

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Twenty-First Sunday after Trinity, October 20, 2013

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 228, 237:1, 165, 156, 375:5.

Lessons: Psalm 40, 2 Corinthians 7:6-13, John 8:12-20.

Sermon Text: Hebrews 10:1-14.

Sermon by Pastor M. H. Eibs

Fellow Redeemed in Christ our Savior:

In the New Testament Scriptures we are told: *"Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming."* (James 5:7) We are exhorted to endure patiently all the trials of this life until our Lord returns on the Last Day to take us home. Have you ever thought of how patient the people of the Old Testament days had to be as they waited for the promised coming Lord, their Messiah? The Old Testament period of time was about 4,000 years long. That means that these people never saw the promise of the Lord fulfilled in their lifetime. We sometimes get impatient if we have to wait for something a few hours!

The Old Testament period was a time of waiting patiently for the Lord's promises to be fulfilled. Those promises centered in the great sacrifice the coming Savior would make on the cross. To symbolize that, and to get the people in the Old Testament Days to look ahead to that sacrifice, the Lord had them offer up many sacrifices of various kinds. Our text makes a comparison of those Old Testament sacrifices and the one sacrifice Jesus made on the cross.

Let us center our attention on the theme:

SACRIFICES FOR SIN or SACRIFICE FOR SIN?

Let us learn:

- 1. Why the many Old Testament sacrifices weren't good enough for man's salvation, and**
- 2. Why Jesus' one willing sacrifice was perfect to take away all sin.**

"The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming – not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship." The law of God in the Old Testament commanded a way of worship that centered about many sacrifices offered up on altars. There were offerings of bulls, sheep, goats, lambs, doves, pigeons, and grain. There were burnt offerings, sin offerings, guilt offerings, and fellowship offerings. These offerings are described in great detail in the Book of Leviticus. Some of them were sacrificed daily or at other prescribed times. Our text also refers to one sacrifice made annually. This was the sacrifice of a bull and a goat on the Great Day of Atonement. The high priest alone was permitted to go once a year behind the curtain in the house of worship into the Holy of Holies with the blood of the sacrifice. The shedding of blood was particularly important in these sacrifices. The Book of Hebrews explains: *"In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness."* (Hebrews 9:22)

All this ceremony, these sacrifices, and the shedding of blood was prescribed in the Law of Moses in the Old Testament. But our text says: *"The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming - not the realities themselves."* These Old Testament sacrifices and ceremonies only symbolized the great sacrifice the coming Messiah was to make on the cross. These Old Testament sacrifices were like a shadow of the good things to come in Christ. They were not the real thing. They only pointed ahead to the real thing.

A shadow of a person cannot accomplish anything. It has to be the person himself. So the many sacrifices of the Old Testament period could not take away sins. Our text explains this when it says that *"the*

same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year" could not do away with the sins of the people. Our text asks: *"If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins."* If the sacrifice of an animal and shedding of the animal's blood would have been good enough to atone for sin, no other sacrifice would have been necessary. It would not have been repeated again and again, and the people would not have had any more guilty feelings about their sins.

But the Old Testament sacrifices were *"repeated endlessly year after year."* This refers to the annual sacrifice on the Great Day of Atonement, the 10th day of the 7th month. *"But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins."* These annual sacrifices were not in themselves able to cleanse sinners from their sins. They were only annual reminders to the people that they were sinners and should look forward to the one great sacrifice of their coming Savior.

When we hear the words of our text, *"Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins,"* we are reminded of the endless sacrifices made in the Roman Catholic mass. By their own definition, the mass is an unbloody sacrifice of Christ's body and blood on the altar for the sins of the living and the sins of the dead. The whole worship of the Roman Church centers about the mass. And it is all senseless, useless, false and blasphemous, because it is altogether contrary to the Gospel. The Gospel teaches that our Lord and Savior made one great sacrifice for sins, and so no repetition is ever necessary.

Not many sacrifices for sin, but one sacrifice for sin is what the Bible teaches. Let us learn from our text why Jesus' one willing sacrifice was perfect to take away sin.

