

**Record of Sermons delivered during the month of
December 2018**

(added progressively after each Sunday)

(see following pages)

Christ is the Offer of a Better Sacrifice

per S Olyott

(review so far)

The Apostle, you'll remember, has spent seven whole chapters revelling in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. For seven chapters he's been rejoicing in Who the Lord Jesus Christ is.

It's doubtful if you can enter into the second half of Hebrews if you have never entered into this first part.

Do you ever revel into, who the Lord Jesus Christ is? Is your heart ever engaged – that is taken up, excited – by the thought, simply, of Who He is. Seeing that He is uniquely superior. Greater than the prophets; greater than Moses; greater than Aaron; greater than the angels; greater than all!

Well, the Apostle has spent seven chapters doing that. Then from Chapter eight he begins to rejoice in what the Lord Jesus Christ has done.

Of course, He's only done, what He has done because He is who He is!

Now, he talks to us about the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. So far he's told us two things:

- Do you, as a believer, know God? Do you know God as your God? Do you know what it is to have a new nature, so that you desire to obey God? These are the blessings of the new Covenant.¹ The first thing our Lord has done: He has

1 ³¹ 'The days are coming,' declares the LORD,

'when I will make a new covenant
with the people of Israel
and with the people of Judah.

³² It will not be like the covenant
I made with their ancestors
when I took them by the hand
to lead them out of Egypt,
because they broke my covenant,
though I was a husband to them,'

declares the LORD.

³³ 'This is the covenant that I will make with the people of Israel
after that time,' declares the LORD.

'I will put my law in their minds
and write it on their hearts.

I will be their God,
and they will be my people.

³⁴ No longer will they teach their neighbour,
or say to one another, "KNOW the LORD,"

because they will all know me,
from the least of them to the greatest,'

declares the LORD.

'For I will forgive their wickedness

mediated a better Covenant.

- Do you know anything of access into the presence of God? You don't just come into a tabernacle – into a 'picture' of access. But you actually have access into the Holy Place and commune with your heavenly Father. Our Lord Jesus Christ has brought that about. Because He's a Priest of a better Tabernacle.

Having told us those two great things – He's the Mediator of a better Covenant and He's the Priest of a better Tabernacle – this morning he comes to tell us that the Lord Jesus Christ is the offerer of a better Sacrifice.

The passage divides easily into three sections:

- Verses 14 - 23 about the **past**, then
- Verse 24 – 28a about the **present**, then
- the remainder of verse 28, about the **future**.

The Apostle is going to tell us what the Lord has done in the past; what He is doing in the present, and then what He is going to do in the future.

He has appeared on earth; He is appearing in heaven; and He will yet appear, from heaven on earth.

There's a look backwards; a look upwards; and there's a look forwards.

- Verses 14 – 23, a look backwards. We'll see what our Lord Jesus Christ has done in the past. We'll see that He appeared once on the Earth.

“Didn't we consider verse 14 last week already? “ Let's remind ourselves what verse 14 said. After living a perfect life – without blemish – for the sake of His heavenly Father – to God – the Lord Jesus Christ went voluntarily to the Cross. He offered Himself!

On that Cross He spilt His blood. It was awful – the Son of God dying, crucified. How could He undertake such a Work? Well, He was upheld (still verse 14) by the eternal Spirit, as He did that Work. And the result has been that your consciences have been cleansed from dead works and you have been changed to serve the Living God.

You have pardon for your sins because of the Cross! Your life is changed so that you now serve God, because of the cross. So we start again, this morning: at the Cross!

Verse 15: The Old Testament talked about eternal life. The Old Covenant talked about forgiveness. All the Old Testament ritual, talked about 'cleansing'. But it couldn't give it to you! How can the blood of animals take away sin? And yet there were people in the Old Testament who were saved.

and will remember their sins no more.’

³⁵This is what the LORD says,

There were people in Old Testament times who were to enter into the promise of eternal inheritance, as verse 15 says. There were people then who were called by God to be His people and they came to know God. How is this possible when all they ever killed was animals, the blood of which could never take away sin? How come those Old Testament saints entered into the promise of eternal inheritance?

The answer is that the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ is so infinitely superior that it doesn't just benefit believers who lived after the event (of the Cross) it also benefits believers who lived before the event. Many an Old Testament person when he killed the animal he knew that the blood of that animal could never cleanse him from his sin, but he looked forward to the coming of the Great Sacrifice. He could see and understand that his present ritual was only a 'picture' of something better to come. His faith wasn't in the animal sacrifice, but his faith was in that better sacrifice to come.

