

Hebrews 10:1-18

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[0 : 00] Good morning, church. If you will join me in your copy of God's Word, we'll be in Hebrews chapter 10.!

Hebrews chapter 10, verses 1 through 18. So far in Hebrews, especially the last couple of chapters, we've seen the superiority of Christ's priesthood over the Levitical order, the Levitical priesthood, the superiority of the new covenant He ushered in, and of the heavenly permanent tabernacle, or dwelling place with God, over the man-made tent and temple.

And today, we'll continue to see the superiority of Christ's sacrifice over those offered in the Old Testament. So let's read our text.

Hebrews 10, 1 through 18. And this is the Word of God. And it reads, 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 sins every year, for it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

[1 : 47] Consequently, when Christ came into the world, He said, Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me. In burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure.

Then I said, Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book. 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 sin. But when Christ had offered for a single time, a single, sorry, 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. 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 law on their hearts and write them on their minds.

[3 : 13] 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. Amen.

So, to understand this text this morning, we're actually going to do it by answering a series of questions. The first two questions, the text explicitly answers.

It's really obvious and straightforward. And then there are four questions I believe the text begs for us to understand the old and new sacrifices under the old and new covenants. So, normally I try to have points of very practical applications as I prepare for teaching.

But in many ways, the next chunk of text after our text this morning provides the application for our passage. That doesn't mean that there's not application. It just means that you may have to wait a little bit to really answer the question, what do I do about that today?

So, the application of a text like ours, which focuses on the superiority of Christ, specifically in His sacrificial work, demands a generic but often overlooked response of awe, of worship, and of obedience.

[4 : 22] So, our first question that we'll be answering this morning, in what ways were the old sacrifices inadequate? In what ways were the old sacrifices inadequate?

Two reasons that appear obvious in the text this morning. First reason, and I'll repeat them as I go, they could not bring access to God. And second reason, they could not remove sin or guilt.

So, first sub point, they could not bring access to God. This is in verses 1 through 2. And it reads, So, this morning, as I was, not this morning, but as I was deciding what book we would read in the Aletheia way, today was actually the day for the church history moment.

But I decided that we'd read a book that actually demonstrates a point that I wanted to make in the sermon, that the entirety of Scripture, you could argue, is themed by and is characterized by this idea of dwelling or communing with God.

Man dwelt with God in the garden. And as Tim Mackey from the Bible Project puts it, God's space and man's space over here were totally overlapping.

[6 : 01] So, if you think about God's space and man's space like a Venn diagram, it would be two perfectly overlapping circles in the garden. And then as man fell in sin, those spaces were separated.

Man could no longer be in the presence of God. And thank God this is not the end of the story. And in fact, we actually have a picture or viewpoint of the end of the story in Revelation.

So, listen to these words from chapter 21. It says, It says, So, from the beginning, from God immediately sacrificing an animal to clothe Adam and Eve in Genesis 3 after the fall, until this beautiful snapshot into the future from Revelation, God has been working out His plan to create a place for God and man to dwell together once more.

And throughout history, especially in the Old Testament history, there were these pockets of space where this Venn diagram, where God's space and man's space could overlap. God and man could draw near to the presence of God.

Namely, those spaces were the tabernacle and the temple. This Old Testament access was there, but it was extremely limited. One man, once a year, could access to God.

[7 : 49] All others had to stay outside of God and man's overlapping space. And so it remained until the right sacrifice would appear. So, reason number two, why the Old Testament sacrifices were not adequate.

They could not remove sin or guilt. And this is found throughout a couple of different places in our text, verses 2 through 4 and verse 11. Let's read those.

Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered sacrifices, since the worshippers, 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 goats and bulls to take away sin. And then he repeats it in verse 11, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sin.

So in order to access God, to draw near to Him, one must be completely sinless. We know that all have sinned, choosing to define right and wrong for ourselves, and all have rebelled against God.

[8 : 59] We know that God, being just, cannot simply look past sin, or even forgive sin just willy-nilly. But to be just, He must punish sin, so our sin must be paid for.

Animals were not adequate for this task. A person who did not have a debt to pay himself had to take our place, to pay our debt, to take our sin, and to give us His righteousness.

