

“The Finished Work of Christ”

Fixing Our Eyes Upon Jesus, Our High Priest

Hebrews 10:11-18

Dr. Jeff Stivason

January 4, 2019

Jeff: Father in heaven, we are very thankful to be gathered here this morning. We're thankful for many reasons, for life and breath and for those kinds of benefits, for rising this morning. Lord, You've summoned us to another day. And it's our desire to be useful in it. And we pray that You would make us to be useful. But Father, we rise to thank You not just for our own life and breath and for our impending usefulness, but we rise to thank You for You and who You are, for how You've revealed Yourself in the Lord Jesus. We thank You for the fact that You are independent of all things, the Creator, and that You need nothing. And yet You condescended to create that we might exist, that we might know Your glory. Father, we ask and pray that You would continually impress upon us Your glory, Your greatness, Your immensity, that we might indeed praise You.

Father, as we gather here today, we seek to learn from Your word which You've revealed, indeed Your authoritative word, Your inerrant word, because it is from You, the infallible God, You who are truth, You who have revealed Yourself in the Lord Jesus Christ who Himself is truth. And so as we gather around Your word this morning, Lord, help us not only to understand its nature, for indeed it is truth. But help us to understand what it says and the truths contained therein, that we might indeed be changed in our lives, that we might follow You more closely, that we might love You more dearly. And Father, we ask and pray that You'll not only do these things for us, but we all have those people upon our hearts and our minds throughout the day that require our prayers. And Father, we ask that You will bless those of whom we are thinking this morning as we lift them up to You in our thoughts. We pray that You'll tend to them. Father, as a good Shepherd we know that You will, and so we commit them to You. And as we do that, we come before You in Your word, asking that You will bless us, for we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Jeff: Well, let me have you turn this morning to Hebrews chapter 10. And we'll look at verses 11-18 this morning. Hebrews chapter 10, verses 11-18. I'll read the text this morning. Listen to God's word.

“And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until His enemies should be made a footstool for His feet. For by a single offering He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us. For after saying, ‘For this is the covenant that I will make with them after those days,’ says the LORD. ‘I will put my laws on their hearts and write them on their minds.’ Then he adds, ‘I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.’ Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.”

Participant: The word of the Lord.

“The Finished Work of Christ”

Jeff: This is the word of the Lord.

Men: Thanks be to God.

Jeff: If you would have given me one more second, (*Laughter*) I would have had it. (*Laughter*) Well, I’ve got an outline planned out. I want to say some introductory things to you men. I want to talk to you about *an enthroned King*. We’ll talk about the significance and the implications of that in just a minute. Then I want to think very briefly about *the testimony of the Holy Spirit* that we see here in the text. And then I want us to notice *the reconciliatory benefits* that come from this enthroned King. So those are the points that I want us to cover this morning. I want us to think about those. But let’s do the introduction first.

I want us to glance back. You know, one of the things that I love about a book in your hand is that you can go backward. You can flip the pages back. And even though this sounds like a simple thing, I want you to understand that this is a basic method of reading.

You want to take notes, perhaps highlight in your book so that you can return, so that you can go backward in them. And I think that’s an excellent, excellent method to keep in mind when you’re reading.

But you know, one of the things about technology is that you just can’t do that the way you used to be able to do that. I’ve got a tablet now with over 4,000 books on it, and I just can’t flip back. It infuriates me that I can’t flip back. But we need to flip back today and look at the first four verses in the chapter. And I want us to do that for a minute. I want us to go back to verses 1-4. I don’t want to read them. I want you to scan them. I want you to just take a look at them quickly. Get a load of what they say; refresh your memory.

Now what I want you to do, having done that, is that I want you to look at verse 11, and I’ll put it up here. Verse 11. *“And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices which can never take away sins.”*

Now when you read those first four verses, what you should have heard were things that were repeated in this particular verse. One of the things that we ought to understand is that the author is repeating himself. Now whether this is an oral literary device with which he is engaged or whether it’s simply a repetition of another idea in order to springboard in another direction, I’m not really sure. But I do know this. I know that there are things worth repeating. There are things worth hearing. And this is one of those things. One of those things that we need to get within us is this very teaching.

