

Hebrews 10: 1-18 “Hope for Discouraged Gardeners”

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[0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama.! Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

I want you to know it might feel a little different, but right now is going to be a blast too. Because we're going to open God's Word. God wants us to hear this morning just exactly how Jesus is perfectly what we need. He wants to tell us that. We struggling people who battle shame, who get discouraged, who don't live up to even our own standards, God wants to give us Jesus. Hebrews has been telling us in so many ways Jesus is greater than everything and everyone else. Hebrews 10, we get to this morning, it's really a summary of the sermon so far. Jesus greater than angels, than Moses, than Joshua, greater rest, greater prophet, greater high priest. Here especially this morning, the greater sacrifice.

And the next week, the second half of chapter 10 is a summary of how that changes the way we live. And then the conclusion of the sermon in the final three chapters. Let's listen to God's Word this morning. Hearing Him speak is the most important thing and He wants us to draw near to Him and hear Him.

Hebrews 10, starting at verse 1. For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come, instead of the true form of these realities, it can never by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year make perfect those who draw near. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sin. But in these sacrifices, there is a reminder of sin every year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. 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've 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. Now, 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, behold, I have come to do your will. He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. And by that will, we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus

Christ once for all. 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 His feet. For by a single offering, He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

[3 : 42] And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us for after saying, this is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord, I will put my laws on their hearts and write them on their minds. Then He 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. God's holy word, let's ask for His help.

Father, these are glorious, glorious truths. And those of us who are struggling, who are battling Satan and sin and living in a world that feels overwhelmed with death and heartache and difficulty, would you give us this morning a taste of the victory that's ours in Jesus?

Father, this is the Lord.

Or last year. Yeah. Isn't that the worst thing about weeds? Not many things I like about them, but it feels like I can do anything I want to them, right? Spray them with Roundup, pull them up multiple times. Even that really satisfying pull where you get like the whole feet of root system from

underground.

You can put that black weed barrier down. You can lay loads and loads of mulch on top and spray it with Roundup again and still give it enough time and that weed is coming back with all of His friends.

[5 : 46] That's what weeds do. I think sometimes, maybe you can reflect on this as you're pulling some this week.

That's a parable for what it feels like struggling against sin in our lives. No matter how many times we get rid of that one struggle, it seems to come back.

Even sometimes when we get the sin by the root, not just a surface apology to feel better that I hurt you when I said that, but no, I mean like deep down dealing with the sin beneath the sin.

And what's going on in my heart? Like, you know, when I said that, I was really insecure and I was afraid that you wouldn't like me or you were going to make fun of me. So I selfishly said that. I'm so sorry.

I'm cleaning up the ugly words and the ugly heart beneath the surface, but it still comes back. It's never the last ugly thing that I've said. Or maybe I get my lust under control and only to see pride sprout fresh.

[6 : 57] Or maybe you're patient with the first child and then the second one comes in and you've run out. Ah, did so well the first time. It can leave you feeling discouraged, can't it?

Why do I even bother? Can anything ever really make this yard full of weeds, this heart full of sin, beautiful once and for all?

Yes. Yes. That's God's answer. Whether you feel that that's possible right now or not, whether you think, not in my life, not my experience, stick with me because God wants to tell you about Jesus. About Jesus' green thumb, you might say. How Jesus actually makes this work in us. So he starts here in this passage we just read by acknowledging the problem we were just considering.

The problem of sin. This persistent struggle that we face in our lives. Notice verse 1, we are imperfect. Verse 2, we have a conscience that feels things like sinful and ashamed and guilty.

[8 : 24] Verse 3, we're reminded of our sins every year. That's the limitation of this otherwise good system that God puts in place in the Old Testament.

With all these sacrifices sacrifices that we read about. You know, what do they do? They remind you of sin. It's a constant reminder. They remind you, but they can't actually make you perfect. Can they? So you have to pull the weeds again next year. Over and over. And that will never change because, verse 4, it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. No matter how often, no matter how many of them, no matter how pure they are, they're not going to deal with sin. Every year, God's people would go to one of their biggest holidays, Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.

And it's all about sin needing to be dealt with. Another goat sent away. It highlights our need just as the family getting ready to go to the temple to go to church and they have to go get the goat from the backyard to sacrifice again.

[9 : 39] It's a reminder of our distance from God. The uncleanness of God's people. The priests are always standing there with blood on their hands.

Their work's never finished. And the writer here says this, the fact that the blood is needed repeatedly proves that it is not ultimately effective.

