

Jesus, the single sacrifice for sins

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[0 : 00] Well, we come to the last in our series. God's glorious son as revealed in the letter to the Hebrews.

Jesus, the son of God. Jesus, our brother. Jesus, our great high priest. And tonight, Jesus, the single sacrifice for sins.

I hope that this fourfold reality of Jesus Christ fills your mind and your heart and your life.

Fuels your prayers and fills your praises. Those Christians for whom this is the center of their Christian life are Christians who have great confidence in God, great contentment in God, and great joy in God.

If these realities, these truths in the person of Jesus Christ are central in our lives, of course we have assurance. Of course we have joy.

[1 : 19] Of course we have contentment. But think what happens if these great truths, this great reality, this great person is not at the center of our lives.

Why then we tend to judge God and judge ourselves and evaluate our satisfaction of being a Christian by lesser things, such as our health, and passing exams, and not losing our cat or our dog, or finding the car keys, or finding our teeth first thing in the morning.

You see, Christians who depend on these answers to prayer, these daily gifts of God, are in a very vulnerable situation, aren't they?

Because one day you may not find your teeth first thing in the morning, and then the question is, does God still love you? You may fail an exam, not get a job, lose a job, lose your health, face great difficulties.

But if Jesus, the Son of God, Jesus, your brother, Jesus, your great high priest, and Jesus, the single sacrifice for your sins, is at the very center of your Christian life and experience and faith and confidence in God, then you will, in the words of Psalm 90, be satisfied with God's love.

[3 : 12] Satisfied with God's love. Or as Paul puts it, if God be for us, as he is in Christ, who can be against us?

Now, last week we focused on Jesus, our great high priest. I told you what Hebrews tells you, that you need a great high priest, and furthermore, in God's kindness, you have a great high priest. But, as I may have said last week, I don't think that this idea is at the front of our minds when we talk about God and about Christ.

Have you ever said to anybody, do you know what, I've got a priest? This is really good news. Have you ever said to anybody else, you know, what you need is a good priest, and you've got one. He's Jesus. Somebody has counted up the number of times Jesus is called Savior in the New Testament, apparently it's 16, but he's called priest 20 times.

[4 : 43] So, perhaps, praising Jesus as our priest ought to be part of our daily prayers. And, indeed, if you want to receive and absorb this idea most powerfully, then you will make it a matter of daily praise.

Start your praise of God for the next 60 days, 90 days, by saying, thank you, God, that you sent your son Jesus to be our great high priest.

You see, Jesus, as our high priest, is our means of access to God.

No wonder at the end of our prayers we say, through Jesus Christ our Lord, or through Jesus Christ our Savior, or we pray this in Jesus' name.

For how else can we pray to God except through Jesus? So, we need, every time we pray to remind ourselves that we only have access to God because we have a great high priest, Jesus.

[5 : 56] And we only have access to God because that great high priest offered a single sacrifice for sins. So, our access to God when we pray is, through Jesus Christ, our great high priest, Christ,

as our access to God as we live is through Jesus great, Jesus Christ, our great high priest.

As the only way we can offer our good works, our lives to God is through Jesus Christ, our great high priest. how else could you approach God?

There's no other way. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. There is no other sacrifice except the single sacrifice of Christ.

There is no other priest, no other mediator other than the one that God has provided, the Lord Jesus Christ. I found these lovely quotations from the reformer John Calvin.

It is Christ who sanctifies our lips to sing the praises of God. It is Christ who sanctifies, make holy our lips so that we can sing praises to God.

[7 : 18] Who opened a way for our prayers and who as our priest stands before God in our name. It is Christ alone who sanctifies our lips to sing the praises of God.

Who opens the way for us to pray for our prayers and as our priest stands before God in our name. Or again from John Calvin, the spots and blemishes of our good works are covered by the purity of Christ.

Or again, our works are perfumed by the odor of Christ's grace. Isn't that beautiful? Our good works are perfumed by the odor of Christ's grace.

Every time you use a deodorant, remind yourself that it's actually more important that your good works are perfumed by the odor of Christ's grace.

Or as I quoted Calvin last week, I think, God hears our prayers as it were from the lips of his son. So we enter the presence of God by Christ and his sacrifice.

