

Here's a picture of my wife. This is my favorite picture of my wife. I did very well for myself, and I am well aware that something mysterious and magical happened. Because she is very, very beautiful and I am kind of...well, you know. And so, this is my favorite picture of her. I liked her hair really short, and it's not that I don't like it long, it's just that really liked it short. I liked the bobbed cut on her, and I love this picture. This picture sits on my desk, a version of this picture sits on my bed stand, and I have a little version of this picture with me when I travel. It's just my favorite picture of her. I don't know why. I just...I love it. But here's the thing about that picture. That picture, it doesn't tell a good story. Lauren, she tells a great story. Like really, she gets detail and she just has this art to her. I mean, she knows how to tell a story. And this picture, it's very uncomfortable to cuddle with. It's got sharp edges and it doesn't make me laugh, it doesn't call me out when I need it. I tend to be unbelievably stubborn, and I at times need her to intervene and tell me that I'm being a moron. And I'm not saying that I like that; I'm saying that I need that. And that picture never does those things. That just sits there. And that picture's like a horrible kisser, horrible, horrible kisser. This is just a representation of her; it's not her. And I've made no vows to this photo. I've made no promises to this photo. I don't need to spend time with this photo. There's no promises between the photo and me. If something were to happen to this photo, there would be no lamenting on my behalf, because we live in a digital age. I would just print another one. And so, this is a very beautiful representation of who my wife is, but this is not my wife. This is a picture of my wife, and some of my wife's beauty be seen here. But the whole of my wife's beauty is completely missed by this because I find her really physically attractive, which really helps in marriage. But, on top of that, there are all these levels to Lauren that make me love her even more. Like the physical side of it, that's a nice side of it, but the way she tells a story, the way she is wholly unimpressed with me, these are things that are good for my soul. And the things that I love about her, they don't show up in this picture at all. They're unseen. I mean, you can kind of catch a shadow of them, but they're unseen.

Now, if you've got your Bibles open, turn to Hebrews 10. The thing about Hebrews 8, 9 & 10 is they are unbelievably repetitive. It's like the author of Hebrews is going to say, "Okay, if you miss everything else I say and if you don't get anything else I say in this book, you've got to get this." And so twelve times in three chapters, he's going to talk about symbols and pictures and these things that are a symbol of something, but they aren't that full on thing. And so, he's said it eleven times already.

Let's look number twelve. Hebrews 10:1, "For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near." Okay, old argument. If you've been here the past few weeks, this is argument. God comes to Moses, and He gives him the ten commandments. Anybody up late last night watching channel 8 on Direct TV? Yeah, Charlton Heston bringing the things down, throws them on the ground because they're worshiping the golden cow. God gives Moses the ten commandments, and they are Morality 101. They are the simplest, easiest to follow rules in all of humanity. There is nothing complex about them, there is nothing overwhelmingly difficult about them, and no one will argue their validity. They will where they should be posted. They will not argue whether or not they're right or wrong. You'll be hard pressed to find a man that will argue that it's good and right for your soul for you to continually be a liar. You won't find that guy. And if you do, don't trust him, alright. So, you'll be hard pressed to find a guy or woman who says, "No, you should steal everything, always. I mean, if it's there, it's yours. Take it." And if you do find them, don't invite them into your house, alright. Now, you're not going to find a guy that says, "What's good for my marriage and good for my soul is, instead of putting my time, energy and effort into my wife, I'd rather have my neighbor's." Yeah, that's not healthy.

And so, the ten commandments are just Morality 101. They're not complex, and yet impossible to follow perfectly. And so, we fail at the basic level of morality. I mean the basic, 101, it's like a "weed out" course or something. I mean we just don't pass. And so, God goes, "Okay, I'm going to institute the tabernacle, because I can't let sin go unpunished. I can't let sin go unpunished because I'm just. So, I'm going to institute the tabernacle." And the tabernacle was this situation where they would come in and talk to the priest and say, "Listen, I've sinned against God," and they would roll open the scroll and show them, "Yes, you have," which is always pleasant, alright. "Yes, you have sinned. Now, don't do that anymore," which is great advice that's so difficult to follow. Right? "And now, let's take care of the past sin, and let's kill an animal." And that was the system they were stuck in.