That blood couldn't forgive sins and make the worshiper perfect. Gifts and sacrifices can't perfect the heart, the conscience, Hebrews 9.9.

There's always more needed. This sacrificial system, it's called the law here in Hebrews 10, revealed sin, but couldn't forgive it.

It exposed dirt, but it couldn't clean it. It showed our broken relationship with God, but it couldn't fix it. It declared guilt, but couldn't remove it.

[10 : 39] It was the most important thing. It was the most important thing. It was the most important thing. Even repeated religious rituals commanded by God. In other words, the very best religious performance. Even that.

Those were shadows. Not the real thing. Without a heart change, they leave us imperfect, guilty, sinful.

Right? Not what my hands have done can save my guilty soul. Not all my prayers and sighs and tears can bear this awful load.

Many hymn writers have confessed this. We can't do enough. Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth had this spot that she couldn't wash out.

Bunyan's Pilgrim had his heavy burden that he couldn't bear. Hawthorne's Hester Prynne had her scarlet A that she couldn't remove. There is a persistent problem that people have long acknowledged between us and God.

[11 : 43] Some of us still try to work it off. You know, to pay it back, to balance the scales. Maybe if I do some good things, some religious exercises.

That's a temptation. Increasingly, our modern world likes to do something kind of new and different. We like to avoid altogether.

We would like to say, you know, this sin stuff, that's really pretty negative. It's kind of discouraging. Why don't you church people stop talking about sin so much?

Let's just pretend it's not really a problem. It's too hard to deal with, right? How about a fresh perspective? Bible teacher Nancy Guthrie lists many ways we deal with sin today.

I've added a few of my own. You might recognize some of these. We deny it, excuse it, redefine it, run from it, ignore it, blame others for it.

[12 : 53] Aha, I just want to, I need to use that one. Lie about it, rationalize it, justify it, medicate it, numb ourselves to it, look for people who make us feel comfortable with it.

we're very enlightened. We know how to deal with sin. It's really not a problem. Except that in spite of all that enlightened perspective on our sin, it's not so bad, right?

Well, our hearts tell us that God and His Word are actually right. While percentages of Americans who believe that we are sinful, that we have a sin problem, those are dropping.

Percentages battling feelings of inadequacy, anxiety, insecurity, feeling not good enough, those are skyrocketing off the charts.

In other words, we haven't escaped what people have known for centuries. We have a cosmic, huge problem.

[14 : 05] Broken sinners are hopelessly lost without a sacrifice to restore us to a holy God. That's our problem. And you may be thinking, hold on, hold on, I thought this church believed in grace.

Friends, we do. This is why we need grace. Grace, big need, big sin, bigger Savior, right?

That's why we have to be honest about our sin. Don't forget the reality of our plight, our struggle. We're not okay and we shouldn't pretend to be.

Maybe you need to remember on your way to church that reality because you don't have an animal with you and your family as a reminder. Maybe you need to remember that coming empty-handed means nothing in my hands I bring simply to thy cross I cling.

Foul I to the fountain fly. Wash me, Savior, or I die. Right? The cross itself is a constant reminder of our sin.

[15 : 19] We come to worship confession and assurance in our services every week, daily in our own worship, our reminders. Baptism and the Lord's Supper with broken body and shed blood are reminders of our need, our problem.

See, the right religious ritual has never been enough no matter how many times you go through the motions. Remember Derek read earlier from the prophet Amos saying the sacrifices have to match the heart and the life, justice and righteousness.

David in his psalm of confession says it's not the animal sacrifice that God longs for. Yeah, God put those in place but they're pointing to what God's longing for.

What is that? David says God's sacrifice is a broken and contrite heart. You say, but I thought we needed blood too, right?

What happened to the blood? Remember Hebrews just told us without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. But obviously not bulls or goats blood.

[16 : 43] That doesn't do it. Human flesh has rebelled. We are the sinners. Our garden has become full of weeds.

So perfect human obedience and the blood of a human sacrifice are needed to pay for sin. And I hope that's a little bit shocking to hear me say it that way but listen carefully.

Dozens of religions since biblical times all the way up to the present day all believe and teach that reality. That's not something that most religions disagree on.

There's a problem. A massive problem and it's on us to fix it. Do better. Give a child.

Be pure. different options set in different ways. Every religion says something like that. Here's the difference.

[17 : 48] Only one God provides the sacrifice himself as utterly unique to Christianity.

That's what this next section shows us. When we can't seem to get enough weeds out of the garden for good, here is our perfect sacrifice.

