

# Perfecting Those Who Draw Near

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** Hebrews 10:1-18  
**Preached on:** Sunday, April 30, 2017

Well, once again we have that wonderful opportunity to open up the inspired revelation that God has given to us in his word, so will you take your Bibles and turn to Hebrews 10. We will be looking at the first 18 verses this morning and I've entitled my discourse to you "Perfecting Those Who Draw Near," and I hope that is the passion of your heart this morning. And frankly, today is a wonderful opportunity to submerge ourselves in the ocean depths of Christian theology, especially as it relates to the atoning work of Christ and, sadly, I fear that many tend to wade in the kiddie pool when it comes to these things and as a result, they never really grasp the miracle of sovereign grace, of all that happened at the cross, and worst yet, they never really get to know our Savior as well as they could.

Now, certainly this was true of the early Hebrew Christians, so they were vulnerable to the pressure that they were experiencing from their family, from their friends, to somehow return back to Judaism, to their comfort zone of the old covenant. And I might add that persecution is often a great motivator to compromise and I might also say that I'm sure there are some of you that know very little about what really happened at the cross and some only know superficially who Christ is and, therefore, you end up loving Christ superficially, serving him superficially, obeying him superficially, and you know nothing, therefore, of what it means to really suffer for Christ and you know nothing of the life-dominating, soul-nourishing joy available to those who walk in intimate faith and fellowship with the living God. But this morning, we have an opportunity to learn more about the cross, to learn more about the Savior, which will increase our longing to draw near to him in a loving and a living communion. I might add that this is something that wasn't available to the Old Testament saints as we will see. In fact, it was impossible for them to draw near to God the way they longed to do until Christ came and made his sacrifice.

So follow along as I read Hebrews 10, beginning in verse 1.

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. 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? 3 But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year. 4 For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. 5 Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says, "Sacrifice

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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. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come (in the scroll of the book it is written of Me) to do Your will, O God.'" 8 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), 9 then He said, "Behold, I have come to do Your will." He takes away the first in order to establish the second. 10 By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. 11 Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; 12 but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, 13 waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet. 14 For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. 15 And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us; for after saying, 16 "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 I will write them," He then says, 17 "And their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." 18 Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin.

Now, we must remember that this is part of an extended argument that the writer is giving to help the early Jewish believers and some who were considering Christ, to help them understand the supremacy of Christ and the superiority of the new covenant over the old. And here we see more reasons why that is true and each of these reason, frankly, should ignite each of our hearts with full-throated praise for God's saving grace. And I wish to examine these 18 verses under three headings that I hope will be helpful for you. We're going to, first of all, look at the imperfections of the old sacrifices; secondly, the perfection of the sacrifice of Christ; and then he closes with the confirmation of Scripture.

Now, let's put ourselves in the place of those early Hebrew believers who were being hammered by their friends, by their family members, to abandon that Jesus of Nazareth cult and come back to Judaism. And obviously the Holy Spirit knew precisely the kinds of arguments that they were having to deal with, arguments that would confuse them and sway them. And so through the inspired writer, the Holy Spirit has provided numerous arguments that are both compelling and irrefutable and here beginning in chapter 10, he is going to add yet another and really a final argument regarding how the old sacrifices are imperfect compared to the perfect sacrifice of Christ.

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So let's look, first of all, at the imperfections of the old sacrifices. He says in verse 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. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins?" So the argument is simply this: the repetition of sacrifices proves their imperfection, proves their ineffectiveness.

Now, remember the context here: you've got, in many cases, genuine worshipers of Yahweh who would bring their sacrifices to the priests to be sacrificed, many of them legitimately longed to draw near to God, to have access into his presence, but they could only get so close. You will remember that. In fact, at Passover every year, they would bring their animals to the temple, the priest would inspect the animals and then they would sacrifice them and it's estimated that about 300,000 lambs would be killed over the course of one week. I did a little math to the amount of blood that would be a part of that and it came out to about half of an Olympic swimming pool in one week.

Now, this would have been a sanitation nightmare. I know you're thinking that so let me explain what they did. They developed a drainage system that was attached to the altar there in the Temple of Herod, as it's called, and at the base of the altar there were two holes into which the blood of the sacrifices were poured and then it flowed into a channel of running clear water which went through the court of the temple, down to the Kidron Valley and outside the city. By the way, the Lord Jesus when he made his way to Gethsemane and ultimately to the cross, would have gone through that bloody creek. According to tradition, this water was sold to gardeners who used it as fertilizer. That's a little of the background.