So even in Old Testament days he entered into the blessings of the New Covenant, because of Christ's uniquely superior Sacrifice. He came into the blessings of eternal life because of Christ's death. Just like you have, who live after the event.

Now, says the Apostle giving an illustration, (verses 16 & 17) "Let's think for a moment about making a will."

"As long as you are alive," he's using the word 'covenant' (or testament), but talking about a will. "As long as you are alive, you can chop and change that will – at will!. You have \$10,000 maybe, that you want to leave to your great aunt, Agatha – and then she offends you. So you can change your mind and leave it to great uncle Harry. If he then offends you, you can then do something else with it. As long as you are alive, you can change the will as often as you like, because it has no legal force because you are still alive.

But now you're dead. That moment that 'will' comes into force. Now it's wording is beyond being changed. The moment you are dead its provisions are unalterable. How is this brought about? How does a will become certain? How does the will become secure? By the death of the testator. It is death that makes the will effective. Which brings all its benefits into operation. Nothing happens until death."

It's a very good illustration that he's using here in verses 16 & 17. Because our Lord Jesus Christ's Covenant is more of a will than a contract.

Yes, it is a contract between God the Father, God the Spirit and God the Son – where our Lord, Jesus Christ, stood for us as 'covenant head'. But as far as we are concerned the terms of the covenant are free gifts, to sinners through Jesus Christ. It provisions become certain to us how? By the death of the Testator. I was due for death, but the wrath of God fell on another. It was by Christ's death that I have entered into pardon. It's by His death that the benefits of the New

Covenant flow to me. It all becomes operational by death.

So he is talking about what Christ has done in the past. What Christ has done in the past is that he Died! But he's writing to Hebrews. Look at verse 18.

"Perhaps," he says, "this whole idea of a Covenant coming into operation because of blood seems strange, but you must remember," he says, "that even the Old Covenant didn't come into operation without the shedding of blood."

Verses 19 & 20. "All the provisions of the Old Covenant, didn't come into effect until they were ratified by Moses." Some of us have entered into covenant agreements: marriage, house sale, and so on. These covenants were made valid when the documents (a book) were signed. The Old Testament, the Old Covenant, that the man who keeps the 'law' shall 'live' by it, became valid when? "When Moses sprinkled the 'book' and all the people with blood, saying (verse 20), *'This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you.'*"

Nothing was any good, even in Old Testament days, without death. Without blood! Nobody entered into the benefits, even of the Old Covenant, without blood!

Verse 21: "Think of the Tabernacle," says the Apostle. "Think of all the furniture; cutlery; bowls; basins; and utensils. None of that was any use until its ceremonial defilement was removed, how? By blood. "In fact," he says, in verse 22, "In the Old Testament law I may almost say that every single thing is cleansed with blood and until it is cleansed with blood it is unfit to use."

"But don't forget what I told you before," he says in verse 23, "That earthly tabernacle, everything that went with it. It's all a 'picture'." A picture of what? "It's a picture of heavenly realities. It's all an earthly 'picture', to convey to our 'poor' minds spiritual truths that we couldn't grasp otherwise. The earthly 'picture' had to be cleansed with blood."

Perhaps one might puzzle, "Didn't the Shekhina(h) glory come down and occupy that tabernacle? Wasn't that the place where God dwelt on earth? Surely that tabernacle was sanctified by the presence of God. It doesn't need any cleansing." But it's not just the dwelling place of God. That earthly tabernacle is where sinners meet God. But they can't come to God as they are. An atonement must be made and therefore 'blood must be shed' in the earthly 'picture' of the heavenly reality.

If there must be blood, in the earthly 'picture' of the heavenly reality, there must be a parallel in the heavenly reality also. If blood has to be carried into the earthly 'picture' so that sinners can approach God, then blood must be carried into the heavenly reality, so that sinners can approach God. And it would have to be a better sacrifice if its use was not for the 'picture' of things, but into heaven itself.

That thought will be the 'bridge' that leads into the middle section of the passage. (next

week)

In summary so far: Wills, testaments, covenants they are all made secure by death. The death that makes the New Covenant secure is the death of Christ. "So look back Hebrews!" Look back men and women this morning. "At the death of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ has appeared on earth and He has died the necessary death. He's fulfilled in reality everything that the Old Testament 'picture' spoke of. The Covenant blessings that I've been writing to you about in Chapters 8 and 9. They become yours because of Christ's death. I've spoken to you about a changed heart. I've spoken about God being your God and you being His child. Spoken about peace of conscience. About access. The blessings of the New Covenant."

