

7-7-24

Something God Cannot Do Hebrews 10:11-18

After seeing the title to this message, you might be thinking, "oh no. This guy is a heretic". I mean, doesn't the Bible have texts such as, Matt. 19:26, that say, "...with God, all things are possible". Or, Gen. 18:14, "nothing is too difficult for God". But don't get too excited. You already know that God can not lie. God cannot change. God cannot break a promise, which is pretty cool. It's why we can *claim* His promises, because He always comes through. You see God cannot do anything inconsistent with His character or His will. And, in a little while, we shall see that there is something else He cannot do.

The background of the book of Hebrews is as important as for any book of the Bible. It was written to Jewish Christians in Rome, following the burning of Rome by Nero. Since he blamed the Christians, things heated up for these folks, pun intended. There was a lot of pressure and a lot of persecution on the believers in Rome. Some in the congregation were thinking of deserting Christ and going back to Judaism. They were thinking that if they just went back to Judaism as a way of life and bury their faith in Christ within it, they could escape the abuse. Some of the folks may have not actually come to faith in the first place. The text before us actually starts in 9:1 and continues through our passage. The author has been attempting to prove the superiority of Christ. To set the broader context:

- Chapters 5 and 6: Christ is Superior in the Qualifications of His Priesthood.
- Chapters 7 and 8: Christ is Superior in the Order of His Priesthood.
- Chapter 9 and 10: Christ is Superior in His Priestly Ministry.

Which brings us to this morning's text. The author is attempting to prove the superiority of Christ's priesthood to that of the Levitical priests. He is explaining that Christ has fulfilled a superior promise. It is called the New Covenant or Testament, as opposed to the old Mosaic law.

10:11-13 Christ Has a Superior Priesthood and a Superior Sacrifice

- :11
 - The animal sacrifices couldn't ultimately remove sin, and had to keep being repeated. In fact, it says, "daily", because there were morning, evening, monthly, sin, guilt, burnt, votive, festive, and freewill offerings and others. Aren't you glad that you don't have to do all that sacrificing?
 - That's why the priest never sat down while he was in the temple. He always had more sacrifices to make. His work was never done.
 - Present tenses indicate that the system was still being used by the Jews there in the 1st century. In fact, it demonstrates that this book was written *before* the Romans destroyed the temple in 70 AD,
 - The old system was ultimately ineffective. Verse eleven summarizes what he has already said in 10:1-4.

- Why the law and sacrifices in the first place? It was **Pedagogical** or teaching, demonstrating that we were fallen (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 3:23-25), it was **Patient**: the sacrifices were an IOU pointing forward (Rom. 3:25), and it was **Prophetic**: the sacrifices predicting that future sacrifice of Christ (I Cor. 5:7).
- :12
 - As 100% God, He was able to be an acceptable *infinite* sacrifice to God. Also, as 100% man, He was able to represent fallen man to God.
 - Thus, in contrast to the Levitical priests, who continued to sacrifice daily, He only needed one sacrifice. Hapax, or “once” occurs 8 times in the book of Hebrews, as many times as in the rest of the New Testament. This is to emphasize the completed nature of His sacrifice.
 - Also in contrast, He sat down because the one sacrifice was completed (Jn. 19:30; Heb. 1:3; 8:1; Eph. 1:20; 2:6; I Pet. 3:18). There is nothing that we can add to Christ’s sacrifice. It was all sufficient. (And not counting metaphors, the only time that we see Christ standing in the New Testament after His ascension, is to receive martyrs, like He did Stephen). Christ is now at the right hand of God, the Father, because Christ is sitting on his *heavenly* throne, not the *Davidic* throne, which is another discussion.
 - To further highlight the finality of Christ’s sacrifice, the writer adds, “for all time”, “forever” in other words.
 - That is why we celebrate that sacrifice in our communion services as a representative memorial. It is not a *resacrifice* of Christ, or we would be in conflict with this clear teaching
- :13 Although the basis for the New Covenant or Testament has been completed, there are yet features to be implemented. The foundation is complete. But His kingdom, which will be built *on* this foundation, has not yet come. This verse references Psalm 110, which speaks of Christ’s future earthly reign, the commencement of which will involve the subjugation of all unbelievers. At that time, every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord (Phil. 2:5-11).

10:14 Christ Has a Superior Sanctification

- Again, the writer emphasizes that there is but *one* offering.
- Perfected is in the perfect tense of completed in the original. It means action completed in the past with results continuing into the present. He adds again, “for all time” or “forever”.
- Sanctification is a big word, not typical in our everyday English. It comes from a root word that means holy, “hagios”. Sanctification is “hagiosmos”. The basic meaning is to be set apart.
- (Sanctification is a present participle here. As each one comes to faith, it is viewed as a process. The author used the perfect tense in :10).
- Typically, we define the word, sanctification, as the *process* of being set apart, of being made more holy. But sometimes the word is used in the New Testament of an action completed in the past. In other words, the sanctification spoken of here was completed in the past when we trusted Christ. And it is based on His once-for-all sacrifice. Thus, this perfection is referring to our *position* or *standing* in Christ. Our experience has not yet caught up with our legal standing

before God. But from His perspective, it is as good as complete, because we are justified, or declared righteous. We have the righteousness of Christ, itself (II Cor. 5:21).