[8 : 44] He is the forerunner who's gone before. Not to say, I got here and you can't come here, but a forerunner who wants to bring us with him, his brothers and sisters with him.

And we're brought near through Christ so that we can pray, but Christ is also praying. And God the Father hears our prayers through the mediator, the only mediator, through the priest, the only priest, the Lord Jesus Christ.

So our prayers seem so feeble, but they come from the powerful lips of the Lord Jesus Christ who is seated at the right hand of God. It's exactly the opposite, isn't it, of ringing up a company to buy a toothbrush or something like that.

And they say, you're very important to us. Please hang on. Ten minutes later, they're saying, you're very important to us.

Please hang on. And my record is 56 minutes. I was still being reassured that I was important. And I was still hanging on, I must admit, somewhat grimly and somewhat reluctantly.

[10 : 05] God's not like that, is he? we have instant access to God through Christ, our great priest and his sacrifice.

Well, let's now turn to chapter 10. God God is only a shadow of the good things that are coming, not the realities themselves.

Now, the law there, of course, is Moses' law. And the law of Moses, as you'll know if you've read the first five books of the Bible, includes not only the things we should do and not do, but also the provision of priests and sacrifices and the provision of the tabernacle.

All this is just a shadow of the good things that are coming. And the shadow of the reality, indeed, you could say that, as I said earlier on, the kings are a shadow of the reality to come, that is, Jesus the king.

The priests are a shadow of the reality to come, that is, Jesus the priest. The sacrifices are a shadow of the reality to come, that is, Jesus. The prophets are a shadow of the reality that is to come, that is, Jesus.

[11 : 28] The Passover is a shadow of the reality that is to come, that is, Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us, and so on. So the law is a shadow of the good things that are coming, not the realities themselves, for that reason it can never by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, made perfect those who draw near to worship.

Now, please remember, at the time this letter was written, the great temple in Jerusalem was still standing. Herod, King Herod, who was a bit of a rat bag, but anyway, he wanted to put up lots of impressive buildings.

He did at Masada, as you may know, and Caesarea Maritime, and so on, but one was the great temple at Jerusalem, which he kind of rebuilt and made, not as a tribute to God, I'm sorry to say, but as a tribute to himself.

And so the daily sacrifices were still being offered at the very time this letter was written. Otherwise, would they not have stopped being offered, for the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, no longer have felt guilty for their sins.

But those sacrifices, those Old Testament sacrifices, still being offered at the time of Christ, still being offered at the time of this letter, are an annual reminder of sins.

[12:52] How ironic, you see, the sacrifices were both a promise of forgiveness to come, but also a reminder of sin. For it's impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said, quoting the psalm, sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me, with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased.

Then I said, here I am, it is written about me in the scroll, I have come to do your will, my God.

Christ, our high priest, verses 5 to 14, offered himself as a willing sacrifice.

He was both priest and sacrifice. Do you remember the words earlier in Hebrews? We don't have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weakness, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are, yet he did not sin.

Or, son, though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered, and once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.

[14:06] the average lamb or goat being sacrificed was not a willing sacrifice. The little lamb or the goat wasn't thinking, oh, this will be nice, I'll be a sacrifice, I'll be really important.

And I must admit, as you read the Old Testament, you sometimes discover that the priests weren't always altogether willing priests. but here is the will of Christ, the perfect will of the perfect Christ, I have come to do your will, my God.

The priests offered animals and birds, Christ offered himself. first, he said, sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire nor were you pleased with them, though they were offered in accordance with the law.

Then he said, here am I, I've come to do your will. So he sets aside the first, that is the Old Testament sacrifices to establish the second.

And by that will, that is the will of Jesus, the will of God, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

[15:38] Now there's a fine line, isn't there, going through Hebrews? The writer wants to say that these Old Testament sacrifices were right, it was right for them to be offered according to the law.

They were a provision for God's people in their immaturity. God's name, but they also pointed forward to Christ, and when they were fulfilled in Christ, they would become obsolete, redundant, no longer necessary, no longer appropriate.

We have been made holy for the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. people. Now after the session last week, somebody asked me a really good question, among the many good questions last week.

Does once for all mean once for all people or once for all time? And the English phrase once for all could mean either, couldn't it?