But the problem is, according to even Hebrews 10:1, it didn't work. It did not work. And what happened was, now pay attention here because this happens just as much in '06 as it did back then, what happened was that people got stuck in ritualistic religion that did not set them free from the shame, guilt and sin in their hearts. So they got stuck in this ritualistic behavior of the tabernacle and were never set free. So, they were kind of doomed to, week after week after week, year after year after year, do the same religious things that brought about the same dead-end results. Hmmm? Yeah? Oh, holy crowd!

Let's go on to verse 2, since you guys are doing so well. Verse 2, "Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins?" He's saying, "Hey listen, it's not working. You keep coming in, you keep confessing your junk to the priests, the priests continually tell you what to do is right, you keep killing animals, and yet you keep coming back. So, it's like you're taking medicine to get well, but the medicine's not working. But you keep just taking more and more of the medicine that's not working to try to get healthy. It's not working. If it worked, you'd quit coming to the tabernacle. If it finally worked in your hearts, if you finally confessed it, killed the animal and walked away, you wouldn't come back. But you keep coming back."

Let's keep going. Verse 3, "But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." Now, we've got an interesting thing happening, because God said, "Hey, sacrifice these bulls and goats for the removal of sin." And now you've got God saying, "But they don't really remove sin." And then He's going to explain it. Verse 5, "Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says, 'Sacrifice and offering you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me in whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin you have taken no pleasure.'" So, if you'll remember this argument from last week, God's going, "I don't want your bull. I don't need your goats. That's not what I want. That does not please me. I am not after your sacrifice. I'm after your hearts. And so, if you're giving Me your bulls and goats and not your heart, I am not interested in your sacrifice or offering to me. And because you've got this thing confused and you think I want your offering rather than you, I'll just come myself and solve this thing." That's what He says. He goes, "Okay, I don't delight in your burnt offerings. I do not delight in your sacrifices. So, a body you made for me." Alright. So God's going, "This is completely messed up. I'll solve it."

Now, let's keep reading. Verse 7, "Then I said, 'Behold, I have come (in the scroll of the book it is written of me) to do Your will, O God.' After saying above, 'Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin you have not desired, nor have you taken pleasure, in them' (which are offered according to the Law), then He said, 'Behold, I have come to do your will.' He takes away the first in order to establish the second." So, now you've got Jesus coming, going, "This old way of you trying to do what you know is right, this old way of you trying to barter with me all the time, this old way of you coming into my temple and going, 'I've blown it again, but here's what I'm going to do. I'm going to do better or I'm going to stop doing this or here, take my sacrifice, let this sacrifice appease you for my failures.'" Jesus is saying, "That way is not working. I'm done. I'm coming, I'm removing the old system, I'm establishing a new one."

Now, let's read about the new one, because the new one is great great great.....great news. Verse 10, "By this will..." or the will of Jesus to come and remove the old system and establish the new, "By this will we have been sanctified..." Now, this word "sanctified" simply means "to put in the proper place." So, sanctification is God taking our hearts and lives and placing them in that place where we were created to walk and dwell. It's the idea that Ecclesiastes 3:11 kind of unpacks the best, when it says that God put eternity into our hearts so that we would seek Him. It means that there's kind of this cosmic gaping eternal hole in us that nothing's going to be able to fill, which is why we can become very successful or very popular, very powerful and still be lacking or still feel something gnawing in us. Because only what is eternal can fill a hole that is eternal, and nothing here is eternal, nothing. And that's kind of this, "I want to put you in the place you were created." Now, back to verse 10, "...through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." This is going to be a pretty big idea here. Verse 11 is going to let you know something really peculiar about the tabernacle. "Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins;..." So, here's something really peculiar about the tabernacle. There were no chairs. You weren't allowed to sit down, specifically if you were a priest. If you were a priest, you couldn't sit down because sitting down in the tabernacle would be symbolic of work being finished. So, a priest was never allowed to sit down in the tabernacle because his work was never done. Why? Because people, no matter how many offerings they brought in, could never have the guilt, fear, shame, depression and overwhelming sense of emptiness removed from them because God was not after goats and bulls, He was after their hearts. And so, He's saying here, "Priests would always offer these sacrifices, but they were never able to sit down because their work was partial, not complete, lacking and never finished.

