

Saints Triumphant Sunday
November 15, 2015

"We Are Saints 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.

The pile gets bigger and bigger every day. I am talking about the pile of dirty clothes in the wash basket. When the kids were still home it was not uncommon to see a mountain of dirty clothes overflowing in the basket. There you stood in front of the wash machine, putting in the clothes, adding the detergent and pushing the buttons for another load of laundry. In the words we just read to you we are told that the Old Testament priest stood in front of the altar of the Lord and offered sacrifices again and again for the sins of the people. Like the person doing dirty laundry, the work of the priest never seemed to be done. He sprinkled blood from goats and sheep in the presence of God to picture the blood of Jesus the Lamb of God that would be shed for the sin of the world.

On this Saints Triumphant Sunday we want to celebrate that we are saints triumphant not because of what we do but because Jesus offered himself at the cross to wash us clean from every sin we have ever committed. This means we can stand triumphant and victorious not only on the last day when Jesus returns, but through every difficulty and trial that life may bring to us.

Without Jesus we have no reason to be triumphant

Let's take a closer look at the Old Testament priest as he stands in the temple of the Lord offering the daily sacrifices for sin. "Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices which can never take away sin." Notice the emphasis on the daily sacrifices with the words, "day after day" and "again and again." See him take a lamb or goat in his arms, sacrifice it, and then sprinkle its blood on the altar in the presence of the Lord.

There is an old saying that a mother's work is never done. That was certainly true of the priests in the Old Testament. Their work was never done. There were times when they did not have time to sit down. Always there were more sacrifices that needed to be made. None of these sacrifices had the power to remove a single sin. They all pointed to Jesus and the one time sacrifice for sin he would make at the cross. Remember what John the Baptist said as he pointed to Jesus. "Behold, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of

the world.” He pointed to Jesus who would offer himself once for the sin of the world.

Before we get into the rest of the verses of this text let’s take a few minutes to think about the desperate need we have for Jesus to wash us clean by his perfect sacrifice at the cross. Sin is like dirty laundry. Every time we wear our clothes we make them dirty. There are smells from our bodies that get into the clothes, and without becoming too personal, some of those smells aren’t all that nice are they. There are dead skin cells that slough off from our skin into our clothes. And that spaghetti you were eating, well some of it got onto your shirt or your blouse and now it needs to be washed.

In Matthew 15 Jesus said it is not the things that go into your mouth that make you unclean or dirty but the things that come out of your mouth. Then he went on to say, “But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man unclean. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what make a person ‘unclean’..” The Apostle Paul confessed that things came out of his heart that made him unclean. “I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.” Did we not confess the dirt in our lives that come from the heart when we joined in confessing our sin before the Lord? The laundry that piles up in the laundry basket is an infinitesimally small pile compared to the pile of sin accumulated in just a short time of living here on this earth.

Nothing can make us clean except the blood of Jesus. Old Testament priests offered sacrifices again and again to point to the blood of Jesus that would offer one perfect sacrifice for all time for the sin of the entire world. That is the message of the gospel that is so clearly proclaimed here in this book of Hebrews.

As I was preparing for this sermon and studying the thoughts of this text I thought of how my mother would wash the dirty clothes from working on the dairy farm. Believe me if you work on a dairy farm you clothes get dirty. There is the dust and the dirt, the ever present manure, the grease and oil from machinery, not to mention sweat when work is done on a hot day. She made her own soap with animal fat and lye that she insisted cleaned the dirty clothes better than any laundry detergent. As good as that soap was, it could not remove the sin that was present in our lives. For that we needed Jesus. Here I am years later and I need Jesus more than ever.

