

The Seated Saviour

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 21 August 2013

Preacher: Rev. James Maciver

[0 : 00] Let's turn together this evening briefly to the passage in Hebrews we read earlier in Hebrews 10 and especially verses 11 to 14.

And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices which 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, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for a seat. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. The fact that Christ's atoning work, that's the work by which our salvation was obtained, the fact that Christ's atoning work is completed is a truth of the highest importance to all Christians.

It is crucial to our understanding of what our salvation rests on. It's crucial that we understand that but for the completed work of Christ, there would not be the salvation that God has provided for us. It's also very much the case that we're very soon into serious error if we depart from the fact of Christ's finished work, completed work, being foundational to our salvation, to our acceptance with God in particular.

[1 : 37] You only have to look in the Bible to the lives of the Galatians to actually see what happens when people actually depart from the sufficiency and the completeness of Christ's death on the cross as an atonement for our sins.

If you depart from that, it doesn't matter what else you go to. The Galatians had done it in terms of going to certain laws or to the law of God as the moral law in order to add that keeping of the law to what Christ had done so that by that they thought they would have full acceptance with God. Now Paul, in a very annoyed and a way that showed his displeasure, he wrote that letter to the Galatians to come absolutely clearly out with the fact that we are justified by faith in Christ. And if we are justified by faith in Christ, then it logically follows that Christ alone is sufficient to be the basis upon which our faith rests for salvation.

Now it's also important that we understand the completeness of the death of Christ and how foundational it is for our salvation. It's important for our own ongoing assurance and comfort.

[3 : 05] Because it's something that we're always seeking, something that we're very right to seek, that we have a comfort and an assurance about our relation with God, about where we are in terms of God's acceptance, God's judgment.

All of these things that you read of in the Bible are important to us in our personal lives as human beings. And if we actually don't completely hold to the sufficiency of Christ's death, then like the Galatians, we're going to add something else that will inevitably involve in some way or other our own doings.

And once you start adding something that you do yourself to the idea of how you come to be accepted with God, you're going to end up with serious lack of assurance.

Because when you look at your doings, even if it's along with the death of Christ, you will find an inadequacy, an imperfection, a sinfulness indeed attached to our doings.

And that will itself, if you think of that, as part of the way in which we come to be right with God, inevitably that means that we don't yet have that. Because our own efforts will always come short.

[4 : 25] So the fact of Christ's atoning work being complete is absolutely crucial for our salvation, for our understanding of salvation where it's founded, and for our assurance and our comfort in an ongoing Christian experience since.

And it's that completeness of Christ's death and its sufficiency that you find packed into these few verses, 11 to 14. And these verses set out for us that Christ's death is complete with reference to four things, or rather more accurately, four persons of people.

And the four are always together in our thinking of the completeness of Christ's death. You can't take any one of the four away without losing some of the significance of what Christ's death means, and what Christ's death has in fact achieved.

And it's important for the young ones especially to think in terms of theology, not that they need to be great theologians, but there is a certain amount of theology that's really crucial for ourselves to know as we grow in our understanding of our salvation, in order that we can be the kind of Christians practically, in our thinking, in our attitude, in our relationships, that God requires us to be. So I'll try and go through these verses in a way that's as simple as possible and I hope as clear as possible, so that we all understand, whatever age we're at or level of maturity we're at, how the complete death of Christ, the complete atoning work of Christ, as it's set out in these verses, is important to us this evening.

[6 : 15] It's first of all completed with reference to Christ himself. Because you notice in verse 11 it says, Every priest stands daily at his service offering repeatedly the same sacrifices which 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. Now there's a contrast there, it's a very important contrast between standing and sitting down. It's saying that every priest, and by that it means the priests as they were in the Old Testament situation. All the way through these chapters, in the middle chapters here we have a comparison and a contrasting with what was the case in the Old Testament and what's now replaced that because Christ's work is done.

Christ's work has fulfilled that. And what it's saying here is that he's demonstrating that Christ's death, the once for all death of Christ, has been absolutely sufficient and complete in order to provide salvation for us.

