

Lessons from a Divine Conversation

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: 24 September 2017

Preacher: Rev. Malcolm Macleod

[0 : 00] Let's turn together now to the letter to Hebrews and chapter 10, and we can read at verse 5. Hebrews chapter 10 and at verse 5.

Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me. In burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure.

Then I said, Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book. And so on.

Now, for many of us and for everyone in the world, it is always difficult to be in a time of transition, to be moving from one stage of something to the next stage.

There are challenges that arise from us leaving the past stage, and there are challenges arising from moving to the next stage. And that is something that was true of the people to whom this letter was written.

[1 : 12] They were leaving the Old Testament behind in the sense that they were leaving the external religion of the Old Testament behind, and they struggled with that. They were moving into the New Testament times of the church and coming to understand and deal with the impact of Jesus Christ on their lives and on the world and on what God was doing.

They were in a time of transition. And in that time of transition, they were struggling in their faith. And when we read through this letter, we see that arising in two ways.

It was arising, first of all, because they were persecuted by the world around them. And they were fearing for their lives and therefore fearing for their faith.

And they were ready at times to abandon their faith. And if we read chapter 3, we can see something about that. They were also struggling because, if we read in chapter 13, for example, that they were struggling with the wrong kind of teaching.

And if they had challenges because of the way they were persecuted for their faith, they were also challenged because of the way in which they were being misled by false doctrine and false teaching.

[2 : 34] You see the difficulty. Everything's changing around them. The world is against them. And the teaching is not what it should be in order to bring them where they need to be.

And unsurprisingly, the answer to that problem for the writer is that he brings Christ to the fore.

The beginning of the letter, he doesn't even introduce himself. He is straight into telling them the kind of person Jesus is, who he is, and why he is here.

Christ is all supreme. He is the answer to the persecuted. He is the answer to our doctrine. And he is the answer to the way in which we are fearing in our faith.

He is everything to our faith. And in this passage, we have a special example of the way in which God encourages his church.

[3 : 38] And it is special for this reason, because we are given a conversation between the Father and the Son. We are privileged to eavesdrop into this conversation between the Son of God and the Father in heaven.

And it is that conversation tonight that gives us some kind of insight into the significance of Jesus and the impact he has on the lives of the people in the world because of his life, because of his death, because of his resurrection, and because of his glory.

Tonight, we have the opportunity to listen in to what Jesus is saying to the Father. And as we do so, we want to notice three particular things.

How are they going to be helped? Well, I want to notice, first of all, the conversation and the dissatisfaction. There is something here that needs to be addressed.

And unless it is addressed, they are not going to move to find the rest in the Lord Jesus. And the dissatisfaction has to do with what God himself has ordained.

[5 : 01] And that itself is remarkable. The dissatisfaction has to do with sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings.

What are these? What do they refer to? They refer to all of the services of the tabernacle that God himself ordained in the Old Testament that the children of Israel should do them.

Go and build me a tabernacle, God said, so that I come and dwell with you in your midst. And at that tabernacle, go and offer all of these sacrifices to show that you are my people and to have them as the means of maintaining my relationship with you.

They are appointed by God. And the writer at the beginning of the chapter speaks to them in the context of the law of God. And we know the story.

God gave Moses the law on Mount Sinai. He gave him the Ten Commandments. But he also gave him the laws for the service of the tabernacle and for the lives of the people.

[6 : 07] The reference here is to the provision of God for the external religion at the tabernacle and the way in which they were going to serve him there as he had purposed for them to do.

And as we consider the lesson for ourselves, of course, external religion is absolutely vital. God has purposed, commanded that you and I should be here this evening worshipping his name.

He has commanded that we pray to him. He has commanded that we serve him at his house. He has commanded that we serve him in our homes. He has commanded that we pray to him.

That we read our Bibles. That we study the word of God. He has commanded all of these things. They are his provision. They are good things.

And they are good things because they have been ordained by God himself. And let's not lose sight of the importance of that.

[7 : 18] That is perhaps one of the most harmful things for the church of Christ in the world is that we lose sight of the importance of that external and visible religion.

Representation of the church of Christ in the world. And the world in the gathered worship of the people of God. This place should be full tonight because God has commanded that we gather to worship him on the Lord's day.

It is his purpose. It is his command. It is the law which he has given to us. But remarkably, it is with regard to these very things that Jesus, the Son of God, has this conversation with God.