I want to tell you something. Let me put it like this. There are certain things about the gospel that are really easy to learn and understand. It’s not rocket science. This is an easy concept. The priests of old daily offered sacrifices repeatedly. But Christ offered one sacrifice on our behalf. That is an easy concept to learn.

But I want to tell you something. What’s easy to learn is not always easy to get into the bloodstream.

Participant: There you go.

Jeff: And this is one of those things that we’ve got to get into our bloodstream. And it gets in our bloodstream through repetition, through the Preacher telling us this sort of thing repeatedly. And this is the kind of thing he’s telling us here. He’s repeating it to us.

“The Finished Work of Christ”

Now I have a basic question for you. This is one of those basic question alerts. It’s one of those things that you’re going to know the answer to as soon as you see the question. But it’s a question I want to ask nonetheless. Who or what is able to cleanse us from sin?

Participant: Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Jeff: That’s right.

Participant singing: Nothing but the blood of Jee-zus! *(Laughter)*

Jeff: That’s right. You did it a lot better than either one of us could have. *(Laughter)* Jesus our High Priest. Now we’ve been learning about Jesus our High Priest. Not a surprise; nothing new. But there is a new image that we’ve seen before but that we haven’t considered for a while, a new image introduced into this portion of the text. That’s what I want us to think about first. I want us to think first of all about *the enthroned King* that’s in the text.

I want you to look at the text. Look at 12-14. I’ll throw it up on the screen. *“But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until His enemies should be made a footstool for His feet. For by a single offering He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.”*

Now what we have here is a very familiar picture. This is the picture of Christ as our High Priest. And this was something that was introduced for us way back in chapter 1. If you go back to chapter 1 and look at verse 3, you’ll see this idea expressed there—Hebrews 1:3. After telling us that *“He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature”*, and that *“He upholds the universe by the word of His power”*, here it is. *“After making purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on High.”*

And we see that. We see it in verse 13 where he quotes Psalm 110. This is not something new for us. And he’s been developing what this means as he goes along in these chapters.

And we know what it means. We understand the practical implication for this when we think about it contrasted with the Roman Catholic theology that we’ve looked at on a couple of occasions, where there is a continual sacrifice offered on the altar for sins. And we notice that they try to maneuver out of that. But the Council of Trent won’t allow them to maneuver out of that fully. And so we all understand that there are practical consequences to this sort of theology.

But we also understand the pastoral benefit of this sort of theology, and we’ve talked about that. But that’s no surprise.

The surprise comes in verse 13. Notice what it says. *“Waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet.”* Now that is the concept that’s introduced that’s a little bit of a surprise to us, at least at this point.

I mean, if you think about it, we were introduced to Jesus the High Priest in chapters 4 and 5. He took a little hiatus because he had to say that we were so dull in our hearing that we needed to catch up with some of the basic things. But then when he got back on track in chapters 7, 8 and 9, we were learning about how Christ was better than the Mosaic covenant, how He was better than the priesthood of the past, how He was a better sacrifice than the animals that were offered, all of these things, the priesthood.

“The Finished Work of Christ”

And now all of a sudden, he introduces this idea into the thinking about the priesthood where he talks about enemies, and being seated and waiting for them to be placed under His feet as a footstool.

Now here we have an idea again that we’ve noted before. It’s the idea of a *priestly King*.

Now I want you to notice something. Look back at Hebrews chapter 2 and at verse 14.

Transcriber’s Note: Hebrews 2:14, NKJV. *“Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil.”*

Jeff: I want you to notice that we’ve seen this before. All these things are things that are being reintroduced into our thinking now. 2:14. *“Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil.”*

Transcriber’s Note: ESV.

Jeff: And then he talks about “delivering those who were suffering from the fear of death.”

Now this is something we’ve heard before. We see it elsewhere in Scripture. In fact, last week it was brought up. 1 John 3:8. *“The Son of God appeared for this purpose: to destroy the works of the devil.”* And so it’s no surprise to find these kinds of things introduced.

Now here’s what I want us to understand when we think about it appearing here in this particular text. Here is a seated priestly King. And what we are to gather from His session, from His being seated, is that His offering was effective. It was an effective offering. And we’ve talked about this. We don’t really need to revisit it again. It’s something that we’ve heard before. But it’s worth saying. It was an effective offering.