Now, all of this, of course, was prescribed by God under the old covenant. This is what he wanted. He wanted those who drew near to him in sincere worship to have a vivid picture of the consequences of sin; that the wages of sin is death. He wanted them to see that these sacrifices were really a shadow of a coming reality, a salvation that was to come, and all of those animal sacrifices were merely a covering for sin. They did not cleanse a person from sin. This covering was first pictured in the garden. Do you remember that? Remember when God, himself, killed the first animal, the innocent animal? When he, himself, provided a substitute to cover Adam and Eve's guilt and shame? And of course, all of that was a shadow of a coming Redeemer that would one day make atonement for sin. But that covering, once again, was only a shadow, not the very image, not the exact likeness or reality or full revelation.

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And I want you to notice, it could never remove sin permanently. This is so important in the whole argument. He says it could never make perfect those who draw near. The concept of making something perfect in the original language means to make something complete; to bring something to its intended end, namely in this case, to fully meet man's needs to be justified, to be sanctified. You will remember in Hebrews 9:9, the writer speaks of the tabernacle and the entire sacrificial system and he says it was a symbol for the present time. Accordingly, both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience. So the argument is this: the repetitive sacrifices prove that they are ineffective, that they are merely a shadow of a reality because they could never make perfect those who draw near.

Notice verse 2, "Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered." It's a rhetorical question. It's expecting the answer, "Well, of course they would have stopped." Any continuation would have been superfluous, it would have been unnecessary. He goes on to say, "because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins." So here the author's use of the phrase "having once been cleansed" adds further clarity to this idea of making perfect those who draw near. So this idea of making something perfect is connected with this idea of a cleansing. This concept of perfection involves a cleansing, *katharizo* in the original language. We get our word "to cauterize" from that. It can also be translated "to purge or to eliminate."

And notice when that cleansing, that making perfect, took place. He says, "having once been cleansed." Having once been cleansed, in the original language this is in the perfect tense which means it's a completed action with continuing results. So what was that? What is it referring to? Well, it's referring to Christ's death on the cross obviously. So what happened on the cross? Here it is: Jesus actually, really, permanently cleansed the sins for all whom the Father had given him so all who had and all who would draw near to him, would be made perfect.

Folks, I want you to understand that an actual cleansing took place on the cross of Calvary. Some people are confused about this. It was a specific act of atonement. It was not a potential atonement that helplessly awaited people who are spiritually dead to somehow exercise their free will and actualize what Christ did provisionally or what Christ did hypothetically. And how often must this cleansing take place? I want you to notice, he says, "having once been cleansed." Not many times but once. Again, the point is there is no need for more animal sacrifices here to cover sin. So there was never any efficacy in the death of those animals. Remember in Hebrews 9:26 we read, "now once at the consummation of the ages," referring to the cross, "He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."

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Folks, if I can make this very personal, for me this is just a miracle of miracles to me. When I think of what Jesus did on the cross in his suffering and his death, I realize that he didn't die some vague, general death, he died for me. He bore my sins in his body. He knew who I was. He created me. He knew my sins and likewise for you. And I died in him and I rose in him purely by the majestic, sovereign love that God determined to place upon me. And for this reason, remember what Paul said in Galatians 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me."

And you say, "Well yes, but 2 Corinthians 5:14 says one died for all." Well, yes, one died in the place of all but you have to read the rest of it. It says, "therefore all died." So for whom did Christ die? For everybody in the whole world, including people in hell? No, he died, it says, for all who died in him, past tense. In other words, he died for specific individuals who died in the death of Christ who was their representative substitute. Paul says in Colossians 3:3, "you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God."

Folks, this is what happened at the cross. His death on the cross was not merely an act whereby he accomplished a potential salvation which, by the way, would have eliminated everyone who died before Christ, but rather he accomplished an actual salvation and a salvation that cleansed the sin of specific sinners that God had appointed unto salvation. Charles Spurgeon said this, quote, "If Christ on his cross intended to save every man, then he intended to save those who were lost before he died. If the doctrine be true, that he died for all men, then he died for some who were in hell before he came into this world, for doubtless there were even then myriads there who had been cast away because of their sins." He went on to say, "That seems to me a conception a thousand times more repulsive than any of those consequences which are said to be associated with the Calvinistic and Christian doctrine of special and particular redemption. To think that my Savior died for men who were or are in hell seems a supposition too horrible for me to entertain."

