

# Foundation 3: Who am I in Christ?

## **No More Important Message**

Whether you are a new believer or established in the faith, there is no more important message than the message of grace. The truth of grace is the foundation on which all other truth is built. Unfortunately, very few children of God have a solid foundation in grace. To the degree our grace foundation is insecure, to the same degree what we build upon that foundation will lack stability.

## **The Old Way – Sacrifices to Atone for Sin**

The Book of Hebrews (chapters 8-10 in particular) is a prime place to see the grace teaching spelled-out. Through studying it we can shore up our foundation in grace. In this particular letter, the writer of Hebrews was addressing Jewish people who had spent their whole life under the Law - a set of requirements that theoretically, if followed perfectly, could leave their adherents “right” before God. Of course, nobody was able to keep the whole Law perfectly, so in the Old Testament, God’s people made sacrifices to atone for their sin. They often made trips to the temple to place their sin upon an animal sacrifice in order to try to re-establish “right standing” with God. We will call this system the “Old Way.”

In the Old Way, individuals had to atone for their sins

by taking a lamb to the priest. The priest would inspect the animal to be sacrificed to make sure that the lamb was without blemish and therefore acceptable. The sinner brought the best of what they had. The priest would then instruct the person who had sinned to lay hands on the head of the lamb so that the sinner's sin would go into the lamb. Correspondingly, the righteousness, perfection, and innocence of the lamb would transfer into the person. After the transference of sins and exchange of righteousness had occurred, the high priest would cut the throat of the lamb and kill the lamb as a sacrifice.

### **The New Way – One Sacrifice to Atone for All Sin**

When Jesus allowed Himself to be crucified on the Cross on our behalf, He offered Himself once and for all as the last sacrifice for sin we would ever need. And He did this for all the sins of all mankind for all time! Therefore in the New Covenant (or Testament), God's people no longer need to offer sacrifices for their sin; we will call this the "New Way."

Because the writer of Hebrews was addressing a Jewish audience with his letter, and because old habits tend to "die hard," he used the letter to contrast the old and the new covenants by making comparisons between them. His purpose in contrasting the Old and New Ways was to make sure his readers knew that God had set up a New Way through the sacrifice of His Son and did not want His people to slip back into the Old Way, which had become unnecessary. Because the original audience of this letter

was Hebrew, many of us will do well to spend a little time studying the comparisons the writer of Hebrews makes in clarifying the New Way.

### **As a Believer, You are Not Under Inspection**

Remember that in the Old Way, individuals had to atone for their sins by taking a lamb to the priest and the priest would inspect the animal to be sacrificed to make sure that the lamb was without blemish--and therefore acceptable. Based on that practice, ask yourself this question: "When a sacrifice was brought before the priest, did the priest examine the sinner or the lamb?"

The answer of course is that the priest examined the lamb, not the sinner! It was already clear that the sinner was not without blemish--that is why he or she was making a sin offering! The Bible refers to Jesus as the "Lamb of God." In other words, when Jesus came and died for us, God examined the Lamb (Jesus), not the sinner (us)!

John the Baptist, when he was in the river Jordan, baptizing people, looked up and by the Spirit of God said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29)! Subsequently, when Jesus was baptized and came out of the water, God the Father said audibly "this is my Son, in whom I am well pleased." Jesus was God's Lamb. He (Jesus, the Lamb) was inspected by God and found to be pleasing, without spot or blemish. Jesus was God's Son in whom He was well pleased. Jesus was acceptable for our sacrifice!

Jesus is acceptable before God as a perfect sacrifice on our behalf. When Jesus went to the Cross, the Father essentially laid His hands on Jesus' head - to transfer all the sins of humanity for all time - onto the Lamb and then killed the Lamb on our behalf, just as the priests did for the Jewish people in the Old Way.

When we consider our own life and perhaps even wonder what our status is with God, we tend to examine *ourselves*. But when God thinks about your status with Him, He is not examining you . . . He is examining your Lamb! Who is your Lamb? Jesus is your Lamb! That is who the Lord is examining. As believers, we need to stop looking inward when considering who we are in God! Our righteousness before God is based on the righteousness of another--Jesus, the Lamb that was slain for us!

### **An Eternal Sacrifice**

Another difference between the Old Way and the New Way is the frequency with which sacrifices needed to be offered. In the Old Way, God's people frequently needed to offer sacrifices for their sins. We can assume for the devout that the sacrificial system was a relatively continual process - perhaps going to the temple many times in just one year (or more!) to work on "staying right with God" - offering a new sacrifice for their most recent sin. In the New Way, on the other hand, Jesus died once and for all, for ALL of our sins. In other words, as believers in Christ, there is no more sacrificial work to do for our sins. Jesus was the first and the

last sacrifice of the New Covenant!

Like the original Hebrew recipients of this letter, we need to be reminded of the finality of Jesus' sacrifice so we do not fall into the trap of trying to "take care of" our own sins after our salvation. Many well-meaning believers, not realizing the finality of Jesus' work on the Cross, find themselves sin conscious--always considering and pondering any potential sin and trying to make a fresh sacrifice for their newest sin.

Hebrews 9:11-12 says, "*But Christ came . . . Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.*" As believers, Jesus provided for us "eternal redemption!" The Bible does not say Christ's sacrifice was time-stamped and only good up until the time of our salvation. It says His sacrifice was a "once for all" sacrifice! The washing of the blood of the Lamb for all of our sins was not just good for the sins we committed up until the day we accepted Christ; it was a washing good for all of our sins for all time!