And what does he draw our attention to? When he came, he said, sacrifices and offerings, you have not desired.

In burnt offerings and sin offerings, you have taken no pleasure. Now that's alarming. God has provided them with something.

[8 : 27] And now he is saying that he doesn't desire them. Now he is saying he has no pleasure in them. Well, here I am saying in the New Testament, when Jesus comes to be baptized, you are my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, in whom I find pleasure.

I take pleasure. But here he is now with regard to what he has purposed himself that they should do in serving him. He is saying, I no longer want that.

And I qualify that. But he is saying, I no longer want that. He is saying, I no longer have pleasure in that. And why would he say that?

Why tonight would God say to you and to me that he has no pleasure in us being here? The only reason for him to say that is that these things are ineffective in themselves and they avoid the real purpose of them.

It can never, in verse 1, by the same sacrifice, make perfect those who draw near. They are ineffective.

[9 : 43] They don't achieve anything. And that is not to belittle them. But it is to say what God is saying, what Jesus is saying to the Father. You, God and Father in Heaven, you are saying that these are ineffective.

Indeed, it goes on to show that they are but the shadow of the realities, of the true form of things that are to come. And you see the danger that they were open to.

Do you see why they were struggling with moving on to the transition? They were hanging on to the external things that God had appointed as if these things themselves were the means of God's salvation.

Were the means of getting them into the kingdom and keeping them in the kingdom and leading them at last to the glory of God. And God wants them to know clearly and to understand particularly that these things are not an end in themselves.

They are the means to an end. And tonight, if these people here were struggling with that transition in their own experience, I sense and I recognize that from time to time, there are people around us in the church of Jesus and they are struggling with the same thing.

[11 : 16] And I sense that perhaps here this evening itself, there are those and they love the external things. And they love being in church. And that's praiseworthy.

It's admirable. But God is saying that he's dissatisfied with that if it's the end itself. If you stop at doing that and don't reach the true form or the realities of the purposes of God.

Because Jesus is saying and the writer is saying that these things are but a shadow of good things to come. Now there's no point in stopping at the shadow.

When I see a shadow, I want to see what's, what light lies behind the shadow. I want to see the object that really draws my attention to.

It's unwise, it's foolish to look at the shadow and to be satisfied with the shadow and to be convinced in your own mind that the shadow itself is the means of your salvation.

[12 : 28] That's critical. That's a lesson so many need to learn. That your being here and all of your godliness without faith in the Lord Jesus will never bring you to God's kingdom.

Will never bring you to the glory of God. To the paradise of God. It will never do that. And also, alarmingly, the devil himself will be the first person to tell you how good you are because of your external religion.

And he'll want to keep you happy there because you haven't come to Christ. And you might be content to yourself and he will be content with you and he won't trouble you at all until you start thinking about the Lord Jesus.

But tonight, the lesson to learn from this conversation, first of all, is that God is dissatisfied with external religion on his own.

It's never going to get you anywhere. It's never going to bring you salvation. Secondly, there is the conversation and the design.

- [13 : 47] What is it then that God has purpose to do? What has the Father provided? And Jesus, once more, in addressing God the Father, he draws our attention to that because God does not decide these things, but he says, a body you have prepared for me.

This is a mystery of God's provision in the gospel. That the Son of the unseen God, the eternal God, that he's saying to the Father so that we can hear him, that he's saying to the Father, you have prepared a body for me.

You have taken something suitable, you have prepared it for a particular purpose, and you have put that all together so that when you have finished, completed this part of your design, then that body will be exactly what will satisfy you in the light of the dissatisfaction that you have in the external religion of the peoples of this world.

You have prepared a body. We read and we sang in Psalm 139, you formed my inward parts.

He did that for us all, of course. He is our creator. You knitted me together in my mother's womb. I was fearfully and wonderfully made. I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

- [15 : 37] Your eyes saw me and my unformed substance. you have prepared a body for me. And the answer to the problem is to be found, first of all, when I go and find the Lord Jesus, the Jesus of Nazareth, when I find him in Bethlehem, in the manger in Bethlehem, here he is, the handiwork of God.

Prepared for the Son of God, here is the body that he's taken to himself. It's a body prepared by God and prepared for a particular purpose. Why would God do that?

Why would God send his Son in that infant form into the world? Because, says the writer, those who were needing to be saved, they were human beings.

