

## His Life for Ours Hebrews 9:11-14

### *Introduction*

For a couple of months now, two of my Bible studies have been studying the Cross of Jesus. There are few topics more important than the work of Jesus on the Cross - and the love of God for us - that's expressed so deeply on Calvary.

And what I've discovered in my studies is that the Book of Hebrews is in a class by itself in helping us see the love God has for us, in and through the work of Jesus on the Cross.

### *The Book of Hebrews*

The author of Hebrews had a very definite purpose in mind as he wrote his letter. He wanted to show the superiority of Jesus and the new covenant over the old covenant. His reason was that many of the Christian believers to whom he was writing had come out of Judaism and now were facing persecution. Some were being tempted to turn back to what they had left behind. They had found new life in Christ, but some were beginning to question whether Jesus was worth it.

Maybe you've felt that way. Maybe you too have wondered if following Jesus is worth it. Perhaps you've thought that the cost of discipleship – of denying yourself, picking up your cross daily and following Jesus - is asking too much. Maybe like the Israelites who were following Moses in the wilderness, you've thought that the food you had as a slave back in Egypt wasn't that bad after all. That thought has crossed my mind from time to time.

But then I read in Scripture the kind of message I find in Hebrews, and I come to see yet again, God's great love for me – and for all of us – and I'm reminded that following our Lord, whatever the hardship, is *more* than worth it.

### *Our Text*

Here's how our Scripture puts it. Hebrews 9:11-14 says,

But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands, that is to say, is not a part of this creation. <sup>12</sup>He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. <sup>13</sup>The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. <sup>14</sup>How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit

offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

### *Lesser to Greater*

The folks Hebrews is addressed to needed to be encouraged. And the author does this by using what's called, "lesser to greater" arguments. Jesus taught in the same way.

In Matthew 7:9-11, Jesus taught...

<sup>9</sup> "Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? <sup>10</sup> Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? <sup>11</sup> If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, *how much more* will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! (emphasis mine)

In Matthew 12:11-12, he puts it this way...

<sup>11</sup> He said to them, "If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? <sup>12</sup> *How much more* valuable is a person than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." (emphasis mine)

The author of Hebrews uses this rhetorical device throughout his letter to show the superiority of Jesus in several ways.

### *The High Priest*

First of all, we learn in our text that *Jesus is our High Priest*. In the Old Covenant there was a great barrier between God and his people. In the Tabernacle, and later the Temple, there was a great veil that separated God's people from the Holy of Holies. Only the high priest could go behind the veil to bring sacrifices to God.

But the death of Jesus spiritually and literally tore the veil in two, so that there was no longer anything preventing us from approaching God directly.

Also, when the high priest in the Old Covenant entered the Holy of Holies to offer sacrifices to God, he had to first offer a sacrifice for *his own* sin. Because even though he was the high priest and a holy man, he was still a sinful man. But Jesus was greater because Jesus was without sin.

Hebrews 4:15 says...

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.

### *The Sacrifice*

In the Old Covenant the high priest brought in an animal to sacrifice. In the New Covenant, *the High Priest was the sacrifice*.

Our Lord Jesus Christ offered himself on our behalf. His life for ours. Do you remember what John the Baptist said when he saw Jesus approaching him? He declared these words in John 1:29,

... “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

John understood the mission of Jesus as, “the lamb without blemish,” the Israelites were to sacrifice at the Passover, in Exodus 12.

The prophecy in Isaiah 53:7 points to this.

He was oppressed and afflicted,  
yet he did not open his mouth;  
he was led *like a lamb* to the slaughter,  
and as a sheep before its shearers is silent,  
so he did not open his mouth. (emphasis mine)

He laid down his life for those he loves. His life for ours.

### *Once For All*

In the Old Covenant, the sacrifice on the Day of Atonement had to be repeated annually because the blood of animals was purely symbolic. It revealed that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). It taught God’s people that sin is a big deal. It separates us from a right relationship with God. It has to be atoned for.

And yet, the death of animals, offered by a sinful high priest, could do no more than point to something greater, something beyond itself, something that was to come.

And something greater did indeed come! God came in the Person of his Son, Jesus Christ, and he offered himself as a “once-for-all” sacrifice. That phrase, “once-for-all,” appears over and over again throughout Hebrews. It speaks of the permanence and perfection of the work of Jesus on the Cross.

