

Hebrews 9:24-28 "The Necessity of a Bloody Sacrifice"—part two\*\*

Main Idea: If we're going to persevere in tough times, the book of Hebrews says we need to ponder regularly the bloody sacrifice of our Savior. Hebrews 9:24-28 invites us to meditate on three specific elements of Christ's sacrifice.

I. Ponder the initiative of Christ's bloody sacrifice (24).

A. Christ didn't enter an earthly sanctuary.

B. Christ entered the sanctuary of heaven itself.

1. He is in the presence of God.

2. He represents those who believe in Him.

II. Ponder the intent of Christ's bloody sacrifice (25-26).

A. Think about what Christ did not do (25).

1. He did not offer Himself repeatedly.

2. He did not plead the merit of another's blood.

B. Think about what Christ did (26).

1. His work is historical fact.

2. His work is non-repeatable.

3. His work is the climax of history.

4. His work took care of our sin problem.

5. His work involved the sacrifice of Himself.

III. Ponder the implications of Christ's bloody sacrifice (27-28).

A. Here's what is true of us (27).

1. We will die once.

2. We will face judgment.

B. Here's what is true of Christ (28).

1. The first time He came to bear sin.

2. The second time He will come to bring salvation.

Take Inventory: Ask yourself two critical questions...

1. Am I trusting in Christ alone?

2. Am I longing to see Christ most of all?

There was a place I loved to go when I was growing up on our farm in western Ohio, especially during times when I was discouraged, but even during the good times. It was simply a great place to go to get your perspective right and to keep it right. I would head down the lane passed the barn, through the gate into the pasture, and take the cattle path back to our sixty acre woods. At the bottom of the hill, I would jump across the creek (or walk the log during a rainy season) and then begin to make my way up the other hillside, being careful not to venture into the thorny blackberry and multifloral rose bushes. The destination was the top of that hill. We called it Bald Knob. It certainly wasn't a mountain by Colorado standards, but it was one of the highest points in the area and from that vantage point you could look north and see for miles. And that's what I loved to do, to spend a few moments on the top of that hill and drink in the big picture. Somehow the fact that you didn't get invited to your friend's party, or you didn't play well in yesterday's jv-basketball game, or whatever that week's biggest challenge was, didn't seem to be quite so overwhelming from the top of that hill.

It's easy to get discouraged these days, even as Christians. So much is happening around us that's out of our control, from stock market upheaval to job uncertainty to an unstable world situation to increasing hostility against Christians and Christian values. In times like these it's easy to lose perspective, which means it's vital that we take a regular walk to the top of a hill, a hill called Mount Calvary.

People who spend time regularly at the top of Mount Calvary see the problems of life from a very different perspective than others do. Quite frankly, it's hard to feel sorry for yourself when you're looking at the blood-stained face of the Man of Sorrows.

There's a tendency for Christians to think that the message of the cross is for *non-Christians*. And it's certainly true that non-Christians need to think about the cross, for there's no other way to enter God's family apart from it. Yet Christians need to gaze upon the cross, too, and regularly. We need to hear messages on it, sing songs about it, memorize verses explaining it, meditate daily concerning it. We need an ongoing view of the cross for many reasons, and here's a chief one. No subject can motivate us to hang in there for God when life gets tough any more than the subject of the cross of Christ.

How do I know that? I know it because of the book of Hebrews. The book of Hebrews was written to encourage some first century believers who were facing intense persecution and growing weary. In fact, some were considering throwing in the towel and going back to their old ways. How do you motivate professing Christians to persevere in hard times? The Holy Spirit inspired book of Hebrews says you motivate such folks by taking them again and again and again *to the cross*.

Beloved, if we are going to persevere in tough times, the book of Hebrews says we need to ponder regularly the bloody sacrifice of our Savior. This morning's text, Hebrews 9:24-28, invites us to meditate on three specific elements of Christ's sacrifice.

## I. Ponder the initiative of Christ's bloody sacrifice (24).

Verse 24 "For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence." Notice who took the *initiative*. We're told that *he* (Christ) *entered heaven itself*. Please note that...

