Christ: Our Perfect Sacrifice (Part 1)

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[0:00] I've had the humble privilege of teaching God's Word at Highland Park for over 40 years.

We come to the realization that preaching and teaching and sitting under the same are the high points of true worship.
When we come under the hearing of the Word, we are lifted out of the muck and mire of this sinful world and placed on a level where the Spirit of God dwells in all His richness.
I heard MacArthur the other day and he said, God indwells His Word. We need to remember that when we open our Bibles. In some respects, everything I have taught for all these years prior to today was preliminary.
In looking back over the various studies, chapters and books, it all seems to have been a journey to the 10th chapter of the book of Hebrews where we find ourselves tonight.
[1:34] Let me put it another way. Take away the 10th chapter of Hebrews and nothing else makes much sense or even matters.

And that may open your eyes in our study tonight, but if not, we're not going to finish the 10th chapter tonight, I can assure you. The 10th chapter of Hebrews is a description of Christ as our perfect sacrifice.
The only acceptable sacrifice. Acceptable by the Father. And for everything else to fall into place and make sense, there had to be a sacrifice.
And that sacrifice had to be perfect. And that sacrifice had to have eternal application.
Now, a billion millennia from now, as we measure time, we will be worshiping the Lamb and talking about and praising Him for His perfect sacrifice.
[2:51] The sacrifice itself occurred in what we call space and time. But its application is everlasting.

Even those who reject the perfect sacrifice by which they could have been saved, it will have an everlasting impact.
Men will be crying out from the pit of hell a billion millennia from now for having rejected the perfect sacrifice.
That's the one ground by which they could have been saved. John MacArthur, and you'll hear his name many times in here, tells the story of a chapel in a quaint English village.
To gain entry to the chapel, one must walk under an archway on which were written these words, a quotation from 1 Corinthians 1.23, we preach Christ crucified.
[4:07] And for generations at this little village church in England, godly men entered the chapel, ascended the pulpit, and did just that.

They preached Christ crucified. Time went on, and as has happened globally, even in our own country, men arose who thought that the message of the cross had become antiquated, outdated, and for some even repulsive.
And they began to preach a watered-down message using Christ as only one example of many lives that had been well lived.
Strangely, and as if on cue, ivy at this little church in England began to grow over the arch, and eventually it covered the word crucified.
It left visible these words, we preach Christ. Time went on, and men came along, who decided that preaching only Christ was far too narrow.
[5:39] They began to give discourses on social issues, politics, philosophy, talked about religious systems throughout the world, and so on.

Well, again, it's like the ivy could hear, and it began to grow until it obliterated the word Christ.

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And all that was left by then on the arch was the words we preach. Dr. MacArthur told that story two decades ago, but now I imagine only the words we remain.
may no such ivy ever cover the message that this church expounds. We need to be a church founded on the words of the Apostle Paul who said this, he said he was determined to know nothing among them except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.
That's 1 Corinthians 2.2. And the beauty of our lesson today is that we see Christ crucified not from the historical space-time continuum, but from the theological standpoint.
[7:09] We see Christ in the depth and the richness of His perfect sacrifice. As we went through last spring through the ninth chapter of Hebrews, back a lot of months ago now, we saw in detail the necessity of Christ's sacrifice.

In the tenth chapter, we come to the character of His sacrifice. And I want to offer to you these words as a form of true worship.
The opening words to Hebrews chapter 10, beginning in verse 1, verse 1, for the law, since it was only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year make perfect those who draw near.
Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered? because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins.
But in those sacrifices, there is a reminder of sins year by year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin.
[8:47] Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says, sacrifice an offering you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me, and whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin, you have taken no pleasure.

And then I said, behold, I have come in the scroll of the book it is written of me to do your will, O God. After saying the above, sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings, and sacrifices for sin you have not desired, nor have you taken pleasure in them, which are according to the law.
Then He said, behold, I have come to do your will. He takes away the first in order to establish the second.
By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all who would believe.
Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But He, that's Christ, He, having offered one sacrifice for sins, for all time sat down at the right hand of God.
[10:15] waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet. For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us, for after saying, this is the covenant which I will make with them, after those days, says the Lord, I will put My laws upon their heart and on their mind, I will write them.
And then He says, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more. Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin. In other words, Christ is not dying every day on a cross.
It's not necessary. And I think we can do a collective wow at that concept. And you may recall I just read that when He finished His work, He sat down.
The earthly priests never sat down. There were no chairs in the temple or the tabernacle. Why? Because their work was never finished. There was always another sin to atone for.
[11:30] But when Jesus atoned for them, He sat down and could say, it is finished. These first six verses are the foundation of what is to follow.