Now, many believe in an atonement that is unlimited in scope but it is limited in power, in other words, in effect, because it is at the mercy of the will of the sinner to somehow actualize a potential salvation that took place on the cross. I believe the Bible teaches just the opposite. I believe that the atonement is limited in its scope, it's limited to the elect, those that God has chosen for salvation, but it is unlimited in its power. It is able to save to the uttermost those that God has appointed unto salvation. Spurgeon also said this, quote, "I would rather believe a limited atonement that is efficacious for all men for whom it was intended, than a universal atonement that is not efficacious for anybody except the will of men be added to it."

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If I can put it real practically: dear friends, when I sing the power of the cross, I am not thinking of some vague, provisional act of atonement that some unrealized potential that I was able to cash in on because I was wise enough or spiritual enough to cooperate with God and be saved, but rather when I sing about the cross, I am there and Christ is my personal substitute, the one who knew me, who knew my sins and died on my behalf. That's just something I'll never be able to get over.

Now back to the text. The author is saying to them and to all of us, "Dear friends, because of the sacrifice that we have in Christ, it will make perfect all who draw near to God in genuine repentance and faith. It's a sacrifice that cleansed you from sin once-and-for-all with abiding results. So why on earth would you want to keep on killing animals?" That's the point. Place your faith in Christ. He is the one who actually, not potentially, bore your sins in his body once-and-for-all on the cross of Calvary. You are, therefore, perfect and complete. You have been cleansed permanently.

As a footnote, this is also a devastating blow to those who would argue that a man can lose his salvation. It kind of goes this way, "Well, yes, I know, I know Christ cleansed all of my sins on the cross but it's up to me to stay clean. I'm gonna have to watch what I do here." Really? If that is you, let me humbly ask you a question: when you trusted in Christ as your Savior, how many of your sins do you believe he cleansed? Let me give you two answers. A. All your past sins up until that point in your life. Or B. All of your sins past, present and future. Of course the answer biblically is B. Child of God, don't be deceived. I mean, think about this: all of your sins were future when Christ died as your substitute and all of your sins were cleansed in that single act. All of them were future. Do you remember what Paul said in Colossians 2:14? He says he "canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross," unless you decide to reject his offer. It doesn't say that. Unless you decide to rebel against him and forfeit his saving grace. It doesn't say that.

Dear Christian, all of your future sins were forgiven because you were united to Christ in eternity past. You must understand that. We were all future. We hadn't even come into existence yet. Our names were written in the Lamb's Book of Life before the foundation of the world. Paul said in Ephesians 1:4, "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world." What a magnificent reality. Christ's death on the cross was a perfecting, cleansing sacrifice because of our union with him and when he died, we were crucified with him. In fact, Paul says in 2 Timothy 1:9 that he saved us and he called us "according to His own purpose which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity." Literally before time began.

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So follow the argument. The repetitive sacrifices could never make perfect those who draw near, 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?" So think again now what he's saying. These old sacrifices never do three things: they could never provide access to God for those who were trying to draw near to him; secondly, they could never cleanse a person from sin, they could only cover that sin temporarily; and thirdly, they are never able to soothe an aching conscience, an accusing conscience because if they couldn't remove sin, they couldn't silence a guilty conscience.

I gave that a lot of thought, especially this last week. I tried to put myself in their place. What would it have been like year after year to make these sacrifices knowing that there is no finality and not ever having a subjective awareness that my sins had been dealt with once-and-for-all. Can you imagine? You see, we don't know what that's like, do we, this side of the cross? Always having that nagging sense of guilt. Never being able to rejoice as Paul did when he said that "there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Not being able to enjoy the reality that our sins have been forever and continually forgiven by the grace of God through the death of Christ who ever lives to make intercession for us.

Now, be careful. Every true believer will still have an awareness of his sin. If you don't, you're in big trouble. In fact, the more we grow into Christ's likeness, the more acutely aware we are of our sin. As we grow in the grace and the knowledge of Christ, we grow in holiness and we learn to love more and more what God loves and hate what he hates, and in that process of sanctification we grow increasingly conscious of our own sinful failures but those things do not weigh us down with some kind of debilitating guilt, certainly we don't have any fear of judgment. Now, we do have guilt if we sin with impunity, but I think you understand what I'm saying. Instead as we grow in Christ, we become more sensitive to our sin and that causes us to rejoice all the more in our forgiveness in Christ.

But the Old Testament saints knew nothing of this. Notice verse 3, "But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year." Underscore that word. Verse 4, "For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." Now as a footnote, God never intended for animals to atone for man's sins. Animals are not made in the image of God, moreover, God's law says that if we sin we must die, and so animals were merely a picture of Christ.