Those blessings really do flow to men and women. Those blessings really are experienced by men and women. But they become yours because of Golgotha! Because of Calvary. Because of what Jesus Christ has done in the past.

What the Apostle is stressing is that all the blessings that I have as a Christian are mine because of a Cross. Everything which I enjoy as a Christian is mine because of blood spilt. Because of agony and suffering which has been undertaken by the Son of God. None of that would have been mine without the shame and humiliation, which the Son of God went through: actually, historically on earth.

Once we catch that, we catch something of the spirit of the New Testament. There is still lingering in our hearts the thought that some how these things could have come to us some other way! The Apostle is stressing that they couldn't. Nothing that you have as a Christian could have come to you at all, if hadn't been by the Cross.

Even if many of the technicalities pass you by, none the less grasp the fact that everything that you enjoy this morning is because of Calvary and anything that you think you enjoy without Calvary you're fooling you mind entirely.

It's because of this truth that the Apostle, Paul, can say, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."²

[2058]

May it please God that all present, through Jesus Christ, shall have life through His Name.

Christ is the Offer of a Better Sacrifice – Pt 2

per S Olyott

(review so far)

We can summarise this passage so far as follows:

Wills, testaments, covenants are all made secure by death. The death that makes the New Covenant secure is the death of Christ. “So look back, Hebrews. And look back men and women this morning at the death of Christ!” Says the Apostle.

“The Lord Jesus Christ has appeared on earth and He has died the necessary death. He's fulfilled, in reality, everything that the Old Testament 'picture' spoke of. The Covenant blessings that I have been writing to you about in chapters 9 and 8 – they become yours because of Christ's death!”

“I've spoken to you of a changed heart. About God being your God and you being His child. About peace of conscience. About access. So many blessings of the New Covenant.” Those blessing really do flow to men and women. They really are experienced by us. But they become ours by Golgotha. Because of Calvary. Because of what Jesus Christ has done in the Cross.

Verses 14- 23 are such a look backwards. Now we consider verses 24 – 28a about the present:

- Now we look upwards. Instead of considering what the Lord has done in the past we look at what He is doing in the present. Not only did He appear once on earth, He is now appearing in heaven.

This is an important truth. There are many evangelical groups throughout the world, who never preach on the present work of Jesus Christ. And although there are Christians amongst the members of such groups, they are deprived of the teaching in their Churches on the subject of what Christ is doing now.

Many Christians are confused about what the Lord Jesus is doing now. They're clear about the Cross and the Second Coming, but there is a haze in their understanding about the present.

Verse 24: To appreciate this verse we must return again to the Old Testament. What did the High Priest do on that once a year 'Day of Atonement'? He shed the appropriate sacrifice. With the blood of that sacrifice he came into the Holy of Holies (once a year) – every year. “Now,” says the Apostle, verse 24, “the Lord Jesus Christ hasn't just entered into a mere 'picture' of the heavenly reality. The Lord doesn't minister in a tabernacle which has been made with human hands. The Lord Jesus has entered into heaven itself.” The Greek of verse 24 is lovely! ‘He appears before God's *face*’. [**προσώπῳ** *prosōpō* – face]

Verse 25: “Your Jesus Christ is not like the high priest entering repeatedly. Who

comes this year but next year he has to do it all again. And the year after that he still has to shed blood once more and come through the 'veil' and do it again and if he's still alive a year afterwards – yet again!

Your Lord Jesus Christ isn't like that high priest who always has to come with the blood of others. The Lord has entered and never comes out. Not entered the earthly 'picture', but the heavenly reality. He's entered not with the blood of others, but with his own blood. He's gone in and stayed. The high priest just visited the earthly 'picture' of God's presence and had to go out at once.”

Jesus Christ has gone right into heaven itself and stayed. Which demonstrates to all the world that His sacrifice doesn't need repeating.

How do you know this morning, as a Christian, that what Jesus Christ did on the Cross is sufficient for you? How do you know that when He died for your sins He died for all of them? And that there is nothing more to be done! Look at verse 26.

The fact that His sacrifice is sufficient for sinners. The fact that His sacrifice is a perfect atonement for your sins is proved by the one simple fact: that it doesn't need repeating. If Christ's sacrifice had needed to be repeated, He would have had to repeat it from the beginning of the world until now. He would have had to come and died ... and come and died ... In your grandfather's time he would have come and died. And in your time He would have come and died. And in your children's time ...