But I’ll tell you what else it did. *It brought about a victory.* Now the interesting thing is that the victory that it brings about is a victory that is analogous to D-Day, and not necessarily D-Day yet.

Now what do I mean by that? Well, some of you military buffs might know this a lot better than myself. I even hesitate to bring it up at this point, but it’s a valuable illustration. And I get it from a guy, an older theologian who used it to describe *“the already but not yet-ness”* of Christ’s victory.

And you remember that in June of 1944 the invasion of Normandy set up the war so that the allied forces could conquer the Western front. And so that invasion of Normandy was such a decisive victory that V-Day was assured. And yet it was one of those things that the enemy had to get into their bloodstream and realize that they had lost before they actually gave up the ghost.

So the idea is that the decisive victory was really the day that the war turned. But it’s not yet V-Day, Victory Day.

And so when you look at this text and read that Jesus “sat down, waiting for His enemies to be placed under His feet,” you understand that the day of Calvary was D-Day. And yet He sits down and waits for V-Day, for the day when He will come again and He will judge the sheep and the goats.

“The Finished Work of Christ”

And that’s the idea here. The idea is that there’s a decisive victory that’s won. But there is a victory, a consummation of all things that’s coming.

Now this has a couple of pastoral implications that I want to share with you that I think are important. Notice first of all that verse 1 and verse 12 share a word that’s translated differently in our text, depending on which English translation you have. In verse 1 of chapter 10, notice. *“For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come, instead of the true form of these realities, they can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near.”* The word is *continually*.

Now go to verse 12 of our text. *“But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins.”* *For all time* is the same Greek word.

You understand what he’s saying. We have to translate that differently here. We understand, for instance, that when we translate foreign words into another tongue that there are shades of meaning. In other words, there’s not a one-to-one correspondence. This word means this in this language, and so it means this in this language. You can’t just go through and translate like that, because if you do, and then you send it to an editor, he’s going to say to you, “I think you should probably get some help on this.”

And you say, “How much help do you think I need?”

And he’s going to say, “Well, you probably should find somebody who knows the language, because you don’t know the language if you only know one word for one word.”

And so here we have shades of meaning. But these shades of meaning become immensely important for us to understand this. When he talks about the Old Testament sacrifices, he’s talking about sacrifices that were continually offered. And you get the idea of continually offered. There’s a “for all time-ness” to that idea under that administration.

But now in Christ this one sacrifice is good for all time. So I think there is an immense pastoral application there that tells us about Jesus Christ and His sacrifice. There was one sacrifice that needed to be offered, and it’s good for all time, to replace the sacrifices that were continually, or for all time, offered under that administration. Does that make sense to you?

Participant: It sure does.

Jeff: Okay. Now that leads to a second pastoral implication. And you have to draw it from the text. But it’s in verse 14. Notice this in verse 14. *“For by the single offering”—* that’s Christ’s offering—*“He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.”* That’s the same word, *for all time*. He has perfected His people for all time. In other words, so long as we are in Christ, His one-time sacrifice is continually good. It is *for all time*. Does that make sense?

Participant: Amen!

Jeff: I appreciate that. But I’m going, “What in the world? Doesn’t that resonate with you?”

Participant: Yes.

“The Finished Work of Christ”

Jeff: Sure, absolutely! It must! And look, that answers the question that we sometimes ask ourselves, a very practical question. We stand before God. We’ve done something. We’ve committed sin in our lives. And we say, “Am I really forgiven?”

I’ve had people say this to me. I’ve had people say to me, “You know what, Jeff? It just seems too easy. You know, I’ve sinned again. I go before God again, and I find myself sitting back and asking myself, ‘but am I really forgiven?’”

And you see, this is exactly what I meant earlier when I said that all of this theology is really easy to get into our heads. This isn’t hard to learn. But I’ll tell you what. It takes a lifetime to get it into the bloodstream, doesn’t it?

Participant: Amen!

Jeff: Where you can sit back and know how poor you actually are before God, and know how many times you actually fail and probably will fail until the day you die. Let me scratch *probably*. (*Laughter*) And come to the Lord asking for the forgiveness of your sins. And then when you sit back and say, “But is it true? Am I really forgiven?”, you can say to yourself in the next instant, “That’s a lie of the devil.”

Participant: Amen.

