

**One time for All  
Hebrew 10:1-18**

Brothers and sisters, there comes a point for every generation where they develop a sense of nostalgia and a longing for “the good old days.”

Currently, our culture is embracing a sense of nostalgia for 1980’s with TV shows like The Goldbergs, 80’s rock bands who are once again booking world tours and filling arenas and the most anticipated movies of the past year being 1980’s franchise reboots.

And while there is nothing wrong with reminiscing over fond memories of the past, there’s always the danger in nostalgia that we only remember the good times, and we forget our past shortcomings and failings and we forget how difficult the hard times were.

Of course this is easy to do when we are faced with our current shortcomings and failings and hard times – and then as that classic Beatles song says; *“we long for yesterday.”*

And it is this longing for yesterday and sense of feeling nostalgic among the first generation of Christians which the writer of Hebrews needs to address in the passage of scripture which we read this morning.

You see friends the early Christians were longing for yesterday because they were facing a significant amount of opposition and persecution from their fellow Jews for embracing and proclaiming the message that Jesus Christ was indeed the promised Messiah and that had risen from the dead!

Now this past week we have remembered and celebrated the events leading up to Jesus’ death, this morning we celebrate the resurrection, and in the coming month we will celebrate and remember His ascension into heaven, the great commission and Pentecost.

And you’ve probably sensed there is an increased level of activity, anticipation, excitement – there’s a bit of buzz going on; especially this morning.

Well just imagine being part of the generation who experienced all of this for the first time, who lived through it.

Imagine what it was like for the disciples to discover, beyond all probability, that Jesus had been resurrected back to life!

What it was like to see him again, when the last time they saw him was bloodied and beaten and nailed to the cross...

Imagine what it was like to wait in Jerusalem, as Jesus had commanded, for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit...

Imagine what it would have been like to have witnessed Pentecost, and hear the gospel proclaimed in your own language...

and suddenly come to realize that indeed *“God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.”* (Act 2:36)

And to be stricken in your heart and ask along with thousands of others *“What do we do?”*

And to hear Peter reply *“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”*

(Acts 2:38-39)

And then imagine what it was like to be a part of that group of three thousand who became believers in Jesus on that day, and who then met every day in the temple courts *“with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.”* (Acts 2:46-47)

It would have been an amazing time; it would have been an incredible experience, you’d never want it to stop, it would be so awesome.

So when *“a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem”* (Acts 8:1) and the early Church stopped enjoying the favor of all the people and were scattered across the country, and were in fear for their lives – you can understand

that many of them were longing for yesterday and becoming nostalgic for the feeling of being blessed and experiencing God at work in their lives – just wanting to go back to how things were after Pentecost.

And this persecution at hands of their fellow Jews – their neighbors, friends and family members – I’m sure this would also make them nostalgic and long for the day when they were at peace with each, and not fighting each other over these matters.

Remembering the days when they all went to Jerusalem together to celebrate the Passover, to observe the Day of Atonement, to give their sacrifices and worship God and experience his presence and forgiveness through the ministry of the priests at the temple – and being tempted to turn back to this...

And we face a similar temptation brothers and sisters.

As Good Friday and Easter Sunday come around and we proclaim that our sins have been paid for by Jesus’ blood, proven by His resurrection and victory over the grave, and we are caught up in the passion of the Holy Week and the joyful celebration of Easter Sunday...

And it all seems so immediate and relevant, vibrant and real and we can really feel that victory over sin and death in our lives.

But then after a few weeks not so much... and a few months later, after the same old bad habits and sins have reared their ugly heads yet again - it’s just a distant memory.

And in the same way that those first Christians were tempted to go back to offering animal sacrifices, we too are tempted to deal with our sins by going back to offering our efforts and good works to assist Jesus’ sacrifice.

Do you know what I’m talking about?

