Once and For All

Hebrews 10:1-18 / John 3:16

10/16/22

The word basic means “constituting or serving as the basis or starting point”. The term “back to the basics” means to return to a simpler way of doing something or thinking about something. For example: The restaurant is getting back to basics in terms of food, using fresh ingredients to make simple, good food. If you get back to basics, this means you start to give your attention to the simplest and most important matters after maybe ignoring them for a while.

In the life of a Christian, sometimes with all the craziness of life, distractions, and spiritual ups and downs, it can become easy to forget the “Basics” of our salvation.

THE ONCE-FOR-ALL SACRIFICE OF CHRIST PROVIDES THE ULTIMATE CLEANSING AND FORGIVENESS THAT WAS IMPOSSIBLE UNDER THE OLD COVENANT!

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the author of the Sherlock Holmes detective novels, was a practical joker. One time he sent a telegram to twelve famous people in London whom he knew. It read: “Flee at once. All is discovered.” Although all twelve were upright citizens, but they all quickly left the country.

That story may be made up, but it illustrates the fact that a guilty conscience is a common thing. Truth is even in the church many are uncertain about their standing before God because of past sins. These ghosts from the past stay out of sight for a while, but then they come out of nowhere to haunt them.

* They wonder if anyone else knows what they have done.
* They’re fearful that the truth may leak out.
* But even more seriously, they wonder if God has truly forgiven them. They’re not sure how it will go when they stand before Him someday. Will God punish them in this life or in eternity for the terrible things that they have done?

Such people need the assurance that our text hammers home:

Through Christ’s obedience to God’s will at the cross, new covenant believers receive what those under the Law could not receive: **Total forgiveness**.

If the original readers were to go back to Judaism, with its sacrificial system, they would forfeit the tremendous benefits that Jesus Christ secured for them. His death on the cross fulfilled all that the old system pointed toward. What it could not do completely, He did, namely, provide total forgiveness for those who draw near to God through Him.

The old system, by its very design, barred the average worshiper from drawing near to God’s presence. Only the high priest could go into the Holy of Holies, and that only once a year. But in Christ, every believer has free access to God’s presence because Christ’s once-and-for-all sacrifice of Himself provides perfect standing with God.

The author piles up a number of synonymous phrases which show either negatively what the Law with its sacrifices could not do, or positively what Christ’s sacrifice did accomplish. Note:

* 10:1: The sacrifices of the Law could never “make perfect those who draw near.”
* 10:2: Those sacrifices could not completely cleanse the worshipers and take away their consciousness of sins.
* 10:3: Those sacrifices provided a yearly reminder of sins.
* 10:4: Those sacrifices could not take away sins.
* 10:10: By God’s will through the cross, “we have been sanctified” once for all.

All of these phrases add up to news that sounds too good to be true, and yet is true:

* In and through Christ we receive a complete, final, once for all pardon for all of our sins, past, present, and future!

We’re prone to say, “What’s the catch?” There’s no such thing as an absolutely free lunch, but there is such a thing as God’s absolutely free pardon from all of our sins. It is totally free to us, because Christ bore the awful penalty that we deserved to pay.

Before we work through the text, let me clarify that we are talking here about our standing or position before God in Christ. In our daily walk, when we sin, we need to confess our sins in order to receive what we may call “God’s family forgiveness.” But even our worst sins do not eradicate our positional forgiveness as children of God.

* For example, my sons entered my family through natural birth, and nothing that they do changes their standing as family members. But if they do me wrong, they need to make right and apologize so that our relationship is not hindered.
* Even so, like Peter we may fail the Lord badly, but our failures do not remove us from God’s family. We possess our standing in the family through the new birth, which provides total forgiveness. We maintain daily fellowship as God’s children by confessing our sins and asking forgiveness of the Father.

Our text falls into four sections.

* In 10:1-4, the author shows how the sacrifices of the Law could not completely remove the guilt of sin.
* In 10:5-10, he shows that Christ’s obedience to God’s will at the cross set aside the Old Testament sacrifices and provided for us perfect standing before God.
* 10:11-18 consists of an illustration and a quotation that both drive home the same point.
* In 10:11-14, the author illustrates the totality of our forgiveness by contrasting the unfinished, repetitive ministry of the Old Testament priests with the finished, all-sufficient sacrifice of Christ.
* Then in 10:15-18, he cites again the Old Testament prophecy of the new covenant (Jer. 31:31-34) to show that the total forgiveness that it promises means that the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ is sufficient and final.

**1. The sacrifices prescribed by the Law could not completely remove guilt and sin (10:1-4).**

In 10:1-2 we see that the Law was only the shadow of good things to come, and not the very form of things. For this reason, the repeated sacrifices could not make perfect those who draw near. Otherwise, they would have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had a consciousness of sins. “To make perfect” refers to our standing in God’s sight. It includes total cleansing from sin, so that we have a clean conscience. If our consciences are aware of sins that have not been confessed and forgiven, we will hesitate to draw near to God.

* Look at Adam and Eve. As soon as they sinned, they tried to hide from God’s presence. They didn’t want to face Him because of what they had done. Ever done something wrong to someone and have a hard time looking them in the eye, much less being around them? Even dogs have this sense of guilt, where they avoid you if they’ve done something that they know is wrong!