The Old Testament sacrifices were a mere shadow of the true sacrifice, Christ. And the shadow of something is meaningless without the substance itself.

So if you remember who this book is being written to, it's this church of primarily Hebrews who are being tempted to practice the culturally acceptable version of Christianity, which at that time basically meant practice Judaism, and tag Christ on to the end of it.

And so the author is writing a response to that, saying, no, the old has passed away, the new has been ushered in. And so again, the shadow of something is meaningless without the substance of that shadow.

[10 : 13] So these sacrifices had to be offered continually, which meant that they were unable to cleanse the worshiper from their sins. And these continual sacrifices were a constant reminder of sin and lacked real atonement.

They were unable to perfect the conscience of the worshiper, so they were left feeling guilty. They were wondering, they would have been left wondering how it was that they could actually enter into the presence of God.

And I think looking back into the Old Testament, you might assume, if you aren't paying attention to this idea, that the people are continually offering sacrifices as if they were atoning for sin. But God sent prophets over and over to tell them that this was not the case. So in Psalm 51, David talks about this. Let's go ahead and turn there this morning.

Psalm 51. Starting in verse 16.

[11:34] He writes, For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it. You will not be pleased with the burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart.

O God, you will not despise. Then skipping down. He says, Then you will delight in right sacrifices, and burnt offerings, and in whole burnt offerings, and then bulls will be offered on your altar.

So, how is it that these Old Testament sacrifices were pleasing to God? David clearly understood that the animal itself did nothing to take away the sin.

Why else would he be running to God, begging for mercy in verses 1-2, if you look back. He says, Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love, according to your abundant mercy. Blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. So, David is saying that these Old Testament sacrifices, he knows that they don't atone for sin, because if he did, he would just offer the animal, and that would be the end of the story.

[12:40] But he's going to God, begging him for mercy. He's doing the action, but he knows that he has to go to God, for he's the one who grants mercy. And so, this was the point.

God had made promises to his people that a redeemer had come. Israel was meant to be waiting for this Messiah, but instead settled for the shadow over the substance, for empty ritual rather than repentant hearts.

They took what was supposed to be an outward symbol of faith, and made it into a substitute for faith. So again, they took what was supposed to be this outward symbol of inward faith, and made it into a substitute for faith itself.

So back to our text today, our second question. And I have to admit, this is the one that, if I was going to regret framing the sermon around questions, this question is probably the worst worded one.

It says, Jesus' sacrifice was effective in what ways? So Jesus' sacrifice was effective in what ways? Some of these are going to be brief. There are six of them found in our text this morning.

[13:57] So firstly, the six ways. It reflects God's eternal will. It reflects God's eternal will.

This is found in verses 5 through 7. Before I read it, I want to emphasize the importance of what's going on in this text. So this is from Psalm 40, which Doug read this morning.

And note that the author is saying that Christ said these words when he came into the world of himself. So what David wrote in first person a thousand years ago, Christ is saying, I am the fulfillment of these words.

And this is not the only example of this happening in the scriptures. Psalm 16 and Psalm 22 are some other examples of this type of phenomenon taking place.

So let's read verses 5 through 7. It says, Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me.

[15:04] In burnt offerings, in sin offerings, you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written to me in the scroll of the book.

Now, if you're an astute listener and you are listening to Pastor Doug read from Psalm 40 this morning, you'll notice that there's actually a slight difference in what's in this text as the Hebrew author records it in what is in Psalm 40 in the Old Testament.

Namely, in verse 5, our translator or our writer says, A body you have prepared for me. In Psalm 40, it says, Ears you have given me.

And so that's kind of, it seems like it's a different thing, but in Hebrew, there was an idiom of this idea. Literally, he's saying, Ears you have dug for me.

So it's this idea that God prepared a body. It was a Hebrew idiom again for the entire body. So he's saying the same thing. So as the author of Hebrews is writing now in Greek to these people, he's saying what the Old Testament author meant as he's recording it in this passage.

[16:20] Just want to point that out. So again, Christ's sacrifice reflects God's eternal will. Paul speaks of this idea in Ephesians chapter 3 verses 8 through 12.

So if you'll turn with me there, we'll note a couple of things. He writes, To me, though in the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of

Christ and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.

