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Once for All

Hebrews 10:1-18

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There are few words more satisfying than **“Paid in full.”** Whether it’s the last payment on a mortgage, a student loan, or a vehicle, those words bring relief because they tell you that nothing more is owed.

Imagine receiving a letter stamped **“Paid in full”** and continuing to send monthly payments because you weren’t convinced the debt was really gone. We would never do that financially, yet many Christians live that way spiritually. Jesus has paid the debt of their sin **once for all**, but they continue trying to make additional payments through guilt, religious performance, or even self-punishment.

Hebrews 10 was written to people like that. It reminds us that, because of Jesus Christ, the debt has been paid **once for all**. To keep trying to earn God’s forgiveness is like making payments on a mortgage that’s already been completely paid.

Listen to *Hebrews 10:5–18*.

“Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, *‘Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, “See, God, I have come to do your will, O God” (in the scroll of the book it is written of me).’* When he said above, ‘You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings’ (these are offered according to the law), then he added, *‘See, I have come to do your will.’* He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. **And it is by God’s will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.** And every priest **stands** day after day at his service, offering again and again 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,’ and since then has been waiting *‘until his enemies would be made a footstool for his feet.’* For by **a single offering he has perfected for all time** those who are sanctified. And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us, for after saying, *‘This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds,’* he also adds, *‘I will*

remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.’ Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.”

Many people live with the exhausting feeling that they’ve never done enough. They carry guilt like a heavy backpack they can’t put down. They wonder whether God is disappointed in them, whether they have prayed enough, served enough, or obeyed enough. Even sincere Christians can live with the nagging fear that they haven’t quite measured up. Today, we’ll consider **three truths** that show why Christ’s sacrifice changes everything. **1. The old sacrifices could never remove sin. 2. Jesus offered the perfect sacrifice once for all. 3. Because Christ’s work is finished, we can live in the freedom of complete forgiveness.**

1. The old sacrifices could never remove sin

Hebrews 10:1 says, “*The law has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the true form of these realities.*” A shadow tells you that something is coming, but it’s not the thing, itself. If you see someone’s shadow around a corner, you know a person is approaching, but you don’t stop and talk to the shadow. You wait for the person.

That’s what the Old Testament sacrificial system was like. Every sacrifice, and every priest, pointed beyond themselves to someone greater. God established those sacrifices, and they served an important purpose, but they were never meant to be the final answer.

The writer asks in verse 2, “*Otherwise, would they not have ceased being offered?*” If animal sacrifices could remove sin permanently, why were they offered year after year? Because they couldn’t accomplish what people ultimately needed. Instead of removing sin, they reminded people of it. Verse 4 states it plainly: “*It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.*” The sacrifices were signposts pointing toward Jesus Christ.

We can make the same mistake today. We begin trusting religious activity instead of Christ, Himself. We think, “If I attend church faithfully, read enough Scripture, pray enough, serve enough, or give enough, perhaps God will finally accept me.” But following Christ has never been about accumulating enough religious achievements. Our hope has never rested in *what we do*. Our hope rests in *what Christ has done*. The shadow has given way to the substance.

2. Jesus offered the perfect sacrifice once for all

Beginning in verse 5, the writer quotes *Psalms 40*: “*Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired... but a body you have prepared for me... See, I have come to do your will, O God.*” Where Israel repeatedly failed to obey, Jesus obeyed perfectly. Where the priests continually offered sacrifices, **Jesus became the sacrifice**. He didn’t bring an offering; **He was the offering**. The heart of this passage is verse 10, “***And it is by God’s will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.***” Those three words change everything: **once for all**.

Not once every year. Not once every generation. Not until another sacrifice becomes necessary. Once. Forever. Completely.

The contrast becomes even more vivid in verses 11–12: “*Every priest **stands** day after day at his service, offering again and again 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.*”

Notice the posture. The priests stood; Jesus sat down. There were no chairs in the tabernacle because a priest’s work was never finished. Every morning brought another sacrifice. Every year brought another Day of Atonement.

But after Jesus died, rose again, and ascended into heaven, He sat down because His work was finished. Nothing remained to be added. Nothing could be improved. When Jesus cried from the cross, “***It is finished,***” He was declaring that redemption had been accomplished. The debt had been paid. The sacrifice was sufficient.

Verse 14 continues: “***For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.***”

That doesn’t mean we never struggle with sin. It means that Christ has completely accomplished everything necessary for our salvation. At the same time, God continues the work of sanctifying us, shaping us into the likeness of Christ. Grace not only forgives us; grace transforms us.

God receives us through Christ exactly as we are, but God loves us too much to leave us as we are. That truth changes how we live. **We no longer strive for acceptance; we live from acceptance.**

Imagine two employees. One works, every day, convinced that one mistake will get him fired. Every failure fills him with anxiety because he's constantly trying to prove he deserves to stay.

Another employee works just as hard, perhaps harder, but she knows her employer values her and is committed to her. She is not working to earn her place; she is working because she is grateful for the opportunity she has already been given.

Many Christians live as though they're the first employee. Every time they stumble, they wonder whether God is finally fed up with them. *Hebrews 10* tells us that is not the Christian life. Because Jesus' sacrifice was **once for all**, our relationship with God does not rise and fall with our successes and failures.

