

Part 3: New Life

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We are continuing our series called New Birth/New Life and for the last few weeks we have been looking at a book of the Bible called Hebrews. Today we are going to finish our time in that book. However, today is not the end of this series.

Next week Jonny Kiedrowski is going to preach out of Luke 12, and then the following week we will have a guest preacher with us speaking from 2 Corinthians. This series is going to continue into the New Year because we want to take what we have learned about the person of Jesus and we want to see the way in which that brings us new life in so many areas.

That's what today's passage in Hebrews is going to look at. For the past two weeks we have looked at the significance the author of Hebrews places on the coming of Jesus Christ, but today, as we fast forward to Hebrews chapter 10, the author is going to pivot on that point of understanding.

The book of Hebrews is thirteen chapters of some of the most beautiful and rich writing in all the New Testament, and in no way are we doing it any sort of justice by trying to capture it in three weeks. But here is the basic structure of Hebrews; Chapters 1-9 show us a biblical understanding of who Christ is and what he came to do, and chapters 10-13 show how we ought to live in light of these truths.

And in essence the passage we are going to look at today (Hebrews 10:1-25) is really a summary of the whole book. It bridges the proper understanding of Jesus and salvation into a practical application in our own lives. In other words what the author is going to leverage today is the idea of change and its relationship to Jesus Christ. And what we are going to see today is this: **It is good to be changed by Jesus**. And to see this we are going to look at three pictures in this text. We are going to look at the problem of change, two ways Jesus changes the system, and three ways Jesus changes us.

Here we are, a few days before the New Year, and change is at least an idea you've thought about. Each of us in here have a love/hate relationship with the idea of change. If you go home tonight and ponder some resolutions for the New Year there will be a sense of excitement and even anticipation. But if I were to stand here and give you a set of New Year's resolutions, you would be less excited. We don't like being told we need to change.

It's very polarizing isn't it? Some of us love the idea of trying new things because we are aware that nothing every really lasts or satisfies us that long. And others of us in here, myself included, fear the idea of change because we don't like surprises or risks. However at the heart of those who long for change and for those who loath change lays a common denominator: what we think to be lacking, or what we hope to find.

For some of us the mantra is: "Stick to the system and it will work." For others it's: "We need another system because this isn't working." But at the heart of each is a hope that something will solve something. This is the first point we are going to look today and that is this: **The problem of change**.

Read with me **Hebrews 10:1-4**.

If you have been with us you know that the book of Hebrews was written to a group of Jews. These Jews had long standing traditions and sacrificial systems which God himself had given them as a way to mediate a relationship between a perfect God and an imperfect people.

The law is shorthand for all the rules, regulations and sacrifices that God gave his people to ensure they lived to his holy standard. God is a perfect, beautiful and absolutely good God so it would make sense that his people would share in that perfection.

But as anyone who has ever met anyone knows, we are not perfect. So what God did was give the people a system of sacrifices. There were sacrifices for just about every occasion. And this wasn't because our God is a blood thirsty god. In some religions like the Aztec religion, the gods demanded sacrifices because they wanted blood. But God doesn't want blood, God wants justice.

Justice was the center of the whole sacrificial system. When we sin, when we do anything which violates God's law, when we choose to worship anything other than God, that sin has earned the punishment of death. That's how severe it is to break a divine and perfect law. And so God set up these temple sacrifices to provide an opportunity for your sin to be covered. It was either you or your cow. In order for there to be forgiveness, someone or something needed to die.

But what's interesting is that the history of the Israelites is plagued with wholesale rebellion against God. There were seasons where God's people refused to obey God at just about every level. They complained openly about him, they ran after other gods, they wanted to be like other nations. But what's interesting is no matter how deep their apostasy, they never stopped offering sacrifices.

Why? Because even when they disregarded God at every level, they bore in their hearts a deep reality that something is still wrong. There was still a burden in their soul that they know must be relieved. This is what the author of Hebrews is talking about.

