

January 19/20, 2019

## Christ Died for Our Sins

*Christ is Enough Series*

**Hebrews 9:15-28**

Pastor Bryan Clark

The greatest risk we face as people made in the image of God is the temptation to be our own god. There isn't a single person in the room this morning that doesn't struggle with that. It manifests itself in hundreds of ways. But one way that it manifests itself all around the world, and has done so for thousands of years, is what I would refer to as religion. Religion, at its core, is the belief that somehow, some way, I can make myself right or acceptable to God. Somehow through good works, somehow through religious' ritual, somehow, some way—here's the key word— **I** can make myself right before a holy God.

But here's the question we want to wrestle with this morning. Every single person in the room: "You will one day die, and you will stand before the holy God of the universe. Do you really believe in that moment, some religious activity will be enough?" Well, that's what we want to talk about. If you have a Bible, turn with us to Hebrews, Chapter 9. If you're new with us, we've been working our way through the book of Hebrews. We started in September, got halfway through chapter nine, took a break for the holidays and a couple of other things, and now we're trying to get our heads back in it, pick up the momentum this morning, and this will get us up to Easter when we finish the book.

In chapter eight the writer of Hebrews told us that the old covenant is obsolete. The old covenant—meaning the tabernacle, the temple, the sacrificial system, the priesthood, the dietary laws, the Sabbath day, the old covenant Law—all of that was a shadow, an image, a picture of the fulfillment of the promise to come. Jesus is the fulfillment of the promise. Jesus didn't come to serve as the high priest in the temple. He didn't come to somehow merge into the old covenant system. He didn't come to serve in the tabernacle. What we learned is He *is* the tabernacle; He *is* the Bread of Life; He *is* the Light of the World. He *is* the mercy seat. Therefore, the old covenant has served its purpose and it is obsolete. The writer has told us it has been replaced by a new covenant that is a better covenant, built on better promises, with a better hope. With all of that in mind, we pick it up then in chapter 9, verse 15:

**For this reason** (because all this is true) **He is the mediator of a new covenant,**

(\*NASB, Hebrews 9:15a)

That word **mediator** gets a little confusing because of how we tend to define it in English. It does not carry the idea that Jesus is somehow negotiating terms between a holy God and sinful people. It rather carries the idea of this layer between a holy God and sinful people. There was this layer of mediation that in the old covenant, it was the tabernacle. It became the temple. It's the priesthood; it's the sacrificial system. There was this clear understanding that the presence of God dwelt in the Holy of Holies, and that could only be accessed by the high priest, and only once a year. So the people were very clear that there was this layer, this mediation layer between them and a holy God. But when Jesus died on the cross, the veil in the temple was torn in two, and the writer of Hebrews has taught us the better covenant comes with better promises: That we would actually be now transformed from the inside out, that we would no longer have this barrier between us and a holy

God, but would experience a deep intimacy, as this God would actually dwell within us now—all made possible on the basis of the forgiveness of our sins. **For this reason, He is the mediator.** Now the only mediator between us and God is Christ Himself!

**...so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions** (that's a technical term, the violations of the law) **that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called** (we might use the word *saved in the old covenant*) **may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.** (Vs.15b)

Now what he's saying there is that because of Jesus, this long-awaited redemption—the purchasing out of the slavery of sin—has taken place, in order that those in the old covenant might experience their eternal inheritance. In other words, what he's saying is that people in the old covenant were called, saved on the basis of a promise that one day a death—the death—would fulfill the promise that they might experience God's salvation. So it would be correct to say that until Jesus died that death, the people in the old covenant did not receive their eternal inheritance. They were waiting for the fulfillment of the promise. Verse 16:

**For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of the one who made it.** (*Covenant* used here is like what we would say a last will and testament.) **For a covenant is valid** (A will is valid.) **only when men are dead, for it is never in force** (It's a legal term.) **while the one who made it lives.** (Vs. 16-17)

So, he's using the illustration of a *will*. When somebody creates a will, that will may be full of promises, but those promises do not have legal force. They are not fulfilled or acted upon until that person dies, and the promises in the will then are put forth, or they're fulfilled. Verse 18:

