

Once for All Hebrews 9:23-28

Introduction

"One man's trash is another man's treasure." People get rid of things others consider valuable. Worn out. Tired of it. Doesn't fit anymore. Out of style. Not what you expected it to be when you bought it (buyer's remorse). Too much stuff—"editing" needed. The basis of thrift stores and programs like Antiques Roadshow. What you inherited or paid little for turns out to be worth a lot. Or not.

Religion can be the same way, including Christianity. We are vulnerable to throwing away what we no longer count valuable.

Hebrews seeks to help us gain an accurate appreciation of the value of what we have in Christ, lest we throw it away. The author does so by contrasting the Old Covenant with the New. How much more the contrast would be with manmade religions.

²³ Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. ²⁴ For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the

presence of God on our behalf. ²⁵ Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, ²⁶ for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. 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. ²⁷ And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, ²⁸ so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

1. A Better Sacrifice (23-24)

Present Reality: His Intercession for Us

24 "Now to appear"

2. A Permanent Sacrifice (25-26)

Past Reality: His Propitiation for Us

26 "Has appeared"

3. A Saving Sacrifice (27-28)

Future Reality: His Return for Us

28 "Will appear a second time"

Christ's sacrifice for our sins profoundly impacts our past, present, and future. It is once for all.

1. A Better Sacrifice (23-24) Present Reality: His Intercession for Us

23 Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. **24** For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.

The earthly copies of heavenly things had to be purified by animal blood sacrifices over and over and over again. Christ achieved something far better through His sacrifice.

We all know what it's like to feel as if you're prayers aren't going beyond the ceiling, to wonder if the activities of worship that go on in a service like this one are other than earthbound. If it were just up to us, they would be nothing more than a human cultural experience similar to worship ceremonies in every time and place.

But Christ entered the very courts of heaven to make intercession for us through His sacrifice and that intercession continues to this very day. He is there even now on our behalf.

"Now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf." A present reality in heaven in the presence of God—before His face. Personal interaction.

You and I have an Advocate with the Father every moment we live. Jesus Christ expresses and ensures heaven's keen interest in and involvement with our lives here. He makes sure that when our earthly journey is done we have a way home where we are not a stranger but where, as the song says, "they know my name" (Far Kingdom).

The priests under the Old Covenant simply could not do that for those they represented. They were earthbound in their intercessions. Their sacrifices were only symbols of the true. The place of worship was a copy of the real.

The "once for all" sacrifice of Jesus was better because it was not earthbound, but heavenly in its impact. It actually changes our present status there before God.

Trusting in Christ to save you certainly has impact here on earth. When you're born again with life from God, your mind and heart change, and the attitudes and actions that flow from mind and heart change as well. That transforms your work, your relationships, your pattern of life from serving sin to serving righteousness.

But there are results far beyond these things that are the heavenly source of the transformation we experience on earth. Our

standing before God in heaven has changed. Our sin record is gone, and in its place is Christ's perfect record. We are made children of God, not only adopted with a future inheritance, but born again by the Holy Spirit with divine life in our souls. Heaven is our family home because we are now God's children. We have a living connection with God the Father, Son, and Spirit, along with all the saints in light. Jesus' sacrifice achieved that for you. It is a better sacrifice. It has present impact because Jesus is interceding for you now.

Think how this truth can shape your view of today's difficulties and challenges. Your present sense of being known and loved. Your courage in times of danger. Your comfort in seasons of pain. Your strength in battle.

2. A Permanent Sacrifice (25-26) Past Reality: His Propitiation for Us

²⁵ Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, ²⁶ for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. 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.

All kinds of projects to do at home. Some tasks have to be done over and over again.

The laundry. The lawn. Cleaning. Pruning. Maintenance kinds of things.

But the most satisfying projects are the ones you do and after that, they're pretty much done. Renovate your kitchen—that generally doesn't have to be done again for at least another 20 years. Add an addition. All that's left is upkeep.

What the Levitical priests did under the old covenant was maintenance. It never completed what needed to happen for us.

What we needed was more than just maintenance. We needed an overhaul. We needed major renovation. We needed to be born again. We needed to be set free forever from the wrath of God we deserved for our sin.

Jesus didn't just provide another way to maintain religious ceremony that symbolized spiritual realities. He accomplished the spiritual realities. He transformed us. He made the God-man sacrifice that made all subsequent sacrifices completely unnecessary. His work was no stop gap, it was end game. Finished.