And therefore he says, contrasting that, look at the Old Testament situation. What do you find in the Old Testament situation? You find that every priest stands. Now why does he put it that way?

[7 : 40] Because every day and every year with regard to the great day of atonement, there is a repetition of the sacrifices that needed to be brought by the instruction of God.

In other words, it's saying here, the priest is standing because they know from year to year, from generation to generation indeed, all the way down to the Old Testament, there's going to be more required until the Messiah comes.

There's going to be another lot of sacrifices needed tomorrow, so the priest is represented here as standing ready to receive yet more sacrifices, yet more repeated offerings, which she says can never take away sin.

I'll see that in a minute. But it's something like that. You can just imagine, if we can indeed put it that way, that priests getting to know people coming with their animal for sacrifices, you would say as a priest, well, here you are again.

You've come again with your sacrifice. How have things been since the last time you were here? Yes, the person would say, yes, I'm here again. Here's my sacrifice given again because I'm required to give it repeatedly and to be offered to God time after time in order that God's requirement in what is representative of Christ's work will actually be done.

[9 : 09] But, you see, he's saying, that's the old situation. That's what was the case all the way through the Old Testament. But, there's the contrast. But, when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice, and it's made clear, of course, in the other parts of the chapter and the previous ones too, that the sacrifice that's meant is Christ himself in his death.

When Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down. And the sitting down, in contrast to the standing of the Old Testament priests, the sitting down indicates that's it.

There's nothing else coming after this that's required to be a provision for sin, for the guilt of sin to take away our sin. He offered himself.

He offered himself a sacrifice. He then sat down. And, of course, that includes his resurrection afterwards and exaltation to glory.

He sat down, it says, at the right hand of God. And we know from the Bible that that involved his ascending to glory. And, elsewhere, Paul makes it clear that it was God the Father who exalted him on the basis of the work being finished.

[10 : 33] But, that is the contrast in these verses. The priest in the old system stands. He's waiting for more of the same.

The high priest in the New Testament age, in the fulfillment of what the Old Testament had, after one single sacrifice, sat down at the right hand of God.

And it says that these sacrifices in the old system could never take away sins. Why not? Well, because they were merely animal sacrifices.

And while God required them, and while somebody coming by faith in God's promise and God's provision of an atonement could see in them the provision of a saviour or a mediator and therefore be justified on that basis, the sacrifices themselves, in themselves, were not efficacious.

They were not powerful or effective with God because they were looking forward to the one that would be. They were looking forward to the offering of Christ who in his one sacrifice would forevermore answer all that was required.

[11:57] So it's completed with reference to Christ himself. Now, there is a work of Jesus still going on. And it's important that we distinguish between the work of Jesus that's still going on, which Hebrews again in a number of places tells us about as a work of intercession.

He ever lives to make intercession for those for whom he died. But there's a difference between that work and the work that was done by his death on the cross or in his atonement, including his death on the cross, more accurately.

Because that work is completed. It was an atoning work. It was a work that provided for our sin and answered all the demands of God and itself was sufficient to do that.

The work that he's now engaged in is all about the application of the salvation that his completed work obtained.

In other words, you're thinking of his death particularly as the completed work by which our salvation was obtained or purchased.

[13:16] And you're thinking of his ongoing work, the work of intercession particularly, as Christ actively applying the salvation that he bought for us by his death in terms of our coming to gain by it, to benefit from it, to have it in our possession actually.

So we have to distinguish very carefully between the completed work and the work that goes on. What this is saying is this work is complete.

He has obtained salvation. He has obtained acceptance with God for us. He has done all that's necessary to take away our sin and the guilt of our sin. Therefore he has sat down at the right hand of God.

It's completed with reference to himself. Secondly, we might ask the question, why is it so? Why is it completed?

Why is it completed? What is it that makes it unnecessary to add anything to it or to take anything from it? Why was Jesus able to sit at God's right hand through being exalted to glory, through his finished work on the cross being at an end?

[14:35] Well, the answer to that is in the second point, that his work is completed with reference to God the Father. You see it saying here, he sat down at the right hand of God.