Jesus entered into the world becomes man with the words of Psalm 40 on his lips. It's yet another Old Testament passage referencing the limitations of that sacrificial system.

Instead of that, what did God do? God prepared a body for his son who came to do his father's will. Remember what Jesus said? My food is what? To do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work. That's John 4. John 17, Father, I accomplished the work you gave me to do.

[18 : 55] Always perfectly obedient. Yes, we've needed that. That's where this perfect sacrifice starts. It's what we call Jesus' active obedience, doing all of his father's will.

He comes to do his father's will including the offering of his body as the sacrifice once and for all. Here's his passive suffering obedience. It's his substitutionary death. Remember the priest, remember what he would do?

He'd place his hands on the head of the goat. It was a picture of transferring to the goat the sin of the people. The goat, the substitute, would take the sin and would be sent away, far away, so that the people could stay near, stay close to God.

The goat is living a shadow of the reality that comes when our sin is actually transferred to Jesus who becomes sin for us, burying our sins in his body on the tree.

[20 : 06] Right? Perfect human obedience and the blood of the perfect human sacrifice. Do you see that? His life and his death means that Jesus' sacrifice unlike all the others for the first time can now be a one time unrepeatable once for all time sacrifice that actually cleanses us and brings us to God.

It's not a picture anymore. It's the real thing. Jesus didn't keep offering himself as a sacrifice did he? No. No. He appeared once for all to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

It's Hebrews 9 26. Once for all. By the way if someone asks you why Christians no longer follow the details of the ceremonial law this old sacrificial system and people ask that question how come all that stuff in Leviticus how come y'all only do some of those things and you don't actually believe the other parts is that what I hear?

That's not quite right. But when we're reading in Leviticus and Numbers and Bible reading plan and we're thinking why is it that we don't do we just decide that we don't like him anymore it was too bloody and we don't like that it was mess it's not arbitrary sacrifices we're pointing us to the perfect sacrifice showing us our need a shadow that the real thing was coming but now that the real thing the perfect sacrifice has come what does he say Jesus does away with the first sacrifice now don't get me wrong our relationship with God still requires sacrifice right it's it's just that Jesus has given that sacrifice once and for all and sat down because it is finished that's why we're not bringing animals with us this morning sin had left a crimson stain he washed it white as snow no more spots on us at all our burdens roll away forever at the cross we are free from them that that a that that sin that

I feel so identified with that I can't think of myself apart from it's gone there's no guilt in life no fear in death fear is gone hope is sure I'm now identified not with my sin but with Christ forever more once and for all this last section is where it's all headed he's going to keep talking about the sacrifice but especially show us the difference that Jesus perfect sacrifice makes for us let's read it verse 11 again every priest stands daily at his service offering repeatedly the same sacrifices which can never take away sins don't forget but when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins he sat down finished completed work at the right hand of God waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet there's the king of psalm 110 again now listen he's about to tell us the effect of Jesus sacrifice look at verse 14 for by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified finally made perfect all those sacrifices generation after generation they couldn't do it but this one does and he tells us what it means it means our consciences can be clear now because we have new hearts for God's will

[24 : 18] Jeremiah 31 again and our sins are forgiven forever Derek said earlier past present future so that even when we do fail it's going to be covered by a sufficient sacrifice that friends is permanent security you can't lose it you can't mess that up it never needs to be done again we are perfect forever did you get that perfect forever why do I need to say it so many times because you

don't feel that way do you most of us are probably if you're if you're following it all you're thinking perfect that's not me he's talking about you haven't seen me this weekend you don't know the thoughts of my heart you haven't heard me when I'm in traffic pastor when I'm upset when I'm alone the things that run through my mind perfect hardly what a joke

I need you to listen to God's word because he's going to tell you the truth about how you feel this is one of my favorite verses in the Bible I told you at the beginning it was going to show us Jesus is exactly what we need when we're struggling like that when we're battling shame when we're getting discouraged when we're not living up to even our own standards Jesus has perfected for all time that is completed action with ongoing reality he's done it once and it still counts who those who are being sanctified present tense process those who are still works in progress who still have weeds popping up who are still in the midst of spiritual warfare who still don't feel perfect and you say this isn't talking about me