**A. Christ didn't enter an earthly sanctuary.** Oh, He went to the sanctuary (the temple) in Jerusalem on several occasions, as did every good Jew. It was there in that sanctuary that the Jewish high priests offered blood sacrifices. That sanctuary, of course, was man-made. It was Herod's handiwork. The temple prior to that was Zerrubabel's, and the one before that was Solomon's, and before that a man-made tabernacle.

Warren Wiersbe cautions, "Beware of trusting anything for your spiritual life that is 'made with hands'.

It will not last." Christ didn't enter a man-made sanctuary, for Christ didn't come merely to patch up Judaism. In fact, the author says that the man-made sanctuary was merely a "copy" (a type, a figure) of the true sanctuary in heaven. So if Jesus did not enter a man-made sanctuary, what did He do?

**B. Christ entered the sanctuary of heaven itself.** "He entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence." Where is Christ?

1. *He is in the presence of God.* Literally, before "God's face." After Jesus went to the cross, He conquered death and ascended back to heaven.

Yet why did He return to heaven? Yes, to be with His Father, but there's another startling reason stated here. He entered heaven to appear in the presence of God *for us* (Greek *hyper hemon*). Romans 8:34 explains, "Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding *for us*." Jesus is interceding for us right now. Yes, in heaven...

2. *He represents those who believe in Him.* How amazing! As sinners, we have no right to go to heaven. We deserve hell, a place reserved for those who have rebelled against the Creator. Satan knows that. He's the accuser. He points his condemning finger and says, "God, those people have no right to enter Your presence." And he's right, but he's also dead wrong.

Listen to 1 John 2:1-2, "My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world."<sup>[2]</sup>

Martin Luther said it well, "For Christ to have ascended profits us nothing, if he ascended for his own sake. But now our glory and joy is in this, that he went there to our advantage and not to our disadvantage."<sup>[3]</sup> And so we can sing the words of Charitie Bancroft (penned in 1863)...

*When Satan tempts me to despair  
And tells me of the guilt within,  
Upward I look and see Him there  
Who made an end of all my sin.  
Because the sinless Savior died  
My sinful soul is counted free.  
For God the just is satisfied  
To look on Him and pardon me.*

Are you downhearted this morning, my friend? Then ponder the *initiative* of Christ's bloody sacrifice. Of His own accord, Christ has entered heaven where He now represents His people before the throne of God. But on what basis does He now defend us? That brings us to our second element...

## II. Ponder the intent of Christ's bloody sacrifice (25-26).

It's vital to understand exactly what Christ did, and why. A person's eternal destiny rests on that understanding. What was Christ's intent for leaving heaven, going to the cross, and then returning back to heaven? The writer invites us to consider that question, first from the negative perspective, then the positive. Negatively...

**A. Think about what Christ did not do (25).** "Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own."

Christ is our high priest, but He's not like other high priests. Other high priests entered the holy of holies year after year, indicating their work was never really finished. And they entered, not with their own blood, of course, but with another's blood, a slain animal's blood. That's not what Christ did.

1. *He did not offer Himself repeatedly.* He did not offer Himself "again and again," says Hebrews.

And...

2. *He did not plead the merit of another's blood.* He did enter the Most Holy Place "with blood that is not his own." And the first part of verse 26 tells us why He didn't do these two things, "Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world." If Christ merely did what previous high priests had done, that is, offer the blood of animals, He would have by necessity have had to repeat that offering again and again, as the other priests did.

But that's what Christ did *not* do. Now stated positively...

**B. Think about what Christ did (26).** Notice the second part of verse 26, "But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself." That may be one of the most significant sentences in the book of Hebrews, and it's worthy of our careful attention. We're given five important details regarding Christ's work...

1. *His work is historical fact.* "But now He has appeared." But *now*. Our calendar points to the historicity of Christ and His work. We are living "in the year of our Lord" 2008. We say that because just over two millennia ago, the Son of God appeared in human form and began His thirty-three year earthly ministry.

2. *His work is non-repeatable.* "But now He has appeared *once for all*." He did what He did *once*. God is satisfied with His Son's work. Are you? The sufficiency of Christ's work is indicated by the fact that it is non-repeatable.

3. *His work is the climax of history.* "But now He has appeared once for all *at the end of the ages*." Now that Messiah Jesus has come, the age of the Messiah (the Messianic Age) has come. It's this age to which all previous ages have pointed. He's coming, said Moses. He's coming, said David. He's coming, said Isaiah. And indeed, He has come, and His work is the climax of human history.