But He hasn't!

He came once and died once. The one sacrifice covers the sins of believers before the event and after the event. The fact that He never needs to die again is proved by the fact that He has gone into heaven and stayed.

The high priest of Old Testament days offered a 'painless' sacrifice – it didn't cost him any pain. Our Lord Jesus Christ offered Himself. He endured mortal agony. If that wasn't sufficient He would have had to endure mortal agony again. And again!

“No!”, says the Apostle, verse 26, :²⁶ for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

The one offering He did make was perfect. It's in the strength of that one perfect offering that He's now in heaven.

The proof that you have, that your sins have been really dealt with. The proof that you have, that your sins have really been put away, is that Jesus Christ's sacrifice is so obviously accepted. That He has been received into heaven and stays there, never to leave again.

Just as certainly as it is appointed for men to die once and just as certainly that it is appointed that you should appear once at the judgement. Just as certainly, our Lord Jesus Christ has offered Himself once, in one transaction, to put away the sin of many. (verses 27, 28a)

You may ask what is He doing now?

When our Lord Jesus Christ died He put away my sin. The Father completely accepted that, so that He is in heaven. But this morning as we read these verses He isn't pleading in heaven. Crying, "O Lord, accept the sinner." He's not beseeching, agonising imploring in heaven. He's not at God's feet saying, "O Lord accept these sinners." He's not doing that!

My sins have been dealt with. Punished. My sin has been put away, because the substitute for my sin, just by His very being there (at God's face), testifies to the fact that my sins have been dealt with. By Christ's being in heaven, this testifies that there is nothing for me to do. Nothing for me to bear. There's no further sacrifice that needs to be offered. There's no atonement that needs to be made. There is nothing for me to pay. Nothing for me to offer. Nothing for me to bring. Everything that needs doing has been done.

The proof is simply that He is there! Just His being there: that ensures my acceptance there. That's what the Lord Jesus Christ is doing now.

Some people attempt to re-offer the sacrifice of Christ in the 'Mass'. They also suggest that God needs some other reminder of Calvary other than the presence of His Son in heaven. To re-offer the Sacrifice of Christ, to suggest that God needs some other reminder of what Christ did, other than His presence in heaven, is an insult to God. The Mass is a blasphemy and to attend it is a sin.

Some people this week have gone to priests, confessed sins. The priest has told them to make up for what they have done by 'penance'.³ By that simple suggestion, they imply that the sinner needs something other – something additional – to that of Christ's sacrifice, to be perfectly accepted in heaven. Just by suggesting a 'penance', they have belittled and degraded the perfection of what God has done for sinners in Christ.

Everything that needs doing for a sinner has been done. All the sinner needs to do, is to rest on the fact that his sins (that rightly deserve the anger of a just God) have been punished at Golgotha. God has accepted what Jesus Christ has done for sinners. The proof being that God has raised Him from the dead and received Him into heaven itself. (Although He bears upon His resurrected body the marks of His crucifixion.)

³ The following 'blog' excerpt (despite its mistypes etc) is a useful summary of the history of mis-translation of 'do penance' rather than 'repent' – change of heart, which is that fundamental gift of grace - generated by Jerome, when he translated the Greek Bible into Latin (The Vulgate). Acts 2:38 **μετανοήσατε**, metanoëó – I repent, change my mind, change the inner man (particularly with reference to acceptance of the will of God), repent.
<http://ronaldvhuggins.blogspot.com/2016/01/acts-238-matthew-417-from-do-penance-to.html>

All that a sinner needs, to be accepted by God, is to 'rest' upon what the Lord Jesus Christ has done. To cast himself entirely on that – nothing in addition! Only on that. Nothing in himself. He doesn't rest on anything he hopes to be or hopes to do. He realises that all that needs to be done has been done. The living proof of it is that the Saviour is in heaven.

As long as the Saviour is in heaven no one who pleads His Name will ever be turned away. There's wonderful access promised in the Gospel. The Gospel doesn't say to you that Jesus Christ can bring you so far but you must do something else to be fully accepted. That's the blasphemy of Rome. The Gospel tells you that everything that is necessary for your salvation has been secured at a price! The greatness of the price proves the greatness of God's love to the sinner.

The wonder of Calvary displays the wisdom of God in designing such a plan for the salvation of men and women. You're required not to re-offer His sacrifice or to remind God of His sacrifice some other way, or to offer anything of yourself. But just to realise that the 'Man of Sorrows' is in heaven and that you can plead that fact and be accepted.