So it says here that the eternal purpose of God has been realized in the sacrifice and then in the resurrection of Christ. The eternal purpose. So everything else in all of time and creation centers around Christ as a supreme priest, king, servant, and sacrifice for his people.

Why? So that the manifold wisdom of God might be on display for all to see as we bow down in worship and in awe. So the second reason why Christ's sacrifice or what Christ's sacrifice accomplishes it replaces the inadequate system before it.

[18:14] And this is really simple and straightforward. Verses 8 through 9 back in our text. The author is expositing this quote from Psalm 40.

He said, When he said above, You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings, these 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. So he explains that Christ came to do away with the shadow, the old sacrificial system to now reveal the substance of God's purpose for his people.

So Christ replaces, his sacrifice replaces the old inadequate system. Thirdly, Christ's sacrifice removes sin and does so permanently.

His sacrifice removes sin and does so permanently. This is in verses 11 through 12. There's a comparing and contrasting going on between the old system and the new.

[19:29] And it reads, Every priest stands daily at his service offering repeatedly the same sacrifices which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for a single time, I said that last time, for all time, a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.

So we have repeated sacrifices offered by continually standing priests for there was no place to sit since there was always more sin to sacrifice for given over time which couldn't take away sin compared to one sacrifice for all time which perfectly removed sin from God's people.

This had been completed as Christ wrested from his work at the right hand of God. And so, the Old Testament, some Old Testament Jews had this idea that there was something mystical about the sacrifice that the animal, as it was given to be sacrificed, that somehow our sin was imputed, literally imputed to that animal.

And this was the picture of what was supposed to be going on but wasn't actually what was happening as David expresses. And so, we need to then be able to answer the question, how then does man's death on a cross or a man's death on a cross appease the wrath of God?

And in a word, the way that this works is through substitution. So, let's turn to Romans 3 verses 21 through 28.

[20:59] we'll see this idea of Christ's substitution on our behalf. And I know most of us know this to be true, but what a beautiful thing to glory in and to revel in this morning.

Romans 3 21 through 28 reads, But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it.

The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified by His grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood to be received by faith.

This was to show God's righteousness because in His divine forbearance He had passed over former sins. It was to show His righteousness at the present time so that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by a law of faith. For we hold that the one is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.

[22:22] So Paul says here that Christ was a propitiation, which means that His death was not merely physical but was spiritual as His perfect communion with God from eternity past was cut off and the Father poured out His white-hot eternal wrath on His only Son.

Christ bore the weight for every sin committed by His people past, present, and future. And our text this morning says that by a single offering, He perfected for all time.

And Paul writes here in Romans that God passed over or looked beyond the former sins, delaying His judgment to be poured out either on Christ or on us.

He took our place under the crushing weight of sin so that we could be justified before God. Christ died, but the grave could not hold Him. The greatest act of evil ever committed, the murder of the only innocent man ever to walk this earth, was the death blow to Satan.

The only power He had over humanity had just been swallowed up as a man was killed and the Father poured out His wrath on His only Son. So this leads to the fourth way that Christ's sacrifice is effective.

[23 : 37] It destroyed His enemies. It destroyed His enemies. So this is in verse 13 of our text this morning. Verse 13, it says, Waiting from that time until His enemies should be made a footstool for His feet.

So this is actually quoted or referencing back to a psalm that we've talked about in Hebrews, Psalm 110, where it talks about how Christ would be after the order of Melchizedek.

This is from that same psalm. So Paul reflects on the fulfillment of this prophecy in Psalm 110 in Philippians 2 verses 9 through 11. He says, Therefore God has exalted Him, Christ, and bestowed upon Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

So the question then becomes not if we will submit to God, but rather when we will submit to God. Will it be voluntary and will we rule in the new heaven alongside Him, or will we be forced to bow as His opposition and footstool for His feet?

So Christ's sacrifice destroys and disables His enemies. Fifthly, His sacrifice sanctifies and perfects the saints forever. This is found in verses 10 and verse 14.

[25 : 10] Verse 10, And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And skipping to verse 14, By a single offering He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

So our status before God has been set through Christ's sacrifice. He not only took on our guilt and shame, but He also imputed to us His righteousness so that we could have His status as a perfect child before God.