In them we see the ineffectiveness of the old sacrifice. And this is a theme we have covered many times before. But when we come to the perfect sacrifice, Christ, it takes on renewed significance.
We know from previous studies that the Old Testament sacrificial system was a veritable assembly line of death. We give Henry Ford credit for creating the conveyor belt of building Model A's and Model T's and they were churning one out about every four minutes.
This was an assembly line of death. The bloodshed was so massive that special channels were cut down the temple mount to carry it into the Kidron Valley below.
There's a brook that flows through the Kidron. The stream itself flowed red for generations from the hundreds of thousands or millions of sacrificial lambs and goats and even turtle doves.

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[13:04] But the water flowed red because of the animal's blood that was shed. I can never recount this fact without recalling that when Jesus made his way to the Garden of Gethsemane to be arrested and ultimately sacrificed, the Scriptures say he crossed over the Kidron.

He went through the Kidron Valley, stepped over that stream of water that flowed red. And I have to wonder, did Jesus look down at the water turned red with a mixture of blood and thought these sacrifices and even this temple will soon be unnecessary?
His perfect and eternal sacrifice were mere hours away. These animal sacrifices had gone on for 1600 years, but ultimately they proved to be ineffective.
Why did they fail? Well, they failed in three ways. First, the animal sacrifices could not bring access to God.
All true believers want to dwell in the presence of the Lord. This was true of the Old Testament saints as well as believers in our generation, but the saints under the Old Covenant had no way to get there.
[14:38] In the days of the Old Testament, God symbolically dwelt inside the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle and later the Temple, only the earthly high priests could enter that area, and only on the Day of Atonement.

It was inside the veil, and that veil was there to protect the people from rushing into the presence of God and being consumed by His holy wrath.
We actually have examples of men trying to enter into the presence of God in an unholy manner. Two that readily come to mind are the sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu.
We read about them in the opening verses of Leviticus chapter 10. Now, Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them.
And fire came out from the presence of the Lord, and consumed them, and they died before the Lord. And then Moses said to Aaron, it is what the Lord spoke, saying, by those who come near me, I will be treated as holy.
[16:13] And before all people, I will be honored. And it's very poignant to me, the next sentence, so Aaron, that's these two boys' father, kept silent.

What could you say? these two sons of Aaron, there's some evidence to suggest at least, they may have been intoxicated when they brashly entered into the presence of God, offering strange fire to the Lord, and being consumed by the holy fire of God.
And Aaron was silent. Nothing to say. Only once he year on Yom Kippur, that's the day of atonement, would the earthly high priest enter the Holy of Holies, while the people remained outside, hoping that the sacrifice offered was sufficient to atone for their sins, even though it was temporary.
temporary. And so serious were they of this ceremony, which took 24 hours, they tied a rope on the high priest, because if he did something wrong or unrighteous, God could strike him dead, and no one could go in after him.
They had to reel him out like a fish. You didn't dare go in after him. But these sacrifices could never make perfect those who draw near.
[17:59] They could not save, neither could they bring access to God. That was through the high priest alone, once a year. But the sacrifices under the old covenant were a picture of the future sacrifice of Christ.

but as such, they were only vague representations. They were shadows, whereas Christ is the substance.
In fact, the Hebrew language describes them as pale shadows, not even distinct and sharply focused images. Just pale shadows.
Now, to be sure, the Old Testament sacrifices pointed men to God, but they had to be repeated over and over. And if you pile shadow on shadow, all you have is shadow.
It remains shadow. But they did stand as evidence of something to come, and a little evidence is better than none at all.
[19:13] people. So the first purpose of the shadow was to provide some evidence of the reality to come. Secondly, the Old Testament sacrifices reminded the people that the penalty of sin was death.

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Death was always around the Hebrew people. In the days of the temple, people would be lined up by the thousands, making their way inside to offer an unblemished sacrifice for their sins and that of their families.
They could see the blood flowing out of the temple and down the slope into the Kidron Valley. It was a continual reminder of the sinfulness of sin and the need to shed blood for forgiveness.
death permeated the Hebrew nation. But the third reason for the sacrifices was that they did provide a temporary covering for sin.
A shadowy sacrifice is better than none at all. When the sacrifices were offered under the Old Covenant, they did provide an immediate although temporary removal of God's judgment that was upon them.
[20:38] Anyone who did not participate in the sacrificial system was cut off from the religious life of the nation.

They would receive judgment from God because their failure to participate was clear evidence that they possessed an unbelieving, disobedient, and unrepentant heart.
But the sacrifices were temporary at best and had no lasting impact on the life of a Jew.
They did demonstrate though that the participant was in a covenantal relationship with God. So the sacrifices could not bring access to God.
There was something else the sacrifices could not accomplish. They could not totally remove sin.
Hebrews 10 2 and 3 If they could remove sin, they would not have ceased to be offered because the worshipers having been once been cleansed would no longer have had consciousness of sins.
[21:58] But in those sacrifices there was a reminder of sins year after year. The ceremonies in Israel reminded them were a sinful people.

