

Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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Christ seated: The One Offering – Sitting Down - Hebrews 10:12

Mrs. Jones was worn out. She had had a busy morning washing, and with a husband and three small children, that was no easy task. She already had two loads out and drying on the line. And there was still the hoovering to do! But she promised herself ten minutes for a cup of coffee with her feet up. All too quickly, those ten minutes sped past. "A woman's work is never done," she sighed, as she got up to start on the hoovering. "If only clothes could be cleaned once, never to be cleaned again! If only carpets could be hoovered once, never to be hoovered again!" But we all know that life is not like that. As a mere male, I would have to confess reluctantly that often it seems that a woman's work is never done.

This morning, we are going to look at a Man who has sat down because His work is finished forever! That Man is, of course, the Lord Jesus Christ. In the previous two talks in this series on the epistle to the Hebrews, we thought first of Him as having sat down because of the greatness of His Person, who He is. Hebrews 1:3 tells us: "Who being the brightness of [God's] glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high."

If you or I were invited to Buckingham Palace, we might feel that we ought to stand in the presence of Her Majesty. It would be totally inappropriate for us to sit down; we don't belong there. But the Lord Jesus, because of the greatness of who He is, has absolute right to sit down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

In last week's talk, we looked at the Lord Jesus, as greater than Aaron and all the other high priests who followed him in the Tabernacle, and later the Temple. Hebrews 8:1 describes the Lord Jesus in this way: "We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." His position is in marked contrast to that of Aaron and the other priests. From the book of Exodus, we learn that although God gave detailed instructions for the furnishings of the Tabernacle, He made no provision for a seat. The lesson is a simple, but important one – the priests' work was never done.

Today, we are going to think of the Lord Jesus as having sat down because His one offering of Himself at Calvary is the final and complete answer to God for man's sin. Hebrews 10:12 tells us: "But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down at the right hand of God."

There are three great themes in the first part of Hebrews 10. They are:

1. The will of God (verses 5-10)
2. The work of Christ (verses 11-14).
3. The witness of the Holy Spirit (verses 15-18).

All three have the same purpose in view: the eternal blessing of all those who trust Christ as their Saviour. What precious themes! We will look at each of them in turn.

The will of God

To begin with, we should note that the Tabernacle was the will of God for His people at the time of the Exodus. He had brought them out of slavery in Egypt and was taking them through the wilderness on the way to the Promised Land. But, as His people, He wanted to have them near to Himself. God took the initiative in this. Certainly, the Israelites would not have dared to ask for it. So God first says to them, "Let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them" (Exodus 25:8). God gave the people detailed instructions as to the size and furnishings of the Tabernacle and of the sacrifices which were to be offered in it. When the Tabernacle was complete, God showed His pleasure in it by filling it with His glory: "Then...the glory of the LORD filled the Tabernacle" (Exodus 40:34).

But the Tabernacle was the will of God only for that time. The sacrifices that were offered in it, although ordained by God, could never really take away sins. But because God could look forward to the one, perfect sacrifice of His Son, those animal sacrifices enabled God to pass by the sins of the people till that time should come.

What, then, is the will of God? Verses 5-7, which are a quotation from Psalm 40:6-8, plainly set out that will: "Therefore, when He (that is, the Lord Jesus) 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.' "

The will of God was no less than the giving of His Son so that He might save His people from their sins by His death at Calvary. In the Garden of Gethsemane, the Lord Jesus faced up to that will when He prayed, "Father, if it is Your will, remove this cup from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done" (Luke 22:42). We should note that the words, "in the volume of the book" do not refer to the book of Psalms, since they form part of Psalm 40 itself. They are a poetic reference to the eternal counsels of God. In those counsels, the Lord Jesus was already set apart as the lamb for sacrifice. So Peter writes, "...Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you" (1 Peter 1:19 and 20). Enjoy the wonder of Peter's words!

Everything which had been set up by God under the Law, the Old Covenant, involving the Tabernacle ritual, has been superseded by the work of Christ at Calvary. So verse 9 tells us: "He takes away the first (that is, the Old Covenant) that He may establish the second (that is, the New Covenant)". So the Lord Jesus, on the night before His death, having celebrated the Passover with His disciples, instituted His Supper, the loaf of bread and the cup of wine. Of that cup of wine, He said, "This is My blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:28).

The consequences of that will are set out in verse 10: "By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all". 'To be sanctified' simply means 'to be set apart'. All those who have trusted Christ as Saviour are thereby set apart for God, cleansed from their sins, through the one offering of Christ at Calvary. Nothing we can do can add to this. Hallelujah! What a Saviour!

The work of Christ

Verse 11 has been described as the most monotonous verse in the Bible: "And every priest (not one could be excused this service) stands (as we have already seen, there was no seat provided in the Tabernacle) ministering daily and offering repeatedly (not one day was allowed to go past without the offering of the obligatory evening and morning sacrifices) the same sacrifices (there was to be no variation in the divinely ordained ritual), which can never take away sins." In these final six words, the awful futility of some 1,300 years of Tabernacle and Temple sacrifices is summed up. Listen again to their terrible conclusion: "which can never take away sins".