As His beloved children, we've been set apart or sanctified for holiness. And the last way that Christ's sacrifice is effective, sixthly, it fulfills the promise of a new covenant.

It fulfills the promise of a new covenant. So, again, the Old Testament believers, the Old Testament saints, were to be looking forward to the day when a new covenant would come. This covenant is talked about in several places, Jeremiah 31, the prophet Ezekiel, and so forth.

So the author of Hebrews is actually re-quoting or recycling a quote that he's already talked about, Jeremiah 31. He's making a specific point with it.

[26 : 26] The point is that the new sacrifice had to be made and had to be effective because God promised that it would be. And this is really simple, but let's read our text and see how the new covenant is fulfilled through Christ.

Verses 15 through 18. It says, 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 any forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

So it is as if the author is saying to these Hebrews who are tempted to go back to the ways of Jerusalem, God promised long ago that he would make a new and a better covenant and here it is. Under the old covenant there was a constant reminder of sin, as we saw in verse 3, but under the new covenant because of the effective sacrifice that has been made, God remembers our sin no more.

[27 : 32] So the next question, I believe this text begs, we've kind of, if you're paying attention, we've made our way all the way through the text in its straightforward fashion, but I believe it begs a few more questions that will help us to understand the greatness and the magnitude of Christ's sacrifice.

So the next question, question 3, what was the role of Levitical sacrifice? If it didn't take away sins, then what were they doing? Why all the death of animals?

To answer this question, let's turn to Galatians chapter 3, as Paul writes about this subject.

Galatians 3, 21 through 25, and it reads, is the law then contrary to the promises of God?

Certainly not. For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. But the scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.

[29 : 01] But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian. So John MacArthur comments on this text, and I'll try to read this quote well. The Greek word for guardian denotes a slave whose duty it was to take care of a child until adulthood.

The guardian escorted the children to and from school and watched over their behavior at home. Guardians were often strict disciplinarians, causing those under their care to yearn for the day when they would be free from their guardian's custody.

The law was our tutor, which by showing us our sins was escorting us to Christ. The law was never meant to give us access to God. And over and over in the Old Testament, God says to His people, if you keep my covenant and obey my commands, I will be your God and I will have mercy on you. Yet over and over we see Israel and we see ourselves breaking this covenant. These sacrifices were inadequate to rectify the relationship between God and His people.

And this was the very role of Levitical sacrifice. Firstly, to paint a picture of the holiness of God, who He is, and what is required to be in His presence.

[30 : 12] So to paint a picture of the holiness of God and what is required to be in His presence. And to show us that we could not keep the law or to undo sin through good action.

So to show us that we could not keep the law. So in a sad case of sinful irony, those Hebrews who were clinging to the sacrificial system as a means of inward cleansing were missing the primary lessons they were meant to learn through it.

So I want to reflect on how animal sacrifice was misunderstood and misused in the Old Testament because I think we have something to learn about their sinful tendencies and how we might see the same type of sinful tendencies in us.

So our next question, number four, if you're counting, how was animal sacrifice misunderstood and misused? So Old Testament Hebrews were constantly being corrected for treating sacrifice like many pagan religions would, a ritual method to appease God.

So the idea was that the gods and the pagan religions around them were angry with them and in order to please them they would sacrifice things.

[31 : 26] Sometimes they would sacrifice animals, sometimes they would sacrifice their own children to try to appease these gods. And this is not the way that God desired Old Testament Jews to sacrifice to him.

It wasn't that he was angry and this made him happy but it was something else going on, right? So our author firmly asserts to that proposition that the blood of animals cannot take away sin.

This is not a new idea but many Israelites seem to believe they could act how they wanted and simply go through the religious ritual to undo the wrong that they had committed. Many today view the Old Testament in this light and sadly many today view Christianity in a similar manner.

So let's take a look at a couple of texts together to establish this point. Only one to turn to. Isaiah, the first one, Isaiah 1. And after reading this text it would be hard to come away with the idea that God desires animal sacrifice as a means in and of itself to make one pure.