And the next line of this text, although it'll mean a little bit to us, would have made 1st Century Hebrews gasp because it would have been blasphemous. But look at what happens, because Jesus is going to play this thing very, very differently. Verse 12, "...but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time..." So let me ask you a legit question. How much of time is incorporated in "all time?" All of it, which means that the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross covered sins of the past (because that's all of time), present (because that's part of time) and future (because that's all of time). So, the sacrificial death of Christ covered, once and for all, all sins. Now watch this. Look what He does after He dies and comes back, "...offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God..." Jesus dies on the cross, is resurrected from the dead and sits down and says, "It's over. I've done it. It's over." He said, "It's finished. It's finished, it's over."

But I can't wait to get to verse 18, so let's go, "...waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet." And so, what you and I are waiting on right now is for the enemies of God, we don't know who they are to be made His footstool. And as soon as that happens, Christ will return again, and we'll be done here. So verse 14, "For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified," those who are believers in Him. So, let me ask you a question. How many of your sins were future sins when Jesus died on the cross? Yeah, all of them, unless you're in the Guinness Book of World Records tonight, alright. Unless you're like 23-2400 years old. So that on the cross of Jesus Christ, your sins and my sins, covered by the blood of Christ so that in this moment we stand perfect before the living God. That's unbelievably hard to get our minds around. Because most of us have been taught the tabernacle system. Most of us are still trying to bring Him offerings to appease Him because of our failures. But we'll get to that.

Let's keep reading, "And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us; for after saying, 'This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws upon their heart, and on their mind and I will write and on their mind I will write them.'" So, no longer is the Law an external thing that is put on top of us that we have to bear externally, but now, He'll write it on our hearts. And out of the overflow from our heart, the life will live. Are you tracking with me on the difference of those two? It's not a set of external rules given to the body of, "Dress this way, eat this way, don't eat this way, go here, don't go there..." It's not that set of rules; it is an impression on the heart, it is the Holy Spirit of God transforming the soul, that the still small voice of God whispering inside of us leads us into all righteousness. People

don't like this, because if you say this, you can't control people. But it's going to look different for some of us. Some of us are going to get more freedom than others of us. And I know that people don't like that. People like the rules, they like the Law, they like the tabernacle. I will never preach the tabernacle here, which means we're going to have some of you that listen to me preach and go on and use it as a license to sin. But that's not between me and you. I am not God's police. I'm going to preach grace. And if you take it and use it as a license to sin, that's between you and the Lord, not between me and you. I cannot police you, but I will tell you this: perfected once and for all, He writes it on our hearts and leads and guides us in the paths of righteousness. He does.

Now, look at these next two. These next two are huge, "He then says, 'And their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.'" Now, that's great news if you know you're a scoundrel, and it will be great news when you finally realize that you are one. Because some of you right now still think you're pretty. You still think like you got stuff to offer God, like you got things that He needs. He should be grateful that He found you, that you got money, and you can give it to His kingdom. And that's so sweet of you to do that. So when you've given Him your life, even though He could have taken it at any time if He wanted, it's cute. It's like when my daughter brings me stuff. "Here, look what I've got for you." "Oh, my laptop. Thank you." It was mine. I could have gotten it at any time, but "Thank you, baby. Thank you."