Having told us what Christ has done and what He is now doing, the Apostle will not leave this Chapter without a brief mention of what He is yet to do:

- He gives us a look backwards to the Cross – everything you have as a Christian comes to you by Calvary. He gives a look upwards to heaven, but he gives a look forwards as well.

The Saviour has appeared on earth; the Saviour is appearing in heaven; and the Saviour will yet appear from heaven to earth.

Did you see the Lord when He first came? Do you see the Lord now? We don't see Him, but we love Him, and we are glad to learn that the One we love will come to earth again.

The Apostle won't leave the Chapter without saying what He does in Verse 28: "He save me by His Cross; He speaks for me just by His being in heaven; and He's coming again for me." So I look for Him. I wait for Him. And I won't be disappointed! He will come – the second time.

But further he says: ²⁸ ... *not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him*. The next time He comes it won't be to deal with sin – He's done that already. The next time He comes it will be to meet sinners. Sinners who are washed in His blood. Saved sinners. He doesn't come to deal with sin, He comes to collect sinners.

In this verse 28, we have the final display of the superiority of the New Covenant over the Old. The New Covenant doesn't just give me access into the presence of God, it gives me a place in the presence of God. I don't have to stay on earth, communing with heaven – a sort of data link. One day I'll be there forever.

I have access to heaven because my crucified Redeemer is there. I have a place in heaven, because my crucified redeemer will come from heaven and take me to where He is, that I may be also.

That's the wonder of the New Covenant over against the Old. For me to get to heaven: He will not just summon me there, He'll come and collect me. Not coming to deal with sin, but to meet sinners. That's the climax and the consummation of God's plan of salvation. Our hearts must surely, when we read verse 28, well up with hope and be amazed at the joys and glories which are held out before Christian men and women. Just think of it. The One you've never seen. The One who died for you. The One who speaks for you by being in heaven is coming again – for you. Wonderful! You will have a place with Him.

But remember that place was none the less secured by His Cross. The Apostle writes to Hebrews, he says, "We're going to heaven". So also do we say, "We're going to heaven!" The person who walks out on Christ walks out on that.

[2151]

May it please God that all present, through Jesus Christ, shall have life through His Name.

Delivered Sunday 16th December 2018

(no Sermon recorded – Service conducted by Rev Jim Cabrera)

Delivered Sunday 23rd December 2018

(no Sermon recorded – Service conducted by Rev Jim Cabrera)

Delivered Tuesday 25th December 2018 Christmas Day
Why be a Christian?⁴

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 1:3a

The apostle, Peter, wrote to Christians who were being persecuted for their Faith. These Christians were prepared to die for their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Why would they do this? What makes being a Christian more valuable even than life itself? In verses 3-12 of Chapter 1, Peter in his first letter gives an answer.

Everyone needs a future salvation!

Like it or not, we are all creatures of God, the Creator. He made us in His image with the chief end to glorify Himself and (by so doing, and in so doing) to enjoy Him forever. From the beginning of all humanity, we have opposed and denied God His rightful due. God's perfect justice condemns us all. From His great purpose for us, we have fallen. Completely and deliberately. Nothing we can do can restore us to God's favour or escape His final wrath.

Yet Peter tells Christians to praise God:

Born Again to a Living Hope

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

(1 Peter 1:3-5)

This is God's merciful answer to our otherwise hopeless future. This is why God came to earth, at the first Christmas, in the form of the baby called, "Jesus – for He will save His people from their sin." This Jesus, the new Adam, who lived the perfect life meant for that first Adam and we the descendants; this sinless, Jesus who took the death penalty, justly due for our sin; this Jesus, who could not be defeated by death, but rose triumphant from the grave, demonstrating once for all, God's acceptance of the substituted penalty; this Jesus whose perfect life covers our gross faults in God's sight; and this Jesus, glorified at God's right hand, His very presence there, pleading for us – to salvation.

Be a Christian because through faith in Jesus the Christ, God saves us to eternal life. Through Jesus we gain the inheritance – we are adopted as God's children. As brothers and sisters of Jesus the Son, Himself.

Christian faith gives us a means of dealing with life right now!

