

We're going to do things a bit differently today. The book of Hebrews is different to most New Testament letters. And parts of it come across as being more like a sermon, than a letter. So, sometimes, it can seem a bit repetitive. And there's a reason for that.

A sermon, is a teaching session. And one of the most effective methods of teaching, is repetition. When I was working on getting a teaching qualification (Ag College), they taught us the basic structure of a training session:

- First I'm going to tell you what I'm going to teach you;
- Then I teach it to you; and then
- I finish the session up by reminding you what you've just been taught.

Anyway, we're taking a large chunk of Hebrews today, and most of my work, (because it's more like a sermon) has already been done for me. And instead of everybody taking turns at reading it, I'm going to read this (as the sermon), and then I'm going to distil it down, into about 3 points.

But first, I'd better introduce what it's about.

As we read this, we're going to hear a lot about:

- sacrifice;
- forgiveness;
- conscience (having a clear conscience);
- purification;
- redemption;
- covenant...

And these are all issues, surrounding the great dilemma (the great barrier between humans and God). “How can I (a sinful human), possibly be in the presence of a holy God?”

In the Scriptures, we realise (right from the beginning) that when I have guilt/sin/shame, I have to hide myself from God. Even for one, to encounter an angel in **their** state of glory, causes one to fall on their face in holy fear.

And even Moses was told by God, “I can’t let you see My face, or you’ll die”... And if the great prophet (Moses) is in that predicament, how much more are we? ... In a state of sin, we cannot see the face of God, or we will die.

Anyway, last week, we talked about how God’s desire, is to be in a genuine, loving, meaningful relationship with us... How can that even happen???

And often we might see it as “God cannot bear to be in our sinful presence”...

*A couple of weeks ago, we had a picnic at Cooby Dam, and I went to the toilet (one of those “environmentally friendly” composting types). And usually I’m pretty tolerant of these things, but this was worst-smelling toilet I’ve ever been in. It was worse than the long-drop we used to have at the shearing shed... And I know Robyn’s more delicate than I am, so when she needed to go, I suggested it might be a good time for us to go home, because I knew she wouldn’t handle the stench...*

And we often think of God like that – that God cannot handle the stench of being in my sinful presence....

But, the more I get to know God, and the more I read His word, the more I'm beginning to realise, it might actually be, the other way around. A sinful Michael, cannot bear to be in the presence of the holiness of God.

- When Adam and Eve sinned, God went looking for them, but they were the ones who were afraid, and hid themselves.
- When men encounter holy angels, the men are the ones who fall on their face in holy fear.
- When Jesus (the Son of God) came, he didn't run away from sinners. In fact, the religious leaders despised Jesus because He ate with tax-collectors and sinners and hung out with prostitutes (not as a client, but as a friend of sinners);

It is man, who cannot bear to be, in the presence of a Holy God. And it is "sin", that separates us from God.

But, maybe we need to define this: "What is sin?" Sin, is our rejection of God. Sin, is falling short of the holiness of God.

It was a bit of a revelation for me, when my New Testament lecturer said to me, "*Michael, "sin" is not "doing naughty things", you know... "Sin", is the rejection of God. And the naughty things we do, is because of our sin/rejection of God*"...

So, let's think of it as "sin" (our rejection of God) and "acts of sin/transgressions/wrong-doing"...

And when it comes to “acts of sin/transgressions”, a Christian, will understandably, have quite a different moral standard, to a person who is **not** a Christian. Why is that? It’s because if I am a Christian, I love God, and I love His ways. And the Holy Spirit of God lives within me. In this reading today, the poetic description is “God writes His Law on our hearts” – it’s a poetic picture of “Godliness within” – His ways becoming our ways.

And if I am not a Christian, I don’t have that kind of relationship with God, and so His ways, are not my ways. Yes, we have all been created in the image of God (every one of us), and so we all have some level of consciousness of sin, but the **result** of “sin (our rejection of God)”, is that our consciences are seared. My perception of good and evil, is out of whack/calibration..., to the extent that “what is evil”, we call “good”, and “what is good”, we see as being evil... And usually what **we** see as being “evil”, are those things that **other** people do, that I would never do...

