

Full forgiveness means no further sacrifice for sin (Hebrews 10:1–18)

This section brings the doctrinal section of the letter to a summarizing climax. The believer has access to God in Christ, full forgiveness of sin and no need for further sacrifice for sin. This opposed the thought that Jewish Christians should rely upon the O.T. sacrifices and runs counter to “natural” thinking that we must “do” something. Drawing upon his previous discussions the author reasons in four steps why full forgiveness in Christ means no further sacrifice for sin.

I. *There was the need for one sacrifice for sin (10:1–4).*

1. The old system of the law was only a shadow unable to perfect the worshipers (v.1). The “shadows” could not make a person fully and finally acceptable to enter the presence of God.
2. The old system demonstrated a need for one final sacrifice for sin because that old system left a continued consciousness of sin. The conscience was not cleansed; the continual sacrifices left the sense of continued guilt.
3. The old system was only a continual reminder or remembrance of sin without any effectual dealing with that sin. (Contrast our “remembrance” of the new covenant in the blood of Christ –Luke 22:19 & 1 Cor. 11:24; as well as the new covenant promise to remember our sins no more.)
4. The old system’s animal blood was not sufficient.

II. *There was the readiness of Christ to be that one sacrifice for sin (10:5–10).*

1. It is demonstrated in His incarnation, not just His birth but His whole act of becoming man and dying as man for men (10:5a, cf. v.10; see also Matthew 1:21; Mark 10:45).
2. It was needed because of the inadequacy of the old system (10:5b-6, 8). The words of David in Psalm 40:6–8 applied typologically to Christ declares that God did not desire all those sacrifices though He commanded them. Sacrifices could be offered without the heart that pleased God (cf. Isaiah 1:11; Jeremiah 6:20; Hosea 6:6) and thereby showed that they neither forgave nor changed the heart, falling far short of God’s desire for man.
3. It fulfilled God’s desire for obedience (10:5c, 7, 9a).
 - a. “A body you prepared” is from the Greek translation of the O.T. and is probably an interpretative paraphrase which understands that God has prepared a body to obey Him fully. (The original reference to ears in the Psalm probably carried that sense of hearing and obeying. Cf. Isaiah 50:5.)
 - b. Christ explicitly was ready to do the will of the Father (10:7, 9a), living not only a perfectly obedient life, but becoming obedient even to death on the cross (cf. Philippians 2:8).
4. It put away the first to establish the second (10:9b). The incarnation of Christ was the signal that the old sacrificial system was being done away with and in its place was Christ’s obedience, even unto a sacrificial death.
5. Christ’s readiness to be that one sacrifice for sin culminated in the believer’s sanctification once for all (10:10). The believer is set apart to God by the will of God in Christ to become man and give His life a ransom for many.

III. *There is the exaltation of Christ affirming that one sacrifice for sin (10:11–14).*

1. Three contrasts argue the important of Christ’s exaltation (10:11-13):
 - a. Christ offered one sacrifice for all time (they offered many repeatedly), thereby His exaltation affirmed that His sacrifice was sufficient.
 - b. Christ sat (the priests stood) indicating that His sacrificial work was done.
 - c. Christ was exalted to the right hand of God, a position of honor and authority to rule (the priests had no right to rule), assuring that He will bring salvation to its completion.
2. Therefore, the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ is sufficient to grant full forgiveness and access to God to all who by faith in Christ come to Him and are set apart by God to Himself (10:14).

IV. *There is the covenant of full forgiveness requiring that one sacrifice for sin (10:15–18).*

1. In the new covenant the Lord promises to put his law in their hearts and write them on their minds (Jeremiah 31:33–34), fulfilling His desire in man for whole-hearted obedience. He also promised to remember their sins and lawless acts no more, i.e., full forgiveness, giving the believer access to God (“perfection”)
2. This brings the author to his grant conclusion: “where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin.”

Jewish Christians were not to return to any reliance upon the O.T. sacrificial system. All believers benefit from the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ which brought full forgiveness to believers. Full forgiveness meant that no further sacrifices for sin are needed.

Questions for further thought and discussion:

- What attraction exists today to systems like the O.T. sacrificial system? What is the danger?
- How does Christ’s readiness to be that one sacrifice for sin model life for believers and how does it not?
- Explain in your own words what the author of Hebrews means by God making worshipers “perfect”? What does it not mean? What is the importance of being “perfect” and how is it attained?