They had flesh and blood. And he also must take part of that. He must become like you and like me, a human being, taking a human nature to him.

And for that reason, God is involved in this marvelous design, preparing a body for Jesus in the womb of the Virgin Mary.

- [16 : 50] And she gives birth to him in Bethlehem. And there he is in the manger. What a marvel. What an insight.

How privileged we are to listen to the Son of God saying this to the Father. at his coming into the world, Christ said, here he is, the infant in the manger, talking to the Father, you have prepared a body for me.

And of course it was unique in its preparation. We know that God created Adam from the dust of the ground, but this is completely different.

a virgin will conceive and bear a son and call his name Emmanuel. How can this happen, says Mary? We need an explanation.

The Holy Spirit will come upon you. The power of the Most High will overshadow you. And that holy child that will be born from you will be called the Son of God.

- [18 : 03] You see, God's design, it's so wonderful. The Father's action in preparing for the sins of the world, in preparing to redeem for himself a people.

He designed a body for a son. A body for a son like yours and mine. And the necessity was this.

he needed a body where he could suffer and didn't suffer for our sins. He needed a body where he would be abused by his enemies, where they would lash his back and tear his flesh.

He needed a body to be given over to the hands of his enemies. And then he needed a body to give himself over to the hand of God.

And to be crushed and to be bruised on Calvary's cross through the wrath of God as it was poured down upon him, it had to be a body that was able to suffer, a body that was able to die, a body that was able to carry the weight of your sin and of mine.

[19 : 19] He bore our sins in his own body to the tree. you have prepared a body for me.

Don't you realize now why God is saying that he is dissatisfied in the external stuff? It's not going to get anywhere. If it was going to be helpful, then this event would never have taken place.

You would need somebody who was the son of God and the son of man. You would need somebody like that to be able to suffer and die. You would manage fine yourself because your works are so good.

But God is saying recognize the importance of this. Recognize the significance of my dissatisfaction in you by recognizing this great design of God.

A body prepared for a son. And Adam at the very beginning when God came to him with his wife Eve and God presented her to him and Adam said this at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.

[20 : 37] We have a similar kind of embrace in the Lord Jesus when he takes this to himself and when he embraces everything that God has done. I he says in verse 7 I have come to do your will.

Oh my God. Here is the true form of the realities of the things. He has come to do the will of God. It was as I say it was the will of the Lord to crush him.

He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities and here is the Son of God embracing God's design of a body for him knowing that when all that is going to be brought to him it means that he's going to suffer and that he's going to suffer ultimately being forsaken by God himself.

Here he is in the closeness and the intimacy of this conversation. You have prepared a body for me. I have come to do your will oh my God.

But then the day will come when this body will be suspended on a cross outside Jerusalem and when the intimacy will be lost and when under the wrath of God he will cry out my God why have you forsaken me?

[22 : 08] he embraces the body prepared the body prepared for suffering the body prepared for service and the body prepared for dying.

Behold I have come to do your will oh God as it is written of me in the scroll of the book where was the scroll?

It was in their hands when they went for their sacrifices and they couldn't see that the son of God was in it as the person was going to come into the world in that very Bible which they used there it was written about him and they read round it and they read through it and they read all about it but they couldn't see that Jesus was going to come as the son of God but here is Jesus saying it's all in the Bible and that's what he's saying to ourselves tonight that this greatest sign of God and the purpose of God and the will of God it is in your Bible and he's saying go back and read your Bible and yes read about all that God requires of your life externally but don't miss the point you remember the open eunuch and Philip reading

Isaiah 53 who is he talking about here is he talking about himself or about someone else and that's who confused he was he needed somebody to guide him to the very place where he would see that this was about the servant of God the servant of Jehovah about the coming Messiah who was going to die for the sins of the world and tonight it is God's lesson for you from this conversation that you recognize the significance of Jesus as God revealed manifest in the flesh it's a great mystery nobody's asking you to understand it all nobody can understand it that's why it's called the great mystery but we need to believe that it happened we need to believe why it happened and we need to believe that all of the external stuff that they carried out at the tabernacle at the temple that all of it pointed to the

