

Heb. 9:6-28 The Most Beautiful Offering: The Pre-eminence of Christ in his priestly office (part 2)

And as we've seen, the author is making the same argument in different ways, namely: Jesus is the fulfillment of ALL God's promises in the OT. The Old Covenant has come to an end. Through his priesthood, Jesus is the mediator of a New Covenant (v. 15). This is why we sit here today. This is why we remember the words of Jesus, "***This is my body, broken for you. And, this is the cup of the New Covenant in my blood.***" Chapter 9 is packed FULL of truths about the person and work of Christ as our high priest. Last week, we observed 2 truths: 1) The Excellency of his sacrifice, and 2) The Reach of his sacrifice (heaven). Today, we will consider two more truths from this passage: 3) The Sufficiency of his sacrifice; and 4) The Effect of his sacrifice. When I consider such truths, I think of Paul's words: "**Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!**" (Rom. 11:33). We need these truths!

1. The Sufficiency of his sacrifice. I will spend very little time here, as we have continually covered this truth so far through Hebrews (we will see it again in cp. 10). In this text the author emphasizes the one-time offering of Jesus. He compares the ongoing activity of the priests under Mosaic Law vs. the finished work of Christ in his one-time sacrifice. Look at vv. 11-12: "**But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the holy places . . .**" Look at v. 25: "**Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year . . .**" And then in vv. 26-28: "**But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many . . .**" Look also over at 10:10: "**And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.**" And 10:14: "**For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified . . .**" Finally, 1 Pet. 3:18 says: "**For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God . . .**"

Oh what beautiful words of our Lord on the cross when he said, "**It is finished!**" (John 19:30). In his death, this one-time sacrifice, Christ has fulfilled and replaced ALL those sacrifices under the Old Covenant. And what follows is the efficiency of this most beautiful offering!

2. The Effect of his sacrifice. Under this point I have two truths about the EFFECT of this one-time sacrifice of Jesus: 1) Jesus' sacrifice purifies a guilty conscience; and 2) Jesus' sacrifice both takes away sins and cleanses.

i. Jesus' sacrifice purifies a guilty conscience.

Brothers and sisters, Jesus offered Himself as a sacrifice. Let's think for a moment about sacrifices in the world. The idea of sacrifice goes back to the beginning of history; every culture has their sacrifices. Human beings have ALWAYS offered up sacrifices to God, to their deity, to their heroes, to demons, etc. Some are bloody, some are not. Animals are sacrificed. Meals are sacrificed. ETC. For thousands of years this has been the case in every culture. Why? Why do people feel the need to offer sacrifices? The answer is simple: A Guilty Conscience. This is the

effect of the fall of Adam (and us) into sin. Instead of law keepers, we are law breakers. This is our nature (Eph. 2:1-10). We have “fallen” from the glory of God. Each of us has gone “astray” (Rom. 3) and looks to our interests above the interests of others, and especially above the interests of God.

When we consider this fact, what happens with our conscience? What happens if you steal something? What happens if you commit adultery? What happens if you deceive someone? What happens if you murder? You might say, “*I’ve done none of those.*” If this is the case, which I doubt, then look to your heart. Jesus says, “***If you think of evil of your neighbor you’ve committed murder in the heart.***” And, “***If you’ve looked at a woman with lust, men, you’ve committed adultery in the heart.***” And because of these things, ALL of us have a guilty conscience. I think of Eustace in the *Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. He was turned into a dragon. And he kept trying to scratch off his skin, as if to change himself back to a boy. He was a particularly naughty boy. And this pictured his own trying to get rid of his guilty conscience.

But when Christ takes away our guilt, what happens to our conscience as we consider a holy God. What happens to our conscience when we think about all the OT laws we have broken. And then we move to the NT and consider all the ways Jesus takes those laws and applies them to the heart. By faith in Jesus’ ONE TIME sacrifice, as regards the great enmity, the infinite gulf, the insurmountable chasm, that once separated you from God, is gone! “By his stripes you are healed.” “**For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death**” (Rom. 8:2). (I remember my own conversion.)

Look back to 9:9: When we compare the sacrifice of Jesus with those under the Old Covenant: “**According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation.**” Now look at v. 14: “**How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.**” Do you see the offering? The sinless Son of God, the perfect sacrifice, the “Lamb of God from heaven!” Nothing else will do! In the most mysterious exchange, Christ (on the cross) takes our sins, our guilt, upon himself and he gives us himself and all that He is. He gives us his righteousness. And what follows? Your conscience is free . . . free from all guilt!

This is why even the good works of sinners are not acceptable. Outside of Christ, all our works are dead. A guilty conscience can only produce dead works. They are unacceptable to God. And YES, we still sin as Christians. But instead, it is the EXACT OPPOSITE. As a Christian consider what Christ’s sacrifice accomplishes for you. Your sins are removed. Your conscience is cleansed. You are justified. You are now a son or daughter in the heavenly family. You are now confident as you approach God. You are reconciled to God. You’ve been given the gift of the Holy Spirit. You are sanctified. You are cleansed. You have newness of life in Jesus’ resurrection. You’ve been redeemed from the power of Satan. You have victory over the world. You no longer have fear of death, but have escaped judgment. And finally, on resurrection day you will rise with Christ, where your eternal inheritance will be realized fully in the new heaven and the new earth. And all of this because of the most beautiful ONE TIME sacrifice of our great High Priest, Jesus! Let’s move on to another effect (benefit) of Christ’s one-time sacrifice.

ii. Jesus' sacrifice takes away our sins and makes us clean. Let's begin with the taking away of our sins. As Ps. 103:12 says: "**As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.**" Theology exam: What is the theological term when God takes away our sins? Expiation. Simply put, our sin problem has been taken away on the cross. God has "***laid on him the iniquity of us all***" (Is. 53:6). (There is also the reality of "propitiation" in this sacrifice as God's on wrath is averted. See. V. 14: He "**offered himself without blemish to God**"). But, my point is that our sins are expiated, or taken away in the sacrifice of Christ. And because of this fact, we are "justified" in God's sight. But, there is more in this passage. There is also a cleansing that must take place in order for us to be acceptable to God. We must be set apart as holy. We must also be made CLEAN. In the context of urging us to holiness, Peter writes: "**you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ**" (1 Pet. 2:5). This is the great doctrine of sanctification.

