

Fulfillment & Formation

Hebrews 10:1-18

The Writer has been making the case for why Jesus is the fulfillment of all that we see in the Old Testament, especially in the Old Mosaic Covenant of the Law. The purpose for this lengthy discourse on this is to encourage the new Church not to look to the old systems for finding true salvation and relationship with God, but to find it in the already finished and completed work of Jesus the Son and Messiah of God's people. For the first century church, there was a lot of pressure to either go back to the old way of doing things in Judaism, or to conform to the dominant paganism of the day. Both of these were acceptable ways of living under the Roman government, but the new Christian way of doing things was increasingly coming under attack and faced violent persecution under the Emperor Nero. Thus, the Writer is seeking to encourage the young church to hold fast to the gospel of salvation found in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. To go back to Judaism, or to conform to paganism, was to reject the only offer of salvation that God has given, and to find oneself burdened under the slavishness of the law, or the licentiousness of paganism. Neither system could offer or produce true life, love, joy, or hope, and would only bring hurt, shame, guilt, and fear in this life and accumulate eternal damnation in the next.

We are living today in a very similar context.

Just as the first century church found itself facing persecution, feeling like the world around them was going crazy and crashing down around them, we too might find ourselves feeling like the world is crashing down around us and we are feeling anxiety and worry about the future, or fear about what kind of world is being created post-pandemic.

We have many pressures to conform to what the world is telling us we need to do, or how we need to think, or what we need to accept in order to be "good people", or "loving people". Sometimes those things aren't bad, but we must not let the world define what love is, or what goodness is, or what the best way to live is, we must look to God alone to define that for us. We can also be captivated by "experts", and those with lots of degrees after their name, looking to them to be our functional messiahs, and yet still find ourselves still so full of fear, guilt, and shame. We can be tempted to accept the world's message that we must live for ourselves, for what makes me happy or secure, or that I have the authority in myself to define who I am instead of looking to God and what He has said about me and the best ways to live.

We today are living in a time very similar to that which the first century church found itself, but the message of then is the same message for now: do not abandon the hope that is

found in the gospel of Jesus Christ, do not drift away through inattention or rebellion, do not let any other voice speak truth to you other than the God of truth. We have a God who saves, sanctifies, and glorifies His people; we have a Savior who is able to meet us in our weaknesses and give us His grace and mercy to help in time of need; we have a priest who purifies our consciences when nothing else can; we have a Lord who is sovereign, reigning on high over all the events of mankind, working all things for the good of His people and the Church.

We are jumping back into a discussion that the Writer has been spending much time on, which is how Jesus is the fulfillment of the Mosaic Covenant and Law system. As we read, we will be spending some more time taking a look at how Jesus fulfills the Law as well as how this New Covenant is formed in us as His special people.

Hebrews 10:1-18

For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins? But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.'" When he said above, "You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law), then he added, "Behold, I have come to do your will." He does away with the first in order to establish the second. And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. 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, "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares 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.

Fulfillment

First thing in our passage that the Writer is seeking to encourage us in, is that we must not go back to the old covenant system of the law, for it only brings about death and guilt, it can never actually save. We must not give in to legalism as a means of justification before God, we already have full and forever pardon on the past work of the Messiah!

What are the good things to come in the law? How does the law pre-figure, or be a shadow of, the fullness of the heavenly substance?

Is it helpful to use the trifurcation/strata of the Mosaic Law to be a categorical lens by which to view the shadows of the good things to come?

Moral Law

The Decalogue are the terms of the Old Covenant. Reflection of God's essence. Moral perfection. Echoed in the non-Jewish world codes of morality.

Jesus fulfills the terms of the Old Covenant, He fulfills all the requirements for moral perfection that God has for humanity; He then establishes the new and better way of morality, which is the way of love, based upon His action of love and obedience in His life, death, and resurrection.

Ceremonial Law

The various rites and festivals which pointed to the need for the atonement for sins, and the gracious provision of God for sinners.