But I want you to notice this phrase "reminder of sins" in verse 3. You see, God's purpose in the repetitive old covenant sacrifices was to remind them of their sin. Don't you hate it

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when you're around what I call a scab-thumper. You know, somebody that's just always thumping that same scab. You know, you just want to get even, don't you? And that's kind of what was going on here, just always, "Look at your sin. It's just there, isn't it?" It just never stops. But think of the contrast in the new covenant. At the Lord's Supper, Jesus did not remind them of their sin but of their Savior. He said, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of," your sin? No, "in remembrance of Me, your Savior."

So when we partake of the bread and we drink of the cup, we are not making another sacrifice for sin like the Roman Catholics do in their Mass. Dear friends, that is a blasphemous heresy. That is another Gospel. Instead we are affirming our participation in the one death of Christ that atoned for our sins as our substitute; a death that cleansed us from all of our sins, that provided for us access into the presence of God so that we can enjoy sweet fellowship with him, and it also forever silences an accusing conscience that would somehow cause us to fear the judgment of God. Those are the new covenant truths.

But the author is also confronting the issue of religious ritualism and externalism that was common among the ancient Hebrews and, oh yes, it is common among evangelicals as well. You see, apart from a sincere desire for forgiveness and a desire to glorify God, the external ceremonies of the old covenant were not acceptable to God. They were totally worthless. And for many, the sacrifices had become magical, kind of meaningless ritual. It would be tantamount to the mythical idea of rubbing the bottle so the genie would come out and grant your wishes. So they were just using God to their ends rather than submitting to him in a humble act of worship and a whole-hearted desire to honor him through their faith and their obedience and their repentance.

So this is what the author is dealing with here in the first four verses, the imperfections of the old sacrifices, and he moves from there to the perfection of the sacrifice of Christ. Here's the great contrast. Notice the transition, verse 4, "For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says," now by the way, here he is quoting Psalm 40:6. The prophetic words of the Messiah himself. 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." You see, this speaks of the Incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ. The body that was prepared for him was sacrificed in order to establish the new covenant that would replace the old. That's the argument.

And it was his sacrifice that pleased God. You may recall how David captured the very essence of this concept when he said in Psalm 51:17, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." Dear friends, make no

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mistake, God hates phony worshipers. He hates those who go through the motions of honoring him; who partake of, for example, communion or anything else that they do in their religious life, if they do it in a ritualistic or a superficial manner. But what he desires are people who are broken over their sin, who long for forgiveness, long for cleansing, long for fellowship, so that they can live a life that brings glory to God.

In Isaiah 1, beginning in verse 11, we read about how much God hates phony worshipers. There he said, "What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me?" Says the LORD. 'I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams And the fat of fed cattle; And I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs or goats.'" He goes on in verse 13, "Bring your worthless offerings no longer, Incense is an abomination to Me. New moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies-- I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly. I hate your new moon festivals and your appointed feasts, They have become a burden to Me; I am weary of bearing them. So when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide My eyes from you; Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood. Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil, Learn to do good; Seek justice, Reprove the ruthless, Defend the orphan, Plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together,' Says the LORD, 'Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool.'"

You know, folks, we would all do well to examine ourselves here. Are we the typical cultural Christian of our day? The Sunday morning Christian that goes through the mere motions of worship? Or are we a living and holy sacrifice that is acceptable to God? Too many Christians today are all sizzle and no steak. As we would say, they are all show but no go. They look like Christ and they live like Christ for a few hours on Sunday morning but they look like the world and they live for themselves the rest of the week. Christians that will go through a whole week and never spend a minute nourishing their souls by reading and meditating upon the word, go through a whole week and never have any desire to commune with the lover of their soul in prayer, go through a whole week and not tell anybody about the good news of the Gospel. Oh, but they come to church and they sing the hymns and they say all the right things. Folks, we must guard ourselves against that.

Well, this was also a problem with those living under the old covenant, and as a result, their sacrifices were worthless rituals. They were an abomination to God. But not so the perfect sacrifice of Christ and here in verse 7, we also see Jesus' commitment to do the Father's will. He is our supreme example as to how to live. This is what is acceptable to God, verse 7, "Then I said, 'Behold, I have come (in the scroll of the book it is written of Me),' a reference to the book of the law of Moses. "I have come to do Your will." And

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what was that will, dear friends? What was the will of God for Jesus when he came? To simply die a martyr's death? No, it was far more than that. He came to be the substitute who would bear in his body the sins of all whom the Father had given to him.