I've still got so far to go and God says you're exactly the one that I'm talking about that is the whole point it's because you feel how far you have to go that I want you to know that I've made you perfect in Jesus he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion at the day of Christ Jesus and it's not just one day someday already today your father what remembers your sins no more he sees you in that perfect obedience that perfect sacrifice of Jesus that's what's true about you I want to picture it for you this way because we have a tough time wrapping our mind around this if you're thinking of your gardens or your yards or your hearts that are full of weeds some of you saw the beauty of Augusta National Golf Course last weekend maybe you don't have to confess it's just I'm just going to give you one picture I have never been there but I have been assured that it is scientifically proven there are no weeds on the entire golf course not a single weed pristine grass fairways and greens surrounded by azaleas and dogwoods and magnolias blooming in spring turf grass cared for by master gardeners absolutely perfect when Hebrew says Jesus makes you perfect forgives all of your sins and remembers them no more it's like he takes the garden of your life and he drops a hole from Augusta National down over it about ten feet off the ground okay so that God looks down at your life and he sees the perfect weed free always obeying his will version of you every moment of every day that's what

God sees perfect forever your heart can truly say I need no other argument I need no other plea I need no other weed treatment I need no other sacrifice it is enough that Jesus died and that he died for me he gave me that perfect sacrifice that covers me completely there is no longer any offering for sin no more sacrifice for sins now that could be scary if when you say that you mean there's no way to fix what's broken that a sacrifice is still desperately needed but we can't find one that's not what this is saying no no quite the opposite this means that there is no more sacrifice needed because the perfect sacrifice has come once and for all no longer any offering needed you don't owe a dime sorry

[29 : 52] Jimmy that's reality you're acceptable to God standing before him perfect with no sins! no weeds visible in his view of you you can walk into his throne room today covered by Jesus even though you know down beneath where you and others see there's still weeds you see them but that's not the most important thing this means so many exciting things the writer is going to tell us about next week I'm just going to mention a couple as we close it means you can be unashamedly joyful in living with God on your best day and on your worst day this is the no condemnation in Christ Jesus part of your life that you often forget when you're licking your wounds from your battle against Satan and sin see your conscience is now clean so that when Satan tells you you failed too often to talk to God about it you say oh no no

I fail so often that Jesus talks to God I'm perfect in his sight that's what you say Martin Luther put it this way he used to say the devil would accuse him of being a sinner and he started responding to the devil by agreeing with him and then reply yes that's true but Christ died for sinners so Satan when you say I'm a sinner you do not terrify me but you comfort me immeasurably that's how much you need to believe this next thing it can do you can see the wonder of Jesus obedient and substitutionary sacrifice and what it does is it makes you want to look up from your weedy garden that you're so focused on and you want it to look more like Augusta National overlaying above it God writes his law on your heart and mind so that you say I don't want to water the weeds anymore look at the beauty ahead for me that God sees already I don't want to feed the sin in my life anymore because think of how glorious it will be to shine forever with the beauty the image of Jesus why wait any longer

Holy Spirit plant some of them azaleas right down here right now right that's what your heart wants there's such hope for discouraged gardeners like us who just feel like we can't get rid of the weeds fast enough Jesus has already made you perfect forever deep breath big smile permanent security come confessing your sins and then standing to sing Christ is mine forever more and if that's true for you it has to change how you view others too this is what I mean the people in your grace group the people you sit in a session meeting with the people in your neighborhood the people in your marriage in your youth group your kids your parents are being sanctified you're going to look at their gardens from your five to six foot view most of the time right and what are you going to see a lot of weeds you're good at it me too and you're going to want to give up on them just like they're wanting to give up when all they see is the weeds the next time you think that

I want you to look up a few feet above them and see the view of Augusta National ten feet over their garden let it fill your heart with patience with hope she's perfect in the eyes of God he's not just the way he'll always be she's being sanctified and you're going to want to be there for that don't give up it's going to be beautiful because God's doing it you've got to see people differently that's what it means for your faith to find a resting place in the sacrifice of Jesus it means that one day you're going to come around amen corner in heaven and see what you already look like to God right by the river of living water and the tree of life there's going to be a pristine fairway a perfect green surrounded by the glorious flowers of your unique personality and gifting with not a weed in sight that is who you really are today that is the truest version of you and to see it you just look up at the one who sacrificed himself to remove all your weeds who's offered his body to do the will of God all the way to the point of death who sits at the right hand of God today looking at you covering you with his love and saying oh look at that dear one struggling he's perfect already she's beautiful completely they're mine forever he loves you like that let's pray

Jesus for your final and perfect sacrifice we give you great thanks and we ask for your help because believing that's what's true of us is hard for us when it doesn't feel like it would you give us great comfort in your love in your grace in your forgiveness in your presence with us today and always strengthen our faith by helping it to rest now and always in Jesus we ask in his name amen for more information visit us online at southwood.org who