And you might ask, well, why is that referred to? Why does it say this is the place or the location where he is now sat down?

Because it is God the Father that he was, if you like, answerable to. The God Father, the Father who sent him into the world to do this work and who required of him that it be finished as the servant that he sent into the world.

That's the God who highly exalted him because he finished it. And he's now sat at his right hand. In other words, it's really saying to us that the reason Christ is sat at God's right hand, seated at God's right hand, is that God has completely and utterly and forevermore accepted of his work and indeed of his person.

You can't separate the person of Christ, the person he is, the God-man, the mediator, from his work, the completed work, of his death on the cross particularly.

[16:01] And when it says that he sat at the right hand of God, it implies things which are taught explicitly elsewhere that God, the Father, had a hand in bringing him to be seated at his right hand.

And the reason that God was able to have him seated at his right hand is that everything that he did, everything the Son actually did, especially in his work on the cross, was fully acceptable to God the Father.

Now, of course, you have to then go into all the things that you learn from the Bible required to be completed, required to be answered, and that includes some of the great things that we need

always to remember.

For example, the justice of God was required to be satisfied. That means that if God had given us what we deserve, our eternal hell, that would have been just, he would have been acting justly in doing that, but it would not have satisfied his justice, because we could not, under his wrath and justice, and under that death, we could never provide or make up for the sin that we had committed. But Jesus did. And because Jesus did make up for the sin that we had committed, and because he answered all of God's demand in terms of his justice, God's justice is satisfied.

[17 : 56] And of course, there's the other thing we mentioned there, the wrath of God. And there are some who don't like the idea of the wrath of God, and I'm talking about Bible-believing Christians, who think that the wrath of God, and these are people who are very often sound in many of the other areas, if not all of the other areas that are important in theology, but there are some churches who have actually removed the words to do with the wrath or the anger of God, for example, from the Westminster Confession or Catechisms, and adopted these without these references.

But of course, as we understand it, and as we should, it is the case, the Bible clearly shows that God's wrath is directed against us in our sins.

You won't have to go as far as Ephesians 2, which talks about the people of God who have been justified by faith in Christ through the grace of God being bestowed upon them.

That same chapter says that we were enemies, children of wrath, even as others. That's how we come into the world.

God dealt with his own wrath against his people. Where did he deal with his own wrath against his people? He dealt with his own wrath against his people in the atoning death of Christ.

[19 : 23] Christ's death is God's answer to his own wrath. It is God's provision against his own wrath reaching his people.

It is the means by which we are no longer under the wrath of God through what Christ has done. These are hugely important things for us in our understanding of what is our redemption. How have we come to obtain or to have redemption given to us, granted to us?

Yes, it's by grace, but what has God's grace involved? It's involved so many things, but especially this that Christ's work is complete with reference to God the Father.

Everything God the Father required of us that we could never give, Christ has actually given in our place. Now that's why on the basis of what Christ has done, we are fully accepted with God when we come to place our faith in him.

[20 : 33] And indeed, it's proper to say, God could not but account us acceptable when we come to trust in Christ.

It is impossible to think of God refusing to find us fully acceptable to him when we come believing in Christ and in his finished work.

God is, if you like, obliged through his own provision to grant us full acceptance. Isn't that amazing, grace?

What a contrast with where we begin, even as the children of wrath, even as others. grace, even grace, even that's one of the ways by which the sheer brilliance of grace, his undeserved favor toward us, really comes out in the teaching of the Bible.

In other words, we can say about God that he is fully satisfied in the death of Christ. nothing else needs to be done to add to that.

[21 : 49] The priest can sit down. God is satisfied so he can sit down at God's right hand. That's the place of the highest honor, of the highest privilege as the Bible teaches.

You cannot get higher, not even God himself is higher than his right hand. And that is where our Savior is.

That's because he and his work have been completely acceptable and accepted by God. And you see it's saying here, for all time.

And what a comfort that is. For all time, you are assured that God the Father will never find anything wrong, not the slightest flaw, with what Jesus has done by his death on the cross.