Lord Jesus and as the writer says in this very chapter these things were only a reminder to them every time that they offered them a reminder to them about their sins and they came on special occasions to offer these sacrifices and it told them they were sinners but this one is very different there is no repetition it's a one-off all of the significance is at last realized and fulfilled the death of Jesus is the end of every sacrifice and they must understand that their struggle with the transition has to come to an end because it's all now about what God has said and God has done and God is doing through the passion of his son he's the answer to everything to you and to me tonight the answer to all of our struggles that God has done it all in the passion of his son and thirdly the conversation and the delight there is the son's own delight and we already touched something on that and there is the father's delight our salvation is all about what pleases them not what about what pleases you it's about where they find satisfaction and delight in verse 9 then he added behold I have come to do your will he does away with the first in order to establish the second the transition all of that he is saying to them is now come to an end all of that is found its ultimate fulfillment in the passion of

[26 : 52] Jesus the will of God for all salvation is realized and fulfilled in his finished work his delight his love his purpose and doing everything that the father required of him he does away with the first in order to establish the second the second in this case is not second best it is the best it surpasses everything else because it is about the supremacy of the son of God as the savior of the world and the cross itself is the time and the moment of that great transition where everything in the old testament converges on the cross and where everything in the new testament emerges from it and spreads out into the world so that tonight we are here because of the son's delight in the father's will and we listen to him even down through the gospel of John and that's exactly what we hear it is my meat my food to do the will of the one who sent me

I have come to do the will of the father everything every step that he took was a step of devotion to God a step of delight in the law and the purpose of God and a step of putting in place everything that belongs to the work of salvation and as we read on into the chapter that's what we see the second what is the second it's the brand new thing he's going to put his law in their hearts he's going to forget their iniquities he's going to not to remember their sins anymore that's the brand new thing that comes from the son's delight in the work that the father has given to him this is the outcome this is the fulfillment of the promise what was in their

Bibles and that they were familiar with and were able to quote here it is now happening in the cross and is that not the great lesson for you and I to learn everything that we do apart from Christ in the house of God in the worship of God in the life of Christ church everything that we are doing if we are doing it in the right way it only reminds us of our sin and we go away with our anxiety and we go away with a sense of sinners and we go away with a real sense of having to do better I need to be better than I am so that I can get into the kingdom of God that's the problem with all the external stuff love but now the great lesson from the son's embrace is that what he has achieved with delight is what sets you free from that so that you no longer look to outward things but his word is in your heart and in the words of

Moses in Deuteronomy he's given you a heart to love him that's the transformation that's where the transition takes place and in that heart that he gives you to love him it's a heart that rejoices in his forgiveness rejoices in the price the ransom price that Jesus paid and rejoices in the peace of God which passes understanding that the delight that Jesus has and doing the will of God becomes the very place where you find your delight and where you find rest for your soul and that's what makes it successful and that's where we see something of the father's delight if we may in verse 10 and by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all we are made the children of

God set apart by him to be his children once for all because of what God has secured in the work of his son and that tells me that the father was delighted in the work that his son completed on the cross father glorify your name and glorify me with the glory which I had with you I have finished the work that you have given me to do and when I see the son of God going to the cross I see him forsaken by God and looking from the outside I wonder what on earth God is doing with the son why would this sinless person ever suffer and die and then I come to his resurrection and I recognize that in his resurrection the father embraces him and raises him from the dead rejoicing in him and having great delight in his finished work he received from the father the promise of the

[33 : 02] Holy Spirit with which he brings people alive the resurrection is about the father's delight in his son and because of that delight says Paul life and immortality is brought to light in the gospel sanctified of course it's a term that belongs to the tabernacle and to the temple but it's now a family word it's a family word because it speaks of being placed in God's family by the blood of Jesus and being given the status of God's children by the blood of Jesus sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all and the writer in chapter 2 speaks of

Jesus as the son of God that in bringing many sons to glory children like you and me the children of God in bringing many sons to glory to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering and here we see Jesus rising from the dead and the God who says that he's dissatisfied in everything that you do for your own salvation is now saying perfection absolute perfection completed to perfection achieved what is perfect and now people of God can be saved a conversation with a lesson a transition that creates a problem a pressure that brings people to think of turning away from their faith and of abandoning

God but here is the answer in this conversation the dissatisfaction opposite it there is the corresponding design and delight of God and tonight let's not forget the supremacy of Jesus of his person and of his work and of what he has achieved and that if God is delighted in his perfection that he will be delighted in you only when you put your trust in his name and embrace him by faith and come to know his power in your life may God grant that that would be what we will all experience and all enjoy not only tonight but as we journey on through life in all of its challenges let's bow our heads in a word of prayer and earth and work in