**Therefore even the first covenant was not inaugurated without blood.** (*blood* meaning death). **For when every commandment had been spoken by Moses to all the people according to the Law, he took the blood of the calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, "THIS IS THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT WHICH GOD COMMANDED YOU." And in the same way he sprinkled both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry with the blood. And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.** (Vs. 18-22)

Now without getting lost and confused in all the detail of that, if you want to read more about that, it's in Exodus 24 and that general area. But the idea—the point the writer is making—is right from the beginning, there was a clear message that salvation would not be possible simply on the basis of religious activity—by somehow trying to do good works, by doing the rituals, by carrying out the commandments. But right from the beginning, everything was sprinkled with blood, which was a reminder that the only way this would ultimately be fulfilled, would be the promised death of the Messiah.

Now all of this blood stuff seems rather odd to us. But understand, in the ancient world it wasn't so odd. Blood covenants were common, and the blood was a reference to death. What the writer is saying is right from the beginning there was a message that salvation is not on the basis of your ability to keep the covenant—your religious activity...your rituals....doing all these things. But all of it was splattered with blood, as a reminder that these are pictures and shadows that ultimately

there will have to be a death—the death that will bring our salvation for, verse 22: **Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.**

Here's one way to think about it. The people in the old covenant were essentially saved on credit. They were saved believing the promise that one day God would fulfill His promise. So it starts in Genesis chapter three. God was clear: The consequence for sin would be death—eternal, spiritual death. But even before you get out of Genesis chapter three, there is at least the hint that there will be blood required to cover the shame of sin.

The story advances to Abraham, and in the covenant—the cutting of the covenant with Abraham—there is a clear message that God sends to Abraham. “Abraham, if you or I fail to keep the covenant, it will be My blood that will be shed to make it right.” So Abraham understood in some way God was saying He would take on human flesh and His blood would be shed for their sins.

You get then into Moses and the Law, and it's developed with the tabernacle and the sacrificial system and all that went with that. But it was all sprinkled with blood. There was this reminder that there will have to be a death—the death—somehow God in the flesh will die in order to die our death and offer salvation. So, if that's true, it's helpful to remember that those in the old covenant—Abraham, Moses, David—did not really experience the salvation that God promised until Jesus died. That's what he just said. The will is full of promises, but those promises aren't really in effect until the person dies.

Abraham believed. What did he believe? He believed the promise. But if God didn't keep His promise, then what did Abraham believe? I guess he believed a lie, and that has no saving power. The point the writer is making is the old covenant—the old covenant system and ritual and all that went with that—have no power to save, other than it was a picture, an image, a shadow of what was to come that would ultimately bring salvation. Verse 23:

**Therefore it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.**

We learned this earlier in Hebrews, that the tabernacle and the pieces of furniture—all these parts of the old covenant—they were copies; they were pictures; they were shadows. So, did the full presence of God dwell in the tabernacle and the Holy of Holies? Of course not! It was a shadow; it was a picture; it was a copy. But ultimately the presence of God is in the realm of God, where it's no longer a copy, but the real. He says this was a necessary part *to cleanse the copy* as a shadow or an image, **but the heavenly things** (the real things) **themselves, were better sacrifices than these.** In other words, in the true presence of God, the high priest cannot show up with religious stuff and the blood of bulls and goats and think that's going to be adequate. In the actual presence of God, to actually make payment for sin, what would be required would be more than that...better than that!

Think of it like this: Let's imagine that we're playing a game of Monopoly, and you are dominating. You have properties; you have cash; you are living large, but for some reason you lose sight of the fact this is just a game. It's like a shadow, a picture of the real world, but it's *not* the real world. So you take your stack of Monopoly money to the bank and you slam it down on the counter, and you want some property. That's essentially what the writer is saying. This was necessary; it was a picture or a shadow. It was a copy. But to be actually in the presence of God,

and make payment for sin, it would take something more than merely the blood of bulls and goats. It would take the long-awaited death of the Messiah. Verse 24:

**For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands,**

So Jesus did not come to be assimilated into the tabernacle or the temple. He came to enter into the actual presence of God Himself.