And it doesn't matter who does what to you. And in a sense, while it's not in any way a license to sin, or an excuse for our sin, ultimately it doesn't matter actually what we do either.

[22 : 59] And I'm not by that suggesting that we should just sit loose with sin and live a careless life. What I'm saying is, even if we have the most serious lapse, as in Christ we are accepted, we

remain accepted forevermore.

There is forgiveness in all its abundance on the basis of the fact that Christ's work continues to be fully accepted with God.

That's our security. That's where our security is. Thirdly, it's completed with reference not only to himself and to God the Father, but also to his enemies.

It's completed with reference to his enemies. You see he's saying he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet.

Of course, the image of the footstool is used in the Bible of God, sometimes the earth, is said to be his footstool. A picture, if you like, of a king sitting on the throne, which is high, perhaps high above the floor, and there's a footstool provided for the king to put his feet up on.

[24 : 18] In other words, a footstool is something that is absolutely beneath the authority and the control and the feet of the king.

The king has his feet planted on it. And what he's saying here is that, with reference to his enemies, Christ has already gained victory over them.

He is now sitting at God's right hand, waiting or expecting, not in some way wondering if it's going to happen, but during this period, if we think in terms of time, as we are involved in time, during this period of the world's history to the coming of Christ, which is marked by grace and by God's patience and long-suffering, seeking that people turn to him in repentance, during all that time, here we're told that Christ is waiting expectantly until his enemies be made his footstool, until it actually be shown demonstrably to all that they are in fact defeated.

Hebrews 2 and verse 14 talks about that by death, that's the death of Christ, Christ might destroy him who has the power of death, that is the devil.

That has happened. Destroy there doesn't mean what destroy normally means in English, it was translated that way, it means to render ineffective or to nullify something, to make it ineffective, in other words to frustrate what that itself might want to do but can't do because it's held in check.

[26 : 05] I know it's not a very good illustration but I'll use it, it might help the younger ones anyway. As you know we've got a little dog at home, Roscoe, and for all the size of it, that little thing can be very very noisy and appear because of the sheer amount of noise to be rather threatening, which actually it's not but that's how it presents itself.

And whenever I take it out because it's so prone to scampering away and so on, it's always on a leash. And especially when a car goes past you, I'm going down the road to the shore and taking him for his walk, if a car comes past he really wants to launch himself and he makes all this barking noise as he sees the car, especially the posty van.

But the fact is the leash, that I hold, keeps him back, it nullifies the intent and the noise and all the aggressiveness, it's kept in check, it's rendered ineffective by the fact that he's on my leash.

That's how it is with Satan. Satan cannot do any more than the leash of God allows him. Why is that?

Because Christ has nullified him. By death he has nullified, he has rendered him ineffective.

Although Satan is still active, we're not saying that, and the Bible isn't saying that, but he's held in check, he's rendered ineffective, he is totally under the mastery of the one who's sitting at God's right hand.

[27 : 41] And if you go to the Pilgrim's Progress, we know that famous passage in the Pilgrim's Progress where the two lions stand in the way of the Pilgrim's advancing to the celestial city, and he's afraid of them from the distance, but the more he's encouraged to go on, the nearer he gets to them, the more he sees that they're actually tied, and they can't actually get him if he walks between them.

They can do a lot of noise, they can be very intimidating, they can be very scary, but he can walk safely through in the middle between them. Why? Because they're tied, they're on a leash, they've been rendered ineffective by Christ.

And that's what he's saying about the enemies, he's waiting for his enemies to be made his food stole, they're already conquered, Satan and all the enemies of God's people are already overcome, where have they been overcome?

In the death of Christ, the cross, in fact, we can say quite clearly, the judgment of Satan in principle, the judgment of Satan has already taken place.

You remember Jesus in John chapter 12, in a very important passage, saying, Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the prince or the ruler of this world be cast out, and I, if I be lifted up, will draw all people towards me.

[29 : 12] This, he said, signifying what death he should die. Put it all together, what's he saying? I'm about to be put to death, I'm about to give myself, I'm about to be lifted up on the cross, what's that going to do?