But when we realise that sin is my rejection of God, and we repent of sin, and begin this beautiful, loving relationship with God, His ways become our ways. And the better we know Him, the more we want to embrace holiness, for God is holy...

So, how can we be rid of sin? (That’s the big question, isn’t it). How can my sin be taken away? And how can my **acts** of sin be forgiven/atoned for???

You see, “sin” cannot simply be ignored. Why? Because that would be unjust. Justice demands punishment for my wrongdoing. And you get that, don’t you???

*If a person were to break into your home, steal your valuables, and leave your family afraid,,,, If the offender was then captured, and brought before a judge, and the judge said, “I think we’ll let you off this time”, You’d be pretty cranky about that. Why? Because it’s unjust.*

And so, justice requires punishment for sin and wrong-doing.

So, what is the just judgment for sin? Death. In Romans it says, “The wages of sin is death”. If I reject God, I do not deserve to live with Him in eternal life. Romans also says, “we have all sinned”.

And **that**, is why the cost of my/your forgiveness requires the shedding of blood. Under the Old Covenant (before Jesus), there was the system of sacrifice of sheep & goats & bulls...

But we’re going to hear today, about how Jesus has done away with all of that. And Jesus Himself, **becomes** the sacrifice.

So, **Hebrews 8:1 - 10:18**

And I’m going to read it, but I’m not going to explain Chapter 8, because we covered that last week.

So, let’s begin. **Hebrews 8:1 - 10:18.**

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**8** Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, <sup>2</sup> a minister in the holy places, in the

true tent that the Lord set up, not man. <sup>3</sup> For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; thus it is necessary for **this** priest also to have something to offer. <sup>4</sup> Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law. <sup>5</sup> They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, “See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain.” <sup>6</sup> But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the **covenant** he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. <sup>7</sup> For if that **first** covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second.

<sup>8</sup> For he finds fault with them when he says:

“Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord,  
when I will establish a **new** covenant with the house of  
Israel

and with the house of Judah,

<sup>9</sup> not like the covenant that I made with their fathers  
on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them  
out of the land of Egypt.

For they did not continue in my covenant,  
and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord.

<sup>10</sup> For this is the covenant that I will make with the house  
of Israel

after those days, declares the Lord:

I will put my laws into their minds,

and write them on their hearts,

and I will be their God,

and they shall be my people.

<sup>11</sup> And they shall not teach, each one his neighbour

and each one his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’  
for they shall all know me,  
from the least of them to the greatest.

<sup>12</sup> For I will be merciful toward their iniquities,  
and I will remember their sins no more.”

<sup>13</sup> In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one **obsolete**. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

## The Earthly Holy Place

**9** Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly place of holiness. <sup>2</sup> For a tent was prepared, the first section, in which were the lampstand and the table and the bread of the Presence. It is called the Holy Place. <sup>3</sup> Behind the second curtain was a second section called the Most Holy Place, <sup>4</sup> having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron’s staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant. <sup>5</sup> Above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.

<sup>6</sup> These preparations having thus been made, the priests go regularly into the **first** section, performing their ritual duties, <sup>7</sup> but into the **second** only the **high** priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood, which he offers for himself **and** for the unintentional sins of the people. <sup>8</sup> By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the holy places is not yet opened as long as the first section is still standing <sup>9</sup> (which is symbolic for the present age). According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, <sup>10</sup> but deal only with

food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation.

## Redemption Through the Blood of Christ

<sup>11</sup> **But** when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) <sup>12</sup> **he** entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his **own** blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. <sup>13</sup> For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, <sup>14</sup> how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

<sup>15</sup> Therefore he is the mediator of a **new** covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised **eternal** inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant. <sup>16</sup> For where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. <sup>17</sup> For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive. <sup>18</sup> Therefore not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood. <sup>19</sup> For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself **and** all the people, <sup>20</sup> saying, “This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you.” <sup>21</sup> And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship. <sup>22</sup> Indeed, under the law almost everything is



purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

<sup>23</sup> Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. <sup>24</sup> For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. <sup>25</sup> Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, <sup>26</sup> 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. <sup>27</sup> And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, <sup>28</sup> so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