Remember that Peter's first audience were in deadly peril because they were showing their faith in Jesus. Nevertheless in verses, 6-9 he says:

⁴ This exposition on 1Peter 1:3-12, follows closely Chapter 3 of John Benton's book, *Why Join a Small Church?*

⁶ *In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials,* ⁷ *so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ.* ⁸ *Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory,* ⁹ *obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*

So Peter comes back to the 'end result' the *salvation of your souls*. Yet all this talk of a new world in the future, the 'great bye and bye' is all very well, but what about now. How does Christian faith help each of us, now, in this world?

Peter has two answers:

- Faith gives a purpose to suffering. God's perfect creation, this world and all that is in it, has been made less than perfect by man's rejection of God and His rules for living. Our failure to do that which allows us to enjoy Him and His creation for ever. The popular human-oriented way of life, live for today for tomorrow we die, is OK while things go well for us. But in this corrupted world, this doesn't happen for most people, most of the time. We get ill; lose our job; have broken relationships; work becomes boring; plans are wrecked; the person we love most, dies! Is this all there is to life? If it's full of trouble, no wonder lots of people are miserable.

Peter reminds his persecuted Christians that even in all their troubles, they will greatly rejoice, since they of faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of their salvation. No matter what happens to them in this life, God will preserve their salvation with Him.

And Peter adds that God also has purpose in these times of trouble and even in the gross suffering. It tests, refines and strengthens one's faith. The reliance on God, through Jesus Christ. These have come *so that your faith ... may be found to result in praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ*. There are many sad people in this world who desperately need to be rescued from the sadness of their lives by the positive sense of eternal purpose found in Christian faith.

- Secondly, from verse 8, Peter shows the Christian faith as a source of joy, through the spiritual presence of Jesus.

Especially at times like Christmas, and New Year, many people suffer from self-destructive abuses. Many end up in hospital or worse. A society in which very little true happiness is known. Where people are desperate to do something. Anything! To feel good, needed or worthwhile. No matter what the consequences.

Peter reminds his Christian audience, and us, that there is a wonderful source of real joy through knowing God – God come among us, as Jesus Christ. To be loved by, to be died for, by God Himself. How more needed and wanted can we be? When *you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, (even in this present life)* ⁹ *obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*

Everybody needs a point to their lives.

Now we come to the final 3 verses of our portion of Peter's letter of encouragement.

Peter has introduced, the wonderful future prospect of life (physical and spiritual) in God's new world, and also the present experience of joy in knowing Jesus by faith. Both he calls salvation or rescue. (verses 5 & 9)

Now in verses 10-12 he has more to say: *Concerning this salvation*, he begins. Long before Jesus' birth, the prophets were aware, of God's grace that would come to mankind. That will of love and mercy that provides, for unworthy humans, released from the penalty of their own initial and continual disobedience. Napoleon was once begged by a mother for mercy on her deserting son. "Why should I?" asked Napoleon, "What has he done to deserve my mercy?" "Nothing!" the Mother replied, "If he deserved it, it wouldn't be mercy."

The prophets searched diligently. Studied God's revelations and received God's Holy Spirit. And all this, not merely for their own benefit, but for ours. That we might know that God's purpose in salvation for us has been his will from eternity past. Even before the once perfect creation, fashioned in His image, mankind, rejected Him. Salvation so wonderful; so unexpected; so undeserved, that even the angels long to know of it.

We read about, and may even know of people who are driven to wild and dangerous pursuits. War correspondents, 'adventurers', extreme sports. Those who risk all, to feel special. To feel that they exist for a special purpose. We are all built with this need to some degree. Yet most, in a consumer, technological age can feel little more than a number on a computer file or a billing account.

But Peter shows, that the Christian is a very special person. Someone who is the object and receiver of an amazing privilege. God's purpose and plan of salvation. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, God's Word, revealing Himself and His purpose, we trace this glorious revelation. Hundreds of years of prophecy were fulfilled at the first Christmas. The agent of salvation was born. God in human form come at last to carry out that long heralded plan, through the life, death and resurrection of Himself, for very special people. Those who *turn* to Him in *belief* and faith. Those called in the first chapter of Mark's account of the Good News of Jesus Christ at verse 15. *The Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news.*

How special do you need to be? Special enough that the God of all Creation, would come to earth at Bethlehem, to save you in this life and for the next.

How special you are to Him. Will you allow Him to be special to you?

Pray God this will be so, for all the saints present today. Amen [1468]

The Effectiveness of Christ's Sacrifice

per S Olyott

(review so far)

Let us put aside those present cares of this world and all the things that impose on our minds and emotions.

When we read this book of Hebrews we are drawn again to look on the greatness of Christ. This is the great theme of Hebrews! We read it and when we have finished we want to take it up and read it again. Our hearts cannot escape the conviction: There is nobody like Him.