Let me tell you about a 93 year old lady that I talked to this past week who did not want to see the dirt of sin in her life that needed Jesus’ perfect sacrifice to save her. Her name is Vera. I was teaching a Bible Class at Santa Maria Terrace. The class was cancelled because lots of people were attending Veteran’s Day activities. Vera had served in the British Air Force and worked as a mechanic on Spitfire airplanes. Vera began talking to me and telling me how lonely she was. I asked her if she knew how much God cared about her, and that he sent his Son to pay for her sins so she could have eternal life. She very quickly told me how she did not want to think about sin or anything negative because she believed in positive thinking and not letting anything negative get into her life.

As much as we openly talk about and confess the reality of sin that enters into our daily life and piles up like dirty laundry we are Saints Triumphant and we have a greater reality

in our lives. We have Jesus who washes us clean and allows us to jump up and down for joy knowing we are forgiven. And we have peace with God and ultimately we will triumph not in what we try to be but in what Christ has done for us.

With Jesus we have every reason to be triumphant

The Old Testament priest had to offer many sacrifices, but Jesus offered only one sacrifice that lasts forever. "But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God." People who work hard sit down when they become tired. In fact they no sooner sit down in the easy chair and they are fast asleep. Jesus did not sit down at the right hand of God because he was tired from his work of living the perfect life for us and dying the perfect death on the cross. He sat down because his work of washing us clean from our sin was finished. You remember what he said right before he died. He cried out with a loud voice, "It is finished." The full wrath of God was poured out on Jesus for our sin. Then it was finished. This was a sacrifice offered for all time that never has to be repeated. Through the blessings of baptism and faith this perfect death, perfect burial and perfect rising from the dead and sitting at God's right hand is personally yours.

Because of this perfect one time sacrifice of Jesus, all sorts of exciting things are now happening in your life. "Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, because one sacrifice, he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy." You are now saints in God's eyes through Jesus. You are now perfect. He is making you holy. That means he is setting you aside to be used in a very special way for his glory. He is waiting to make your enemies his footstool.

Think of a king on a throne. Beneath his feet is a footstool and enemies are brought in that must bow before him. King Jesus is on his throne. He is conquering your worst enemies. Satan is trying to accuse you day and night before God's throne, but then the Revelation says we overcome him with the Word of God and the blood of the Lamb. The world is trying to mold and shape you in its pattern, and then you hear King Jesus say, "I have overcome the world." And when our last hour comes and we face death, we will triumph over death as Earle Balgeman did about two weeks ago. The great resurrection chapter fifteen tell us, "The last enemy to be destroyed is death." With King Jesus on his throne we can say with confidence, "Nothing in all creation will ever separate us from the love of God that exists in Christ Jesus our Lord..." We are more than conquerors through him who loved us."

And if there is any doubt that you are a saint triumphant through Jesus then listen to what these verse of Hebrews tells us about the Holy Spirit that blesses us so richly with God's Word in our lives. "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.'" God put his laws into our lives. He puts his Word into our lives. Think of how often God's Word has taken you from a low moment in your life and lifted your eyes to Jesus to help you see how triumphant and victorious you are in Christ. You soar on eagle's wings when you say confidently, "The Lord is my Shepherd I shall not want." I shall not want. I lack nothing, nothing, nothing.

Our God, our Holy Spirit, our Comforter puts his Word into our lives and causes us to soar even higher as saints triumphant. He tells us, "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more." Our God does not remember our sins because they have been removed and forgiven and expunged by the blood of the Lamb, Christ Jesus our Lord, God's Son.

I close this sermon about being Saints Triumphant with a story that Dr. Donald Barnhouse tells in his commentary on Romans. He told about preaching in a church and closing his sermon with a powerful proclamation that our sins were remembered no more, cast into the depths of the sea, removed as far as the east is from the west, washed clean. A twelve year old boy was sitting in the balcony that wrapped around the church, leaning over the pulpit and hanging onto every word. At the end of the service, the boy came down from the balcony and came up to the pastor, tugged on his arm and said. "Great sermon doc," and then said, "We are sure sitting pretty aren't we?" We sure are sitting pretty. We are saints triumphant in Jesus.