It could mean once for all time or once for all people. But the New Testament is written in Greek, and in Greek there are two different expressions. One is once for all time, and the other is once for all people.

[16:54] And the once for all in Hebrews are the Greek term, which means once for all time. And we find the other references with a similar meaning in Hebrews, rather, Romans 6.10, there are the other references in Hebrews, and one Peter 3.18, a sacrifice once for all time.

The idea of a ransom for all, that is, for all people, is found, for example, in 1 Timothy 2.6. So both ideas are in the New Testament, once for all time, and once for all people.

But in Hebrews, the focus is on once for all time. Why is that? Why? Because the Old Testament sacrifices were offered every day, and the Passover sacrifices every year, and so on, and so on. But all those priests and all those sacrifices reach their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. We have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

And then he returns to the temple, still standing in Jerusalem. Day after day, every priest stands and performs his religious duties. Again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.

[18 : 27] But when this priest, that is, Christ, had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.

Those priests are standing to offer their sacrifices. They're on duty, on permanent duty, offering sacrifices, more and more sacrifices.

It was reckoned at the Passover in Jesus' day that about 180,000 Passover lambs were offered in the temple at Jerusalem.

It must have been pretty mucky, I might say, with all those dead lambs and their bodies around. It's a lot of sacrifices all being offered by priests. But Jesus is not standing, please notice, he is sitting. And that shows he's finished his job of offering a sacrifice. He's now sat down at the right hand of God, and quoting Psalm 110, waiting for his enemies to be made his footstool.

[19 : 42] So there is the finished work of Christ. He is still praying, but not grovelling before his father, but seated next to his father, he still intercedes for us, prays for us.

for by one sacrifice is made perfect forever, those who are being made holy. Now, the writer of Hebrews has been talking about the law and the sacrifices.

Now he returns to the theme of the covenant, which, if you've read through Hebrews a few times, you'll know is really important. chapter 8, chapter 9, and chapter 13.

Notice the Holy Spirit also testifies that he's doing this at present, and he's doing so by words from the Old Testament.

It's a bit like Hebrews 3, 7, introducing Psalm 95 as the Holy Spirit says. So the Holy Spirit who inspired this book is still speaking this book.

[20 : 59] He's still speaking to us tonight. He's speaking every time you open your Bible, every time you remember a Bible verse, every time a Bible verse comes into your mind, the Holy Spirit is busy speaking to you.

Isn't that wonderful? And here is the Holy Spirit testifying to us about this. First he says, this is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord.

I'll put my laws in their hearts, I'll write them on their minds. Then he adds, their sins and lawless deeds I'll remember no more. And where these have been forgiven, sacrifice for sin is no longer necessary.

By the way, I love playing tricks on congregations. things like I say, I had prepared a sermon for tonight, but as I was driving here, God said, no, they need a contemporary word from God.

They need exactly what the Holy Spirit is saying today. And then I pull out my Bible and start reading. Because this is what the Holy Spirit is saying today.

[22 : 12] I don't ever do that. I just talk about doing it. don't worry. It's okay. I'm not that unpleasant. I am mildly unpleasant, but not that unpleasant.

Therefore, brothers and sisters, verse 19, since we have confidence to enter the most holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain that is his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart and the full assurance that faith brings.

Listen to these words from Hebrews chapter 9. When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands, that is not the earthly tabernacle or temple, but that which the earthly tabernacle and temple represented, the most holy place in heaven.

He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves, but he entered the most holy place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption.

The blood of goats and bulls of the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially the unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more then will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death so that we may serve the living God.

[23 : 56] So our confidence to enter the presence of God and to serve God comes through Christ, our great high priest, and through his blood.

God, somebody during the week I was talking to about these themes and he quoted one of his lecturers at college, I think one of the northern colleges, asked if our salvation was secure, his reply was, as long as Jesus remains at the Father's right hand, our salvation is secure.

Isn't that good? isn't that good? Graham Goldsworthy was the author of that comment. As long as Jesus remains at the right hand of God, our salvation is secure because our high priest is there on

our behalf.

But there is no other way into the most holy place. except by the blood of Jesus and unless Jesus is your great high priest.

So what should we do? Let us, let us, let us. let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

[25 : 49] God's God's sin. The only barrier between you and God is your sin and Christ has removed that barrier.