**For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;** (Vs. 24b)

Jesus would not simply go into the tabernacle and go through the routine. He *is* the tabernacle, and He would actually enter the presence, the realm of God, and make payment on our behalf—for us! Verse 25:

**Nor was it that He would offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood that is not his own. Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world...** (Vs. 25-26a)

So the writer is saying the inadequacy of what the high priest offered is evident by the fact he had to do it year after year after year. But Jesus wasn't going to offer Himself year after year after year. I think the writer even gets a little sarcastic here—*then He would have to die every year since the foundation of the world*. We've learned in Hebrews that Jesus would die once for all, and then Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father, indicative of the fact that payment has been made—mission accomplished! That's been a main theme in the book of Hebrews. Verse 26, half way through:

**...but now once at the consummation of the ages...**

That's kind of an odd phrase, but basically the words carry the idea of an age that gives way to a new age that somehow fulfills one or both. It's just simply saying it was time for the old covenant to be fulfilled, to usher in a new age, a new covenant. As we've learned, new covenant—better covenant...better promises...better hope.

**...but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested (revealed) to (what?) put away sin (That's a legal term: to render sin void. How?) by the sacrifice of Himself.** (Vs. 26b)

He does not come before God offering blood that is not His own. He comes offering Himself as the sacrifice. We learned earlier in Hebrews that He died our death, and made payment for our sin through His blood. Verse 27:

**And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment,**

This is one of those verses in the Bible that utterly terrifies people. As a matter of fact, I would suggest to you that this concept is what drives a lot of atheism. It drives a lot of agnosticism. It drives this idea that all religions—all roads lead to God. It drives this idea that there's no absolute truth and there's no absolute morality. All of that is because people are terrified at the thought that

one day when I die, I'm going to stand before God in judgment. So in order to emotionally deal with it, they convince themselves it's not going to be like that...it's not going to be like that! Now I understand people are free to believe whatever they want to believe if that makes them feel better, but that does not change reality. My job is to tell you what the Bible says, and the Bible is clear. **It is appointed for men (every person) to die, once and after that comes judgment.**

Every single person in the room this morning will die, and you will stand face to face with a holy God and give an account. In that moment, do you really think it will be adequate to say, "I was very religious; I did some rituals; I did some activities; I did some good works?" Do you really think that's going to cut it in that moment? What the writer of Hebrews is saying is that has never been the basis of salvation. From Genesis three on, there has always been a message that someone will have to die. The ultimate death in payment for sin without the shedding of blood is no remission of sin...there is no forgiveness of sin! The consequence of sin is death. Someone had to die our death for God to grant us forgiveness. Verse 28:

**So Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without *reference to sin*, to those who eagerly await Him.**

So this is what Jesus did: He died for our sins. Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will return. But His second coming will not be another payment for sin, but rather to rescue His children and deliver them to the salvation of the new heaven and the new earth—everything that our souls long for today!

I realize there are a lot of people that would consider what I just said as foolishness—like something out of the twilight zone. But think of it this way: Two thousand years ago there were a lot of people laughing and a lot of people mocking at the thought that God would take on human flesh to become the Savior of the world. But He did! So if He kept His promise two thousand years ago, what would be the reason why you would doubt that He would keep His promise to come back a second time in order to bring the fulfillment of our salvation?

We've reminded ourselves many times that there are three verb tenses in the New Testament related to salvation. Past tense—I *was saved* five years ago. Present tense—I *am being saved* from the corruption and slavery of sin. Future tense—I one day *will be saved* to the ultimate fulfillment of the promise in the new heaven and the new earth. I would suggest we have a habit of referring most often to the past tense: I *was saved* five years ago. But the New Testament, by a significant margin, refers more times to the future tense.

So what do you tell a group of believers who were headed into severe persecution? Do you tell them this is a life of health and wealth and prosperity? Do you seek to convince them that this is their best life now or do you tell them this is going to get really rough? But the hope of the gospel is Jesus, who is going to deliver His children to the fulfillment of the promise in the new heaven and the new earth, and it will be everything you've ever imagined it to be, and more! That's the hope of the gospel! But it cannot be experienced through religious activity, through rituals, through good works. That flows out of our desire to be God and save ourselves.