Galatians 4:4—"But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law."

1 Peter 1:20—"He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake."

4. *His work took care of our sin problem.* "But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages *to do away with sin*." That's why He came, beloved, not simply to show us the way to heaven, for sinners need more than a guide, but to remove the barrier that blocked the way to heaven. He came to address our biggest problem, our *sin* problem, but not merely to expose it, but to *do away with it*. And how did He do that?

5. *His work involved the sacrifice of Himself.* "But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages *to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself*." That's how Christ did away with our sin problem, by sacrificing Himself. Sin must be punished, and it was. In Isaiah 53:6, the prophet Isaiah had announced that God would lay our sins on the coming Christ. Peter says that Christ bore our sins in His body on the tree (1 Pet. 2:24). Hebrews says that Christ did away with sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

If you are not a sinner, then this won't matter to you. But for every sinner in this room, there's no greater news I could share with you. Your sins can be taken away!<sup>[4]</sup> Not swept under the rug, not ignored, not cancelled by our good deeds, but removed and taken away!

Sadly, many people today shortchange themselves. They choose to relabel sin and even use medical terminology to justify its presence. Rather than admitting they're guilty of the sin of drunkenness, they call it the disease of alcoholism. Instead of adultery, it's called a sexual disorder. Instead of homosexuality, it's an alternate lifestyle. Instead of admitting the sin of an unforgiving heart, they cling to being a victim. Instead of calling it sinful anger, it's a genetic predisposition. Instead of worry, it's a panic attack.

Dear friends, when we refuse to call sin "sin," we are robbing ourselves (and the people we think we're

helping) of true and lasting hope. It's not cruel to call sin "sin," for we have a remedy for sin. Sin can be taken away, and that's because Christ came to do away with sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

John Calvin put it this way, "Although we must daily seek for pardon just as we daily provoke the wrath of God yet because we are reconciled to God only by the pledge of the one death of Christ it is true to say that by it sin has been destroyed."<sup>[5]</sup>

Let that sink in. By the one death of Christ, sin has been destroyed. Raymond Brown offers this helpful explanation, "By Christ's death it is not only that the devil is deposed and the power of death overcome, but also that sin is vanquished. Jesus came to rob sin of its tyranny and its suffocating stranglehold on man."<sup>[6]</sup>

Are you experiencing the *suffocating stranglehold of sin*? Then admit your problem. Admit your *sin*. Admit that your problem isn't simply what people have done to you, but rather your sinful response to them. It's not your genetic disposition, but how you've used that to justify your self-focused approach to life. But admitting sin isn't enough. To be set free from the suffocating stranglehold of sin, you must put your trust in the One who came to do away with sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Believe in Christ and God will cancel the penalty of your sin right now, He will give you the power to overcome sin this week, and one day He will take you from this world and the very presence of sin forever.

Suppose doctors developed a pill that was proven to cure cancer. One pill, and the dreaded disease is gone. If that happened, can you imagine the following: Suppose someone developed cancer, went to their doctor, and heard him explain about this once-for-all proven, remedy for cancer. "Take this pill, and you will be well," he instructed. To which the patient said, "No thanks. I don't think that pill is enough. I don't trust your judgment. I want the full-blown radiation and chemo treatments."

Absurd? Certainly. But that's what so many people do with God. He provided a once-for-all remedy for the cancer of sin. Yet instead of trusting in Jesus Christ and His finished work, people look for something else.

Don't minimize the intent of Christ's bloody sacrifice, my friend. "He has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself."

### III. Ponder the implications of Christ's bloody sacrifice (27-28).

The writer gives us the bottom line...

**A. Here's what is true of us (27).** "Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment." Whereas in verses 24-26, the writer looked back, here in verse 27 he looks ahead. The Bible is black and white when it spells out two events that we will face.

1. *We will die once.* As you well know, the statistics are quite high. One out of every one person born on this planet will die (if the Lord tarries). It is appointed unto men once to die. As the unbending consequence of sin, all of us will die. It's inevitable. So is another event.