So Isaiah 1. Verses 11-18. This is pretty strong language. God's speaking through Isaiah. He says, I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and of the fat of well-fed beasts.

[32 : 54] I do not delight in the blood of bulls or of lambs or of goats. When you come to appear before me, who is required of you this trampling of my courts, bring no more vain offerings.

Incense is an abomination to me. When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you. Even though you make many prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are full of blood.

Wash yourselves. Make yourselves clean. Remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes. Cease to do evil. Learn to do good. Seek justice.

Correct oppression. Bring justice to the fatherless. Plead the widow's cause. Then this beautiful change. Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord.

Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool. So again, Israel was seeking to undo the sin that they had committed by going through a religious ritual.

[33 : 58] As David already reminded us in Psalm 51, that the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit and a contrite heart. Hosea adds to this in Hosea 6, verses 6-7.

He says, I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings. But like Adam, they transgressed the covenant. There they dealt faithlessly with me.

Similar sentiments are expressed in 1 Samuel, other places in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, Micah, and several of the Psalms and so on. Religious actions that they may be commanded by God cannot appease righteous vengeance against sin.

So, the actions that we do are not to undo sin that we've committed. The obedience that we have doesn't cover over our sins. This is an important point because we can have this type of debtor's ethic towards God where we do something wrong, we have a bad day, we make a poor decision and we seek to somehow balance out the scales through good works and through action.

Even things just like Israel, doing things that God had commanded but doing them with the attitude that it somehow puffs up our position before God and God despises this type of attitude and I think we would do well to consider how we may be doing this in some regard today.

[35 : 25] So, our fifth question that I believe our text begs this morning, what made sacrifice in the Old Testament acceptable to God? So, what does good sacrifice look like in the Old Testament?

In short, what makes it acceptable is the heart and the attitude of the worshiper. Now, Isaiah, the text we just read above, entreats us to cast away sin, to do good, to seek justice, to stand up for those who are oppressed.

Hosea stated that steadfast love and knowledge were what God desired and David said again that the sacrifice is of the Lord or a broken spirit and a contrite heart. So, without this attitude, the sacrifice was just an empty ritual.

Religious activity with no change of heart, going through the motions because that's what we're supposed to do. But this is not the attitude that God desired of His people then, nor is it the attitude He desires now.

Instead of seeking repentance, forsaking sin, and walking in the righteousness God has called us to, we try to undo sin by going to church or Bible study, praying, or reading the Bible.

[36 : 33] And, to kind of shift gears, many parents across the Southeast and other pockets of cultural Christianity have the attitude that getting their family to church or to youth group is pretty much what their role as spiritual leaders sums up to be.

And there's a common trend over the last several decades of teens leaving the church once they go off to college. Many never return, but a high percentage of the ones who do come back once they have kids and realize that someone has to teach them morality, so they enlist the church.

And while it would be easy to assume that families bring their kids to church in this way, they're not ideal, isn't that positive, and while certainly God can and has worked through ill-intended worship, I want to push back on this idea that God wants worship or wants the activity without the heart behind it.

So, as I was studying this, I just have this like burning question, which is our next question, last one. Why does God despise Israel's empty sacrifice so much?

question six. Why does God despise Israel's empty sacrifice so much? It would seem based off of the text that we've read that worshiping God in the wrong way or with the wrong attitude is actually worse than not attempting to worship Him at all.

[38 : 00] Right? These Israelites were trampling God's courts according to Him. In Isaiah 1, again, He said He had enough burnt offerings to no longer bring vain offerings.

The incense is an abomination that He says I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly together, that my soul hates them and they are a burden.

So, Israel attempting to do the right thing but doing it seeking to gain favor before God was absolutely unacceptable to Him. So, however this idea relates to our worship today, I'm not totally sure 100% what that connection is but however it relates to us today, we want to make sure that we're not making the same error that these Israelites were.

Keep in mind that they thought they were in the right in some regard. They thought that their worship was acceptable because they were doing the right things but their understanding was deeply flawed.

And as I explored this question, I was under a great deal of conviction in my own attitude which if I'm honest sometimes reflects empty ritual more than a broken and contrite heart.

[39 : 11] It's really easy to go through the motions and it's really easy to get stuck in a rut to come and to attend to be doing the right things but to do so with the wrong attitude.