10:15-17 Christ has Superior Results in His New Covenant or Testament

- :15 The author obviously believed in the inspiration of Scripture. Inspiration is the word, *theopneustos*, which literally means, “God breathed”. II Pet. 1:21b says that “...men moved by the Spirit spoke from God”. The words in a sermon today might be *illuminated*, but not *inspired* in a Biblical sense. Though, like other words, we sometimes don’t use them in a Biblical sense. (For example, *ecclesia*, or church, is never used of a building. It means the people, the congregation. But we often use it of the building.)
- :16-17 The quotation here is from Jer. 31:33-34, what we typically refer to as the New Covenant.
 - But the author only quotes *part* of the promise, the part that has to do with spiritual change in the believer. Because that is the only part of the promise that has to do with the church today. If you have the sermon notes, you will find the references for these features.
 - This promise, which has a broad context both here and in Ezekiel, was made originally to Israel, not to the church *per se*. As Paul explains in Romans 11, we have been grafted into the place of privilege, but only until the “times of the Gentiles” are fulfilled, the time of Gentile world domination (Jer. 31:3b).
 - It involves the national restoration of Israel to its land (Jer. 32:37; Ezk. 36:24; 37:21-22).
 - It involves the national regeneration (the new birth) and repentance of Israel (Jer. 31:31-34; Ezk. 16:60-63; 36:25ff.; 37:23-28).
 - It will feature the 2nd coming of Christ (Isa. 59:20-21).
 - There will be universal belief in Christ and knowledge of God (Jer. 31:34).
 - :16 The word, “*covenant*”, means the same exact thing as the word, “*testament*”. They are both translations of the same word in the New Testament, *diatheikei*, and also both translations of the same word in the Old Testament, *berith*. The closest thing we have to a covenant or testament in English is to a contract, or a will. In our Bible, it was typically initiated with blood, so it was a serious thing for the stakeholders. But this covenant, unlike the old one, was to be internalized. Instead of an external code of 613 commandments, it is actually internal, innate, and intrinsic to the believer. We know from other passages that the believer is enabled to carry out the *spirit* of the law by means of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16,18). The Holy Spirit has replaced the Mosaic Law in the Church age. Our desires, goals, and intentions are now being driven by the Holy Spirit, or should be driven by the Holy Spirit.
 - Now, it is important to remember just when the New Covenant or Testament began! Most likely, your Bible says, “New Testament” somewhere between Malachi 4:5 and Mathew 1:1. That was not part of the original text. It was added much later. Actually, the New Testament was not *ratified* until Mathew 27:50. It could not be ratified *until* Christ shed His blood:

- Gal. 4:4. You see, the life of Christ was lived under the Mosaic Law. He fulfilled the Law for us, all 613 commandments (Rom. 8:3-4). The New Covenant or Testament could not be ratified until then.
 - Ironically, we will shortly read from a text we typically read every communion (I Cor. 11:25)
 - And the New Testament has only been *ratified*, so that all who come to faith in Christ can enjoy the *spiritual* provisions of the New Covenant. But it actually has not been fully *inaugurated* in all of its provisions, which we will see when Christ returns and has initiated the Messianic Kingdom. Those are the other features I mentioned in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. That is why the author in Hebrews only quotes the portion having to do with the *spiritual* blessings of the New Testament.
- :17 Here is what God cannot do. He cannot remember your sin. It is a strong negative in the Greek. He will never remember your sin against you. The Lord develops *amnesia* about our sin. He won't hold the penalty of sin against us, because Christ has paid that penalty 100%. He can't, because He has dealt decisively with the sin issue. It is settled once-for-all. Lutzer card

- **10:18 Conclusion: The Sacrifices Have Ended**

In the immediate context, the writer is encouraging the readers not to return to the old system of sacrifice. But sometimes modern Christians fall into a more subtle trap. We might be tempted to do things for the Lord, to serve Him, *in order to earn favor with Him*. But understand that you are already maxed out on favor with the Lord if you have trusted His Son. You have uber favor. You couldn't have earned favor with God in the first place (10:4; Gal. 2:21). You can't get any more favor with God than you currently have (like the prodigal son). Serving God should be out of gratitude. The reward system is built on favor we already have. (A person can't even get to the reward system until he or she is first accepted by God through faith in His Son.). All of our service today should be either freewill or thank offerings.

God doesn't throw people away. He forgives a Christian's sin and *forgets* it. It's the only way that Lance can serve (cf. 9:14).

Now let me ask you something. God has forgiven you. But have you forgiven yourself? The word for confess, *homologeō*, means, "to agree with" or "to say the same thing as". Presupposing that we are truly sorry for the sin and acknowledge Christ's sacrifice, we should agree with God that our sin has been forgiven, or we really haven't agreed with God, now, have we? So, you need to forgive *yourself* to align with His way of thinking about your sin.

Let's take this to another level. Not only has God forgiven our sins, He has forgotten them. Do you still drag up old sins that you committed long ago, or even last week? Are you still beating yourself up about it? Wasn't Christ beaten in our place? If we have confessed and turned from sin, we should take the Mafia approach, "forget about it". 2nd Lutzer card.

And what about forgiving others? Are you still harboring some resentment toward someone? The Scriptures are clear in connecting forgiveness that we have received from God and forgiveness toward others (Eph. 4:32). We repeat it every time that we recite the Lord's prayer (Matt. 6:12).

Now is where I go to meddling. Have we sort of forgiven someone for something, but we still *remember* it. Married couples are notorious for this. We remember things. We use them as leverage or weapons when we bring them up again. We should not only *forgive* these sins, but we should also *forget* about it. But that takes the enabling power of the Holy Spirit, as the Change Agent. It took God's love to provide forgiveness for us in the first place. It takes God's love for us to forgive others. We need to come down with a serious case of *amnesia* when it comes to what others have done to us. Wesley card, Clara Barton card.