2. *We will face judgment.* Please realize that there is more to life than meets the eye. Judgment follows death. 2 Corinthians 5:10 declares, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad." (see also Rev 20:11-15)

That's what's in store for you, my friend. You will die, and you will stand before the Judge. So will I. We can ignore the inevitable—and many do—but we can't change it. That simply is what is true of us.

**B. Here's what is true of Christ (28).** Observe that verse 27 begins with "just as" and ends with a comma. There's a connection between what is true of us (27) and what is true of Christ (28). Listen to it, "Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take

away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him." Here we learn what is true of Christ, two insights.

1. *The first time He came to bear sin.* The first time, at His first coming to earth, Jesus came to be sacrificed. He was sacrificed to take away the sins of many people.

How shall we understand the word "many" here? John Calvin offers this explanation, "He says many meaning all, as in Rom. 5:15. It is of course certain that not all enjoy the fruits of Christ's death, but this happens because their unbelief hinders them. That question is not dealt with here because the apostle is not discussing how few or how many benefit from the death of Christ, but means simply that He died for others, not for Himself. He therefore contrasts the many to the one."<sup>[7]</sup>

By the way, how many times (acc. to verse 28) was Jesus sacrificed to take away sins? The text says *once*. He made *one* payment for sins, *one* sacrifice.

Not everyone agrees with that, however. Compare what God's Word says with the following statements taken from *The Question and Answer Catholic Catechism*:

"Question 1264: How is the Sacrifice of the Cross continued on earth? Answer: The Sacrifice of the Cross is continued on earth through the Sacrifice of the Mass."

"Question 1265: What is the Sacrifice of the Mass? Answer: The Sacrifice of the Mass is the true and properly called Sacrifice of the New Law. It is the Sacrifice in which Christ is offered under the species of bread and wine in an unbloody manner. The Sacrifice of the altar, then, is no mere empty commemoration of the Passion and Death of Jesus Christ, but a true and proper act of sacrifice."<sup>[8]</sup>

The question is, why is such a repeated sacrifice even needed? Hebrews 9:28 says it isn't. "Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many." (see also 10:11-12) Christ made one sacrifice, and that happened 2,000 years ago on the cross. The first time He came to this world He came to bear sin. Here's a second insight about Christ.

2. *The second time He will come to bring salvation.* Verse 28 finishes this way, "And he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him."

Don't miss this, beloved. When Jesus returns—and He will—He will not suffer. He won't bear sin. That's over and done with. What will be the purpose of His second coming? Our text says He is coming to bring salvation.

Yes, in one sense, we are already saved; but in another, our salvation is yet to be. Christ has saved us from the penalty of sin (Eph. 2:8), but in that day He will save us from the presence of sin. Leon Morris explains, "There is a sense in which salvation has been brought about by Christ's death. But there is another sense in which it will be brought to its consummation when he returns."<sup>[9]</sup>

F. F. Bruce suggests the writer has the work of the Jewish high priest in mind. "The Israelites who watched their high priest enter the sanctuary for them waited expectantly for his reappearance; that was a welcome sign that he and the sacrifice which he had presented had been accepted by God...So our author thinks of Jesus as going into the heavenly holy of holies, to reappear one day in order to confirm finally to His people the salvation which his perfect offering has procured for them."<sup>[10]</sup>

Did you notice the word "appear"? It *appears* three times in our passage, and as Wiersbe points out it sums up three aspects of our Lord's work. "He *has appeared* to put away sin by dying on the cross (Heb. 9:26). He *is appearing* now in heaven for us (Heb. 9:24). One day, He *shall appear* to take Christians home (Heb. 9:28). These 'three tenses of salvation' are all based on His finished work."<sup>[11]</sup>

As we began today I shared how important it is that we travel often to the top of Mount Calvary. Charles Wesley certainly did, and he wrote about what he saw. I hope you've taken my exhortation in recent weeks to memorize and meditate on cross-centered hymns in your daily quiet time. Here's one of

the best, penned by Wesley...