## Christ's Sacrifice Once for All

**10** 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. <sup>2</sup> Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins? <sup>3</sup> But in these sacrifices there is a **reminder** of sins every year. <sup>4</sup> For it is **impossible** for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

<sup>5</sup> Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said,

“Sacrifices and offerings you have **not** desired,  
but a body have you prepared for me;  
<sup>6</sup> in burnt offerings and sin offerings  
you have taken no pleasure.  
<sup>7</sup> 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.’ ”

<sup>8</sup> 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), <sup>9</sup> then he  
added, “Behold, I have come to do your will.” He does away  
with the first in order to establish the second. <sup>10</sup> And by that  
will, we have been sanctified through the offering of the body  
of Jesus Christ once for all.

<sup>11</sup> And every priest stands daily at his service, offering  
repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can **never** take away  
sins. <sup>12</sup> But when **Christ** had offered for **all** time a **single**  
sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God,  
<sup>13</sup> waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a  
footstool for his feet. <sup>14</sup> For by a **single** offering he has  
perfected for **all** time those who are being sanctified.

<sup>15</sup> And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after  
saying,

<sup>16</sup> “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,”

<sup>17</sup> then he adds,

“I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.”

<sup>18</sup> Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

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Righto, if you're new to church, and this is only your 842<sup>nd</sup> time that might have been pretty hard going. But please, don't be discouraged. This is some of the most complex teaching that we will find anywhere in the Bible.

But, did you mostly follow it?

I'm just going to distil it down, into three key points.

1.

Firstly, it says <sup>9:22</sup>...without the shedding of blood **there is no forgiveness of sins**. That's what we said earlier – atonement **has** to be made – a sacrifice has to be made, otherwise justice hasn't been served. But it also said: <sup>10:4</sup> **For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.**

Alright, so, if the blood of bulls & goats don't cut it what are we left with? We're left with Jesus. We're left with the blood of Christ. **Jesus** died on the cross, to make it possible, for our sins to be taken away.

And so we realise that the sacrificial system (in itself) was ineffective. How can the killing of a sheep, make me right with God??? It can't....

And Hebrews brings this out with the concept of “conscience”. Every year, the High Priest would make atonement for **un**intentional sins, but the gifts and sacrifices could never perfect the conscience of the worshipper.

The gifts and sacrifices, could only ever satisfy the requirements for the religious ceremonies themselves – all of the religious purity rules about what you could eat/drink, and about ceremonial washings....

So, in a way, these sacrifices could give a level of purity for the act of worship, but what it could **not** do, is clear the **conscience** of the worshipper.

So, ... if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, had some level of effectiveness to purify **physical** things (to prepare the people for worship) it says, 9:<sup>14</sup> how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

**WOW!!! That's what we're waiting for.** I don't care if my cup is clean. I want my conscience clean...

You see, the sacrifice of animals, is never what God wanted. He wants a people:

- who will do His will
- who will worship the Lord Jesus Christ
- who will make His ways, our ways...

And so, the High Priest, would have to do his thing year, after year, after year. But when, Jesus made **His** sacrifice, He did it, and then He sat down. That means He's finished/done the job/completed it. He's made the one perfect sacrifice – the sacrifice for all time. 9:12 says that through His **Own** blood, Jesus secured an eternal redemption.

And it seems that “for all time”, means that when sacrifices were made (back in the day) under the Old Covenant, although they were ineffective in themselves, they were looking forward to the **perfect** – the sacrifice that Jesus would make (on the cross). V26 says that Jesus **appeared** once for **all** at the **end** of the **ages** to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

Alright, so the only effectiveness that the sacrifice of animals ever had, was that they foreshadowed the genuine sacrifice of our Lord Jesus....

So, Jesus made the sacrifice once (never to be repeated).

*There have been times when I have done wrong, and I've been deeply ashamed. And in my sorrow, I've felt like I've driven another nail into Jesus... I now know that's wrong. There are no extra nails. Jesus was sacrificed once. He will not be*

sacrificed again. That's why we have communion at a **table**, not an altar. We are remembering the one time sacrifice Jesus made for us, not sacrificing Him again.