It is not unusual that people ask the question, "Why did Jesus have to die? Why couldn't God just forgive?" It's a good question. The answer would be because the concept of, "Just forgive," doesn't exist in reality. Those are just words. Many of you have heard this illustration, but it's

simple and it makes a point. Let's imagine I back into your brand-new vehicle and I put a big dent in it. Now we have a problem. There are two options. One option is: I'll pay to have it repaired. That's justice. But there is a second option. It is possible you could say, "You know, don't worry about it. I'll take care of it." But what you're saying in that moment is *you* will pay for it. Either you're going to pay to have the car repaired, or you can just leave it, but you lose the value of the car. Either way, what you're agreeing to is that you're going to pay for it. The one option that is not on the table is, "Let's pretend it didn't happen." It did happen, and somebody has to pay. Every single person in the room, we have all crashed into the holiness of God and now there's a big dent—and somebody has to pay. According to Genesis 3 and following, the consequence is eternal, spiritual death. But there is another option. God has offered to pay it for you. He died your death. He shed His blood to satisfy the wrath of God, and on that basis, to offer you forgiveness. Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sin.

The fallacy of religion would be that after I put the dent in your vehicle, I convince myself that over the next six months, if I'm a really good driver, the dent will go away. So for six months I am the most courteous driver on the road. I always drive the speed limit; I come to a complete stop at every stop sign. I let people cut in front of me. I am the most courteous driver in town. At the end of six months, I am surprised when I show up and find out the dent didn't go away. The fallacy of religion is thinking that if I do religious activity, if I do these rituals, if I'm a really good boy or girl, somehow that makes the dent go away. It doesn't! You can't un-sin yourself. Somebody has to pay—and it's either going to be you forever, or it's going to be Christ who offers to pay your debt.

You don't have to go out and get religious. It doesn't matter what you've done...doesn't matter who you are! It doesn't matter what's been done to you...doesn't matter! God offers you salvation freely as a gift if you're willing to admit you can't save yourself, and your only hope is to receive what Jesus did for you.

I am convinced at the end of the story more people will miss Jesus because of religion than any other reason. We love religion because it appeals to our desire to be God and do it ourselves. But at the end, the only hope you have is to believe by faith that Jesus did for you what you could never do for yourself.

Have you truly trusted Christ as your Savior?

*Our Father, we so thankful that when we were lost in our sin with no hope, that God became flesh to die our death, to shed His blood, so that You might offer us forgiveness, that You might offer us a hope beyond what we can even imagine this morning. God, my prayer would be that no one would leave this place today without receiving the gift that You freely offer. This I pray in the name of Jesus, Amen.*

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## **Christ Died For Our Sins**

*Christ is Enough*

Hebrews 9:15-28

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### **Opening Discussion**

1. What has been your experience with religion? What is religion trying to accomplish and why is it so popular in all cultures?
2. How did you first come to understand the message of God's grace and how did it differ from your experience with religion? Do old thoughts and habits from your religious days ever creep in to your new life in Christ?

### **Bible Study**

1. Review the highlights of Hebrews 9:1-14.
2. Read Hebrews 9:15-22. What have we learned about the new covenant so far in Hebrews? Why is it better? (See 8:7-13)
3. The writer is using the illustration of a will. While a will may be written and signed for years, when is it actually carried out? So, when did the believers from the Old Covenant actually receive their eternal inheritance? What's the writer's point here?
4. The writer talks about the significance of blood (death) all through the story in the Old Covenant. How does that correlate with the result of sin from Genesis 3? Why couldn't God just pretend sin never happened?
5. Read Hebrews 9:23-28. What did Jesus do and how did that differ from what was done in the Old Covenant? Compare with Romans 3:21-26 and Ephesians 2:1-10.
6. Hebrews 9:27 states we die once then stand judgment. What does religion have to offer God in that moment? According to this text, what brings salvation?
7. Christ died once for all (7:27; 9:12; 10:10; Romans 6:10). There is nothing more needed for salvation than the one death of Christ for sin. When is our salvation completed according to 9:28? What then is the hope of the Gospel?