Hebrews 9:28 makes the singular finality of Christ's sacrifice all the more clear: "*Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many*" (emphasis added). If Christ's sacrifice had been like the sacrifices in the Old Testament, then Jesus would have had to suffer often--since the foundation of the World-- continually making sacrifice for all of our various sins over the years. But Christ's sacrifice was not like that! He offered Himself up for us once and for all! "*But now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by*

*the sacrifice of Himself*” (Heb. 9:26, emphasis added).

## **No Offering Remains!**

Therefore, the New Covenant believer (one who has put their faith in Jesus Christ) no longer needs to make any offering for their sin. In the Old Covenant, sacrifices were offered again and again, yet could not take away the consciousness of sins (Heb. 10:2). But, as born-again believers, in God’s eyes, we are perfect.

Believers, having been cleansed by the blood of Christ once and for all, do not need to be walking around with any sin-consciousness. If we were asked this question: “What is your status right now with God?” Our answer should be “Perfect!”

But most of us respond to that question with something less than that. Something less than “perfect!” If so, we simply need to spend more time focusing on what Jesus did and less on what we’ve done or not done. He is the perfect one, that’s why we put our faith in Him. To whatever extent you think of your relationship with God as being based on your actions, you will perceive a disconnect in your communion with Him because you will disqualify yourself in your own thinking from His free gift. On the other hand, to whatever extent you think of your relationship with God as being based on the once and for all sacrifice of His Son, you will realize that you are perfectly qualified in God’s eyes!

## Past, Present, and Future!

All of your sins have already been forgiven. You don't need to think about something that is in the past. It's done. It's over with, and it's dealt with - completely! There is no sin you will ever commit that was not already laid on Jesus - the Lamb of God that was slain for you! Look at the lyrics of the classic hymn, It is Well with my Soul:

*"My sin — oh, the bliss of this glorious thought! —  
My sin — not in part but the whole, —  
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,  
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!"*

Your sin. Not in part. The whole thing. Has all been nailed to the Cross. You don't bear it any more! So, what do you do? Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord! He has paid your debt in full!

All of your sins (past, present, and future) have been forgiven! The work is done! Jesus is not going back to the Cross ever again, for you or for me! He is never doing it again. He is not even grouping up the world's sins on an annual basis to atone for them or *anything* like that. All of your sins have already been paid for!

*"But the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us; for after He had said before, 'This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,' then He adds, 'Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more'"*

(Heb. 10:15-17). If God is not remembering your sins and lawless deeds anymore, why would you? There is no longer any offering for your sin that needs made (v.18)! It's done! It's taken care of! Are you still trying to bring offerings to God for your sins? Are you in any way still trying to appease God for your sins? There is no need!

### **God Saw it All**

All this said, many of us, when we first hear about the finished work of Jesus on the Cross, can struggle with the thought of “how is it that my ‘future sins’ can already be paid for?” Good question. Isaiah 57:15 says God “inhabits eternity.” Psalms 139:16 says, *“Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them.”* God knows your entire life from beginning to end (including the part you haven't even lived yet). Psalms 90:2 says, *“Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.”*

God made time and lives on both ends of it. Psalms 90:4 says, *“For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it is past, and like a watch in the night.”* One thousand years are like “yesterday” to God because to Him they've already happened. *“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,”* says the Lord (Isa 55:8). His Ways are above our ways! God sees the beginning from the end. He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end (Rev.



1:8). We live in time, but God created time. God started the clock. He, having made time, is not bound by it, but instead can see our every move, see our every choice. We have a free will but God has already seen every choice we will make. He has already seen our every success and our every failure. He saw our whole life before He punished Jesus on the Cross. He knew all of your sins and gathered them ALL up to put them on His Son at Calvary.

We, on the other hand, live in a succession of moments, so to us it is mind boggling that our sins of tomorrow could already be taken care of by the sacrifice of Christ roughly 2000 years ago! Often, when we sin, it comes as such a surprise that we reason to ourselves “surely this must need to be dealt with!” But God did not find out about that sin when you found about it. He knew about it before He punished Jesus! God has already taken care of your life-long-sin-inventory and completely covered them all with the blood of His Son! God, after gathering up all of your sins, poured out His wrath on His very own Son for those sins. God has not gone soft on sin; He has already dealt with the entire sin issue thoroughly and completely!

God put all of our sins on His Son. Therefore, we have been given a gift from God called righteousness. It is His righteousness, not ours. That’s why our sin does not affect our right standing with God: our right standing is based on the righteousness of His Son, Jesus! The Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, was your perfect sacrifice. And Christ offered Himself for you once and for all! Your complete and entire

sin issue has been dealt with and, because you have received Jesus as your savior, your right standing with God is not based on you at all. It's based on Him! It's all about Jesus!!!

## **What's Your Status with God?**

So if anyone ever asks you "what's your status with God?" You can confidently answer "praise God, I'm the righteousness of God!" "I am forgiven once and for all!" When you understand this, you realize we are not supposed to have a sin-consciousness. As believers, we are supposed to have a righteousness-consciousness.

## **Scriptures**

*The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (Jn 1:29)*

*And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matt. 3:17)*

*"But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come . . . not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption." (Hebrews 9:11-12)*

*... not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another - He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. (Heb. 9:25-28a)*

*For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers,*

*once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. (Heb. 10:2)*

*But the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us; for after He had said before, "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them," then He adds, "Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." (Heb. 10:15-17)*

*Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin. (Heb. 10:18)*

*For thus says the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy... (Isaiah 57:15a)*

*Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them. (Ps. 139:16)*

*Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God. (Ps. 90:2)*

*For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it is past, and like a watch in the night. (Ps. 90:4)*

*"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says the Lord. (Isa 55:8)*

*"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty." (Rev. 1:8)*