By the sacrifice of Himself—Jesus satisfied all the demands of God's holy law. He did so by living a perfect, sinless life. He did so by

bearing God's wrath against our sin by dying for us on the cross. An infinite being with an innocent life taking the place of many finite guilty lives.

He did not offer Himself repeatedly as the earthly priests had to do with animal sacrifices. He offered Himself once and completely accomplished what needed to be done. It did not need to be repeated.

End of the age—the goal of the age. By sacrificing Himself he put away—abolish, to annul, do away with—sin. This was the ultimate goal toward which all the earlier sacrifices pointed. The turning point of history.

John the Baptist introduced Jesus this way:
John 1:29

“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”

This is why “if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”
We serve God because Christ has put away our sin, not in order that He will. So leave all your guilt at the cross. His work is the only basis of our forgiveness. You have nothing to add to merit it.

3. A Saving Sacrifice (27-28) Future Reality: His Return for Us

²⁷ And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, ²⁸ so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

Appointed—by God Himself. Death is not happenchance. Nor does death end it all.

Death, then judgment. No endless cycle of reincarnations. No second chances after death. Death itself is the appointed verdict for our sin ever since Adam and Eve fell to Satan's lie in the Garden of Eden. They were fooled into thinking they would be better off disobeying God than obeying Him. Instead they got suffering and death. Their sin marred a whole creation along with the human race. And world history tells the story of all the fallout from that fateful day.

Romans 6:23 "The wages of sin is death"—and every day we taste the reality of that divine declaration. "But the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Just as we die once and then face judgment, so Jesus Christ the God-man Savior-King died once for our sins. He absorbed all the

judgment we deserve. No further judgment remains.

Romans 8:1-2

¹ There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

With the sin debt paid death had no more claim. He rose again from the dead.

Romans 4:25-5:1

Who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification. Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

History is not an endless cycle of change. It is going somewhere. The cleansing work of Christ on the cross was the crossroads of all history. Decisive. It changed everything for us. History up to that point tracked toward Christ's first coming. Now it tracks toward His second coming. With the decisive victory accomplished history rushes toward its divinely appointed endpoint. The second coming of Jesus Christ.

He rose again and He's coming back.
"not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him."

He will deal with sin among those who have not put their faith in Him. The NT repeatedly underscores the reality of that coming judgment. Much of the last book of the Bible, Revelation, deals with what will happen.

But for those who belong to Christ it will be different. Their sin has already been judged. Jesus took the penalty for them. He will come back to save them.

Look at how these people of Christ are described: "those who are eagerly waiting for Him."

We patiently endure because we are eagerly expecting His return. His once-for-all sacrifice guarantees our future eternal joys. He has not forgotten us. We are His forever.

Our strength is small. It fades and falters. Our faith is often weak. We sin. We fail. And we will continue to do so during our earthly journey. But our salvation is not dependent on us. It is dependent on Him. He cannot fail and He will not.

This is the secret to our lasting peace. This is the reason for our unquenchable joy. It is not found in ourselves and our performance. It is found in Christ and His.

Romans 8:31-39

31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? **32** He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? **33** Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. **34** Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. **35** Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? **36** As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." **37** No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. **38** For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, **39** nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Do you have your heart set on home?
Do you eagerly anticipate seeing Jesus?
Or are you totally absorbed with the here and now? Do you realize how vulnerable that makes you to temptation and to discouragement?
Jesus has opened up a bright future for you.
So don't despair because of the present

darkness. And don't obsess with the trinkets of a word that is passing away.

Conclusion

Don't throw away this infinite treasure. Don't treat it like trash. The once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus for you is the greatest gift of all time. Nothing can compare. Past. Present. Future. Take it, and don't ever let it go.

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Discussion Questions:

1. In what ways does it help you in your present life to know that Jesus Christ is interceding for you right now in heaven before God the Father?
2. What do you find difficult to hold onto regarding that statement from our text, and why do you think that is?
3. How does the truth that Jesus put away our sin once and for all by the sacrifice

of Himself help you deal with residual guilt from sins you've already confessed?

4. Why is it important for human beings to face the reality that death and then judgment are appointed by God for us?
5. How does Christ's having been "offered once to bear the sins of many" change the death-judgment appointment for us who believe in Him?
6. What does Jesus' second coming to save His people in contrast to His first coming to deal with sin tell you about the timeline and scope of our salvation in Him?
7. How does "eagerly waiting for Him" impact your approach to daily life now? What does that eagerness look like?
8. What are some of the other substitutes people pursue instead of the treasure of what Christ gives us by His sacrifice and how do they compare?