It's the judgment of the prince of this world. When Satan comes to attack you, when he comes with his temptations, when you get suggestions planted in your mind that you're not as you should be, even if you know it's true, when you get all sorts of things coming to you that you know are bombarding you from that evil source, then you can say to him, yes you're my enemy, yes I know you're still active, but I know my Lord's got a hold of you, I know he's got his foot on your neck, and I know the day is coming when I will be with him, and you'll be beneath his feet.

That's what it's saying. And that's why it's there for our comfort, because it's against temptation that we can take strength from the completed, finished work of Christ.

It's completed with regard to his enemies, with reference to his enemies. And just to leave that point with this thought, the whole book of the Revelation, I know that we all know there are difficult bits in it, but it's not at all difficult really to see the whole purpose of that book.

And the purpose of that book is to assure God's people while they're in this world, that they're on the winning side. That the Lord is the conqueror now.

[30 : 51] And that the time is coming, at the end of it all, when the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne, and his followers, will be shown to be completely victorious over their enemies and his enemies too.

That's the purpose of the book of the Revelation. To him who overcomes, will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

So, it's complete with reference to himself, it's completed with reference to God the Father, it's a completed work with reference to his enemies. And finally, and importantly too, of course, it's completed with reference to ourselves, or to his people, which would say particular.

For by a single offering, he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified, or have been sanctified. The tense there is rendered differently, different translations.

But, what's it say? Well, it's really saying here that in terms of our relation with God, let's think of it in terms of our acceptance by God, or being acceptable to God, comes to the same thing.

[32 : 14] In regard to that, by the death of Christ, this single offering, he has perfected us. If you like to think of it in terms of giving us a case, a case in terms of our thinking of it in legal terms, if you like, which the Bible often does, that we have to present a case to God for our acceptance.

Where are we going to get a case, for myself, for yourself, to argue before God so that on the basis of what's in that case, we will be fully accepted by him?

It's in Christ's death. By that, he has perfected forever. He has made complete in the sense of giving them an absolutely watertight case.

In the court of heaven, the case that's presented on your behalf cannot be found inadequate. It's not going to be case dismissed.

It's going to be case fully accepted. because it's based, and it's made up in fact of Christ's worth, Christ's merit, Christ's finished work, his work of atonement.

[33 : 34] And he says here, by a single offering, he has perfected for all time. He's made them completely acceptable. Who are they? All those who are being sanctified.

sanctified. There's a bit of a difficulty over the meaning of that, but I think what it means is not sanctified here in the sense of being made holy, the work of the Holy Spirit in us, which is what it's in other parts of the Bible undoubtedly means.

But what seems to be indicated here is if you take the whole thing together, he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified, means those people for whom he died, he has given complete acceptance to God and that continues for all time.

It is a case of them going on being accepted or being sanctified. what was the case is the case and will always be the case.

They are going on being accepted, if you put the word accepted instead of sanctified it, that's the meaning really that I think it comes to in that context. So by a single offering, he has perfected, he has made fully acceptable to God all those for all time who are being accepted, accepted, who are

being sanctified, kept acceptable with God.

[35 : 06] And that's why you have such great text in the Bible as Romans 8 and verse 1. Therefore, being justified by faith.

So in Romans 5, we have peace with God. Romans 8, therefore, there is now. The word now is important. There is now, now on the basis of what Christ has done, there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.

And that is the fountain of all our comforts and all our hopes. Lord, our God, we thank you for your provision that you sent your own dear Son, who came to be an atonement for our sin through his rendering of himself in his death on the cross.

O Lord, our God, we thank you tonight for the assurance that you give us from the record of your own word, that that death will always be for you, that upon which our acceptance is founded.

And therefore, our acceptance will always be perfect with you. Bless to us, we pray, all of these great assurances that we have in your word.

[36 : 39] And help us to live them out in our lives in a way that would more and more reflect that assurance and reflect that firm and constant hope that belongs to your people.

Continue with us now, we pray, and accept us. For Jesus' sake. Amen.