

Hebrews 9:24-28

An Analogy, An Activity, An Outlook

So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation – v. 28

No other book in the Bible explains the Old Testament so fully and so clearly the way this epistle to the Hebrews explains it. I remember when I first contemplated going through this epistle the thought that struck me was that I would about have to go through the book of Leviticus first in order to lay the foundation for understanding Hebrews. In retrospect I believe a student of the Bible would do better to go through Hebrews first in order to understand Leviticus as well as the other portions in the Old Testament that seem so strange and so different.

I hope you've been able to see from our studies in Hebrews how the Old Testament points us to Christ. The animal sacrifices point us to Christ. The tabernacle furniture points us to Christ. The order of worship in the Old Testament points us to Christ. The sprinkling of the book and the people and the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry with blood points us to Christ's blood and teaches us how, by faith, we are to apply the blood of Christ not only to our sins but to our most noble endeavors. We need the merits of Christ's life and death applied to all we do and all we fail to do.

The failure for a student of the Bible to see the centrality of Christ, one could argue, leads to the failure to gain all that God intends us to gain. This was the problem the Hebrew Christians were facing. They didn't really know how blessed they were to have a high priest representing them in heaven. But not only does the failure to see the centrality of Christ rob us of all we should have it also leads to failure to live the Christian life the way God means for us to live it.

Have you noticed throughout this book the emphasis that is placed on where Christ is now? I use to emphasize this when we studied the book of Acts. Some of you may recall how often I said that the blessing of the book of Acts is that we find Christ in the same place today that we find him in the book of Acts. He's in heaven seated at the right hand of God engaged in the process of building his church.

The same thing applies to this epistle to the Hebrews. There's an emphasis on the glorious truth that Christ has gone before us into heaven and that he is engaged in his priestly ministry now in heaven. This point of emphasis comes out again in v. 24 *For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.*

As we come to the end of chp. 9 we discover an emphasis on the sufficiency of Christ's atoning death. One sacrifice was all it took for Christ to accomplish our redemption. *But now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself* (v. 26). *So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many* (v. 28).

This is why it's so important for us to affirm that in partaking of the elements of the Lord's supper we are not professing, as some do, to offer that sacrifice anew, we are, rather, commemorating a once for all sacrifice that was completely successful in all that God intended to accomplish by it.

Our time around this table is a time, therefore, in which we glory in all that was accomplished by Christ's broken body and shed blood. We glory in a redemption obtained. We rejoice that God's burning anger against was truly appeased. We affirm that we became God's purchased possession and we praise our Savior for his pronouncement that his work was finished.

This morning, in preparation for the remembrance of Christ, I want us to consider the words of the last two verses of this chapter – vv. 27,28 *And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.*

In the analysis of these words we discover:

An Analogy – An Activity – and An Outlook

I. The Analogy in the Text

In v. 27 Paul is making use of something so certain that it is beyond dispute no matter who you're dealing with. It doesn't matter how smart or ignorant a person may be – it doesn't matter what religion a person follows or even if he follows no religion. This matter is beyond dispute and all men know it. It's the truth of death.

Note the words of v. 27 *And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.* All men know that death is certain. Men may disagree about a number of things. They may disagree about politics – they may disagree about religion – they may disagree about who the best sports team happens to be, but here is a subject, perhaps one of very few subjects, in which we can find universal agreement – all men die.

It's interesting to note the theology of this statement. We're not only told that all men die but we're told that *it is appointed unto men once to die.* Who makes that appointment? We certainly don't make it ourselves. Here is an appointment we would skip if we could. The obvious answer to the question is that it is God that makes this appointment. Just as surely as the day of your birth was ordained by God, so the day of your death is appointed by God as well.

