full" brings a Transformed Life of Serving

First, Payment in Full. Look at the emphasis:

Heb. 9:28 So Christ, having been offered **ONCE** to bear the sins of many . . .

Heb. 10:12 When Christ offered for all time a **SINGLE** sacrifice for sins, He sat down . . .

Heb. 10:14 By a **SINGLE** offering He has made perfect those . . .

If the "shadowy" old covenant sacrifices that were according to God's pattern/blueprint did **NOT** actually pay for sins.

How much less *pagan* sacrifices NOT conforming to God's pattern/blueprint (not offered to the True God, not offered in the Right Manner with the Right Motive *worthless!*)

We all need Jesus!

But it's not just *pagan* religions who struggle with this *once-for-all-ness*, single sacrifice.

Even religions falling under the name "Christian" really struggle here . . . like the Catholic Church.

This is the 500th anniversary of the Reformation – marked by men who initially tried to "reform" grave errors of the Catholic Church from within.

The average Catholic on the street probably does not know this, but the official & unchangeable dogma of the Catholic Church is that during Mass, when the priest blesses the symbols of the bread & cup, Catholicism not only *teaches* this is an actual **re-sacrificing** of Jesus, but *curses* those disagree:

The Council of Trent (a *Counter*-Reformation Council by the Catholic Church), says:

(Session 26, Canon 3): "If anyone says that the **SACRIFICE** of the mass is one only of praise and thanksgiving; or that it is a mere *commemoration* of the sacrifice consummated on the cross but not a **propitiatory** one . . . let him be anathema." [accursed]

The word propitiatory means '**paying for sin**'.

This is why if you skip Mass, you're in a state of unforgiven sin, mortal sin.

One more example, from another 'authorised' document:

*"When the **priest** announces the tremendous words of consecration, he reaches up into the heavens, brings Christ down from His throne, and places Him upon our altar to be **OFFERED AGAIN** as the victim for the sins of man."*²

This is incredibly unbiblical. Communion is a 'remembrance' not a 'sacrifice'.

Catholic teaching robs Jesus' sacrifice of its *once for all* sufficiency, & casts upon Him repeated 'suffering' and shame:

For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands . . . but into heaven itself.

*Nor was it to offer Himself repeatedly, as a high priest enters the holy place repeatedly, for then Jesus would have had to **suffer repeatedly** since the foundation of the world!*

But as it is, He has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. (9:24-26)

² John O'Brien, *The Faith of Millions* (Huntington, Ill.: Our Sunday Visitor Inc., 1974), pp. 255-56. Declared "**nihil obstat**" by Rev. T. E. Dillon – Censor Librorum, and "**imprimatur**" by John Francis Noll, D.D. – Bishop of Fort Wayne.

Catholic dogma means Jesus *suffers* repeatedly, but also church goers, in their *conscience*.

A Bible College flatmate of mine was raised Catholic.

He shared about how Mass (Communion) wrecked his young teenage conscience.

He had eaten a chocolate bar on the way to Catholic church.

- His Catholic teachers, from the 'missals' of his childhood³, instructed him that eating food an hour before partaking was mortal sin (mixing food with 'transubstantiated' bread)
- BUT if he missed Mass (aka, Communion), that also was mortal sin!

Looking at his watch, 52 minutes since chocolate!...he kept backing up in the communion line: "Sir, go ahead" . . . 54 minutes, "Ma'am, you go ahead".

Last in line at 55 minutes, to him it was literally "*damned if I do, damned if I don't!*" Because of dreadfully theology, *damning* theology that robs Jesus' worshippers of a clear conscience before God!

At least this misguided doctrine induced a dread & insecurity that 'shook up' my friend to *search for true grace in the true Gospel of Christ*.

Jesus paid it ALL, and God wants His true children secure, living a life TRANSFORMED by grace, empowered by clear conscience!

Heb. 9:14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who . . . offered Himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to SERVE the living God.

This verse highlights two glorious fruits of a saved life:

- 1] A purified conscience (not an enslaved one), because our guilt & shame is *paid in full!*
- 2] A transformed life – **servi**ng the living God in gratitude for His grace!

We've used the analogy of a credit card, and being credited with Jesus' righteousness. If our bill is *paid in full*, in a sense, it means our card – our life – has "No Credit Limit!"

A bit like the Black Card from American Express (aka, the 'Centurion Card'). You can charge anything from a Ferrari to a 10-bedroom mansion on your Centurion Card!⁴

So . . . What practical effect would *should* such 'no limit' grace have on your life?