Jeff: Trying to keep the gospel out of my bloodstream. It’s important that we learn that.

Participant: Amen.

Jeff: Yes?

Participant: Using your analogy, I like the thought first off that we are redeemed, as though D-Day just happened, and we’re waiting for Victory Day.

Jeff: Yes.

Participant: And then you go back to chapter 2 where it says that “through death He might render powerless he who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.” So we as the Allied troops are coming in to set people free through the power of Jesus Christ and the cross. So that’s our commission. We are part of His army. It’s won already, but we’ve got to secure the victory. And the day will come when we will be victorious.

Jeff: Yes. Is there anything else? Yes?

Participant: My question is—

Jeff: Is your question the same as his?

Participant: No.

Jeff: Okay. Hold on just real quick, then, because I want to come back to what you’re going to say, Sig. But I want to stay with this for just a minute. You know, this idea of D-Day and V-Day and how it pertains to Christ and His victory, sitting down and waiting for His enemies to be placed under His feet? I want you to notice that this has, like you’re saying, real personal application. And it’s right here in this text.

Have you noticed this? We are the subjects of this text. In verse 14, we have been perfected in Christ. The verb tense is one time, unrepeatable. But did you also catch this? “*Those who are being sanctified.*”

Participant: Yes.

Second Participant: It’s a process.

“The Finished Work of Christ”

Jeff: It’s a process. Here is what we have right here in the text: a *definitive sanctification* and a *progressive sanctification*. Now what’s the difference? Because you can’t, you cannot describe definitive sanctification like you would justification.

I’ll tell you what. It’s really interesting when you get into a presbytery exam with some students. And you ask them what the difference is between justification and definitive sanctification.

They’ll say this. They’ll say, “I’m not really sure what the difference is. But they’re both sort of a declaration that we’ve been forgiven and are no longer sinners.” And you know, that’s not right. It’s not right at all.

Participant: One is digital and the other is analog.

Jeff: Okay. I have no idea of what he said. *(Laughter)*

Participant: Sorry. *(Laughter)*

Second Participant: *Simul justus et peccator.*

Jeff: I didn’t hear you, Bishop.

Bishop Rodgers: *Simul Justus et peccator.*

Jeff: Okay. He’s full of Latin this morning. *(Laughter)* But it’s a fine phrase that he’s come up with today.

Bishop Rodgers: Just so we’re still sinners.

Jeff: Yes, that’s right. Luther’s great phrase, right. Just and—

Participant: We’re redeemed sinners.

Jeff: What’s that?

Participant: We’re redeemed sinners.

Jeff: Yes.

Participant: I’m a guy who is not a lost sinner. I used to be. But today I’m a redeemed sinner. There’s a big difference.

Jeff: Yes. Simultaneously just and a sinner, right? So think about it like this. Think about justification as that legal one-time declaration that we receive by faith. But think now about definitive sanctification in terms of spheres. In other words, when I am definitively sanctified, I am removed from the kingdom of darkness—that sphere—and I am placed into the kingdom of the Son of God, another sphere.

Now think about progressive sanctification like this. As I am now placed in that new sphere, the kingdom of the Son of God’s love, I’ve got to progressively bring my life into conformity with the rules of that kingdom.

I want you to think about it like this. Remember *The Prince and the Pauper*, when Tom and Henry swap places, and now Tom is the prince? And everybody thinks that Henry, who now is Tom, has lost his mind. The prince has lost his mind. He doesn’t know how to act as a prince. And so Tom, (now Henry), has to act and he has to learn what it’s like to be a prince in the kingdom. And that’s the idea of definitive sanctification. Tom switches places with Henry and now is in the kingdom. And now he has to learn to act like a prince. That’s the progressive aspect of it.

And so it’s right here in the text that we are, in one sense, as Christian as we will ever be. But we are becoming what we already are in Christ. So let me ask you the question. What’s wrong with that?

“The Finished Work of Christ”

Transcriber’s Note: The slogan “be all you can be.”

Participant: You mean the statement on the screen?

Jeff: Yes.

Participant: Well, it’s the Army.

Jeff: That’s right. It’s the Army, and not the Navy. *(Laughter)*

Participant: Be all that you are.

