

Positive Negatives #2 – Hebrews 10:1-18

Neville Rowlandson addressed the ball for his first drive of the day. Neville is an English man who lives in Suffolk. He had rushed to the course to get there for his tee time and hadn't had much opportunity to warm up. Neville will never forget his first drive off the first tee on that day. He almost missed the ball completely. But at first he thought that it would have been better if he had. For Neville hit the ball with the tip of the toe of his driver. The ball shot off to the right, hitting the large marker that designated the first hole. It then ricocheted off of that marker going further to the right. To Neville's embarrassed chagrin, the ball then bounced about 25 yards until it arrived at the 18th green. Neville's drive then slowed down as it bounced across the 18th green until it finally hit the pin and dropped into the hole. Golf Digest made Neville Rowlandson an instant hero as it quickly picked up the story and awarded the Englishman the honor of being the only person ever in the history of golf to score one shot for an entire 18 hole game of golf.

Sometimes positive results come from negative events. Neville Rowlandson probably would have never gotten his name mentioned in Golf Digest had it not been for his horrendous tee shot. I'm sure that he now has his picture and article framed in his office so that everyone can see proof of his scoring the lowest total ever for 18 holes of golf.

Last week, we began to look at some negatives that had an extremely positive message in the spiritual realm. These 5 negatives that lead to positive ends are found in Hebrews 10:1-18. We looked at the 1st two positive negatives last Sunday morning.

The first positive negative is the fact that the law could never make people perfect. This positive negative is found in the first verse. READ Hebrews 10:1:

HEB 10:1 The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming--not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship.

Now at first it appears to be very negative indeed that the law did not have the ability to make people spiritually complete or mature. The law couldn't bring spiritual maturity because it was just a shadow. It was not the complete image. But this turned out to be a good thing for all of us. For if the law would have been sufficient to bring about spiritual maturity, our salvation would be dependent upon our ability to perfectly keep the law. Since nobody except for the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has ever been able to keep the entirety of the law, none of us would have been able to work our way to eternal life if the law had been able to bring about spiritual maturity. But because of the law's inability, the Lord Jesus Christ came as the perfect image of the invisible God. His work on the cross of Calvary was able to bring about complete spiritual maturity in the lives of those who are in Him.

The **2nd positive negative that we looked at last week** was the simple fact that animal sacrifices could never take away sin. We saw that truth in verses 3-4:

³ But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, ⁴ because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

Now this truth was so critical to the author's point that he repeated it in verses 11,12:

HEB 10:11 Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹² But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.

If animal sacrifices could have provided the complete payment for sins in the eyes of God, they wouldn't have continually been made. One sacrifice should have been sufficient to pay the penalty for sin. The fact that these sacrifices were made day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, for more than a thousand years was a demonstration that they were inadequate to pay the penalty for sin in the eyes of God. But this negative again proved to be a positive for God's people. For the inadequacies of animal sacrifices motivated God to provide the final and complete sacrifice for sin in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. God sent His one and only Son to us as His Messiah. The Lord Jesus Christ gave His life on the cross of Calvary as the final and complete sacrifice for sin. Having made that final and complete sacrifice, the Lord Jesus Christ ascended to heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. This symbolized the fact that His work was done. His sacrifice had been final and complete.

2 negatives that are very positive. The law of God could not bring complete spiritual maturity to anyone and animal sacrifices could never take away sins. Now there are 3 more positive negatives in this passage that we need to look at.

Animal sacrifices were not pleasing to God. Notice verses 5-8 with me:

Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; **with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased**. Then I said, 'Here I am--it is written about me in the scroll-- I have come to do your will, O God.' " First he said, "Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them" (although the law required them to be made).

The author of this epistle quotes from Psalm 40 here. But there is an interesting change that he makes. Let me read Psalm 40:6-8 for you – see if you can detect the change that this N.T. author makes.

PS 40:6 Sacrifice and offering you did not desire,
but my ears you have pierced;
burnt offerings and sin offerings
you did not require.

PS 40:7 Then I said, "Here I am, I have come--
it is written about me in the scroll.

PS 40:8 I desire to do your will, O my God;
your law is within my heart."

