



HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

The Shadows of His Coming

December 6, 2020

Hebrews 10:1-4

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

(Pastor prays)

It's hard to leave what you know and walk into what you don't know. It's difficult to be away from what you've known all your life and step into a new setting with no real guarantees and no clear security. It's hard to leave home for school, the military, marriage, singleness, career changes, and loss. We often revert to what we know and are comfortable with.

And that's the very danger of those reading these words for the very first time. This is written to a small congregation of thorough-going Jewish Christians. They came to Christ late in life and still have a lot of Jewishness left in them. And on top of that, a persecution has developed where Christians are dying and Jews are living. And since they are so augmented with being Jewish, many of the church members are stepping away from the church and fading back into what they know, Judaism.

And this whole letter is an attempt to persuade scared people that Jesus Christ is better than any temptation, even the familiar and loving ones; that Jesus Christ is better than anything in their former lives. And here in Chapter 10, the author puts a dagger in the heart of their old religion that was so solidly based and dependent on the law of Moses. You think obeying the

law of God is going to get you to Heaven and make you feel safe. Verse 1 says, the law is a shadow, a shell. The law of the prophets is sacrifice, rituals, days, and liturgies. All of that is a shadow. It's not evil, it isn't contrary to the will of God, it's just not the good thing to come.

Let me illustrate it. It would be like going to get a hot dozen of Krispy Kreme Donuts but throwing out the donuts and eating the box. It's an empty shell. Or going to Chick-Fil-A and ordering the box lunch, throwing out the food and eating the box. It's an empty shell. In a higher, holier, more profound way, the argument here is the advent coming of Christ is the good thing to come. It's what the whole Bible points to. It points to Christ's virgin birth, His perfect, obedient life, His love, His healing, His compassion, His empathy, His righteousness, His death on the cross on Good Friday, His Sabbath keeping, His resurrection on Sunday, His ascension. He saves sinners who come, believing, and this passage speaks to His coming to rescue sinners.

The entire Old Testament shadows the coming of Christ as a rescuer. In Genesis 3, Adam and Eve sinned and knew they were naked. Animals died to cover them. It's the first time we see that something has to die to cover our sin.

In Genesis 22, with Abraham and Isaac, God provides a substitute. There's Joseph, who could be considered a sacrifice to save his brothers. There is the Passover lamb whose blood was put on the doorpost. In the desert when Moses struck the rock to bring water, the writer of Hebrews would say that rock was Christ. And Jesus would say that the serpent lifted up in the desert was a picture of Him. Even in the book of Judges, and their twisted beliefs, there is sacrifice. The entire Old Testament shows that the shadows are not the substance. The substance is Christ and...

Christ Came to Rescue Sinners

Let's get to the text and see what He rescues us from.

Christ rescues us from the Merry-Go-Round of life

A merry go round. You just sit there and experience the same old thing over and over again. That's how verse one feels. Let's read it. **10** *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.* Since the law is vague and powerless, this is what it feels like. The same old sacrifices being continually offered every year.

It is the day of atonement, high and holy day. It's not having a lasting and real effect on you. It's not changing you. It's an ineffective routine. I mean even down in Hebrews 10:8 all of the sacrifices are listed. The whole thing, the whole system. The whole setup and all these systems have always been designed to point to Christ and his coming. All those animals being sacrificed pointed to Christ. Israel saw the shape of the good to come. God is only satisfied with the sacrifice of his son and puts Christ's righteousness on us. Because the righteousness of Jesus is the only righteousness that meets God's statutes. And Christ comes to rescue us from the treadmill of trying to get into the resting place of grace. Christ came to rescue sinners and he will rescue you!

Christ rescues us from our flaws.