Jeff: “Be all that you are” is the way you want to think about your progressive sanctification, because you are now set down in a new sphere. Now I want you to think about this. Think about these sphere aspects like this.

I remember that I was proofreading Rick Gamble’s second volume on theology. And he tells a story and I think it’s a really valuable story. He talks about when he was a kid delivering flowers to a funeral home. And he said, “I walked into the funeral home.” And he said, “I put the flowers down on the table.” And he turned around and he said, “To my utter surprise there was a dead body lying on the table behind me.”

And he said, “I was shocked. But do you know something? That body wasn’t surprised at all!” *(Laughter)* And the idea there is that this person is now in a different sphere of existence.

And that is the way to think about this. This is not just a happy thought, that we’re no longer in the kingdom of darkness; now we’re in the kingdom of light, and I can try to go to my happy place. No, there’s a reality to being taken from one sphere and placed in another sphere. And that reality is illustrated in that illustration. Okay. So Sig, what were you going to say?

Sig: I think you answered it. But especially with the Bishop sitting next to me, I’ve always had a hard time wondering why, when we celebrate communion, which I want to celebrate often, in the back of my head, am I sacrificing Christ again?

Participant: The answer is that you are not.

Sig: I understand that intellectually. But it seems like I’m counting on what He did. And oh yes, He died and bled. But on the other hand I think that I can’t just do it once and never do it again—I mean Communion—and be remembered by this. But it always seems like there isn’t a lot of difference between Communion and the sacrifices the priests did with the animals, because it’s doing the same thing. Does that make sense?

Jeff: Well, I understand what you’re asking. But the Bishop is about ready to give you a spanking here. *(Laughter)*

Bishop: I just want to say that our sacrifice is one of praise and thanksgiving, not a repetition.

Jeff: It’s the Roman Catholic church that defines it that way. They define it as a propitiatory sacrifice. And the thing that you have to remember is that words mean something. And this is the problem.

I probably shouldn’t tell you this. But he’s passed now, so I guess it doesn’t matter.

Participant: He’s in a different sphere.

Jeff: He’s in a different sphere. *(Laughter)* I had a Roman Catholic uncle. I wasn’t Roman Catholic growing up. But he ended up joining the Roman Catholic church and becoming a priest. That was his intent from the very beginning, early in his life.

“The Finished Work of Christ”

And I would talk to him about the theology of the Roman Catholic Church. And this is what he would say to me, a Roman Catholic priest. He would say, “That’s not true.”

And I would say, “Paul, you are in a magisterial church. And you are bound by obedience to the infallible interpreter of revelation, the Pope. You are his minion.” He didn’t like that. (*Laughter*) But I digress. He was my uncle; I can say that.

And I would say to him, “You are bound to believe this.” And he would say—

Participant: And bound to teach it.

Jeff: And bound to teach it. And he would just kind of dismiss me. And I would say that this is where we are, right? Words mean something. And we’re living in a day and an age where people think that they don’t. But that doesn’t mean that they don’t mean something. They do. And so it matters greatly because of how they describe and define what’s happening.

Whereas the Protestant church does not describe and define it that way. I think they describe it in terms more consistent with what we’re studying here in the book of Hebrews. So the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper fits into this. It’s not a repetition of the Old Covenant.

Participant: If we’re part of a credal church or a confessional church, then the clergy is bound to teach what they confess.

Jeff: That’s right.

Participant: There can’t be much discipline going on in there. They’ve violated their intension of who they are as a body.

Jeff: Yes. You know, just the idea of confession is an interesting concept. When you think of confession, it comes from the Greek word *homologeō*, to say the same thing. And so what you’re doing is that you’re saying the same as God is saying. So when we confess, we hope that what we confess is what God has said about Himself. But we confess it with one another. That’s the idea of confession.

Okay. So why don’t we go on to *the Spirit’s testimony* for a few minutes? This is just a brief point. But I think it’s worth saying.

If you think back to chapter 9,--and again this is the idea,--flip back to chapter 9. And we learned there that access to God under the Mosaic administration was limited. Remember how we looked at it? We said that everybody was permitted in the outer courts. And then in that Holy Place only the Levitical priests were permitted. And then in the Holy of Holies only one priest once a year could enter. And we learned that access was limited.