So, I think we can answer this question of why does God despise it so much in a couple of right ways. Certainly, Israel's sacrifice as an excuse to continue and known sin was presumptuous, dismissing of God's holiness and flippant towards sin.

But I think the answer cuts even more deeply than apathy and a lack of zeal. And I think if we look into Hebrews more closely, we'll see the depth of the corruption both in the heart of Israel and if we're willing in our heart as well.

So, I believe this concept circles back to the idea of drawing near to God. In our text, circling back to chapter 1, it says, 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.

So, the purpose of sacrifice, again, is to be able to draw near to God. The author of Hebrews has been dealing with a great deal of heavy doctrine. While he has paused to give us a few exhortations along the way, he's mostly been building a case of Christ's superiority.

[40 : 33] But if you look after verse 18 in our text today, the author turns that focus on the application of this doctrine that he's been teaching. He sums up what he has taught so far in Hebrews 10, 19 through 21.

He says, Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he's opened for us through the curtain that is through his flesh, and since we have a great high priest over the house of God, so again, summing up where we are so far.

He concludes, based off of everything we've studied, let us draw near with a true heart and a full assurance of faith. So we've already talked about access to God, but this phrase, drawing near, is a favorite of the author of Hebrews.

He uses it seven times in his epistle. Chapter 4, verse 16, he says, Let us draw near with confidence through the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Chapter 7, verse 25, he says, He's able to save forever those who draw near to God through him since he always lives to make intercession for them. In chapter 11, verse 6, Without faith, it is impossible to please God, for he who draws near to God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of those who seek him.

[41 : 52] And again, circling back to this idea of access to God, one of Christ's names, Emmanuel, God with us. Christ drew near to us, as John says in his gospel. He literally, it says, he tabernacled with us and made a dwelling place with us so that through his perfect righteousness imputed to us and our sin imputed to him, we might now draw near to God.

And we can do this to some degree now, but Revelation, as we read, shows us that one day we will dwell with God perfectly as our space and God's space can once again overlap because Christ's sacrifice was perfect and actually took away sin.

So the point is this, drawing near to God is the essence of the gospel itself and the purpose for which we were created. So let's answer this question, why was Israel's vain sacrifice such an abomination to God?

They were attempting to draw near to God flippantly, under their own merit and for selfish gain instead of for humble submission and worship for his great mercy.

So again, they were attempting to draw near to God flippantly. They weren't considering what it took for us to be in the presence of God. They weren't considering who God was and his holiness and they were believing that they could undo sin through enough good action thus appeasing God.

[43 : 10] And beloved, I think sometimes we have the same tendencies. We walk into the blood-bought presence of God as if we are owed something. We go through the empty routine of church glazing through scripture, not taking the time to get our mind right before a holy God.

If we've had a good week spiritually by whatever measuring stick we're using and we feel like we deserve God's love and if we struggle with sin we feel ashamed to approach God as if we ever deserve to be in his presence in the first place.

And this is the exact opposite of the message of the gospel and ignores our great need of God to show us mercy. Under the old covenant they knew that God was merciful but they did not know how it was that he would deal with sin but on this side of grace we get to see it and celebrate it in all its glory.

Through Christ's sacrifice we have a glorious access to God so let us draw near. Piper writes of this text The great aim of this writer of Hebrews is that we get near to God that we have fellowship with him that we not settle for a Christian life at a distance from God.

This drawing near is not a physical act it's not a building the tower of Babel by your achievements to get to heaven it's not necessarily going to a church building or walking to an altar at the front but it's an invisible act of the heart it's a directing of the heart into the presence of God who is as distant as the Holy of Holies in heaven and yet as near as the door of faith.

[44 : 43] He is commanding us to come to approach him and to draw near to God. Let us not worship God vainly as Old Testament Israel did going through the right actions without forsaking sin seeking to undo that sin by going to church reading the word and fellowshiping with believers.

And this morning if you're dealing with guilt and the weight of your own sin let us remember that Christ's sacrifice has removed our sin cleansed this from its effects and absorbed the wrath of God. It is finished Christ has accomplished this so let's praise the Lord together. Let's pray.