He goes on to add in verse 8 after saying above, "sacrifices 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." Again, speaking of the new covenant that supersedes the old.

In verse 10, "By this will we have been sanctified." "Sanctified" means "to be set apart"; literally "to be made holy." How does that happen? "Through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." This is an amazing text. In fact, the Greek grammar of the phrase, "we have been sanctified," emphasizes the absolute and enduring permanence of our salvation. In Christian theology, you may remember that there are three distinguishable phases of sanctification. First of all, there is what we would call positional sanctification and that is fully accomplished at the moment of salvation. It was ultimately accomplished on the cross but we see this here in verse 10, positional sanctification, when at the cross ultimately man is set apart from sin and set aside unto God. This has to do with our deliverance from the penalty of sin. This is what we might call positional truth. This has to do with our positional standing in Christ, our judicial standing before a holy God.

Then, secondly, there is progressive sanctification. That is that process of spiritual growth in a believer's life where we become increasingly set apart from sin and set apart unto God and ultimately conformed into the image of Christ. This is the deliverance not from the penalty of sin but from the power of sin. This is not positional truth, this is conditional truth dealing with a believer's actual spiritual condition. Remember Peter said in 1 Peter 1:15, "be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'" And Jesus said in his high priestly prayer in John 17:17, Father, "Sanctify them in the truth; thy word is truth." Father, use your word to conform them more into my likeness.

Then, finally, there is perfected sanctification. That is at the consummation of the process of sanctification and that is accomplished by God at the moment we are ushered into his presence. That's when we are delivered not from the penalty of sin, not from the power of sin, but from the presence of sin. This is eschatological truth. It relates to the coming consummation of the salvation of those who have in this life trusted Christ. I love what Paul said in Philippians 3:21, that he "will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory."

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Now, with that little aside, we come back to Hebrews 10:10. It was the will of God that we have been sanctified. We have been set apart. We've been made holy through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. When Christ died on the cross for our sins, dear friends, we were permanently, our sins were permanently removed and we were set apart from sin and set aside unto God. But, you know, we didn't understand this until we were born again but it happened ultimately at the cross.

Then he contrasts the profound reality of the old covenant sacrificial system that can only cover but never cleanse anyone's sins with the new covenant. Notice he says in verse 11, "Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins." Don't you know this was hard for them to hear? "You mean we've been doing this all this time and everybody is telling us we ought to go back to that? And, you know, you're right. They never take away the sins."

Yes, but notice verse 12, "but He," referring to Christ, "having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God." And why did he sit down? Because his work was finished.

Verse 13. What is he doing now? Well, he's "waiting from that time onward until His enemies will be made a footstool for His feet." In other words, he's waiting for that time when his enemies will be forced to bow at his feet, totally against their will but they're going to be forced to bow and acknowledge Jesus as Lord. You say, "Well, who are his enemies?" Well, certainly it includes Satan whom Jesus conquered at the cross. Remember Hebrews 2:14, through the death of Christ he rendered powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil. It also includes all of Satan's minions, all of the fallen angels, the demons, and all of the rulers and all of the authorities of all time, and every person who has ever ridiculed and rejected and rebelled against God. All of them were conquered at the cross. It was there, according to Colossians 2:15, that he disarmed the rulers and authorities. He made a public display of them, "having triumphed over them through Him," referring to Christ.

Dear Christian, I hope you find solace in all of this. You know, we look around at our world today and we see all of the chaos, we see the moral free-fall in our country. We don't know when some ballistic missile is going to come over and do untold damage. I mean, it seems like we're right on the brink of war today, doesn't it, as you read the news? Times are hard. Do you know what? Times are going to get a whole lot worse before Christ comes and Jesus promised that, that the world is going to hate us because it first hated him. But here's what the writer is saying and we read this all through Scripture: dear friends, the battle has already been won and that battles was won at the cross and

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# Perfecting Those Who Draw Near

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** Hebrews 10:1-18  
**Preached on:** Sunday, April 30, 2017

now the one the world hates, the one the world mocks, quietly awaits that day when he has had enough. And a day is coming, dear friends, when the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, will have enough and his nostrils will flare with righteous indignation and he will rise from his sovereign throne and he will return to this earth in unimaginable glory to pour out his judgment upon the world and one day we will witness this astounding event that is recorded here in this text when his enemies will be made a footstool for his feet.