But we also learned something else. We learned that in 9:8 that that’s what the Holy Spirit said about the Old Covenant administration. That’s what the Holy Spirit was teaching us. But chapter 10 says that Christ leads us by His one-time sacrifice into the presence of God. And notice this. The Holy Spirit testifies to this.

Isn’t that striking? The idea is that we have God’s word before us. It’s the Holy Spirit who taught us what the Old Testament was, and He’s testifying to Jesus’ work in the New.

I want you to notice this. This is just an interesting thing. In verse 15, “*the Holy Spirit testifies to this.*” In verse 5, when he introduces Psalm 40, he said that Christ said this. And in verses 16 and 17 Jeremiah the prophet attributes the words he quotes that we find

“The Finished Work of Christ”

here in our text to Yahweh. We could say the Father. And so in the text that we’re looking at we find the Holy Spirit testifying, Christ saying and God speaking.

Now think about that for just a minute. Who’s word is this? This is the word of the triune God. And so it’s not that the Holy Spirit, the Son and the Father are the same Person. But they are the same in Being, in glory and power. There’s one God in three Persons. And we ought to expect there to be a harmony in what they’re saying here. We ought to expect, for instance, that the Prophet believes that he’s revealing Yahweh, God the Father’s word. And then here we realize that the Spirit is bearing witness to it as He inspires the writer to the Hebrews to bring it forth, and he does. And Psalm 40 is Christ’s word, and so on. I think it’s beautiful.

I just wanted to bring that up because look, when you’re sitting there just reading the Scriptures you need to understand that you’re reading God’s word.

Participant: Amen.

Jeff: It’s as simple as that. And when you disagree with that, you need to understand that you’re disagreeing with the word of God about itself. It’s as simple as that. If you say, “I really don’t believe that it’s God’s word,” then you’ve just disagreed with the Word. And you’ve disagreed with God, who’s word it is.

All right. I just briefly wanted to point that out to you. Let’s talk now about *the reconciliatory blessings that we receive from the enthroned King*. And I put it like this: *positive and negative*. And I don’t mean negative, like it’s a bummer. You’ll see how I mean it in just a second.

The positive is this. The law is written upon the heart. Now this raises the question, doesn’t it? It raises the question about Christian experience versus experience in the Old Testament. And I mean by that believing experience in the Old Testament.

It raises the question. Well, was the law not written upon the heart in the Old Testament? And if it wasn’t, then what did that mean for believers back then? And how is that different for us today?

Now I want to explain that to you in this way. I want you first of all to think about *progressive revelation*. When you think about progressive revelation, you think about God revealing the gospel in Genesis 3:15, the *protoeungelium*, that the Seed of the woman will crush the head of the serpent, though the serpent will strike at the heel of the Seed of the woman. That’s the very gospel.

Now as you go through the books of Scripture, that idea is developed and unfolded progressively. And it’s unfolded progressively in the covenant administrations.

Now I want you to think about that in, say, Isaiah 53. We are told in 1 Peter chapter 1 that the prophets peered into what it was that they were inspired to write in order to see who it was about whom they were writing. And so there is a sense in which Isaiah is not sitting there writing Isaiah 53 thinking, *I’ve got this all down. This is this Jesus of Nazareth guy. This is who He is, and this is what He’s going to do.*” He doesn’t know all there is to know. There’s a progressive unfolding of this to even the Prophet, okay?

Now it is at the climax of the covenants when Jesus appears that John the Baptist is saying, as a student of all of those previous covenants and writings, *“Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”* And he points at Jesus.

“The Finished Work of Christ”

Now he’s inspired to say that. But he, like Jeremiah who understood that the seventy years was about ready to end, is like John who understands that after reading all of those things, that this Man was the Lamb of God who was to come. So there’s a progressiveness to revelation.

Having said that, there’s also a progressiveness or an unfolding to Christian experience. In other words, the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament is not going to reveal to Isaiah the experience of a New Covenant believer. That would be inconsistent with the revelation that he has up to that point. Now does that make sense to you?

Participant: It sure does.

Jeff: All right. I’ll give you a quick illustration. I’ll tell you this. How about this? You know, your little eight-year-old comes to you and says, “Daddy, can you tell me about the birds and the bees?” He heard somebody say “the birds and the bees,” and he has no idea what they’re talking about. And he wants you to explain it.

