

• *Answers the question – “Why is Jesus’ sacrifice so pleasing to God and so effective?”*

### 1. The law was only a shadow

• *It could never impart Christian salvation*

• *Abraham and David were saved by faith not by Mosaic law*

### 2. The law could not produce adequate worshippers

• *No cleansed consciences*

### 3. The law was an ever-repetitive failure

• *Christians do experience guilt but...*

• *An age has come when it is not necessary to stay feeling guilty*

• *The law could not deliver a permanent answer to the problem of guilt*

Hebrews chapter 10 still continues the theme that began in 8:1. Our writer has emphasized the priestly **compassion** of Christ<sup>☞1</sup> and the priestly **activity** of Christ in taking his blood to the Father<sup>☞2</sup>. But the question might be asked: why is the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ so pleasing to God and so effective as a cleansing of our sins? Our writer handles this question in Hebrews 10:1–18. He begins by reminding us of the ineffectiveness of the Mosaic ritual.

1. **The law was only a shadow.** <sup>1</sup>*For the law was only a shadow of the good things to come and not the true form of the realities themselves.* It gives a sketchy outline but there is nothing substantial in a shadow. The law could never impart Christian salvation. This does not mean that Old Testament saints were not ‘saved’. Abraham is the model of justification. Abraham believed God and that – simply believing – was reckoned to him for righteousness. In the same way Paul says quite clearly that David was ‘reckoned righteous’<sup>☞1</sup> and we recognize in David’s psalms the writings of a regenerate person – a man with spiritual life and a believer in God’s promises. So our writer does not mean Old Testament believers knew nothing of salvation; he means only that it was not the law that brought it to them. They were saved (at an Old Testament level) by faith not by Mosaic law,

2. **The law could not produce adequate worshippers,** it is only a shadow. *So it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near.* A ‘complete’ worshipper is one who has a cleansed conscience in the presence of God, one who does not feel guilty or unclean before God. There is only one way to feel accepted by God and that is to know by the Holy Spirit that the blood of Christ satisfies God.

3. **The law was an ever-repetitive failure.** Repetition is a mark of failure. <sup>2</sup>*For in that case would they not have ceased being offered? For the worshippers would have been purified once and for ever because of their having no longer any guilty conscience about sins.* If the sacrifices could have provided perfect cleansing, they would have ceased, for the worshippers would find that their feelings of guilt would have disappeared and no more sacrificing was needed. Of course our writer does not mean that the Christian never feels guilty. But he means that an age has come in the history of the world when it is not necessary to **stay** feeling guilty. Jews under the law felt guilty of sin and the law gave no help to them at that point. It was as if every time a sacrifice for sin were offered someone was **trying** to find an answer to guilt – but failed. And so the system tried again and again to find a sacrifice for sin which would give a permanent answer to the problem of guilt being a burden to the conscience. If at any point the law had succeeded in providing a once-for-ever answer to the problem of guilt the system would have come to an end since the remedy to sin had arrived! No more searching for an answer would have been necessary.

☞1 4:14-7:28

☞2 8:1-9:28

☞1 Romans 4:6-8

## 4. The law made the situation worse

• The annual Day of Atonement ceremony was a reminder that the answer had not been provided

• Likewise views that the Lord's Supper (or Eucharist or Holy Communion or Mass) are an ongoing sacrifice are seriously mistaken

• Christ has done what the law could not do

4. The law made the situation worse! <sup>3</sup>But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sin every year. Far from providing any answer to guilt, the annual repetition of the Day of Atonement ceremony kept on reminding the people that an answer had not been provided, and the problem of sin was still unanswered despite the many years of sacrificial ritual. <sup>4</sup>For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. He totally puts down the law as a means of salvation. The fact is: animal sacrifices do nothing! Although the law was appointed by God and was useful as a means of teaching, its actual power to deal with sin was nil! We should not admire the Mosaic law as much as some people think we should! The animals of the Mosaic system were not of sufficient value to compensate for sin. Unlike Jesus, they could never agree to put themselves in the sinner's place and bear his sins.

The repeated sacrifices were hopelessly unsuccessful. In the same way any idea that the Lord's Supper (or Eucharist or Holy Communion or Mass) is an ongoing sacrifice of Christ is ruled out here. The idea of some is that as a priest speaks the words 'This is my body...', Jesus Christ becomes physically present despite the appearance (and taste and smell and feel) of both bread and wine. So it is thought that Jesus' sacrifice on the cross is somehow continuing. People who believe this will worship the bread and wine thinking it is Jesus. But Hebrews 10 shows that such teaching is seriously mistaken. If the cross had to be repeated it was defective like the Old Testament sacrifices. If it is effective (and it is!) it needs no repetition.

Christ can do what the law could not do. Christ's blood does satisfy God, and we may know it! Now the sacrifice provided by God – the blood of Christ – is perfect. It never needs to be repeated because sin has been dealt a death-blow by the one event of Jesus' sacrifice upon the cross. The sinner is forgiven and – with regard to his eternal status – is consecrated to God for ever. No kind of law gives us the assurance of everlasting freedom from the guilt and power of sin. But Christ does!



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