2.

*"Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: 'Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased.'" This is a quotation from what the coming Messiah spoke through David in the 40th Psalm. It tells us, first of all, that God's plan of salvation was that he would send his Son in the flesh to offer up his body as a sacrifice for sin. The Messiah also expresses his willingness to do what his heavenly Father had planned in the words of the 40th Psalm. *"Then I said, 'Here I am, I have come-- it is written about me in the scroll.'"* (Psalms 40:7)*

When some unbelievers read the history of Jesus' life in the Bible, they conclude that Jesus must have been a miserable failure. They conclude that because Jesus was betrayed, captured and crucified, he was forced to submit to his enemies, and that he did not accomplish what he set out to do. Nothing could be farther from the truth! Everywhere in the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, the willingness of Jesus to suffer and die for the sins of mankind is clearly proclaimed. Jesus is the eternal Son of God. A thousand years before he was born, in the days of King David, Jesus expressed his willingness to do what his heavenly Father had planned. And listen to the Savior speak about his willing sacrifice on the cross during the days of his ministry: *"The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life - only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father."* (John 10:17-18) Our Savior, just as Paul wrote to the Philippians, *"became obedient to death - even death on a cross!"* (Philippians 2:8)

That perfect obedience in keeping every commandment of God and in willingly giving up his life on the cross is the obedience that makes us righteous in God's sight. Paul writes: *"For just as through the disobedience of the one man [Adam] the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man [Christ], the many will be made righteous."* (Romans 5:19) That's the righteousness we must have in order to stand before the Lord on the Day of Judgment.

Our text says: *"He sets aside the first to establish the second."* The Old Testament sacrifices were set aside, and righteousness in Christ was established. The ceremonies of the Old Testament were abolished. They could not please God anyway because they were not perfect. Our text says that they *"can never take away sins."* Furthermore, as the years passed, they became a daily mechanical routine performed over and over again by many priests.

"But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, because by one sacrifice he has made

perfect forever those who are being made holy." It is in this way that the perfect righteousness which we need to stand before God on the Last Day was established by Christ's sacrifice.

Let us concentrate on this precious truth our text teaches. It is all summed up in this one sentence: Jesus' one willing sacrifice was perfect to take away all sins. Jesus is our great High Priest. Not only did he offer up the sacrifice for our sins, but he himself was the sacrifice! He made the one offering for our sins on the cross when he offered up himself as the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world. Note carefully: ONE sacrifice is all that was necessary to atone for all sins of all people for all time. John writes: ***"The blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from every sin."*** (1 John 1:7) John also writes of Jesus whom he calls ***"the Righteous One"***. ***"He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world."***(1 John 2:1-2) In the Old Testament, Isaiah spoke of the Lamb of God when he wrote: ***"The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all."*** (Isaiah 53:6) Micah prophesied: ***"You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea."*** (Micah 7:19) The psalmist speaks in the most reassuring words: ***"As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us."*** (Psalm 103:12) What more can we hear to assure us of a perfect sacrifice for all sins of all people! It was made ONCE when Jesus died on the cross. It is never necessary again!

Now as our text says, Jesus ***"waits for his enemies to be made his footstool."*** Jesus has won the victory over Satan. His redemption is perfect. He now rules victoriously over all things in heaven and in earth. Finally, when this wicked world comes to an end, all his enemies will be conquered and laid at his feet. Thus will be fulfilled the words of the psalmist David: ***"The Lord says to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.'"*** (Psalm 110:1)

May what Jesus has done for us be our comfort and joy. While we should daily sorrow because of our sins, for we know they are many and have offended the holy God, let us also rejoice with all our heart in Jesus Christ our Redeemer, and say with the poet:

"Therefore, I will forever
Give glory unto Thee,
O Jesus, loving Savior,
For what Thou didst for me." Amen.
(The Lutheran Hymnal 152:4)

(Reprinted from the Ministry By Mail for March 21, 1982 by M. H. Eibs. Edited by Robert Mehlretter)