What does your life *actually* reveal?

A life of 'binge spending', comfort, retail therapy?

Or a life serving God?

JESUS WILL APPEAR – OPENING THE BOOKS!

The Bible is clear, there's no reincarnation, no 'Live. Die. Repeat.'

THIS life is our *only* opportunity to trust in Jesus and be welcomed into Heaven

Just as it is appointed for man to die ONCE, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to bear sin [that's done], but to save those who are eagerly waiting for Him. (9:27-28)

³ Unlike *unchangeable* dogmas of Catholic Councils (like Trent), the Missals can change and are subject to more interp.

⁴ Information, whether fact or fiction, from the "Buy Like Buffet" website, <http://buylikebuffett.com/credit-cards-2/how-to-get-a-black-card/#more-4223>

Those "eagerly waiting for Him", are those who have repented of self-trust and centring the universe around self, and instead, re-centring it around Jesus.

Before he met Jesus, Simon Peter, one of the 12 disciples, always thought of himself as a decent person with a few issues; nobody's perfect!

But then Peter caught a glimpse of the awesome, incomparable glory of the Jesus. Peter fell on His knees & said, "O Lord, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man" (Luke 5:8)

*In the **presence** of Christ, Peter has discovered that there is a massive distance between himself and a holy God.*

Later, Peter came to understand both the unique majesty of Jesus the Son of God and the undeserved grace of Jesus. It's then Peter said,

"Lord, where else have we to go? You alone have words of eternal life" [John 6:68]

Why go to anybody, Peter?

Why not just go home?

You have a wife and a career, so why do you need someone to go to?

Because Peter had come to realise:

"Lord without You I'm lost – without You, I've no hope before the exposing light of a Holy God. I'm sticking with you, Jesus, because I need someone who can make things right between God and me."⁵

This is the *first conviction* that compels someone to seek after God!

This is the *primary conviction* that sustains you to follow Jesus for a lifetime.

Are you *absolutely clear* about this in your own life?

Are you sure Jesus will be your Advocate, speaking up for you on the last day, saying:

"He belongs to me. She is covered by my blood – enter into the joy of your Master!"

⁵ Adaptation of Colin Smith, "You Must Be Absolutely Clear About This", blog on 17 July, 2017.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Main Point:

Only Jesus' Sacrificial Blood "Opens the Door" to Heaven

- 1] What great Question of the Bible is answered in "shadow" form by the earthly Tabernacle? (read Exodus 25:8)
- 2] What did the OT shadow system teach us about blood and approaching God (Heb 9:16-23)
- 3] "*We're not sinners because we sin. We sin because we're sinners.*" Discuss (esp. parents!)
- 4] How is the author's main point advanced by his stressing the heavens/heavenly realm of Jesus' sacrifice? (read Hebrews 8:1, 8:5 & 9:23-24)
- 5a] If the blood of bulls & goats did NOT pay sins debt, were OT believers actually "forgiven"? (read Leviticus 4:20, noting its final phrase is *repeated dozens* of times in Leviticus & Numbers)
 - b] OT believers trusted *God's sacrificial provision/system*, but what was forgiveness based on? (read Hebrews 9:15 & Romans 3:21-26, especially v.25 and what was passed over/overlooked. Discuss the relevance of the "*grace period*" credit card illustration)
- 6] In your own words, summarise the relationship between Old Covenant & New Covenant.
- 7] How has God's amazing **GRACE** *freshly amazed* you in going through Hebrews? How do other "bloody" religions compare?
- 8] What does official Catholic teaching about Mass/the Eucharist (their version of Communion) say about the Catholic Church's view of the sufficiency of Jesus' blood sacrifice?
- 9] What should a conscience made "perfect" *look like* in Christian living, even amidst stumbling?
- 10] Summarise the difference between Jesus' 1st coming and 2nd coming (Heb 9:26-28) [Since bearing sin is not what His 2nd coming is about, what does "save" mean in v.28?]
- 11a] How does Jesus 1st coming help you endure in the faith?
 - b] How does the promise of His 2nd coming help you endure?
- 12a] What would you expect to see in the life of one "eagerly waiting for Christ's appearing"? (read Heb 9:28 and 9:14 and 1 Thess 1:9b-10)
 - b] What do you see in yourself, about how you are spending your "no credit limit" life?