He is uniquely superior. It is the theme of all the Chapters.

In the first 7 Chapters we've been told who He is. He is uniquely superior in His Person. In Chapter 8 we started looking at what He has done. In this He is also uniquely superior. He's the mediator of a better Covenant; He's the Priest of a better Tabernacle: and, the offerer of a better Sacrifice. That takes us to the end of Chapter nine.

So now we continue at Chapter 10 – the first 18 verses.

Some may have had the experience at school that at a certain stage we found that we learnt nothing new. But there was a thorough recapitulation and consolidation. Drawing on all that had been learnt previously.

This is the way with Chapter 10. Relax! This (the first 18 verses) is where we learn nothing new, but we consolidate so that we never forget it. It becomes clearer than we have ever seen it before.

You've heard that Christ is the mediator of a better Covenant. You've heard that He's the Priest of a better Tabernacle. You've heard that He is the offerer of a better Sacrifice and we are not going beyond that, but what we are going to do is hear it all again – but more clearly. And this was so important to the original readers because they were thinking of returning to the old, inferior, and redundant, covenant. A different priesthood, with animal sacrifices.

The purpose in these 18 verses is to 'cement' the uniqueness of Christ's Work in their minds.

How does the Apostle start to underline and enforce what he has just been saying? Where does he begin?

In the first 4 verses he shows, all over again the ineffectiveness of the Old Sacrifices. They were shadows. There was no reality to them. They were only 'pictures' of something else. Something better that was to come. They were only earthly

representations of a better sacrifice that was going to come. They spoke of something better to come, but they weren't that better thing, which was going to come. (verses 1 & 2) "Those animal sacrifices," says the Apostle, "they were repeated year in and year out and yet they didn't actually do anything for the worshipper. After He had had a lamb slain 1000 times. After he had brought his heifers, bulls or goats, a thousand times, his sin had still not been dealt with.

If it had been dealt with, he never would have had to repeat the sacrifice.

Think of it like this: You have a bad cough. I say to you, "Take this it will cure you." So you take it and afterwards you are no better. So you take it again and a gain and you are still no better! You go away and years later you come back. You're still coughing and you're still taking the medicine. What good has that medicine done for you? Nothing. And the proof that it has done nothing for you is that you are still coughing and you are still taking the medicine.

All the medicine has done is to remind you that you have a cough that really needs to be cured.

"Now," says the Apostle, (in the end of verse 2 and verse 3) "If the Old Testament Sacrifices had really done anything they would have cleansed the consciences of the original worshippers. But in fact all the Old Testament Sacrifices have managed to do is to remind folk of their sin. And to remind them that they really do need cleansing. That's all those Old Testament Sacrifices were able to do. They were ineffective for anything else.

Think of it! The men and women who gave those lambs, bulls, goats, heifers, turtle doves and pigeons remained unforgiven. They brought sacrifices that spoke of atonement. They brought sacrifices that spoke of cleansing and spoke of access. But apart from the few, who could see that these things spoke of something better to come – and who put their faith in that better sacrifice to come. Apart from those few, all the other people who brought these sacrifices remained unforgiven!

Because (verse 4) ⁴ ... *it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins*. You have a perversion – a twist of character – inherited, as it were from the 'fall', which shuts you out from God; makes you a rebel to Him; condemns you to punishment in hell! And it is not possible – how could it be possible – that the shedding of lamb's or turtle-dove's blood could take away sin?

Think it out. Can anything like that actually root out the problem (of your 'stony' God-ignoring heart)? To remove the sin and the guilt.

So the Apostle is pointing out (in the first 4 verses) as he is underlining and enforcing previous lessons, the ineffectiveness of the Old Sacrifices.

Now look at verse 5 -10: Here by contrast he speaks about the effectiveness of Christ's Sacrifice. The old sacrifices did nothing. Christ's does accomplish something.

The sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ at Golgotha was able to accomplish that, which the animal sacrifice could never accomplish.

Why? How? He tells us in verses 5 to 10:

“To explain my point,” he says. In verses 5 to 7, “I must quote to you from the 40th Psalm.” Which is exactly what he does from the middle of verse 5 to the end of verse 7.

“These words,” says the writer, “are Messianic. These words in verses 5 to 7 express what was in the mind of the Lord Jesus Christ, when He came into the world.”