Now honestly, if you've been here the last four weeks, we have said nothing new, this is just review. Isn't it? I mean, I'm telling you, the writer of Hebrews is going, "I don't care if you get anything else, get this. Don't miss this. Now, it's going to end big. Look at verse 18, "Now where there is forgiveness of these things..." where Christ has come alive in our hearts, where Jesus has saved us, "...there is no longer any offering for sin." So, what just happened is Jesus says, "Where I have come into your, I am no longer taking offerings. The shop is shut down. It's done. It's over. You no longer have anything to bring to My altar. It's over." And we go, "Well, what about my sins? What about my struggles? I'm so messed up." And so, we bring them and lay them down, "I mess up here, and I struggle with that. And so, I'm going to do this, and I'm going to stop doing that." And Jesus sits back and goes, "Already paid for. Already paid for. I'm not accepting offerings. It's over." "Well, what about my...I...but...yeah, I just did...You died like a couple thousand years ago, I just did this this week." "All time. All time means "all time." All time, I'm not taking offerings." And yet, so many of us keep dragging things to His altar and saying, "I'm going to do this for You, and I'm going to do this for you. And I'm hoping this pleases You, and I'll start doing it this way, and I'll quit doing this and I'll start doing this...." We keep laying things down at His altar, and Jesus is going, "What is all this stuff? Why are you cluttering My altar up? What is all this junk?" "Well, I'm just...You know...You've got to be upset with me. I keep blowing it here and I'm doing this and I can't shake this and this is haunting me..." And Jesus is going, "What are you talking about? I'm not taking offerings anymore." "Well, what about my mess ups?" "It's paid for." "Yeah, I know You already said that and all, but I keep struggling with that..." "Okay, listen. Look at Me here. It's paid for. See, there's nothing in you that's of value to Me, nothing. You have nothing that I need, nothing you can offer Me, nothing you can bring to My table. I'm God and everything, well everything's mine. Your sin had to be punished so I have killed you. I have killed you in My Son, and now when I see you, I see my Son, perfect, spotless, radiant. So take your pettily good behavior and get it off My altar, because this altar is covered with the blood of Christ that washes away the sins of man. I'm no longer taking offerings." Now, don't get confused. We're still taking offerings, alright. So, in the back there are some boxes that you put your offering, but Jesus... Some of you are rejoicing, "YES! How do we join this church?" We still are. I'm just kidding, but I'm not at all. Christ, He's going, "What are you going to offer Me? Seriously, what do you have to offer Me?"

Now, let me tell you this is a very, very, very, very difficult truth for rule followers. Any rule followers in here? Hmm? Any earners? Yeah. You know why you raised your hand? You didn't want to, but you follow the rules, and I said "Hey, raise your hand." You're like, "Nah, I don't want to admit to them....AAGGHH! Why do I have to follow the rules?!?" We're an earner, and this is a doctrine that we struggle with, sometimes almost impossibly. Because so much of our identity can be built up in being the one that follows the rules. You know, "I'm the one that does it right. I'm the one that is good.

I'm the one that doesn't do this. I do this." And it becomes like this is our identity. Our identity is wrapped up in good behavior. And if you're not careful, you'll become like the men and women in the parable who worked in the vineyard all day, and when the owner of the vineyard hired some people late and paid them the same thing, they threw a fit. And the owner of the vineyard tell them, "Hey, didn't I tell you what you'd get? Why are you angry that they're getting paid? Why are you so upset about them?" And this is how you know if you're in a dangerous area. If you're hearing me preach grace right now, and you're already worried about everybody else who will take what I'm saying as a license to go out and screw around and sin. If right now, you're going, "Oh, there's going to be people that listen to that..." Because what you're doing is going, "Oh man, they might not live like me. And if they don't live like me, I don't know...." Because all that stuff is meant to control people, and grace doesn't let you control people, and it's an unbelievably dangerous thing. And people use it all the time. They grab that banner of grace and use it as a license to sin. And so, there are people who go, "Yeah, you've always got to put the "but" on grace." But once you do that, you've added to the cross of Christ. And you've said that it's not sufficient in itself. So, it's the cross plus we don't drink" or "It's the cross, and we don't....the cross, and we do....the cross and we..." No, if you add anything to the cross, you're off.

Do I know this is dangerous? I know it's impossibly dangerous. But it isn't my call to do anything with how He's decided to be dangerous. What do you think the Lord's going to do if I knock on His door and approach it with confidence and go, "Yeah, I don't really like the way You wired this thing. See, my people, they hear this....what?...Oh yeah, Your people, they hear this and then they go 'Oh, I can do whatever I want" and they run out and do whatever." I mean, what do you think He's going to say to me? "I'm okay. I got it. I'm forever, you're 31. You're so cute. Get outta here." Yeah, it's grace that paid the bill. It paid it.