Jesus fulfilled the sacrificial rites, all true atonement for sin is to be found through faith in His finished and completed work on the cross.

Jesus establishes the location of all true festivals and feasting in the Church, with the best motivation for feasting, namely, in celebration of the forgiveness of sins, of acknowledging the gracious provision for sinners in the person of Christ, in keeping regular rhythms of celebration and remembrance throughout the seasons of the year.

External forms of purification rites have come to an end since the blood of Jesus' sacrifice is the true cleansing agent to wash away our sin.

External dietary exclusions have also come to an end since the purpose for them, which was to be an external display of purity and being set apart for the living God, are fulfilled in Jesus who purifies our consciences and sets us apart as a holy priesthood. What goes in to a person is not what makes someone unclean, but what comes out (sin).

*And he called the people to him and said to them, "Hear and understand: it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person. – **Matthew 15:10-11***

*But Peter said to him, "Explain the parable to us." And he said, "Are you also still without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled? But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone. – **Matthew 15:15-20***

Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ... – Colossians 2:16-17

If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations– “Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch” (referring to things that all perish as they are used)– according to human precepts and teachings? These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh. – Colossians 2:20-23

*So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God...
– 1 Corinthians 10:31*

I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died. So do not let what you regard as good be spoken of as evil. For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit... – Romans 14:14-17

Civil Law

The Old Covenant law as regards the civic life of the nation was intended to highlight the equality we all deserve as being made in God’s image, as well as in the nature of reciprocity, of dealing with one another fairly and with an eye for the mutual uplifting and building up of the community. There were very clear and established ways of relating with one another which were given to promote holiness and to expose ways of unholy living which do not bring God honor or glory. The heart of all, however, was the promote a life of love for God. It was a shadow of the good things of love since the law could not produce love, only show what not to do.

Again, Jesus is the fulfillment of even the civil law first established under Moses. Jesus treats all with dignity and equity, He holds the line on what true sin is, while also giving comfort to those who were seeking and searching for forgiveness and restoration to true life.

Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. – Romans 13:8-10

Love and pursue faithfulness.

Love and pursue life.

Love and pursue hard work.

Love and pursue contentment.

Formation

What is the purpose for using this Psalm to show the fulfillment and connection to Jesus?

To show the purpose for why Christ came, as well as to show the true desire that God has for His people: to delight in the will of God, to have His law written on our hearts, to trust in the sacrifice He has given for the forgiveness of sins.

O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise...

– Psalm 51:15-17

For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings. – Hosea 6:6

The Psalm that the Writer is using is intended to demonstrate how the first covenant of the Mosaic Law was set aside by the arrival, and obedient death of the Messiah. Through faith in this finished work, we have access to the grace and steadfast love of our covenant God.

What does God require, or delight in, for His people?

Repentant/contrite hearts.

Open ears to hear God's Word.

Mouths to declare the salvation of God and the glory of God.

To grow in relationship with the Living God.

I have told the glad news of deliverance in the great congregation; behold, I have not restrained my lips, as you know, O LORD. I have not hidden your deliverance within my heart; I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation; I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness from the great congregation. – Psalm 40:9-10

By whose will are we sanctified?

The will of the One God sent: the will of the Messiah. The word “will” is the word for purpose, so what the Writer is communicating is that through the purpose of God in sending His Son to make full and final atonement for the sins of His people, we who respond in faith and trust are saved! Utterly saved to the uttermost.

This should also remind us that redemption for God’s people was never something that was unforeseen, or God needing to figure out what to do with sin, but was purposed and planned from before the foundation of the world so that His glory would be displayed in the salvation of His elect, beloved, people. So that His justice and power over sin and evil would be demonstrated. So that true love would be known and experienced in our lives.