For all the joy and celebration we experience on Easter, the reality is that our anger will rise up and get the better of us again, our lust will consume us again, our pride will cause us to fall, we will say words that hurt and wound others, we will betray someone's trust, and harbor hatred in our hearts towards our neighbors and towards strangers.

No matter what we feel like on Easter Sunday – this is the reality we face in the weeks and months afterwards and we will feel terribly guilty about it.

And so the good news and the encouragement from the scriptures this morning is that what happened on Easter is – to quote another nostalgic song - *“More than a feeling!”*

That's the central point which the writer of Hebrews makes in vs. 10. of this passage. That regardless of what we feel like – the fact is that *“we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all!”*

For the first generation of Christians this was an encouragement for them to continue to put their faith and trust in their confession that Jesus was Messiah and Lord, and not to return to offering animal sacrifices at the temple – in spite of the persecution they were going through.

Additionally the writer of Hebrews points out some of the deficiencies of animal sacrifices in comparison with Jesus' sacrifice.

They don't impart perfection to those who offer them (vs1), they do not completely cleanse and remove the sense of guilt (vs2), they do not truly take away all sins (vs4) and they had to be offered repeatedly as new sins were committed. (vs1)

By contrast of course the one time for all sacrifice of Jesus Christ completely cleanses us, removes our guilt, takes away our all sins – and does not need to be repeated.

But friends it is easy for us to misunderstand what the writer of Hebrews is doing here in contrasting animal sacrifice with Christ's sacrifice.

We often take this contrast as an indictment against the Covenant of Law and the provision which God had graciously made for His people to atone for their sin, and the ministry of His priests which assured the people their sin was forgiven.

And we mistakenly start to think that the old covenant was bad, and that Jesus actually came to save us from the Law of Old Covenant – to free us from having to observe all those rules and make those sacrifices.

Brothers and sisters that is not the case.

Remember the writer of Hebrews says that the law was a shadow of the good things to come (vs1), therefore it is a good shadow... In order to point ahead to something better it had to be something good in itself.

Obviously now that the better means of sacrifice had come in Jesus – it makes no sense to return to the previous means of animal sacrifice, not because it was bad, but because something more effective was available.

Instead what the writer of Hebrews wants to point out to the first generation of Christians and us is that we must beware of the temptation and tendency in ourselves to flip grace into works.

Friends the truth is that sin is so subtle and pervasive and deceitful that it even takes the means which God provides for our forgiveness and twists it into a work which we perform to settle the debt with God ourselves.

Sin had caused God's people to do this with animal sacrifices in the past - which is why the writer of Hebrews quotes Ps 40:6-8 where God rebukes people for offering animal sacrifices in this spirit of legalism; *"Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were*

*you pleased with them” though they were offered in accordance with the law.”*

You see friends the deceitfulness of sin is that it causes us to do things in accordance with the law, but not within the spirit of the law.

So, for the first generation of Christians to return to offering animal sacrifices would not only be foolish because they were turning away from the better and more complete sacrifice of Jesus Christ – but it would also because they would be giving into that same old temptation to flip grace into works.

Now it wouldn't be the same type of legalism as God's people had committed before – even though they are offering animal sacrifices - because the old system is now obsolete.

Instead it would be flipping God's new means of grace in Jesus Christ into works by performing and adding our own efforts to Christ to help him address our sin and failings and

shortcomings, in this case adding animal sacrifices to Jesus' sacrifice just to make sure things were covered.

It's the same dynamic, but with different expressions of works – and we are just as susceptible to it as they were friends.

Except that instead of adding animal sacrifices to Jesus' work we add the sacrifice of praise, the sacrifice of giving, the sacrifice of service, the sacrifice of self, the sacrifice of repentance...

Do you know what I'm talking about here brothers and sisters?

It's what happens when the Easter feeling fades, and our sinful nature catches us off guard in some way and we feel so guilty, so horrible, so contradictory in who we are supposed to be as Christians and the reality of sin that still persists in our life.