And so, the only way to be in fellowship with God, is to have our sins removed, so we can be with Him. And the only way to have our sins removed, is through the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no other way. Jesus is the only way to have a genuinely clear conscience, allowing us to be in fellowship with God.

## 2.

And this is really important because of the second point.

There are “those who are **called**”, and there are “enemies”...

Some people don't like Christianity. They say, “Oh, it's too black and white”... You know what: The fact that there's no shades of grey, is a very good thing. That way we know exactly where we stand. My relationship with God is very clear. I am either “called”, or I am “an enemy”...

But let me tell you, it's a good thing, that God **loves** His enemies, and He calls them, to be His beloved.

It was Jesus (Who is the personification of “love”), Who said:  
**Matthew 12:30 (ESV)** **Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.**

In Romans, we are told that while we were **enemies** of Jesus, He loved us enough to die for us<sup>i</sup>.

Within today's reading, we were given several statements on what it's going to be like, on the day Jesus returns.

- For those who are called, it's going to be wonderful.
- But for those who reject Jesus, there's no further chances, for the Day of Judgment has come.

Those who are “called”, are the Disciples of Jesus. “The called”, are those who by faith, receive Jesus as their Lord, and follow Him.

And in Chapter 9, the “called”, receive the promised eternal inheritance.

At the **end** of Chapter 9, we are reminded of “judgment”. it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment

But because Jesus died once, to bear the sins of the **many**, when Jesus comes again, it's not to deal with sin again. He's already done that. When He comes, it is to save those who are eagerly waiting for Him...

How do I know if I am saved? Well, am I eagerly waiting for Jesus? Let there be, no doubt: “the saved”, are in this wonderful relationship with God, and we cannot wait for Jesus to come... And if I am not eagerly awaiting the coming of Jesus, then that should ring a few alarm bells for me, that there

is something missing in my relationship with God (and maybe it's having a relationship itself)...

And on the Day of Judgment, there is no judgment for those who are waiting for Jesus. For them, He's coming to **save**.

And in Chapter 10, we're given a picture of Jesus, in the throne-room of God. He's made His once and for all sacrifice. **by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.**

And he waits. What is He waiting for? He's waiting for the day, when our redemption will be complete. For Disciples of Jesus, that's a wonderful day.

But, we're given a bitter image, for those who have rejected Him. His enemies will be made a footstool for his feet. *Back in ancient times, when an enemy was defeated, the worst punishment for an enemy king, was their utter humiliation.* And here, we're given a picture of utter humiliation.

If in my pride, I reject Jesus today, on the day Jesus returns, what a humiliation that will be (for me)...

### 3.

But, Hebrews reminds us, that the Gospel, is Good News.

The bad news, is “the enemies of Jesus will be judged and humiliated”.



The good news, is “Those who are eagerly awaiting Him, will be filled with joy at His coming.”

Our relationship with God, begins now, and it will continue, without fear, through the Day of Judgment. And so, we’re finishing off today, with the same message as last week. A message that our relationship with God is possible, because of the total and complete forgiveness He provides.

It’s a forgiveness so complete, that He says: **“I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.”**

Isn’t that wonderful. For a Disciple of Jesus, we know exactly where we stand. There **is** no fear, that God’s going to bring up my sins of the past... There **is** no worry that I don’t really belong, because **everything** is forgiven, and there is no record of wrong.

Questions?

Let’s pray:

Heavenly Father,  
We thank You for our Lord Jesus Christ.  
We thank You, that He was willing to make  
that very costly sacrifice of His own life,  
for without it,  
there would be no forgiveness of sins.

We thank You, for Your great love,  
that while I was an enemy,  
even then, you loved me enough,  
to die, that I could become Your beloved.

Lord, forgive us of our sins.  
And help us to live in the freedom and forgiveness  
that Your perfect sacrifice provides.

And draw us into Your wonderful, loving relationship.  
Help us to experience this relationship now,  
causing us to eagerly await Your coming.

And Lord,  
we pray for those who do not yet know You.  
Give us a love for them,  
as You love them.  
And we pray, that they too,  
would come to know You,  
and experience Your love,  
Grace  
Mercy  
and forgiveness.

in Jesus' Name,  
Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> Romans 5:6-10