

On Wednesday the senior adult Bible study put on a Thanksgiving meal for the school children. It's a great time when the older generation gets a chance to offer something nice and the younger generation gets to make cute cards to thank them. The food is everything you'd expect for Thanksgiving; turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes, and corn. Of course there's pumpkin pie and cool whip too. In preparing this meal, and almost every other, you know most food needs to be cooked to certain temperatures. I found out turkey really needs to reach at least 165 degrees before it's done. All our food was fully cooked. Everything was done and ready.

Does your life feel like it's done? I mean, when you look at things around you does it feel like you've arrived? With so much chaos and upheaval taking place I wonder how done, how ready we feel. More often we wonder what could go wrong next. There's no way we feel like things are running smoothly, like we're finished.

The writer to the Hebrews in the second lesson makes a comparison to show us that things are a lot different than they appear around us. It's a lot better than we think. We are...

**Already saints by grace  
Made perfect once  
Being made holy for life**

If you're like a lot of people your days run pretty much the same. Out of bed and breakfast at the same time. Drive the same way to work. Go to the same classes. Eat supper at the same time. Do homework, watch TV, go to bed. Get up and do it all over again. The priests in Old Testament Jerusalem had a routine too. Each morning they took a one year old male lamb with no problems and killed it as a sacrifice. The entire lamb was burned on the altar as a sacrifice for the sins of the people. They also took two quarts of flour and mixed it with about a quart of olive oil and offered that too as a burnt offering to the Lord. They added a quart of wine poured out with the lamb being sacrificed. That was repeated at night.

This never stopped. Every day was the same. Plus the priest was to respond when someone came in with a particular sin they needed to make an offering for or guilt they needed to offer a sacrifice for. That never stopped. **"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."** This was what every Jewish person had to look forward to, a life of constant sacrifices that couldn't actually take away sins.

You would never expect to leave a restaurant without paying. You receive a meal, you pay for that meal. The Old Testament people knew they weren't saints so sacrificing made them feel better. It felt like their part in getting to heaven. The devil wants nothing more than for you to think you have to play a part too. You're thinking about a world beyond this one, life after earth. But you want to make sure you get there and certainly such a great place will require a great payment. So you take out your feeble checkbooks and write a larger number, and feel good about your sacrifice for God. Putting up with spouse or siblings becomes proof God should let you into heaven. Anything good is good enough for God and should guarantee a spot in heaven. We sin more not less because we're counting our own works as worthy of eternal life and payment for God's love towards us.

Compare a payment system that can never cover the bill with one in which the bill has already been paid and no longer needs paying. Which one would you prefer? **"But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God."** This priest is none other than the one Great High Priest, Jesus. So you could keep trying to pay by sacrifice to God every day never actually doing anything. Or you could believe in the onetime sacrifice made once for the sins of all people. There's no comparison. Jesus finished the work. He made you perfect once by his one sacrifice. This was his grace.

No more sacrifices are needed, in fact to try only results in loss of everything. Instead God has a new covenant with humanity. It's a one sided agreement in which God makes sure your heart knows his laws and commands. **"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."** But this is one sided, so God shows his grace. **"Then he adds: their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more."** God's grace is that you break the laws but Christ didn't. You deserved punishment, but Christ took it. His one great sacrifice takes away your every sin. The truth for you repentant sinners is that God doesn't remember your sins anymore. They are lost in his memory, and God's not searching for them. They're gone. We're already saints by grace.

When you graduate from high school you'll always be able to say you're a high school graduate. Nobody can take that away from you. What Jesus did for you is a onetime action like graduation from high school. No going back over and over. Jesus died for you. It's done. No one can take it away from you. You're a saint by grace. But graduation certainly doesn't mean that learning stops. In fact learning is a lifelong process. So too the process of making you holy doesn't stop either. Through Christ you are being made holy for life.

Being in the process of being made holy doesn't mean you aren't saved. It doesn't mean somehow you have more to offer to God before you can be saved. The Old Testament Jews made constant sacrifices because of their constant sins. But God forgave them, not because of their sacrifices, but because of his. He would sacrifice his own Son and that counted as forgiveness for even the Old Testament believers. Falling into sin like each one of us does and having to be reminded of the forgiveness that Christ won for us doesn't mean we don't get forgiveness. We do. That can't and won't change. What must change is us.

Like someone looking forward to a long overdue vacation, we long for the eternity of heaven. We know it's out there and we can't wait. We want the glory now. We even think our works and life on this earth should reflect who God made us to be perfectly. Instead our life is one of contrasts. God declared us not guilty by Jesus. Yet we get frustrated because we can't see the glory in our lives because of the sins we still do. God sees us as perfect because of his Son. Yet our sins make seeing any growth impossible for us. God sees us do no wrong because of the sacrifice of Christ. Yet very clearly we see sin. Sin is pointed out to us. Then we only get mad at ourselves or God. We should be better but we're not. We should be more advanced in our Christian living but we're not. The process of becoming holy doesn't seem to end.

God makes it clear through the prophet Jeremiah that complete pardon is promised. If pardon is complete, then there is no place for more sacrifices. There is no place for our good works or life to fill in. Christ paid it all for you. **"By one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy."** We're in a process of being made holy in our life only because we've already been made perfect through Christ. The writer finishes this section with the crowning thought, **"Where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin."** Sins have been forgiven. The cross of Christ means you have complete pardon, total forgiveness, and it lasts forever.

Because we're already saints by grace, holy living is bringing out the fruits of a harvest. It's so natural in those who are forgiven. Let our hearts be focused on appreciating that perfect sacrifice of Christ. As we go into Thanksgiving it only seems natural to offer thanks to God not only for the food and family but also for the forgiveness of Jesus and the cross. Let our lives be ones of offering praise in thankful living. How we live going forward knowing of our forgiveness says a lot about us. Sin no longer becomes the default setting. Instead we flee sin in all its forms. With Christ's strength we are confident to say no to sin and yes to following God's desires from his Word. Let our efforts be reenergized to spread God's love and forgiveness to others. Sharing Christ's work in our lives becomes a priority for us. We know people are sick with sin and the only help they need is Christ. Only Christ Jesus can continue to help saints being made holy for life.

When the turkey is done, it's time to be served. Sitting will only dry it out and then it won't be good for anyone. Christians you are done. Your true status before God is perfect by the one sacrifice of Christ. Your life here on earth is to reflect that change of status by living a life being made holy in Christ. By Jesus Christ you are already saints by grace.