What a comfort this would have been to those first century Hebrews that were longing for a Messiah that would conquer Rome, that would free them. They were looking for a conquering King, not a suffering Savior. Oh, dear friends, the Spirit says however, the King is coming. Oh child of God, the King is coming. Kim Jong-un of North Korea, the King is coming. Bashar al-Assad, the King is coming. Xi Jinping of China, the King is coming. Vladimir Putin, the King is coming. Barack Obama, Donald Trump, the King is coming.

Dear Christian, our King is coming but we have nothing to fear. Notice verse 14, "For by one offering He has perfected," he has made complete, he has made whole, "for all time those who are sanctified." We close this morning with, finally, the confirmation of Scripture. Bear in mind now what the writer is doing here under the inspiration of the Spirit. He's saying that because our sins have been removed permanently at the cross and because we were eternally united to Christ, we have been forever sanctified and perfected, verse 15, "And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us; for after saying," and by the way, now he's going to quote their own prophet out of Jeremiah 31, but the Spirit says through his prophet beginning in verse 16, "'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 them,' He then says, 'And their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.' Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin."

What an astounding statement, dear friends. Anyone who seeks forgiveness of sins can find it through repentant faith in the completed work of Christ at the cross and all who will do so will be those whom he saved and called according to his own purpose which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity. Why go back to an imperfect sacrifice when you have the perfect sacrifice of Christ?

Well, let me close with a challenge to each of us who know and love Christ. I want to remind you that after Paul had expounded upon the riches of God's grace for 11 chapters in the book of Romans, after he talked about the magnificent doctrine of justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, you will remember that he just exploded

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in that magnificent doxology and he said, "Oh the depths both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God, how unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways." He went on to say, "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen." And then he says this, "Therefore," Romans 12:1, "I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God," in other words, by all that he has done for us in his infinite mercy and grace, "I urge you to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship." And folks, it is my passion as your pastor that each of us will be able to echo that great doxology in our heart, to be able to grasp the riches of God's grace in Christ, and how I long for all of us to know the mercies of God on our behalf, to be able to just take hold of the extravagant blessings that he has lavished upon us because when we do that, we will begin to bear much fruit for the glory of God; we will begin to experience his power and his presence in our life. Because of Christ's ultimate and final sacrifice, the continual sacrifice of animals that God prescribed and accepted under the old covenant are all over. They no longer have any effect. But now what God wants of us is for us to offer ourselves whole-heartedly to him, to yield ourselves to the Spirit of God. That's the only acceptable form of worship. In fact, in Ephesians 5:18, Paul warned us, "Don't be drunk with wine that produces dissipation, but to be filled with the Spirit." To put it practically: don't allow yourself to be dominated by alcohol. Don't allow yourself to be dominated or controlled by marijuana or any other kind of drug that causes you to lose control or to somehow be elevated into some alternate state of consciousness. That's what the pagans do. Don't do that. In fact, don't allow yourself to be under the control of anything or any person but rather than that, be under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Yield yourself completely to him as he has revealed himself to you in his word. And folks, you simply cannot do that apart from an accurate and intimate knowledge of Christ and, frankly, this is what Jesus meant in John 15. Remember when he said, "Abide in Me"? In other words, "Stay in intimate fellowship with Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me, you can do nothing."

Dear friends, walking closely with the Lord in humble faith and obedience, rejoicing in all that he has done on the cross, is the thing that will produce within you an increasing love for Christ and that will result in an increased desire to be obedient to Christ, to serve him, to tell others about him, and it will produce within you that soul-nourishing joy of Christ that will dominate your every thought and animate your every passion and soothe your every sorrow, and it will cause you to sing with conviction,

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"O Love that will not let me go,  
I rest my weary soul in thee;  
I give thee back the life I owe,  
That in thine ocean depths its flow  
May richer, fuller be."

Let's pray together.

*Father, I pray that by the power of your Spirit, the great truths of your word will indeed bear much fruit in each of our hearts that we might not only experience your glory in our lives, but that our lives might redound to your glory that others might see Christ and believe. I pray especially for our young people today, knowing that between their flesh and the world in which they live there are so many competing things that will rob them of the great truths that hopefully they have heard today. And for them and, Lord, for each person, I pray that you will not let us forget what you have told us that we might meditate upon them and apply them to our lives for our good and for your glory. I pray in Christ's name and for his sake. Amen.*

We pray you've been edified by this presentation. You've been listening to Pastor, Bible Teacher and Author, Dr. David Harrell. For more information or for other messages from Dr. Harrell, please visit the Olive Tree Christian Resources Website at [otcr.org](http://otcr.org).