He says the law was a shadow of the good thing. Not the good thing itself. Here as the author is writing there are Jews who are still going to the temple, still offering sacrifice after sacrifice hoping to find the relief they wanted, and they never found it. Maybe that's you. Maybe you know deep in your heart, Christian or not, that you aren't who you really should be and so to solve that you turn to something, over and over again hoping that whatever it is will bring you that relief, but it never works. Here the author gives two reasons why this doesn't work.

The first is that sacrifices never make perfect those who draw near. That's what he said in verse one: "the same sacrifices offered every year can never make perfect those who draw near." From the most pious worshipper to the most prodigal son, rituals do not make you perfect, they do not solve the problem we feel needs to be solved.

And this is the second reason why they don't work: They don't absolve our conscience. Look back at **Hebrews 10:2-3**. Because they are imperfect, our hearts are always restless. Instead what actually happens is the more people went to sacrifice the more they were aware of their sin. Every year they went back, every week they walked up to that altar they knew, that they were still broken. That's why they had to keep offering sacrifices.

They very thing they hoped to change them reminded them of their inability to change. They went to a shadow hoping to find the real thing, and it just reminded them all the more that it wasn't sufficient.

While most of us have never killed something as a sacrifice, we know the frustration that comes when we see shadows that look like good things, but are never the full reality of the good things.

Good food shows us the pleasure of contentment. Art and entertainment light in us a desire to be dazzled by beauty. Family stirs in us a deep sense of belonging. But I want to ask you, believer or not: have you ever found a ritual, a Bible reading, a meal, a partner, an adventure that resulted in that cleansing the author of Hebrews is talking about?

Have you ever eaten a steak so good that you said, "At last my desire for comfort has been met"? Have you ever watched a movie so dramatic, or encountered a sunset so beautiful that you said, "Give me the blindfolds, I don't need to see anything else my whole life?" Have you ever had the perfect paycheck come your way where you said, "This at last meets everything I have ever needed. Don't give me another cent."

We pursue so many things in life hoping to find this cleansing, this relief. We spend our lives shaking down these shadows trying to find our perfection in them. But what has worked for you? Have you ever found it in its fullest? Have you ever been set to a full rest from your labors?

My guess is no. That's because what's behind all the shadows of things we enjoy in this world is God himself. God gave us food, even simple food like bread and wine, to remind us of himself. He gave us family to remind us that he is our Father. He gave us sexual intimacy to remind us of the union we experience in Christ. God is behind all of it. Behind the veil of the sacrificial system, behind the experientialism of our day is God, the very substance himself the one who if we taste him, we will be cleansed and satisfied forever. So why can't we get there?

Look back at **Hebrews 10:4**. Sin. The problem of change is that our sin simultaneous reminds us of what is lacking and at the same time keeps us from ever getting what it is we need. We lack a relationship with God because of our sin, and our sin is what keeps us from being able to find him in a world of shadows.

Now remember, God gave the sacrificial system. God gave us families and taste buds. It's not that these things are bad. It is just that they are incomplete as a system. They are meant to be a shadow, a sign post to what is real. And this is why the coming of Jesus is so important. This is our second point: **How Jesus changes the system.**

Jesus is the one who is going to come and show us the real good. He is going to bring us the change, the relief and the perfection we all want. And it's only Jesus who can do this and we are going to see to reasons why. The first reason is that Jesus was offered as a different sacrifice.

Read with me **Hebrews 10:5-10**.

What's really nice as a preacher is when the biblical author exposit his own text for you. And that's what the author of Hebrews is doing for us right here. He is quoting Psalm 22 and showing us how Jesus fulfilled these words and changed the whole system.

And he says Jesus offered a different kind of sacrifice. Having existed with God the Father for all eternity Jesus knew that it wasn't just man who was not pleased with the present structure of sacrifices. He knew that God himself was not fully pleased. Why? Because God meant it to be a place holder. The sacrificial system was meant to temporarily cover sins, but it was never able to fully bring relief from sins.

Does that make sense? These sacrifices never brought ultimate satisfaction to the worshippers, and that's because it never brought ultimate satisfaction to God. They temporarily suspended his justice, but they didn't appease it. But that's what shadows are meant to do, they point to the true shape.