We see this pictured in the kinds of sacrifices mentioned. In v. 12, he mentions the blood of bulls and goats. Let me ask, "*What kinds of sacrifices were these animals.*" They were "sin" offerings and "guilt" offerings. These kinds of sacrifices particularly dealt with sin and consequent guilt between a holy God and sinful men. And there was great emphasis on the blood and the death of those animals to appease God. However, in v. 13 we see a different kind of sacrifice. **and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer . . .**" (This is why v. 22 says, "**Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood . . .**")

As regards this sacrifice, it is not called an "offering" but instead a "sprinkling." This offering pictured, not so much guilt and sin, but CLEANSING and PURIFICATION. According to Num. 19, a red heifer would be sacrificed. It's blood would be SPRINKLED toward the tabernacle. Then, they would burn the entire sacrifice and take its ashes (along with cedarwood, hyssop and scarlet yarn) and keep it in a place alongside water. And there, the people could come and cleanse themselves from different impurities (mostly the touching or handling of dead bodies – which was very common). Though its blood was shed, this sacrifice was for the purpose of cleansing or purification

With this in mind, the author of Hebrews is showing that the one-time sacrifice of Christ functions in both ways, taking away sins AND making clean. Brothers and sisters, as the mediator of a New Covenant, Jesus' death on the cross (and his subsequent resurrection) does in ONE SINGLE SACRIFICE, what all the sin and guilt offerings AS WELL AS all the offerings of purification could not do. As we've seen, they were never finished. They continued around the clock year after year. They were of this world, carried out in an earthly tabernacle. And, in and of themselves, they could NEVER take away sins. Nor, could they purify or make the people clean. And now, because of his death, resurrection, and ascension to the Father, He now pours out the Holy Spirit upon us. This is why Paul can say: "**If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation**" (2 Cor. 5:17)

Do you remember Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus? He comes to Jesus by night and asks, "**What must I do to be saved?**" Well, in this conversation Jesus deals primarily with cleansing. He points him to the OT and says, the Scriptures teach that one must be cleansed. He says:

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). Water pictures cleansing. (ie. Water mixed with the red heifer). I think of Titus 3:4-7: “**But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.**”

So, for us today, what does this mean? It means that In Christ, you are washed clean! Your sins are always covered! In this way, we are always clean. Under the Old Covenant, there was a really good bath (once a year), but as they looked at the law of Moses, they continually racked up sins . . . until the Day of Atonement the following year. Can you imagine taking a bath only once a year, and it never washes completely. But, in Christ, in the New Covenant, ALL our sins are washed, past, present, and future. And even our hearts, and our conscience, is wiped clean, never to be corrupted and dirtied again. This is what Law of Moses with all its sacrifices and washings could not do. It could never get to the heart. This is the NEW COVENANT! There is finally effective application. There is EXPIATION. There is CLEANSING.

Let me try and end with just a couple applications.

Application: For us, Christ’s death was final. All your sins are covered. And by the giving of the Holy Spirit your conscience is clean. There is ongoing conviction of the conscience because of sins. But, as Christians, we look to Christ has atoned (covered) ALL of them, past, present, and future. Under the Old Covenant the work of the priests was never finished. It was continuous. Can you imagine morning and night, week after week, month after month, year after year, ALL the gifts and offerings? All the washings and regulations? All the wearing of the proper clothing? All the killing of those animals? All the blood? Well, pictures what we have in this world. There is no finality to their sins. The guilty conscience is ALWAYS there. There is no rest! And This must motivate us to tell our neighbors about this one time sacrifice.

Application: You can approach God boldly. Consider King David. We will see this more in cp. 10. But, did you know that the sacrifices of those animals in the OT did not cover ALL sins. It covered unintentional sins. But certain sins such as murder and adultery etc. it did not cover. (This is Paul’s main issue in Rom. 3:25 when speaking of the Christ’s death he says, “This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.” I believe David knew those sacrifices could not cover his sins of murder, adultery, etc. He could only fall on the mercy of God. This created a coming of fear and trembling. And all he could do was plead the mercy of God and look forward to a better sacrifice (Ps. 51). But, for those who trust in Christ and his sacrifice, we come with boldness. Why? Because of the excellency and reach and sufficiency and effect of this ONE BEAUTIFUL sacrifice! This illustrates what is NEW about this New Covenant from Jer. 31: “**I will be their God. I will write my law upon their hearts. I will put my Spirit within them.**” What an offering! What a sacrifice! What a love! And this is the message we believe. This is the message we live by. This is the message we proclaim. This is how David (and Paul the murderer) was saved. By the same sacrifice. He was certainly to the “uttermost”) This is why murderers and adulterers and thieves and witches, etc., can be saved today.