He was the eternal Son of God. Through Mary's womb, He became the Son of Man. And when He came into the world, the thoughts that were in His mind, as He came into the world are found in verses 5 to 7. (Quoted from Psalm 40.)

Tremendous truth. Many, even those who have been Christians for years, their first reaction is to think that the life of the Lord Jesus Christ began, when He was born at Bethlehem. Or a little earlier at His conception. But, of course, He is the only Person who ever lived, whose life did not begin at conception. He's the eternal Son of God and He became a man (adding a human nature to the one Person) and there were thoughts in His divine mind, as He took to Himself a body. The actual thoughts of the Lord Jesus Christ as He did this are revealed to us in today's passage.

Now verse eight: “Now, Hebrew friends,” says the writer, “look very carefully at those words. The Messiah recognises, in the words quoted, that God has no pleasure in animal sacrifices, as laid down by the Old Testament law. All those offerings and all that blood spilt by the Ceremonial Law and practised in Old Testament times doesn't bring any pleasure to God at all.”

And so, verse 9, “When the Son of God comes into the world, He says in His mind, that He hasn't come to offer those animal sacrifices, but He has come to do God's will. His whole interest in coming into the world, isn't to offer again all those sacrifices. His whole purpose, in taking to Himself a body, is to do the will of God.”

Verse 10: “It's not by the way of animal sacrifices. It's by Christ's surrendering Himself to the will of God. That men and women, are set apart.” That is – sanctified. Men and women are set apart for God. “It's not by animal sacrifices. It's by the Lord Jesus Christ's voluntary offering of His body once for all, that salvation for sinners is accomplished.”

Let us put it like this: The will, of God in sending Christ into the world, was to make an atonement for sin. Now atonement necessitates sacrifice. Atonement necessitates blood. What was to be sacrificed? What blood was to be spilt?

It was for this reason that God prepared for His Son a body, so that He should be the sacrifice. So that His blood should be spilt. It's by His blood being spilt, in that body, that the will of God has been fully and finally accomplished. Bringing the new, and better, Covenant, into operation.

The Apostle is simply telling us that believers have been cleansed, not by the Old Testament 'shadows', but by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all. An atonement has been made. But the atonement, which pleases the Holy God is not the *type* but the *anti-type*. Not the 'shadow' but the fulfilment. Not the 'picture' but the reality. Not that which was pointing forward, but the event that was being pointed forward to!

The way that sinners have had their sins dealt with is not by animal sacrifices. The effective atonement lies in the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now to verses 11 to 18: So far in verses 1 – 4, he has shown to us the ineffectiveness of the earlier sacrifices. In verse 5-10 he has stated that the only effective sacrifice is Christ's. Now he draws these two strands together. Underlining and enforcing them on the minds of his readers.

Verse 11: Think back to Old Testament times. There was no seat in the Tabernacle. We have mentioned already the various pieces of furniture in the two sections. There was nowhere to sit down.⁵ Why? It's not an accident! It was to show that there was no place to rest for the Old Testament priests. There was always work to be done. The work of offering sacrifices was never finished. Showing, as we have already seen, that those sacrifices didn't take away sin. ¹¹ *And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.*

Verse 12: “How different it is with this⁶ man”. The Greek is not afraid to call the eternal Son of God 'this one' that is a man. “This man offered one sacrifice for sin. He did it for ever.” In other words the one sacrifice is never to be repeated.

“When He had offered the one sacrifice for sins He then sat down!” Showing that the work is over, never to be repeated. It's finished. It's complete,

Where did He sit down? ¹² ... *at the right hand of God, ...*

When He had done His one offering of His body – once for all. He sat down showing that that one sacrifice was sufficient – never to be repeated. The work of atonement is complete.

“There He is,” says the Apostle, verse 13, “There is the Lord Jesus Christ, seated in heaven, awaiting just one event – ³ *waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet.*

This morning let us declare that Jesus Christ has no more battles to fight. No more temptations to endure. No more Gethsemane's to suffer. No more Golgotha's to

⁵ There is a mention of the 'mercy seat', but this is a figurative expression for the location of God in the vicinity of the Ark of the Covenant. The golden images of the cherubim in any even would have filled the space leaving no room for a human to sit there even if the ritual permitted the High Priest to do so.

⁶ Note the footnote of the ESV which replaces the literal 'this one' with 'Christ'.

experience. No more graves to be laid in. The only thing that now awaits him is the day when He comes in great glory with all the holy angels with Him. Every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father.

[1981]

May it please God that all present, through Jesus Christ, shall have life through His Name.