Jesus didn't come to offer sacrifices like the rest of us. If Jesus had to use the temple sacrificial system he would be just like us, a sinner. Instead Jesus came to obey God perfectly. He came to do the will of the Father without sinning. Jesus isn't going to use the same system of offerings, Jesus is going to become the new system of offering. Jesus was going to please God not by offering a sacrifice for sin, but by being a sinless sacrifice.

Because he perfectly obeyed God's will and never sinned, it is by his offering and sacrifice on the cross that we are able to be set apart, sanctified. Bulls and goats were pure because they can't sin. Jesus was pure not because he couldn't sin, but because he chose to fully obey. And that perfect obedience is counted to us. He changes the system by offering a different sacrifice.

The other way Jesus changes the system is by offering a final sacrifice. Look with me at **Hebrews 10:11-14**.

We might never have a steak so good that don't need to eat anymore. We might never hear a song so beautiful that we never need to hear anything else. But in Jesus Christ we have an offering made on our behalf that means we never need to offer anything else again.

The sacrifice of Jesus for your sins is final and perfect. You need nothing more than his blood. Remember earlier when it said that worshippers continually came seeking to be made perfect, but never able to find it? Jesus ends that rat race. The truth is in our hearts we are all legalists. We feel a wrongness in us and it drives us to pursue something which changes that.

Some of us experience that as a guilt which forces us to try and absolve our conscience through good works and moral behavior. Some of us feel that our perfection will be bestowed if we can raise a flawless family. Some of us feel not so much a guilt, but a longing, a longing that there must be something more. And you can give your life to trying and hoping, trying and hoping, but it's only Jesus who has done it perfectly. And he offers that to you.

It is no longer choice to choose a cow, or an adventure as a substitute. You are able to choose Christ. And you can rest in his abundant provision for you.

Now this is often where we are prone to stop. We can understand that it is only the work of Jesus which can change the system and therefore change our hearts. But when such a final and powerful change is applied to your heart. It by nature changes things in our lives.

The work of Jesus when applied to your heart changes your whole life. Remember last week we looked at the idea of sanctification. Sanctification is when our lives are set apart by Jesus for a distinct purpose. It is becoming more like Christ and less like our old self.

Jesus not only changes the system, he changes us. Jesus not only fulfills the Old Testament law, but he actually goes even deeper and places a new law in our hearts. **Hebrews 10:14-18.**

Being saved by Jesus Christ doesn't make us lawless. It instead removes us from the burden of an external law that we could never meet, and instead it writes a law of grace on our heart which compels us to live for something even more beautiful.

God wants you to change. And we really struggle to see that as beautiful. We don't have a construct for feeling we ought to do something and seeing that thing as good. But that's because we all know the way in which our hearts were obligated prior to grace. And we know the burden and emptiness those obligations gave us. But this is not true of the law of grace.

The very next word of this text in Hebrews is the word, "Therefore." And on that one word hangs the whole weight of what the book of Hebrews is trying to accomplish. If Jesus has saved you from the weight of sin, therefore things will be different. Therefore you will be different.

For many of us the idea of sanctification, or becoming more like Christ seems like a return to a system of legalism. Something we have to do, but just like everything else it will not satisfy us. But I want us to read what comes next and I want us to see how backwards that expectation is.

Hebrews 10:19-25.

If you are a believer in here today, I want to do what I told you earlier you would hate for me to do. I want to give you your resolutions for this coming year right from this text. Three times in this text the author uses the phrase "let us." In other words he is not laying on us another burden of obligation. Instead he is giving us the prerogative of divine opportunity.

In other words what the author is describing is the very blessing of our salvation not new burden of slavery. All the things that he is going to give us to do are things which take hard work. They will not come easy. But these things are the real form, the real substance of the good things.

So this here is our last point today: **Three ways Jesus changes us.**

The first is this: We get to approach God with full confidence. Now before I move on I want us to look back and read **Hebrews 10:1**. What is it that you are approaching in this life hoping for it to be your god but constantly disappointed in? What is it in your life that you are approaching hoping for it to make you perfect, only to spend the rest of the time worrying about if it is really able to do that? How many of you are terrified at the idea of approaching God because you know that you are not yet who you should be and it's safer to stay at a distance?