And what do you do? You say, “Oh, sure I can. Bees go buzzzzzz.” *(Laughter)*

No. What you may say to him is this. You may say, “Well honey, they’re talking about how men and women get along as husband and wife. They’re talking about Mommy/Daddy relationships. And as you get older, I’ll tell you more.”

What are you doing? You’re unfolding for them progressively information that they can handle only in this amount at this particular time in their lives. But they also have some experience. You give them that information because they know what a Mommy/Daddy relationship is like because of you. And they’re able to have that information, and it’s compatible with that experience.

And so as the Holy Spirit unfolds revelation in the Old Testament, He does it so that it’s compatible with their experience. Now I know what you’re going to say to me. You’re going to say, “Wait! Wait a minute!” What about the Psalms, because we all, every Christian believer, we go to that book and we say, “Oh man, this is so rich! It’s the anatomy of all parts of my soul. I feel like that when I’m down I can go there. I feel that when I’m happy I can go there. I feel like it just does double duty for me.”

And I want you to know something. There is a sense in which the book of the Psalms is a progressively rich book. It talks about the Incarnation in Psalm 40. It talks about the Resurrection in Psalm 16. It talks about the ascension of Christ in Psalm 110. It really is a rich book. I understand that. So there’s a sense in which Luther called it his little Bible. And he called it that for a good reason. It is.

But I also want you to understand something. The writers of that book had an experience that was capped off by what was typical for that period of time. And so I’m going to say something here that you may not agree with, but I’m going to say it anyway. And then I’m going to move right on. *(Laughter)* The Psalmist’s experience is where our experience should begin as Christian believers in the New Covenant.

Participant: Amen.

Now you may say, “Wait a minute. His highest experience is beyond what I could ever attain.” And I want to say this to you. It’s not. The problem is with us, not with the Bible. I don’t know who wrote that, but he was right. The problem is with us, not the Bible.

“The Finished Work of Christ”

The negative is that *He will not remember our sins*. He will not only write the law upon our hearts such that His word has reached its climax and its fulfillment, such that our experience can rise to that. But He doesn't remember our sins.

Now He's omniscient. You know what He's saying here. God can't forget. He knows all things singularly at one moment in His eternity. But He's saying, "I'm not going to count these against you." And look at verse 18. "*Where there is forgiveness, there is no longer an offering.*" And it just strengthens all that we've been saying.

Now people are going to say this. Today is different. And what they mean by "today is different" is something that I think is very important for us to remember. They say that today is different. He might have been talking back then about ceremonies.

Let me pause and say this for a second, because this is important. We need to remember that we're talking about Old testament ceremonies and liturgies, divinely instituted for the purpose of teaching about the Christ who would come. And one of the reasons that I say this is because we saw it illustrated today.

What's the difference between, say, the Roman Catholic church and the Anglican church? And what's different, at least in one important facet, is how these things are described and defined. For instance, the Roman Catholic church believes that the offering of communion is propitious. The Anglican church does not. The Roman Catholic church invests something of substance and power in the priesthood as they descend authority from the Pope. As far as I know, the Anglican church's priests are pastors. Would that be correct? And so there's a major difference between the Judaic ceremonies and vestments and all those things and Protestant understandings of them, because Protestant understandings of them vary.

For instance, when you think about the Reformational period, John Calvin wore what was called a Geneva gown, and did not see that as priestly as in Judaic priestly. So I think there's an important difference that we have to understand and take on board when we think about Judaism. We may be warranted in saying that Roman Catholicism seems to be very much like Judaism. But we're not warranted in saying that some forms of Protestantism are like Judaism. I think we need to be cautious about that.

But you know, today is different. Today people aren't asking, well, what vestments or what ceremonies or what liturgies are going to save me? Today what they're saying is this. They're not asking, "What will provide forgiveness for me?" They're saying this. "I need to forgive myself." They're not worried about whether a priest can pronounce it, or whether you get forgiveness from a propitious Lord's Supper. They're not worried about that. They're worried about how can I forgive me?

And I want you to know something. It's just a shade of variation between this, because today is not different. Forgiveness, no matter how you construe it, is only had in the unrepeatable work of Jesus Christ.

Participant: Amen.