Did you catch the major difference? The Psalmist spoke of the ears of the sacrifice being pierced. This is an obvious reference to the practice of making a Jewish person a permanent bond slave to his master. The O.T. law made a very clear that Jewish men were not to be permanent slaves to other Jewish masters. They might sell the use of their time temporarily as slaves if they fell into debt, but when the year of Jubilee came around, they were to be freed from their slavery. The single exception to this was the Jewish man who voluntarily wanted to remain a slave to his master. In this case, he was to have his ear pierced with an awl signifying his desire to remain a slave. He would then remain a bond slave to his master for the remainder of his life. The Psalmist reference to the Messiah's ears being pierced foretold the life of the suffering servant that the Lord Jesus Christ would lead. In order to redeem the human race, the 2nd person of the triune Godhead would take upon Himself a human body. This would be a lasting sacrifice, for even after His death, burial and resurrection, the Lord Jesus Christ was given a resurrected body that He will have throughout all eternity.

Now the author of Hebrews moves from the picture of Christ's servanthood to His sacrifice. He speaks of a body being prepared for him. On the cross of Calvary, the body of the Lord Jesus Christ was pierced. Nails were driven through His hands and feet; a spear was thrust through His side. While the blood of animals could not take away sins so God was not pleased with them, the Lord Jesus Christ could pay the penalty for sin once and for all.

But I am also glad for that statement that God was not pleased with the animal sacrifices. It did not bring God pleasure to see animal after animal slaughtered so that human sin could be atoned for.

One of the main criticisms that many levy against the O.T. is the bloodiness of the animal sacrificial system. They claim that the God of the O.T. was a cruel, heartless God who delighted in slaughtering millions of animals for no apparent reason. This is certainly not the picture that this author presents here, is it? It did not bring God pleasure to see sheep and goats and bulls slaughtered upon the altars. God created all things. He created every animal that walks the face of this earth. God loves His creation. God pronounced every creature to be good. God was grieved that so many animals had to be sacrificed for the sinfulness of the human race. He was not pleased that these animal sacrifices took place.

Then why did God allow them – even order them? God set up the sacrificial system because it was necessary for the spiritual life of those whom He had created in His own likeness and image. Several times in the Bible it is recorded – "Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin." You see, the wages of sin is death according to Romans 6:23. So every time a human being sinned, the natural consequence of that

sin was death. Life had to be sacrificed in order to compensate for death. So innocent victims had to be sacrificed so that sin could be atoned for. Now the blood of bulls and goats was not sufficient in itself to pay the penalty of sin. We have already seen that. But it was absolutely necessary in the eyes of God. For without the shedding of blood, there could be no remission for sin. None of us realizes the seriousness of sin in God's eyes. None of us realizes how much sin runs against the grain of God's character. Only God knows this. So God set up the only system that could atone for sin in His eyes. It didn't bring Him pleasure. He wasn't pleased with it. He didn't delight in watching these bovine creatures that He had created being slaughtered on altars. But it was necessary so that those who had been created in His own likeness and image might have fellowship with Him.

A 4th negative that has great positive results is the fact that God will not remember our sins. Notice this positive negative with me in verses 15-17:

HEB 10:15 The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says: "This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord.

I will put my laws in their hearts,
and I will write them on their minds."

Then he adds: "Their sins and lawless acts
I will remember no more."

Now God not remembering our sins against us does not conflict with His divine attribute of omniscience. The Bible speaks of God knowing all that there is to know. There is nothing that escapes His awareness. When the author here says that God will remember our sins no more, he doesn't imply that there will now be something that God is not aware of – that there will now be something that we know that God doesn't know. For we remember sins that we have committed in the past all too well. Could it be possible that we know something that even God doesn't know? Of course not. God knows even the thoughts of our minds. There is nothing that is hidden from his omniscience.

No, God not remembering our sins means that He will never hold them against us. Our sins have been paid for in full. God, being just, will never ask us to pay for our sins again. He will never throw up our sins before our eyes and ask that we atone for them. He will never remember our sins against us.