This truth can actually be of great comfort to the Christian if it's applied right. How often do we find in the world, and among Christians too, a sense of guilt that arises from a sense that they failed to do all they could to prolong the life of some loved one. *If only I had directed my parent, or my spouse or my child to a different doctor, the way I thought I should have at the time, maybe death could have been avoided.* I found this kind of

mentality something I had to fight when my Mother passed away. If only we had talked her out of her knee replacement surgery, she might still be with us. If only we had chosen a different care facility following her surgery, maybe she would have made it through. If only we would have looked more diligently into the kind of care she should have received following her surgery – all these thoughts give tremendous leverage to the devil to oppress Christians with guilt.

And I suppose at the end of the day that it could be viewed as true that we all could have done better. Who among us can't think of ways in which we could have improved our care of a loved one. One thing we could never have done, however, was to thwart God's appointment. And if the text is true then death takes place by divine appointment. So, as Christians, we can comfort ourselves in that truth.

For those that are not Christians, they should be terrified by such a truth. You cannot and will not escape death. You may escape a lot of things within this world. Young people may manage to evade punishment by their parents. Criminals may manage to escape the punishment for their crimes. There are those that pride themselves in doing dangerous things and escaping serious consequences for a time but nobody escapes death. *It is appointed unto men once to die.*

The terror of this appointment becomes all the more magnified by what follows in the text. Note that *It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.* This is what makes death all the more fearful. The one who dies is not merely going into the realm of the unknown. On the contrary, he knows in the depth of his heart that he's headed toward something that is sure. He's headed for judgment which is tantamount to saying that he's headed for condemnation.

Now notice with me that this text, while it may be viewed in isolation because of the solemn truths it conveys, it's being used by Paul as a means to an end. He's using it as an analogy. Notice the opening words of vv. 27 & 28. Verse 27 begins *And as...* Verse 28 begins *So Christ...* And as – so Christ. There's a point of comparison being made in these two verses and the comparison runs like this: Just as it is appointed unto men once to die and after this the judgment – Just as death and judgment are certain, in other words – so is it just as certain that *Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.*

You've perhaps heard the saying that is attributed to Benjamin Franklin - *In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes.* What Paul is suggesting in this text is that one other certainty could be added to the list – *Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.* Just as certainly as men die and judgment follows so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.

How certain, then, is your salvation? It's as certain as men dying. It's as certain as death itself. And once you've grasped this truth then you've put yourself in a position to be preached to by a common occurrence of life. The next time you find yourself attending a funeral let the reality of a deceased loved one preach to you that Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.

And the next time you pass a cemetery let the grave stones of that place join in chorus to proclaim to you that Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many. It's worth noting before we leave this point that like every death that takes place Christ's death was also by Divine appointment. So we read in Ac 2:23 *Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain*: This is one of those verses that brings together the truth of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. Neither negates the other. And so Christ's death was by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.

And so we have this analogy between death and Christ offering himself for our sins. This analogy contributes to the certainty of our salvation. What a blessing to remember such certainty when we partake of the bread and the cup. What a source of assurance to the reality of our salvation.

But not only does our analysis of the text reveal to us an analogy which points us to certainty. But would you note with next:

II. The Activity of the Text

Notice what we read in the second half of v. 28 *and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation*.

The activity of faith is to look to Christ. I hope that's why you've come to church this morning – in the expectation that you will look for him and behold him with the eye of faith. If memory serves me right, the text that the Lord used to get hold of Charles Spurgeon's heart was Isa 45:22 *Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I [am] God, and [there is] none else*.

The way the story is told is young Spurgeon couldn't make it to his own church because of the wintery weather but he managed to make his way to an old Methodist church in which one of the church officers was preaching because the Pastor couldn't make it to church on account of the snow. The man's sermon was very simple. He kept reciting the text – *Look!, Look unto me, and be ye saved*. He had little to say by way of explanation but just kept repeating the exhortation to look. And the Holy Spirit used that unskilled speaker to compel Spurgeon to look and be saved.

The Lord's table holds out that same exhortation to us. The bread and the cup say to us *Look*. But they don't exhort us to see bread and juice they exhort us to look beyond to what the bread and juice symbolize. We're to look by faith upon the broken body of Christ and we're to consider that his body was broken for us. And we're to look by faith to the shed blood of Christ and remember all that was accomplished by that blood.