Jeff: That is a powerful lesson that we need to take on board. Okay? Go ahead, Don.

Don: I heard a pastor a couple weeks ago say that if you ever catch yourself saying, "I need to forgive myself," to smack yourself. (*Laughter*) And I understand what people mean by that. But I think that we are all too eager to forgive ourselves, to justify

“The Finished Work of Christ”

ourselves. I think that a better way of putting that is to receive the forgiveness Christ has for you. Am I wrong?

Jeff: No, I think you’re right. I mean, you know, we want to give ourselves what God has so freely offered to us. But we hate God so much that we’re not willing to take it from Him who is the only One who can give forgiveness. It’s a striking thing, you know, what people will do. What are they going to do on that last great day? Will they go before the almighty, omnipotent, eternal Deity and say, “But I forgave myself?” Yes?

Participant: So we have been set free. Now we must be about setting others free.

Jeff: Yes.

Participant: The forgiveness of Jesus Christ.

Jeff: Yes. Amen. Up here? Oh, never mind.

Participant: All of this is answered by the wrist band that was given to me when I came here many years ago with the words from Brother Bruce, WHJD. What has Jesus done? Remember that and apply it. That’s the answer. Thanks, Bruce.

Jeff: You know, one of the things that we’re learning here, especially in this book of Hebrews, is that there is a great difference—and I think I’ve taught you this before—between the history of salvation and the order of salvation. And the history of salvation is really properly the gospel.

I’ll tell this story about my kid. Not too long ago my daughter was asked by someone, “What is the gospel?” And she said that it’s the life and death and resurrection of Jesus. And this person came to me and said to me, “Your daughter doesn’t know the gospel.”

And I said, “well, what’s the gospel?”

And this person painted for me the roman Road. Do you know what I mean? It’s really the application of the gospel.

And I said, “Well, that’s my fault, then.” (*Laughter*) Because I’ve taught her that the gospel is the life and death and resurrection of Jesus. That’s the history of salvation. That’s the gospel proper. “What you’re wanting her to recite is the application of the gospel to us—our calling, our justification, our sanctification.” Those kinds of things are really the order of the gospel applied to persons.

And I want you to know something. I think that we need to keep that distinction straight. And here’s why. It’s because we fault the liberals of the 19th century for being so subjectively oriented. So for instance, after a philosopher by the name of Immanuel Kant came along and said that God is not a percept that I can know with any of my senses. And therefore if God has created me, if indeed He has created me, He has created me so that I can’t know Him, because He’s not a percept. And so theologians came along and said, “Oh, that’s a pretty good idea. You’re right!”

And so a guy like Frederic Schleiermacher comes along and says, “You know what? How do we know god if a guy like Kant is right?” well, we know him by—here it is!—a feeling of absolute dependence. And that’s what liberal theology has been for years and years and years. How do we get to God through this feeling of dependence?

But I want to tell you something. As evangelicals, or as Reformed people, we can criticize that movement. But I’ll tell you something. As soon as we begin to focus, focus, focus on the application of the gospel to me, we are focusing on experience. And if that

“The Finished Work of Christ”

focus becomes inordinate, to the eclipse of the actual gospel, I'll tell you what then begins to happen. What begins to happen is that when people say, “Well, what did Jesus do for me? Well, He forgave me all my sins.”

And remember what I've said to you in the past. That's a truncated gospel. That's only part of what Jesus did at best! He was obedient for me so that He could die for me. And so when He died for me, he has forgiven all of my sins. But when He lived righteously for me, I have the imputation of His righteousness to myself in union with Him.

So you see how the experience of the gospel can never eclipse the gospel, because they are mutually defining. So I think that it's really important in that regard. Anybody else? No? Okay, well let's pray together.

Father, thank You for this day, for the time You've given. And thank You for reminding us in very simple ways in the text that we are in one sense as perfect as we ever will be in Jesus Christ. And yet we are becoming what we are. Thank You for the finished work of Jesus Christ, for that unrepeatable work. Thank You, Father, that You've told us about it in Your word, for indeed it is Your word. And thank You for loving us so much, that You're so patient with us as we progress along in our walk. Father, help us to share this good gift with others, that they might have the same joy in our Lord Jesus Christ, for it's in His name that we pray. Amen.

Men: Amen. (*Applause*)