The only reason to keep at a distance from God is the presence of your sin and Christ invites you to come near.

the only reason to remove yourself from God's presence is your rebellion against God. But even the sin of rebellion is forgiven by the powerful blood of the Lamb, by the powerful blood of Christ, by that one sacrifice by which he's made perfect forever, those who are being made holy.

the theme of these talks, the big theme is don't drift away, draw near. And the best antidote against drifting away is to draw near consciously, frequently, purposefully, joyfully, thankfully.

Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and full assurance of faith brings. next, let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess.

[27 : 21] And how can we hold unswervingly to the hope we profess? Because he who promised is faithful. And the promise of God is not only God's promises to us, precious as they are, all God's promises find their yes in him, as Paul writes in 2 Corinthians, but also God's promise to his son.

You're a priest forever. in the order of Melchizedek. God is faithful in his promises to us. God is faithful in his promise to his son.

So we can hold unswervingly to the faith we profess, because he who promised God, the God who promised, is faithful. God is faithful in God.

But we're not just thinking about ourselves as we draw near to God, not just thinking about our own security. Please notice that the exhortation is not let, why don't you draw near to God, it's let us draw near to God.

And isn't that wonderful? Because the more often you draw near to God, the more often you encourage the rest of us to draw near to God. On the other hand, the more you drift, the more you discourage the rest of us.

[28 : 45] So the more you know and rejoice in Jesus Christ, your great high priest, and his single sacrifice for sin, the more you encourage your fellow believers, not just the ones in your church, but others around the world, whom you know or who know of you, those people for whom you pray.

Let us draw near to God, let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, and let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.

And how might we do that? How might we spur one another on towards love and deeds? I think by encouraging each other, in godliness, not just saying, you know, you're looking terrific today, but I see glimpses of glory in you today.

I think you're being transformed from one degree of glory to another by the Holy Spirit. What a great encouragement that would be. Or to say, this is the prayer I prayed for you this week.

Here it is. What a great encouragement that would be. But the writer focuses on, in verse 25, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day approaching.

[30 : 16] Like many churches, the church I go to, St. Jude's, we've started meeting in the building together, and it's just wonderful what an encouragement it is to see brothers and sisters in Christ meeting together again, now that it's safe to do so.

You only realize how important that is, how encouraging that is, when you can't do it. Isn't that right? But the more we can do it, the more we're allowed to do it, and the more we do it, the more we will encourage one another, and spur one another on to love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day approaching.

Now I think one of the keys to Hebrews is that it addresses, I think, Jews who had become Christians, and who had faced persecution for the sake of Christ, we discover that in chapter 10, Jews, but who were being tempted to give up Christianity and revert to being Jews again.

There was a good reason to do that, because Judaism was an accepted religion in the Roman Empire, and Christianity was not. So if you're a Jew, you were safe from persecution. If you're a Christian, you weren't. and if you've read through Hebrews, you'll know how tempted the readers were to draw back from Christ, and that would be to return to Judaism, and yet how well they had started and accepting persecution and continuing to care for fellow believers who were persecuted.

[32 : 13] And it was, I admit, hard to compete with the glory of Herod's temple, one of the great wonders of the ancient world.

A group of Christians meeting in somebody's house wouldn't be quite as magnificent as that, would it? You might think, well, actually, we're on the losing side. Let's go back to the winning side, because at least Herod calls himself a Jew, even if he's not, and at least we've got a splendid temple.

And at least it looks wonderful. And at least the Romans won't persecute us. But here's the challenge, to keep on drawing near, not drifting away, even when persecution arises.

Well, if you are old, it might not happen in your time. But if you are young, it might happen in your time here in Australia.

So this is a very important letter for you, so that when persecution arises in whatever form, you don't drift away, however attractive drifting away is, but you draw near to God with a sincere heart and the full assurance that faith brings, you draw near with confidence entering the most holy place by the blood of Jesus.

[33 : 53] For we have his sacrifice for sin, and we have a great priest over the household of God. Praise you, Lord Jesus, the Son of God.

Praise you, Lord Jesus, our brother. Praise you, Lord Jesus, our great high priest.

Praise you, Lord Jesus, the single sacrifice for sins. Amen.