We must not confused with the way the Writer uses the word “will” in chapter 9, where it is the Greek word used for covenant. Here the Writer is emphasizing the great and glorious purpose of God in sending His Son, the promised Messiah, to make full and final atonement for all of His elect for all time! It is through His purpose that we now enter into the New Covenant, by which we can actually repent of our sins and be forgiven and changed; by which we can actually have ears to hear God’s Word in our lives and respond to it; by which we can actually declare the praises and glory of God; by which we enter into a real relationship with the Living God; by which we can have God’s law written on our hearts in such a way as to enable our holy and godly lifestyle.

Why is the Writer again drawing attention to the daily attending of the priests at the temple?

To once again show the stark contrast between man’s futile efforts at making things right with God, and the more excellent way of faith and trust in the completed work of the True High Priest. The imperfection of mankind’s endless desire to make things right with God on our own terms.

What are ways that we seek to make things right with God on our terms?

When the good things you are doing in your life become the justification for your forgiveness, rather than the fruit of your forgiveness, you are depending on the wrong thing to make things right with God.

So why do we obey? Why do we do the things God has called us into?

We are faithful to the body of Christ because we have been adopted into the family of God.

We serve others because we have been served by the faithfulness of our High Priest.

We love because we have been love by God.

We pray because Christ has first prayed for us, and has spoken to our hearts.

We read the inspired word of God because the Incarnate Word of God has drawn us to Himself.

We forgive others because we have first been forgiven.

We glorify God because He has brought us into the glory of His Son.

What is the essence of the New Covenant?

Where there is forgiveness like what God offers through His Son Jesus Christ, there is no longer any more need for offerings! We come as we are, we come freely, we come already fully accepted, we come loved, we come cared for, we come under the providence of God.

We are declared forgiven and righteous before God because of the sacrifice of the Son on our behalf. We who respond in faith to this call, are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and are called to live out this new inner reality in our lives.

The already and the not yet

We are already fully perfect in God's eyes through the perfection of the Son of God imputed to us. We are already pardoned for all our sin, we already have the guarantee of our inheritance of the saints in light, we already have the love and light of the truth of God shone into our hearts, we already have the transforming power of the Spirit dwelling in us.

Yet, we are still working this out in real time. We still find ourselves distrusting God, we still find ourselves acting selfishly, we still find ourselves sinning in works of the flesh, we still find ourselves growing in our gifting and in the fruit of the Spirit. We are becoming who we already are. It is a day by day transformation that we are called into and which brings honor and glory to God alone.

Thanks be to God that our standing before Him is not based on anything I do in obedience, or anything I refrain from, or anything I accomplish for His glory. My standing before God is forever settled in heaven because of the faithful obedience, sacrifice, and love of God's Son. I simply get to rest in His finished work, letting His Spirit change and transform me from the inside out, reflecting the glory and character of the Son of God in the world.

So, in light of the character of the person who is God's child:

Where do you need to repent of sin? Where in your life do you need to seek God for a change and transformation?

Where do you need an open ear to hear God in His Word? What might be clogging the ears of faith to really hearing God?

What are you praising in your life? Is it your accomplishments? Is it your sense of being a “good person”? Is it the way you raise your kids? Is it praising others who do not love Christ? What would it look like for you to actually use your lips to praise our great and awesome God?

Are you putting priority on your relationship with the living God, or are you cluttering up your life with so many other things?

Take each of these to Jesus today, see how He forgives and transforms; see how He praised and glorified the Father; see how He had ears to hear His Father; see how He cultivated His relationship with the Father. He did and is all these things because we fail in them, yet He calls us to keep going, to keep working at it and the promise He has given to us when we do:

*And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. – **Philippians 1:6***

Confession

Father, we confess that we are too slow of hearing You, too quick to praise the world, too busy to grow in relationship with You, and too hard of heart to repent of our sin.

Assurance

Jesus, thank You that through Your death and resurrection we can truly repent of our sin, find true and lasting forgiveness, and endless second chances. May we today seek Your face through faith, and may we honor You with our thoughts and our words.