You read verse one and you can feel the futility of a dead religion or a non-religion. It can't make perfect those who draw near. That phrase "make perfect" is the word *Telios*. It means to couple to, fulfill or satisfy. So much of what is passed off as Christianity today is some sort of behavioral management to help people cope, get ahead, deal with strife or live happier. And all of those things are great things but it leaves people dead inside. It wears off and that's what the writer is warning people of. Religion and recreational relationship can't remove our biggest problem that is the sin that separates us from God. And in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus says, "Be perfect as my father is perfect." We can't. We use the phrase, nobody's perfect, to excuse our flaws when that is the actual problem we have. We aren't perfect and we need the one who is perfect to cover us. And that's the coming of Jesus Christ, who came to rescue slaves. Allow me to offer a third consideration.

Christ rescues us from our filth

We don't often think of ourselves as filthy. We don't like filthy mouths, clothes, homes or cars. But for some reason, like spiritual hoarders, we have gotten accustomed to allowing filth to layer in our souls so that like the frog in the kettle, it's gotten to a death boil and we don't even know it. And this verse is a promise that Christ can and will rescue us and nothing else can. Verse two starts with a rhetorical question. . ² *Otherwise, 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.* It is essentially saying, if the sacrificial system actually worked to fully cleanse people, then why do we keep having to repeat it? And the point is, it's a shadow. It's a

pointer that is pointing to Christ. The sacrifices are there to appease God and remind us that God has once again temporarily held back his judgment. But they don't actually do anything to the state of the sinner. He is still a sinner. The filth, sin and brokenness is still there. And the point of verse 2 is that the coming of Christ not only has the effect of permanently removing the wrath of God from his children, the death of Jesus on the cross has an actual effect on the sinner whereby the sinner becomes a saint. That's the point of the rhetorical question in verse 2. See that last phrase, consciousness of sin. That means we are aware of right and wrong. This is what Christ does for people. It's not just the turning away of God's righteous judgment, it's what happens in you! When you believe Christ died for you, the virtues of his sacrifice not only are applied to the judgment of God, but they are also applied to our souls and conscience. We are cleansed, renewed, forgiven, changed, made alive, freed up and unbound to no longer have any consciousness of sins. It means no more fear of judgment, hell, death or condemnation. It's the full recognition of what Paul said in Romans 8:1-2. *Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, ² because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.* Your conscience, along with knowledge, is the eye of your soul. The spirit of God, through the law of God, awakens me to sin and gives me a guilty conscience. And we look to Christ, we run to Christ, we are rescued and cleansed and during this advent season I want you to see that Jesus came to rescue sinners.

The fourth point is similar but I think it's different enough to stand alone.

Christ rescues us from our memory

Listen to the short stab of verse three with the day of atonement in view. Look at the reminder of your sin. ³*But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins.* The truth is that the Old Testament and the sacrificial system was put into place to help the people remember. God is holy, he hates sin, man is a full-blown sinner, and sin leads to death. There is a need for a substitute, a substitute with the perfect nature of Christ. There is a need to look at the perfect sacrifice, Jesus. The whole Bible is saying look to Christ! And the terrible thing brought up in verse three is the fact that all the law can do is remind you of your sin. Memory is a powerful thing. If you have ever sinned in a really grievous way, the memory of that is hard to get through. Rosaria Butterfield, who wrote *Confessions of an Unlikely Convert*, talked about that. When Christ came and lived perfectly and would die, he left us with one tangible thing to help

us remember, The Lord's Supper. He said, this is my body given for you, do this in remembrance of me. This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this in remembrance of me. With one, the law, you look back and remember failings and guilt. With another you look back and remember Jesus and grace and that the blood of Jesus covers me. Jesus came to rescue sinners.

Christ came to rescue us from hell

That's the point of verse 4. It points to our only hope. *4 It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.* Impossible. Now go to Hebrews 9:22. *In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.* And yet, it's impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. These sacrifices only symbolically point forward to the only one who would rescue his people from hell. Isn't that what we sing, "When my accuser makes the claim that I should die for my offense, I point him to the rugged frame where I found life at Christ expense. See from his hands, his feet, his side, the fountain flowing deep and wide. Oh did he shout the victory! The blood of Jesus speaks for me." Christ came to rescue sinners at the cross. The law of God is a beautiful shadow of the good thing to come - Jesus Christ.

(Pastor prays)