So we ask for forgiveness from Jesus Christ – but we're still left with that nagging feeling of guilt, of shame, of self-contradiction and it is so easy to give into the temptation to sacrifice something of our own to try to relieve that feeling of guilt.

Maybe we spend the next half hour repeating our request for forgiveness or doing extra bible reading... maybe we get online and make a donation to some worthy cause... maybe we try to sacrifice ourselves by beating ourselves up, berating ourselves for being so stupid, so foolish, so careless for having made the same mistake again...

We all know what it is that we try to sacrifice to make ourselves feel less guilty, less contradicted, and help even the score up a bit when we have repeatedly fallen back into sin.

But this is flipping grace into works friends; it is undermining the effectiveness and completeness of Christ's sacrifice – which as Heb 10:14 says *“has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.”*

Now there is nothing wrong with time spent in prayer, reading the scripture or giving to worthy causes – or even with times of brutal self-honesty...

They just aren't meant to be offered as sacrifices, because Christ's sacrifice was already sufficient to pay for our ALL our sins – even the ones we have yet to commit...

So Hebrews 10:18 gives us the incredible news – that regardless of how we feel – *“where these [sins] have been forgiven, sacrifice for sin is no longer necessary!”*

The reality of Easter, brothers and sisters is that it is more than a feeling – our forgiveness is a fact! And this is what we must continue to return to in the weeks and months ahead of us when our feelings and the enemy condemn us as guilty when we fall into sin.

We hang on to the truth that *“when this priest [Jesus] has offered for ALL time, one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God”* (vs12)

The empty tomb is the proof that Jesus' sacrifice was sufficient, effective and complete- we are forgiven, sacrifice for sin is no longer necessary! Amen!?

Now what do we do about those awful feelings of guilt and condemnation which our consciences and the devil throw at us when we mess up?

Well once we have rightly confessed our sin to the Lord and admitted that it needs his forgiveness we can deal with our feelings - not through offering sacrifice, but through co-operating with sanctification.

Vs 14 says that in His one sacrifice Jesus *"has made perfect... those who are being made holy."*

So there is an on-going, continuing process where the Holy Spirit is applying Jesus' one-time sacrifice to all the various aspects of our person.

The writer of Hebrews quotes a promise from Jeremiah 31 where God describes how He will do this; *"I will put my laws on their hearts, and I will write them on their minds."* (vs16)

You know friends, when I wrestle with these feeling after falling into old sins the Holy Spirit has convicted me that continually telling God how sorry I am, and repeatedly asking for forgiveness is actually the wrong prayer.

Instead I need to be praying that the Holy Spirit would do more to write God's laws on my heart and in my mind, and praying that I would be given wisdom and insight on how I can co-operate with the Holy Spirit in this matter.

Maybe my repeated sins are merely the manifestation of much deeper held beliefs and or wounds that the Holy Spirit is working to expose and bring to my attention?

And which I need to share and confess to my fellow brothers in Christ – because this is how healing comes to the various parts of the body.



Maybe the enemy has a stronghold in my life that I still need to renounce and receive deliverance ministry to spiritually break it?

Whatever it may be – I need to be praying for more sanctification – not asking repeatedly for more forgiveness. Do you understand what I’m saying?

Brothers and sisters in Christ, our sanctification is an ongoing process and our feelings can help us identify where the Holy Spirit still needs to bring more of Jesus’ new life into ours, and the good news is that we don’t need to sacrifice for sanctification – we simply ask the Holy Spirit to do His work and we listen and we obey.

After all the scripture says *“obedience is better than sacrifice”* right? (1 Sam 15:22)

Brothers and sisters remember and believe and trust that because of Christ’s sacrifice, ALL of our sins past, present and future have been forgiven.

Because where these have been forgiven, sacrifice for sin is no longer necessary!

So may the Holy Spirit use this fact in our lives in the coming weeks and months after Easter, so that our obedience furthers our sanctification - instead of being offered as an unnecessary sacrifice.

Amen.