We still confess our sins. We still repent. We still pursue holiness. But we do those things as sons and daughters who are already loved, not as employees desperately trying to keep from being fired.

Think about what that means in real life. For a high school student, it means you don't have to prove your worth through grades, athletic or artistic achievements, popularity, or getting into the right college. Those things matter, but they don't determine your deepest identity. Because Jesus' sacrifice was once for all, your identity is secure in Him.

For an exhausted parent who ends the day thinking, "I lost my temper again. I should have been more patient. I'm failing," God's love is not measured by whether today was a successful parenting day. Parents should repent when they sin, and keep growing, but because Jesus' sacrifice was once for all, your standing with God does not change with every good or bad day.

For those who are grieving the loss of someone deeply loved, Christ's finished work reminds us that, although much in life has changed, God's love for you has not. The Savior who forgave your sins will never leave you nor forsake you.

That's what it means to live from acceptance instead of for acceptance. We no longer obey **to earn** God's love; we obey because we've **already received** God's love. We no longer strive to pay a debt Jesus has already paid. We live with grateful hearts because the debt has been paid in full.

That's the difference between religion and the gospel. Religion says, "Work harder." Jesus says, "***It is finished.***" Religion tells us to earn God's acceptance; the

gospel announces that Christ already has. Religion leaves us wondering whether we've done enough. Jesus invites us to rest in what He has done.

3. Because Christ's work is finished, we can live in the freedom of complete forgiveness

Beginning in verse 16, the writer quotes *Jeremiah 31*, as was done in chapter eight: "*I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.*" Under the old covenant, God's law was written on stone tablets. Under the new covenant, God does something greater. Through the Spirit, God begins writing the law on our hearts. Obedience becomes the grateful response of people who have already received God's grace.

Then comes one of the most comforting promises in all of Scripture: "***I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.***" (v. 17) That means God chooses never again to hold our forgiven sins against us. They have been dealt with completely through Christ.

Psalm 103 tells us God removes our sins as far as the east is from the west. Hebrews says, "*I will remember their sins... no more.*" That is the completeness of the gospel. Verse 18 concludes: "*Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.*"

Nothing needs to be added. No additional payment remains. No greater sacrifice can ever be offered. Christ has done everything necessary.

That means there are three invitations for each of us.

First, stop trying to earn what Christ has already accomplished. You can't improve upon a perfect sacrifice. If you've trusted in Christ, your acceptance rests on His obedience, not yours.

Second, stop carrying guilt for sins Christ has already forgiven. Many Christ followers continue punishing themselves for sins that God has already forgiven. They rehearse old failures and relive old regrets. Hebrews asks us a simple question: *If Jesus has already paid for your sin, why are you still trying to pay for it?*

That doesn't mean we minimize sin. Sin is so serious that it required the death of the Son of God. But Christ's sacrifice is so sufficient that no further payment is necessary.

Third, start serving and obeying out of gratitude instead of fear. The gospel never produces complacency; it produces **gratitude**. When we understand what Christ has done for us, we don't love Him less, we love Him more. We don't become careless about holiness. We pursue holiness with joy because we know we're already loved.

As we close, think again about that heavy backpack of guilt. Some people have carried it for so long that they can't imagine setting it down. Some are carrying shame over recent failures. Others are carrying regrets from decades ago. Some are still trying to prove to God — and perhaps to themselves — that they're good enough.

Hebrews 10 gently, but firmly, says, “*You do not have to carry that anymore.*” Not because your sin was not serious, but because Christ's sacrifice was.

Tomorrow, your circumstances may look much the same. The responsibilities and struggles of life will still be there. But if you belong to Jesus Christ, the most important question has already been answered.

So tomorrow:

Obey God — not because you're trying to become a child of God, but because you already are.

Serve the Lord — not to gain His love, but because you have already received it.

Confess your sins — not wondering whether God will forgive you, but trusting that Christ has already paid for them.

Rest in Jesus' finished work.

Live in the freedom of His forgiveness. Because where there is forgiveness of sins, there is no longer any offering for sin.

Once for all. Those three words change everything. They don't simply change where we'll spend eternity; they change how we live today.

Let's pray.

Blessing: “*Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*” *Matthew 11:28-30*

Questions for Discussion or Reflection

1. What contrasts does the author make between the Old Testament sacrifices and Jesus' sacrifice? What words or phrases stand out as you compare them?
2. Why does the author say that the repeated sacrifices under the law could never fully deal with sin? What do you think it means that they were only a "shadow" of what was to come?
3. What does the phrase "once for all" (*Hebrews 10:10*) teach us about the effectiveness of Jesus' sacrifice? How does this shape the way we think about forgiveness and our relationship with God?
4. In *Hebrews 10:11-14*, what is the significance of Jesus sitting down after offering Himself as a sacrifice? What does that image communicate about His work?
5. *Hebrews 10:15-18* quotes, again, from God's promise of a new covenant, from *Jeremiah 31:31-34*. What blessings are emphasized, and why are they important for us today? How does knowing God remembers our sins "no more" affect the way we live?
6. What difference should this passage make in our daily lives? Are there ways we still act as though we must earn God's forgiveness or acceptance? How does *Hebrews 10* challenge that mindset?

