

November 15, 2009
Saints Triumphant

"Saints You Are Triumphant in Jesus"

HEBREWS 10:11-18

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. ¹³ Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, ¹⁴ because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy. ¹⁵ The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says: ¹⁶ "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." ¹⁷ Then he adds: "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more." ¹⁸ And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin.

Houston, Texas, is home to the largest Christian Church in North America with over 45,000 people in attendance each Sunday. Their place of worship is the refurbished former basketball arena for the NBA Houston Rockets. The website for this church has this mission statement or slogan flashing across the stream: "Finding the Champion in You." How different are the words found in this book of Hebrews that call on Christians of every age to fix their eyes on Jesus.

On this Saints Triumphant Sunday we have the privilege of reassuring each other that we are saints who are victorious at all times because we have our champion in Jesus and not in ourselves. This book of Hebrews pleads with Jewish people who had become Christian to avoid trying to find the champion in themselves or in the religious rites and rules and regulations of Judaism. This book of Hebrews also has a chapter on the great heroes of faith. They all had one thing in common. They focused on Jesus for their salvation. That made them victorious and triumphant.

Satan never stops tempting me and you with the delusion that we can find our champion with in us. That is why we need to gather together and encourage other as saints triumphant to stay focused on Jesus, not on ourselves, until that day comes when he calls us home to himself.

Jesus sat down after paying for our sins

We know that we have our victory and triumph in Jesus because he sat down after paying for our sins. He sat down not because he was tired, but because he had won the victory and his work was done. How different Jesus was from the priests of the Old Testament who never sat down because they were always busy sacrificing animals in the temple and leading people in their prayers. "Day after day every priest stands and performs religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins." There is an old saying that a mother's work is never done. The same was true of Old Testament priest. He never had time to sit down as he went from one sacrifice to another, or leading the people in prayers or in worship. This was not like throwing a few pieces of

meat on the grill. He had to sacrifice each animal according to God's plan dressed in the clothes of the priest. Think of all the cleanup work that went along with these sacrifices.

These sacrifices, and all their blood, and their smoke that went up in the air, could not pay for one single sin. As we are told, "which can never take away sin." Oh, to be sure, these were not worthless sacrifices. No, they were extremely valuable because they pointed people to the sacrifice Jesus would one day make for us at the cross. Hebrews 10:1 describes them as a shadow of things to come. Last week, we compared these sacrifices to the Christmas decorations you have in your attic. Every year you bring them down and set them up to remind yourself of Jesus' birth and the blessings that come through him. Or what about all those slides you have of previous family activities. Maybe you want to convert them to digital format that you can burn into a DVD because they remind you of blessings you had in your past life. Every day the priest offered sacrifices as pictures of what Jesus would do for us.

The Old Testament priest's work was never done. The devil loves to afflict us and lead us into think our work is never done. He tells us that we can only be saints triumphant by constantly trying to improve ourselves and make ourselves more acceptable to God by what we do. In your daily life there are certain tasks that need to be repeated continuously such as washing dishes, brushing teeth, carrying out the garbage, filling the car with gasoline, shopping, and the list goes on and on. It is also true in your relationship with people that you are never done showing love and kindness especially to members of your family. The devil, whose very name means liar, loves to deceive us into thinking that our daily efforts at trying to improve ourselves or finding the champion in us will make us acceptable to our God, draw us closer to God and help us live a better life.

We need to keep our eyes focused on Jesus and the one time sacrifice he made for us. Here is what our text says about this one time sacrifice of Jesus for all sin. "But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice, he sat down at the right hand of the God." When Jesus finished sacrificing himself for our sins, he was raised from the dead and he sat down on the right hand of the heavenly Father. Jesus did not sit down as we sometimes do because we are tired. Jesus sat down because his work was done, just as Jesus rested on the seventh day when his work of creation was done. He sat down because there were no sins left unpaid. You remember his loud cry from the cross signaling his work for us was done: "It is finished."

And what are the results of this one time act of Jesus? Look at the quote at the end of our text where the Lord God spoke through the Old Testament prophets and predicted a time when "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more." As long as we live on this earth we will have flashbacks to certain sins that we have committed. They come back to haunt us. Why is it that certain things you did or said never seem to go away? They may be forgotten for awhile and then they came back to us. Because of Jesus one time sacrifice our God says that he will not remember our sin. That makes us saints of God. We are saints triumphing in what Jesus did in our behalf. Someday we will have to die and we will have to stand before God in the final judgment. Then the book will be opened, and what a huge book that must be, this book that records all yours sins. You already know what will be found in that book. You know that the one time sacrifice of Jesus was complete. This one time sacrifice expunged every record from that book. Oh, don't you love that word, "expunged."

Oh, dear Christian, think of the comfort this morning in hearing that Jesus sat down after making the perfect sacrifice for sin. Now you have an IRA that will guarantee what you need to be a saint triumphant on the last day. Oh, did I say IRA? I did not mean the kind of IRA where you put money into an account that helps prepare for your retirement. The success of that account depends on how hard you worked to put money into it and invest it wisely. I am talking about an Individual Redemption Account based on the sacrifice Jesus made that not only wiped out every sin from the account but installed into the account his perfect righteousness. You might also call it your "Individual Resurrection Account" because when Jesus arose from the dead, he sat down. His work was done. The account was complete, perfect and full, and no one can alter what has been placed in the account.

Do you ever grow tired of hearing this good news? Never! We cannot get enough of it, because we know the time will come when Satan will say, "You can't rest on what Jesus has done. You need to do something to make your salvation more real." He tries to tell us that we need to love God first and then maybe God will love us and help us with our problems. No, as we say in the one Scripture verse, "We love him, because he first loved us." We look for the champion in Jesus and then we have hope.

Jesus sits down with his enemies at his feet

Look again at Jesus sitting down after paying for our sin. He is sitting there and his enemies are beneath his feet. "Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy." Jesus is sitting and waiting until that day when all of his enemies and all of our enemies are made his footstool. 1 Corinthians 15 has this to say about Jesus' triumph over his enemies and our enemies. "Then the end will come when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominions, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet." We think of the words from Philippians 2 where it says, "Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue confess Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father." Listen to the words of James, "Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient, and stand firm because the Lord's coming is near."

It is tough to stand firm in these last days. In his book, *The World, the Flesh and the Devil*, Harold Lindsell writes, "Where there is mischief afoot, Satan is sure to be involved. He is the one who precipitates wars, encourages men in their lusts, causes people to question the Word of God, and tells them they can play with sin and win. He stands by every drunkard's side. He peers from the window of every house of prostitution. He watches over the shoulder of every thief. He feeds words into the mouth of every blasphemer. He controls the minds and thoughts of every pornographer. He sits by the statesmen in the chancelleries of the world as they decide the destiny of nations. ..He laughs silently beside the grave of his victims and claps his hands with glee when men slide into eternity without the knowledge of Jesus Christ." (p. 31) Look at the past week. See how powerful Satan is in your own life. We seem to have no chance and no hope. But then we look up and see Jesus sitting down waiting for his enemies to be made his footstool. He will cast Satan into the lake of fire on the last day. He also equips us with his powerful word to fight against temptation as the Lord promised in the quote found in our text, "I will put

my laws in their hearts and write them on their minds." We have the powerful sword of the spirit, the word of God.

In the C.S. Lewis' book, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, there is hope for the land of Narnia when the magnificent Lion Aslan returns and then later comes back to life again. One by one he crushes his enemies, a picture of what Jesus will do when he returns and what Jesus is doing right now in your life. We are saints triumphant, not because we find the champion in us, but because of what we have in Jesus. Amen.