And that's what we talked about last week. So, you know when we're laying in bed tonight, and all the accusations in our heart start stirring up, and we realize that we're miserable and we've failed and we're not as good as we should be and we could do better. And all that stuff is true, but it shouldn't crush you. It shouldn't crush you that you are those things. You have not surprised God with how lazy and lacking you are. God did not die on the cross, and now in '06 is filled with all this regret. "If I would have seen those fools, I would have never done that." That's not how it plays itself out, it's not. All sins for all time covered for those who are being sanctified. Which means I am a scoundrel, but you know what? Being accused of that sure makes me want to run into Him, because Oh the love of sweet God that He would lavish upon us, grace enough to love us today, right now, right where you are. I mean, it's such a freeing thing. And for the saints, the Scriptures say the saints of God, those called by Christ unto God, that they'll hear this message and this kindness will lead them to repentance. Not fear, not me standing here going, "If you do this, God will destroy you. If you do this, this is what's going to happen to you." I mean, that might lead to a kind of repentance, but it's a kind of repentance that gets filled with joy and life. No, the kindness of God in this grace, that's what leads the saints to repentance.

Now, it leads the religious back into the tabernacle. But the saints, this unbelievable truth of love, it leads us to press into Him all the more and not run from Him. And that's why accusations actually become one of your best friends. Because it's in those moments when you become aware of how messed up you really are, but the fullness of Christ has made aware to you. That's why we read, back in Hebrews 9, that where there's any standing left in the tabernacle, the door of the holy of holies will remain shut for you. It's this idea that you'll never know the fullness of Jesus as long as you think you can bring an offering that He likes. Like, you'll never know the fullness of Jesus until you understand that you don't bring stuff to His altar, you come lay down on it. That's the difference. You don't bring your religious activity, you bring you, with all that you have – nothing. And you become the living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God. You know, the old argument of the Old Testament is, "I don't want your bull, I want you." And now in the New Testament, it's the same argument, "Quit bringing Me your stuff. Keep your bull. You lay down. I want you."

So today, we celebrate another picture. Today, Easter Sunday, Jesus didn't die today. No, this is a picture, it's a symbol, it's a shadow of the form. Maybe we'll bring it back to the beginning. So, I love that picture of my wife. It's my favorite picture of her. I take it with me on trips, and I stare at it during the day at my desk. I love that picture. But if it's all that I had, it would only produce longing in me, because I want the real thing. So, in two weeks, I've got to spend a week in Seattle teaching. So, I'm packing up the umbrella and jetting up. And if I took the picture with me, and set it on my TV, that's my habit, I'm kind of that Job 3:11 fellow, "Don't let my eyes look upon anything it shouldn't," and Lauren on top of the TV staring at me helps, alright. If all I brought was the picture, then I'm going to look at that picture and I'm going to be in that king sized bed and I'm going to be longing, man. Because if you're single in here, you won't get this, but if you've been married for awhile, like there's this comfort thing that happens after a while in marriage where if my wife is not there, I don't sleep well. I don't sleep well because I'm used to like a foot being on me or a hand or her murmuring something that makes no sense or "Cheetos stereo system." "Cheetos stereo system? Did you just say Cheetos...?" "I know what I'm talking about." So there's this comfort thing. Married folk, do you know what I'm talking about? Maybe it's because I've only been married for seven years. Maybe some of you have been married longer and you're like, "Please." For me, if she's not there, I don't sleep well. I don't sleep well. And so, the picture would be on the TV, I'm laying in this big bed by myself, and there would be this longing created in my heart because when all is said and done, I was meant to be near and with the real thing, not it's picture. The good news is she's flying with me and we're leaving the kids. Woohoo! So, real thing.

So, I have to wonder how many of you are holding on to a picture, longing and frustrated because you were created for the real thing and have instead, settled for the shadow? We're created for the form, but instead, have grabbed hold of the picture. And since the picture might be all that you know, you just feel like it's impossible to let that thing go, despite that fact that you, just like the Hebrews, keep coming back and making the same sacrifices every week to no real change. "Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe. Sin had left a crimson stain. He washed it white as snow." So may the dangerous grace of the cross of Christ lead us to repentance. And may we learn to like the picture but love the form. And may we celebrate that we are children of weakness, and may we find in Him our all in all. Happy Easter.

Let's pray, "I know You want us to get this. I mean, I know you want us to get this because I am unaware of three or four chapters in a row with such repetition in such of Scripture. I mean over and over and over again that the Law and external morality are just a shadow, just a shadow, just a shadow, just a picture, just a shadow, just a picture, just a shadow, that offerings and sacrifice is just a shadow, just a picture. You are the real thing. Your death, the real thing, no longer taking offerings, no longer receiving sacrifices, paid for once and for all. And so, may this news send us running towards You. It's for Your beautiful name I pray. Amen."