Therefore, there’s no need to repeat the sacrifices anymore. All that *needs* to be done, has *now been done*.

Therefore, we’re called to trust in *his* sacrifice alone. The death of animals only provided a temporary, symbolic, and ceremonial cleansing from sin. But the author of Hebrews makes it clear that the death of Jesus cleanses us from *all* unrighteousness – both outward and inward. It cleans our hearts.

Verse 14 says,

*How much more*, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! (emphasis mine)

Because of what Jesus did on our behalf, we no longer need to be weighed down by the burden of our past – the guilt and shame of who we were, or what we did, before we came to know Christ.

We now have a freedom that's been won by our Lord Jesus on the Cross.

### *The Love of God*

God did all of this because he loves us. The Apostle Paul emphasized this in Romans 8:9,

*But God demonstrates his own love for us* in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (emphasis mine)

And because we're now new creatures who are free in Jesus Christ, the author of Hebrews says we can now "serve the living God." The word, "serve," in this verse points to the *worship* of God, more than anything else. Because the veil to the Holy of Holies has been torn in two, we can now approach God in worship, unhindered by the oppression, shame, and guilt of our sin.

*All of that* has been atoned for. We've been washed. We've been redeemed. We've been reclaimed. His life for ours.

### *Aslan and Edmund*

In the book, *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*, by C.S. Lewis, one of the story's four children, Edmund, betrayed his brother and sisters by telling the evil White Witch where they're hiding. And in the Land of Narnia, where the story takes place, the penalty for being a *traitor*... is death.

Edmund was a young man and was understandably terrified at this prospect. And even though he betrayed his family, they forgave him and thus they begged Aslan, the great lion and King of Narnia, to intervene, to do something to get Edmund off the hook. Maybe an exception to the rule could be made this time.

However, Aslan, who is the Christ figure in the story replied, the law is the law and betrayal is indeed worthy of death. The White Witch, therefore, laid claim to Edmund in order to be his judge and executioner. Yet Aslan and the White Witch met privately to discuss the matter, over a long period of time. Upon their return, Aslan declared Edmund would *not* be put to death, and was now free.

Later, that evening, after a great celebration was over, Aslan, somber and alone, left the camp where all the Narnians were staying, and made his way to the Great Stone table, which represented a sacrificial altar.

And there, the White Witch and all her wicked followers, bound Aslan, shaved his great mane, all the while mocking and beating him. And he took all of this without defending himself. Without trying to fight them off. Without trying to talk them out of it.

And there on the great Stone Table, Aslan was put to death. He was killed by the witch's blade. He died in the place of Edmund and took the punishment Edmund deserved.

His life for Edmund's.

Isaiah 53:4-5 says,

Surely *he* took up *our* pain  
and bore *our* suffering,  
yet we considered him punished by God,  
stricken by him, and afflicted.  
<sup>5</sup> But *he* was pierced for *our* transgressions,  
*he* was crushed for *our* iniquities;  
the punishment that brought *us* peace was on *him*,  
and by *his* wounds *we* are healed. (emphasis mine)

His life for ours. There is no greater love than this. God has done a great work on our behalf because he loves you and me. Our response is to love him, trust him, and follow him. And when we consider all he's done for us, how could we do otherwise?

But thanks be to God that the story of our Lord Jesus, our Great High Priest and sacrifice, didn't end at the Cross on Good Friday. Because Sunday was on the way.

### *Walking Points*

- Was there any teaching in this devotional that you had never heard before? Or perhaps, understood in a new way? Describe what it was and how it impacted you?
- With a friend discuss the "lesser to greater" contrasts between the Old and New Covenants, as they relate to...
  - The high priest
  - The sacrifice
- How does the work of Jesus Christ on the Cross, reveal God's love for you? How does that realization lead you to respond?
- If you are a Christian, do you occasionally find yourself dwelling on your past, grieving over former sins, and letting that begin to define you? How can the truth of Hebrews 9:11-14, help you resist giving in to that temptation?
- Have you read The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe? If not, go out and buy it today and start reading! Read it with a friend and read it to a child. You will be blessed.