In 10:3 we see that the annual sacrifices (on the Day of Atonement) only provided a yearly reminder of sins.

* The fact that every year the people had to go through this ritual sacrifice again and again only showed that it had not completely removed their guilt. It put it off for another year, but just like our April 15th tax deadline, that day of reckoning kept coming around.

Then in 10:4 the author states plainly, “it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.”

* Animal blood has no permanent effectiveness for human sins. God designed that system of animal sacrifice to point ahead to His provision of the sacrifice of His own Son. As eternal God, Jesus’ sacrifice has infinite value. As man, His sacrifice atones for human sin in a way that the blood of animals never could.

It’s interesting that the word “reminded” (10:3) is the same Greek word used in the institution of the Lord’s Supper, where Jesus says, “Do this in remembrance of Me”

* While we are instructed to examine ourselves and confess our sins before partaking of the elements, the gospel transforms our remembrance from one of guilt to one of grace.
* The Lord’s Supper reminds us that the penalty we deserve for our sins was put completely on Jesus Christ. His death accomplished what the blood of animal sacrifices never could accomplish, namely, it took away all of our sin and guilt!

2. **Christ’s obedience to God’s will at the cross set aside the Old Testament sacrifices and provided perfect standing for us before God (10:5-10).**

These verses (10:5-10) make three points:

* ***THE CROSS WAS THE DIRECT WILL OF GOD.***
	+ The cross was not an accident or an unforeseen tragedy that took Jesus by surprise. It was not a temporary setback that God figured out how to turn for good. Rather, the cross was God’s predetermined plan, before the beginning of time, to deal with our sin. The Son of God would come into this world as a man, would fulfill through His obedience the complete Law of God, and then would die as the sacrifice that the justice of God demands as the payment for sins.
	+ By coming into this world specifically to go to the cross, Jesus not only provided the sacrifice for sins that we need, but He also provided a supreme example of resolute obedience to the complete will of God. The author twice repeats Jesus’ words from this psalm, “I have come to do Your will, O God.”
		- Luke 9:51 puts it, “He set His face to go to Jerusalem”
		- As Jesus prayed in the garden, “not My will, but Yours be done”

We cannot imagine how difficult it was for the sinless Son of God to be made sin for us. But His determined obedience to God’s will, no matter how difficult, teaches us to commit ourselves to obey His will, whatever the cost. You don’t decide to obey God at the moment of temptation. It has to be a rational commitment that you make before you find yourself facing temptation.

* ***CHRIST’S OBEDIENCE TO GOD’S WILL AT THE CROSS SET ASIDE THE OLD TESTAMENT SACRIFICES ONCE AND FOR ALL.***

*“...He cancels the first covenant in order to put the second into effect.* - 10:9. When the psalm states that God did not desire or take pleasure in sacrifices (10:5-6), it reflects a frequent theme in the Old Testament, that God did not desire sacrifices for their own sake. Rather, the sacrifices should reflect a repentant heart. David says this in Ps. 51:16, 17.

* + God is displeased when people go through the outward motions of worship, but their hearts harbor sin that they are unwilling to forsake. Today you can go to church and partake of communion, but if you are living in disobedience to God or if you are covering some sin in your heart, God is not pleased with your worship.
	+ But the author’s main point to his original readers is that the sacrifice of Christ on the cross permanently replaced the Old Testament sacrificial system. The cross supremely fulfilled and replaced that old system.
* **BY CHRIST’S OBEDIENCE TO GOD’S WILL AT THE CROSS, WE RECEIVE PERFECT STANDING BEFORE GOD ONCE AND FOR ALL**.

That is the point of 10:10. The author of Hebrews uses “sanctified” (made holy), to refer to “inward cleansing from sin” and “being made fit for the presence of God, so that …[we] can offer Him acceptable worship”. “Have been sanctified” is the Greek perfect tense, signifying a past action that has ongoing results. By way of contrast with the often-repeated Old Testament sacrifices, the one offering of Christ on the cross conveys to believers perfect standing before God for all time. As I explained, this refers to our position before God, not to our daily relationship. Though we are perfect in our standing before God, we need to continually progress daily in our growth in holiness.

**Conclusion**

You see when Adam & Eve sinned against God, they destroyed the bridge that linked us to God Himself. Sin separates us from who are created to follow. There was no fixing it. Nothing we could ever do in ourselves, through our self, or in ourselves could ever restore what had been broken. Not even the Old Covenant could truly fulfill God’s desire to restore what was broken...

But God being the awesome God He is had a plan. That plan would take some time, but until that time, The work around was the Old Covenant. But that was never to be the permeant, as God had another WAY!!!!

John 3:16:

*“For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.*

* His death obtained total forgiveness for ALL.
* His death perfected us for ALL time.
* His death sanctified us once for ALL.
* His death completely takes away the guilt of ALL our sins.

Through the New Way and New Covenant, the bridge that was broken between us and God has been restored, never to be broken ever again by sin!

This morning, it’s not about what you do, how many times you come to church, or even how many times you read your Bible.

The basic truth is, accepting & trusting in Christ alone, which then allows God to bestow upon you His grace & His total forgiveness...**ONCE AND FOR ALL**!