Well I want you to hear the change Jesus makes in you by faith: **Hebrews 10:19-22**. Under the Old Law it was approach God and hope to be made perfect. Under the New Law, Jesus has already approached us and made us perfect, so now we have the immense pleasure of going to God.

We get to draw near with full confidence to the real thing, the true substance, the living God of all scripture and when we enjoy him we enjoy all the things we were meant to enjoy. All the longings of men find their hope in this God and we get to run to him without fear because of what Jesus has done for us.

This sounds like an evangelistic message here. But remember the author is talking to those who have been made perfect through faith in Jesus Christ. Dear Christian, where in your life are you making steps to draw nearer to God. Where are you taking and eating the food that will never leave us hungry and the water that will never lead you to thirst.

We have Bible reading plans available for you in the back take them home with you. But don't see your Bible reading as a staircase. You've all gone up staircases before. You go up one step knowing it gets you a little closer. And if you want to get to where you are going you just have to keep your head down and keep making small steps. Your Bible reading is not a staircase that each day gets you a little bit closer to God.

Jesus is the rocket-ship to God. He brought us here. Your Bible reading then is a doorway into God's family room. As you read you are not offering God something, God is offering you something. He is calling you to think deeply about the God behind these scriptures. How good is this God that he would not only give us his word, but that he would give us his son? Let us draw near to God and meet him as beautifully sufficient.

The second way Jesus changes us is this: We are provided unwavering hope in a wavering world. Look at **Hebrews 10:23**.

Now in light of everything we've looked at, why would we waver? If Jesus sacrifice is so final, if we get to draw near to God in full confidence, why would we think about wavering? Because pursuing and living out the perfection of Jesus Christ is vastly different than pursuing and living out perfection according to the world.

If our goal in all things is to draw near to God, we will be seen as foolish at times by those around us. When we don't laugh at the jokes we once laughed at, our friends might find us a stick in the mud. When we begin to share the gospel at work, we might find people whisper not great things about us behind our backs.

And when that happens even the strongest Christian will face the possibility of wavering; of doubting that God will really give us that final ultimate cleansing and validation. But this is why we hold fast to the confession of faith. We know that God will hold up his promise. Our confession is this: Christ has come and Christ is coming again.

The world is going to try and tell you that everything you hope Jesus can provide can also be provided by the world. The world can satisfy in an easier less costly way. One of the ways we are able to do this is by preaching this gospel to yourself. Remind yourself daily this year that the promises of God are certain because the offering of Jesus is certain. Consider memorizing this text from the end of Hebrews 10: **Hebrews 10:35-39**.

Hold fast to this hope in the New Year. Make it part of your muscle memory to trust in God in a world which trusts everything but God.

And lastly, the third way Jesus changes us: We are given over to the life of the church. **Hebrews 10:24-25.**

For most of this year one of our points of emphasis has been to be a healthy church, and here we see very clearly why and what it looks like to pursue this. And here is what I want us to see in closing, sanctification is not a private matter.

We often think that if we want to be sanctified, if we want to change, we withdraw and attempt to do this in private. But here God is calling us to participate in the sanctification and edification of those around you.

Consider the people sitting next to you in church this morning. What can you do this next year to help them follow Jesus better? How can you stir them up for good works and greater holiness? This is one of the things we agree to in our membership covenant. We should expect other people to encourage us in our growth, and we should expect to encourage others in their growth.

And we get to bathe our Sunday gatherings together in a new light. We do not come to church simply because attendance and loyalty matter. We get to submit ourselves to the regular gathering of the church because we want to be encouraged by all those who are around us. Sunday services are not about consumption they are about participation.

In just a moment we are going to stand and read the apostles creed together. What a great way to practice two of these three things. We get to remind ourselves of our confession and we get to help others be reminded of that as well. This year where can you see even the simple gathering on Sunday as an opportunity to encourage those who gather with you?

Brothers and sisters these are privileges of joy which Jesus has given us over to. I encourage you to trust that his promise to bring you relief by saving you is just as true as his promise to bring you joy by changing you.

Jesus has come to change us, and this is for our infinite good.