

Hebrews 9:24-28 “The Beauty of a Bloody Sacrifice”<sup>\*\*1</sup>

Main Idea: According to Hebrews 9:24-28 there are three things that make Christ’s bloody sacrifice beautiful to us.

- I. Christ’s bloody sacrifice is beautiful because of its initiative (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. Christ’s bloody sacrifice is beautiful because of its intent (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. Christ’s bloody sacrifice is beautiful because of its implications (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: Two questions to determine if the cross is beautiful to you...

1. What am I trusting in?
2. What am I longing to see most of all?

### Blood.

How does that word affect you? When I was a freshman in college, I was a pre-med major, but the Lord used *blood* to redirect my path, specifically, the realization that I didn’t like the sight of blood. Pretty tough to be a doctor and be squeamish in the presence of blood.

The Lord’s ways are sort of amusing at times. He used *blood* to change my path, and called me to a new path where it’s my joy to think and talk about blood all the time.

I’ve entitled this morning’s message, “*The Beauty of a Bloody Sacrifice.*” To the world, a bloody sacrifice is an ugly, despised thing. To those of us who know Christ, however, it is beautiful. In fact, throughout eternity we will marvel at the scarred hands of the One who became a bloody sacrifice for us.

And that’s what I want us to think about today on Palm Sunday. To help us prepare for the Passion week in front of us, we’re going to ponder the beauty of Christ’s bloody sacrifice. We’ll going to learn what makes blood so beautiful this morning, from Hebrews 9:24-28. Then this evening, we’ll look again at the blood, this time in Hebrews 9:11-15, and then we’ll respond to its beauty through singing and worshipping at the Lord’s Table.

Ten years ago Mel Gibson produced a movie called *The Passion of the Christ*. I remember being struck by the fact that it was R-rated. If you saw the movie, you know why. Even if you didn’t, you know why if you’ve read the biblical account. Jesus didn’t die a G-rated death.

So the question is, what makes this bloody death so beautiful to us? We find the answer in Hebrews 9:24-28. It’s beautiful for three reasons, one because of its initiative (24), two because of its intent (25-26), and three because of its implications (27-28).

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<sup>\*\*</sup>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.

<sup>1</sup> This message has been adapted from an earlier message preached in the Hebrews series at WBC in 2008.

## I. Christ's bloody sacrifice is beautiful because of its initiative (24).

We don't know who wrote Hebrews. We do know from its content who first received it. Some Jewish Christians who were facing pressure to renege on following Jesus and go back to the safety of their previous religion in Judaism.

How do you encourage people who are wavering? You show them that what they *have* is better than what they're *considering*. The writer shows first that the person of Christ is superior to anything they're considering—that's chapters 1-7; superior to angels, to Moses, to the Jewish priests. The person of Christ is better.

Second, he shows that work of Christ is superior to anything they're considering—that's chapters 8-10. Christ's covenant is better. Christ's sanctuary is better. Christ's sacrifice is better.

With that in mind, notice 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."<sup>2</sup> 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>3</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

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<sup>2</sup> Warren Wiersbe, p. 312.

<sup>3</sup> 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.

advantage and not to our disadvantage.”<sup>4</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 struggling with your faith 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. Christ’s bloody sacrifice is beautiful because of its intent (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 not 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.”

So it’s not blood in general we love. It’s particular blood. It’s *Christ’s* blood.

This 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” 2014. 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.

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<sup>4</sup> Martin Luther, p. 383.

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. Of course, the question is, 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 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, yet 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>5</sup> Not swept under the rug, not ignored, not cancelled by our good deeds, but removed and taken away!

Sadly, many today forfeit what could be theirs. They choose to relabel sin and even use medical sounding terms to justify sin’s presence. Instead of adultery, they call it a sexual disorder. Instead of homosexuality, they say it’s an alternate lifestyle. Instead of admitting the sin of an unforgiving heart, they say they’re a victim. Instead of acknowledging their sinful anger, they blame it on a genetic predisposition. Instead of confessing the sin of worry, they label it a panic attack.

Dear friends, when we refuse to call something what God’s Word calls it, namely “sin,” we are actually robbing ourselves (or the people we think we’re helping) of true and lasting hope. It is not cruel to call sin “sin.” It’s actually the most loving thing we can do. Why? Because we have a remedy for sin! And we have a remedy because Christ came to do away with sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

Let this sink in. When Jesus died, He *did away with sin.* 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, or even primarily what others have done to you. Your problem is your sinful response to them. It’s not your genetic

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<sup>5</sup> 1 John 3:5 “But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin.”

<sup>6</sup> Raymond Brown, p. 172.

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 became a bloody sacrifice. Believe in Christ and God will cancel the penalty of your sin right now, will give you the power to overcome sin this week, and one day 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 contracted 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 isn't that what so many people do with God? He provided a once-for-all remedy for the cancer of sin. Yet instead of accepting this provision, 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."

Now having seen the initiative and the intent, let's move to implications.

### III. Christ's bloody sacrifice is beautiful because of its implications (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 persons 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.

And 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>

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<sup>7</sup> John Calvin, p. 131.

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>

In just a few days we'll come to a day called Good Friday. We'll pause and call to remembrance the most terrible, wonderful event the world has ever known. One of the ways we can grow in our appreciation for the beauty of Christ's bloody sacrifice is by meditating on the meditations of others.

Listen to Charles Wesley's word picture...

*And can it be that I should gain  
An interest in the Savior's blood?*

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<sup>8</sup> taken from *Salvation: The Bible and Roman Catholicism*, by William Webster, pp. 21-22.

<sup>9</sup> Leon Morris, p. 93.

<sup>10</sup> Quote taken from Raymond Brown, p. 173.

<sup>11</sup> Warren Wiersbe, p. 312.

*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.*

Charles Wesley saw the beauty of Christ's bloody sacrifice. Again, I ask, do you?

Take Inventory: Two questions to determine if the cross is beautiful to you...

1. *What am I trusting in?* We're all trusting in something. Some are banking their eternity on the belief there is no eternity. Maybe that's you. For others, it's the assumption that if they live a good enough life, they're entitled to heaven in the life to come. Others are trusting in religious systems. I'm asking, what are *you* trusting in?

Are you trusting in Christ and in the work of redemption He accomplished on the cross? If not, I want you to think about something that Philip Hughes said in his commentary, "To refuse the cross as the instrument of salvation is to choose it as the instrument of judgment."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Philip Hughes, p. 388.

Jesus Himself 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 friends. What am I trusting in? Not what did I trust once a long time ago, but what am I right now trusting in? Christ alone can save a sinner, and Christ alone can keep a saved sinner on track. Am I trusting in Him?

By the way, 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? No more pain?

Those are wonderful blessings, for sure, 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 sinners, does have all.

So ask yourself this second question as we close...

2. *What am I longing to see most of all?* Is it the One who became a beautiful, bloody sacrifice on a Roman cross two thousand years ago? I hope it is. I hope you love Christ. Worship Him this week, and tell others about Him, and what He did on that beautiful, bloody cross.

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<sup>13</sup> taken from *Grace Chapel Witness*, Vol. 2/1, Dry Run Rd., W. Portsmouth, OH.