The animal sacrifices could temporarily cover but never take away sin. And that was the one thing that men and women desperately needed.
We need it now. sin and its companion guilt eat away at people. If the animal sacrifices had been able to remove both sin and guilt of sin, then the very sacrifices would have ceased and Christ would not have had to die.
Atonement would have been secured through the Old Testament system. Once sin was removed, sacrifice no longer necessary. But far from an ability to remove sin, the Old Testament sacrifices reminded people of their sins.
Although the animal sacrifice covered the sins committed, they only lasted until the next sin. Well, how long was that? Well, if they're like me, a few seconds and maybe they could last a minute.
[23:19] Literally. It's amazing. maybe they'd last a whole minute. The sacrificial system was not only burdensome, but it was also disappointing in that it had to be done repeatedly.

So the old system of animal sacrifice did not bring any permanent relief. Instead, it brought a continual reminder of the person's failure fear and their need really for continual atonement.
In that regard, the people had a consciousness concerning sin. The word means an awareness of wrong and a sense of guilt because of it.
God. Now, this does not mean that as Christians we are not or should not be conscious of our sins. Of all people, we should be acutely aware of our sins even though we've been cleansed of them by Christ and His atoning sacrifice.
Having been saved, we become acutely aware of God's holiness and of our sinfulness. We have a consciousness of sin but should not be weighted down into ineffectiveness as a result of it.
[24:47] Instead, this awareness should drive us to our knees in confession and genuine repentance before a loving God who died as our substitute and never lives to make intercession for us.

It is the unbeliever who should do business with his sins. If only every unbeliever could do business with 1 John 1.8 and 1.10.
If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we say that we have not sinned, we make God a liar and His word is not in us.
That's pretty powerful words. As forgiven sinners, we are not insensitive to sin. We also know that godly discipline could follow a pattern of sin for the believer.
But we also know that we've been delivered from the fear of final judgment through the cross. through the atonement. So we have seen under the old covenant that there was no access to God and the sacrifices could not remove the stain of sin.

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[26:17] There was a third thing concerning the Old Testament sacrifices. They were only external. external. Another reason the old sacrifices were ineffective because they were merely external.

Never did the blood of bulls and goats strike at the heart of the problem. Sin may be manifested outwardly. It often is. But it is always an inward problem.
It's inward. It starts internally. Was it James or one of them that said it starts in your heart? That's where sin originates? Animal sacrifice could never reach inside a man and cleanse him.
Hebrews 10 4, for it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. There was never any firm relationship between a person's sin and animal sacrifice.
It was simple. It was merely symbolic. As was said earlier, it was a shadow of the good things to come. Amoral animals cannot cleanse morally reprehensible sins.
[27:38] Those offenses are against God Himself. To be eternally clean, God must be eternally satisfied.

satisfied. And He finds that satisfaction only through the sacrifice of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. He alone is the ultimate sacrifice.
In Hebrews 10, 5, and 6, therefore, when He comes into the world, He says, sacrifice and offering you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me, and whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin, you've taken no pleasure.
Even in the Old Testament, if people did not sacrifice with a heart that was seeking forgiveness and reconciliation, then the bloodshed was without meaning.
It didn't mean anything. Most people do not sacrifice appropriately. They had not put their faith in God. They were trusting in the outward form, not in the inward reality.
[28:46] It reminds me of some in the church today who put faith in faith. If my faith is strong, well, your faith is not in faith, it's in Christ and His finished work.

We're to put our faith in the finished work of Christ and Him alone. But even under the old code, obedience was always better than sacrifice.
The true sacrifices that were acceptable God were summed up by the psalmist. Sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.
That's Psalm 51, 17. When sacrifices were not offered in the right spirit, they could not even cover sins temporarily.
they lost even their symbolic value. They were not only displeasing to God, but they were an abomination to Him. Listen to what Isaiah had to say.
[29:54] We'll close with this. Isaiah chapter 1 verses 11 to 15. What are your multiplied sacrifices to me, says the Lord?

I've had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed cattle. I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs, or goats. When you come to appear before me, who requires of you this trampling of my courts?
Bring your worthless offerings no more. How would you like to be listening to God say that to you? Incense is an abomination to me. New moon and Sabbath, the calling of assemblies.
I cannot endure iniquity in the solemn assembly. I hate your new moon festivals and your appointed feasts.
They become a burden to me. I'm weary of bearing them. So when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you.
[31:08] Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood. Oh, what a stinging indictment.

But over and against this, we have the effectiveness of the new sacrifice. That being Christ. And that's where we're going to pick it up next time.
So let's close this evening with prayer. Father, we thank you for Christ who laid down His life for all who would believe.
And so certain were you Lord of their identity, you wrote their names down in the Lamb's Book of Life before the foundation of the world. That's an amazing thought, Lord.
Lord, open our hearts to the truth of this great book of Hebrews as we study. May we begin and end each day on our knees as we contemplate these truths and what it means to the church now in the 21st century.

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[32:27] because like you, it hasn't changed. Lord, be with us now as we return to our homes. Give us a good week and bring us back as we study Your Word.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Amen.

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