*And can it be that I should gain  
An interest in the Savior's blood?  
Died He for me, who caused His pain—  
For me, who Him to death pursued?  
Amazing love! How can it be,  
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?*

*'Tis mystery all: th'Immortal dies:  
Who can explore His strange design?  
In vain the firstborn seraph tries  
To sound the depths of love divine.  
'Tis mercy all! Let earth adore,  
Let angel minds inquire no more.*

*He left His Father's throne above  
So free, so infinite His grace—  
Emptied Himself of all but love,  
And bled for Adam's helpless race:  
'Tis mercy all, immense and free,  
For O my God, it found out me!*

*Long my imprisoned spirit lay,  
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;  
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray—  
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;  
My chains fell off, my heart was free,  
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.*

*Still the small inward voice I hear,  
That whispers all my sins forgiven;  
Still the atoning blood is near,  
That quenched the wrath of hostile Heaven.  
I feel the life His wounds impart;  
I feel the Savior in my heart.*

*No condemnation now I dread;  
Jesus, and all in Him, is mine;  
Alive in Him, my living Head,  
And clothed in righteousness divine,  
Bold I approach th'eternal throne,  
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.*

Take Inventory: Ask yourself two critical questions...

1. *Am I trusting in Christ alone?* Philip Hughes offers this sobering reminder, "To refuse the cross as

the instrument of salvation is to choose it as the instrument of judgment.” \_\_\_ As Jesus said in John 12:48, “There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day.”

It’s a critical question, dear ones. Am I trusting—not did I trust once a long time ago—but am I right now trusting in Christ? And am I trusting in Christ *alone*? Christ alone can save a sinner, and Christ alone can keep a saved sinner on track. Make sure you are trusting in Him and in Him alone.

Did you notice, according to the end of verse 28, who will receive His salvation? He is going to bring salvation *to those who are waiting for Him*. What are you looking forward to about heaven? Seeing loved ones? The fact there will be no more pain?

Those are wonderful by-products, but here’s what should be at the top of the list. We’re waiting *for Him*. It’s all about Him.

There is an interesting story about a family that lived years ago.<sup>[13]</sup> A young man and woman married and started a business together which flourished. Soon they bought a new house, and a new car. Their happiness increased when a child was born, a little boy, and both mom and dad gave praises to God for His blessings.

Then one day mother got the devastating news that her husband was killed in a terrible traffic accident. She clung to her young son, determined to raise the boy and continue the business by faith in Christ, just as she and her husband had done while he was alive.

The boy grew and became a handsome young man who made his mother very proud. Soon after graduation he was called into the military because of war. Not long after he left home, his mother received the heart-breaking news that her only son was killed in battle.

Shortly after, the woman became ill and, they say, died of a broken heart. The day finally came when people gathered for an auction of her estate, which was worth a sizable fortune. The first item up for bid was a baby picture of the woman's son. No one would bid on the picture. The auctioneer announced that until the first item was sold the auction could not continue. A man bid \$1. Trying as hard as he could, the auctioneer could not get another bid so he sold the picture for \$1.

Then the auctioneer said the auction was over. The crowd began to grumble and complain. The auctioneer then said, “Quiet down so I can read the will.”

The woman had clearly and simply stated in the will that the person who would buy the picture of her son would inherit the business and whole estate because: “He who has the Son has all.”

I have no way of knowing whether that story was true, but I know this on the authority of the Word of God. He who has the Son, the Son who became a bloody sacrifice for us, does have all. So ask yourself this question as we close...

2. *Am I longing to see Christ most of all?* I know this. The more I journey to Mount Calvary, the more I know that I want to see Him and see Him most of all.

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\*\*Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

[1] Warren Wiersbe, p. 312.

[2] Raymond Brown offers this perspective, “The one who now appears in the eternal sanctuary *on our behalf* is the mediator who has acted for us in the past, the surety for us who guarantees our acceptance in the present, and the pioneer who has gone before us into the future.” p. 170.

[3] Martin Luther, p. 383.

[4] 1 John 3:5 “But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin.”

[5] John Calvin, p. 130.

[6] Raymond Brown, p. 172.

[7] John Calvin, p. 131.

[\[8\]](#) taken from *Salvation: The Bible and Roman Catholicism*, by William Webster, pp. 21-22.

[\[9\]](#) Leon Morris, p. 93.

[\[10\]](#) Quote taken from Raymond Brown, p. 173.

[\[11\]](#) Warren Wiersbe, p. 312.

[\[12\]](#) Philip Hughes, p. 388.

[\[13\]](#) taken from *Grace Chapel Witness*, Vol. 2/1, Dry Run Rd., W. Portsmouth, OH.