From such hopelessness, we gladly move on to verse 12. Often in Scripture, the little word 'but' is like turning a corner. Verse 12 is no exception: "But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down at the right hand of God." Note the glorious finality and assurance of these words! In the Authorised Translation, the comma comes after 'for ever', but it is better inserted after 'for sins'. The Lord Jesus has sat down for ever at the right hand of God. No other offering is required, no more offering can be made. His work at Calvary is perfect and complete! In our story at the beginning, poor Mrs. Jones could only manage a ten minute sit down with her coffee – her work was never done! Not so our Lord Jesus Christ!

The Lord Jesus, in His prayer to His Father just before the cross, could look beyond our human perspective of time. Knowing all that He would certainly accomplish at Calvary, He could say, "I have finished the work which You have given Me to do" (John 17:4).

It is said that when a conquering Roman general returned to Rome, he would lead a march of triumph through the city, crying, "*Tetelestai!*" – "It is finished!" The crowds would reply in triumph "*Tetelestai!*" This was the conqueror's cry. So Jesus, the Conqueror of sin and death, could cry in triumph from the cross, "It is finished ('*Tetelestai!*' in the Greek New Testament)" (John 19:30). His words were not the last feeble gasp of a dying man, but the cry of the Victor! "There is no longer an offering for sin" (verse 18).

But God will see to it that there is a righteous answer to all that men did to His beloved Son at Calvary. As seated at the right hand of God, the Lord Jesus awaits the day described in verse 13, "From that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool." The words are a reference to Psalm 110:1. Paul writes of that day, "...that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth" (Philippians 2:10).

Verse 14 summarises this section: "For by one offering He has perfected forever the sanctified." As those who have trusted Christ as Saviour and who have been sanctified (set apart) by His precious blood, we are made right before God eternally. Let us lay hold of the tremendous assurance that, because of His work, we are absolutely right before

God now. We will not be any more right in eternity! The ‘forever’ of our blessing in this verse is in happy accord with the ‘forever’ of His finished work (verse 12) and in glorious contrast to the ‘never’ of verses 1 and 11.

The witness of the Holy Spirit

In Romans 8, Paul describes a very special witness of the Holy Spirit: “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (verse 16). As Christians, we have this inner joy that stems from the fact that the indwelling Holy Spirit gives us the sense of belonging to the family of God. That might be called the witness *in* us. It is not, however, the witness that is before us here in Hebrews 10. That might be called the witness *to* us.

In verses 16 and 17, we have a quotation from Jeremiah 31:33 and 34: “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...their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more”. Although these are the words of Jeremiah, he, like all the other authors of the books of the Bible, wrote them under the direction of the Holy Spirit. Peter tells us, “Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21). Their words, then, might properly be described as the witness of the Holy Spirit.

Jeremiah’s words primarily look on to a day when the Lord will once more take up His people, the nation of Israel, for blessing. He will make with them a New Covenant, totally distinct from the Old Covenant at Sinai. The Old Covenant was based on what the people promised to do. It brought only judgment because of the sins of the people. The New Covenant will bring only blessing because it is based on the blood of Christ. We have already seen that the Lord Jesus, on the night before His death, described His blood as “the blood of the New Covenant” (Matthew 26:28). As Christians, we have already come into the spiritual blessings of that New Covenant. So we can rejoice in these words of Jeremiah. They are set down in God’s unalterable word for our eternal blessing!

If I were to say to my grandchildren, “I will give you £10 next month”, I hope that they would know me well enough to realise that, although it was only a verbal promise, I do try to keep my word. But then I might forget! Any doubts they might entertain would, perhaps, disappear if I put the promise into writing. They would then be able to wave a piece of paper before me if the money was not forthcoming! In this witness of the Holy Spirit, we have the recorded words of a God who cannot lie, as Titus 1:2 describes Him. Let us take these words to heart, rest our faith on them, enjoy their blessing!

“I will put My laws into their hearts.” Our obedience to God is not the result of the external constraints of the Ten Commandments. Rather, it springs from the inner constraint of responsive love in our hearts because we are children of God. It is interesting that in Psalm 40, which we were looking at earlier, the Lord goes on to say prophetically, “Your law is within My heart” (verse 8). So Paul could describe the Christians at Corinth in this way: “You are manifestly an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart” (2 Corinthians 3:3).

We can rest in the assurance of total peace with God as the Holy Spirit witnesses to our hearts this precious promise of God: “Their sins ... I will remember no more”. As we grow older, there are many things that we cannot remember. Forgetfulness does its terrible work. Yet sometimes, things we thought we had forgotten spring unexpectedly to mind. Take note of the fact that God does not promise to forget our sins. No! He chooses His words carefully: “I will remember no more”. They are the words of an omnipotent God! There is no possibility whatever of our sins coming back to His attention because they have been completely forgiven and put away through the work of the Lord Jesus at Calvary. What a great God He is!

We can rejoice with the hymn writer, HG Spafford:

*My sins – oh! the bliss of this glorious thought,
My sins – not in part, but the whole,
Were nailed to His cross; and I bear them no more:
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!*

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