Corrie Ten Boom was a well known author and speaker after World War 2. After growing up peacefully for the first years of her life, living with her sister above her father's watch shop in Haarlem, Holland, she was thrust into the atrocities of World War 2 along with her other family members. Moved by their devout Christian beliefs, the Ten Boom family began to shelter Jewish people who were running for their lives from Nazi persecution. When the Nazis found out about their activities, Corrie and her sister were torn from their home and forced to live for many months in a concentration camp. The inhumane humiliation that was forced upon them is almost impossible to describe. Miraculously, Corrie survived the ordeal and became an

ambassador for the Lord Jesus Christ following the war, traveling as a lecturer to some 62 countries and writing a number of best-selling books. Every once in a while, someone would approach Corrie from her past after a speaking engagement. Often, this person would be a German soldier who had participated in her degrading treatment and now felt plagued by a guilty conscience for what he had done. On one occasion, such an event occurred. A person who had wronged Corrie came to apologize and ask forgiveness. At first her eyes showed confusion as she thought back through the sordid events that she had experienced during World War 2. Then suddenly, Corrie's eyes brightened as she smiled and said, "Yes, I remember now the exact time that I chose to forget that event."

What had Corrie Ten Boom done? She had chosen to release that wrong done to her by forgiving. She had chosen not to carry around a bitter and vengeful spirit for the rest of her life. So she had decided to forget the matter. It wasn't that it was totally removed from her memory banks for it was still there when she searched for it. But she had decided that she would not hold that wrong against the person who had committed it.

This is a picture of what God has done for each of us. Because the complete payment for sin has been made, because our sins have been fully atoned for so that God's holy and righteous standards are appeased, God can say that he does not remember our sins against us any longer. This gives to us the confidence that if we know the Lord Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and have experienced the forgiveness that only His sacrifice can offer, we will never stand at the Great White Throne Judgment to be tried for our sins. That judgment has already occurred on the cross of Calvary. We will, of course, stand before Christ at the Bema Seat, the Judgment Seat of Christ, to give an account of our stewardship, how we have lived our lives as a follower of Christ. But we will never suffer God's wrath or judgment for sin.

And this brings us to our 5th and final Positive Negative – there will never again be another sacrifice for sin. READ Hebrews 10:18:

HEB 10:18 And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin. What a wonderful statement this is! Never again will there be another sacrifice for sin. Why? Because the final and complete payment has been made. Jesus Christ has paid for sins in full.

Now this doesn't mean that the temple in Jerusalem is not going to be rebuilt and an altar of sacrifice put into use again in the future. Ezekiel 40-48 gives a detailed description of a temple to yet be built in the future. And it describes sacrifices that will yet take place. But these sacrifices will not be made to atone for sin. The temple activity that will take place during the tribulation and millennium will be in memorial of Christ's atoning work. It will be similar to the Lord's Table where we remember what our Savior did for us. The glorious message of the gospel is that because Jesus Christ died once for all, there doesn't need to be any further sacrifice for sin.

There was an English evangelist by the name of Ebenezer Wooten who preached throughout Great Britain a couple of hundred years ago. After one particularly long meeting, Wooten was busily engaged loading his equipment on the back of a wagon. A young man who had been sitting near the front of the congregation timidly approached him, obviously under conviction. "Mr. Wooten," he asked. "What must I do to be saved?"

Sensing that the young man was trusting in his own good works and righteousness, the evangelist without even looking up from his work replied back in a rather brusque manner, "It's too late."

The young man was startled. He assumed that the evangelist was now too tired to talk with him after the long meeting and was in a hurry to get on his way. "Oh, no, don't say that. It can't be too late for me to be saved." The young man pleaded.

The evangelist looked up and smiled. "You asked what you must do to be saved. I tell you it's too late. You can do nothing to be saved. The work has already been done. It was finished by the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary". Then evangelist Wooten turned from his task loading the wagon, sat down with the young man and explained how he could only acknowledge his sin before God and receive by faith the gift of forgiveness that the Lord Jesus Christ had already purchased for him.

Aren't you glad that there can never be another offering for sin? The work has been completely finished.

5 Negatives that are tremendously positive in the hope that they bring into our lives:

- *The law could never make anybody spiritually mature
- *Animal sacrifices could never take away sin
- *God wasn't pleased with animal sacrifices
- *God will not remember our sins against us
- *There will never be another sacrifice for sin