The danger of our day is that too often we're being directed to look for something else. *Look at all the programs our church offers* – or *look at how well known the preacher is* – or *look at how seriously we strive for holiness* or *look at the emphasis we place on the family*. The list could go on and on and without knowing it there are many that are sowing the seeds of destruction within their families because they're not looking where they

should. I believe this is one of the reasons that the Lord saw fit in his sovereign wisdom to establish such a sacrament as the Lord's supper. Here especially we're called to look upon Christ. *See from his head, his hands, his feet, sorrow and love flow mingled down.* And when we look to him we'll also say as the hymn-writer *Did e'er such love and sorrow meet – or thorns compose so rich a crown?*

There is such a simplicity about looking that we find it easy to take such an activity for granted. This was the problem with the saints at Galatia. They were lured into the notion that they had to do something more. They were deceived into striving for external sanctification instead of realizing that true sanctification works in us and then through us. And the inward working of our sanctification is accomplished by our looking to Christ.

Haven't you found it to be so in your own experience? Don't you find an inward compelling force of love being shed abroad in your heart when you behold the very dying form of One who gave himself for you? Don't you find that the more convinced you are that Christ bore your sins and that Christ took to himself your wrath that you are moved to reverence and praise and thanksgiving?

If we would serve him and love him with all our hearts, then, we must look to him – we must behold him – we must gaze at the one who died in our place and we must behold him where he is now – in heaven interceding for us. May our gaze be fixed upon him today as we partake of the bread and the cup.

This is the activity to which we're called this morning – we're to look. We're to look for him. The word is actually a participle in the original which means that it's a term that describes true believers. They will be the looking ones, as it were. The blessing comes to the looking ones. So we have in our text an analogy that demonstrates the certainty of Christ's atoning death. We also have an activity – we're to look to Christ. Indeed looking to Christ characterizes the true disciple of Christ. And then we see finally:

III. The Outlook of the Text

When it comes to looking to Christ there's a sense in which our look could be described as an historical look. Around the Lord's table, especially, we're looking at the person and work of Christ. We're focusing on the truth that he really became a man and gave his body to be broken and his blood to be shed. These are historical truths that transcend time and effect our lives today.

But in the context of the statement in v. 28 the application is primarily eschatological. Notice again the words of the text: *unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.* The reference is clearly to the second coming of Christ.

There is an aspect to the Lord's supper that I probably don't touch upon enough. In the words of institution that we use from 1Cor. 11 we're told in v. 26 *For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.* There is a reference here to Christ's second coming as well. The teaching is that this ordinance is to last until Christ comes again and the reminder is that he will indeed come again.

So we have this eschatological aspect to the Lord's supper as well as an eschatological outlook in our text in Heb. 9:28. And it is the Lord's return that should govern our outlook to this present world. This world in its present state causes the whole creation to groan according to Paul in Rom. 8.

Listen to what he says in Rom. 8:22,23 *For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.* And I take the phrase *the redemption of our body* to speak of the consummation of redemption when Christ returns and delivers his people from the very presence of sin.

This second coming of Christ, according to our text back in Heb. 9:28 is said to be *without sin unto salvation*. In other words it will be without any reference to Christ being our sin offering. That work was accomplished in his first coming and there's nothing to be added to it. And his coming will be *without sin unto salvation* i.e. it will lead to the consummation of salvation.

This is what we look forward to, then – Christ coming again. Christ consummating the work of redemption with the ushering in of a new heaven and a new earth. Doesn't the very thought of it sound inviting? Doesn't a new world order in which righteousness will reign provide even some manner of refreshment to your soul?

This world at its best is cursed with sin. And even Christians at their best within this world still know the lingering power of their sin natures. It is true that there are times of spiritual refreshment to be found in this sin cursed world. When the Lord sends revival we come much closer to approximating heaven in this world. But such is the nature of sin that even something as glorious as revival can be twisted and distorted and abused. The history of revival shows us that there were always excesses of emotionalism and physical effects that became false standards for measuring a man's spirituality.

There will be no such thing when Christ returns. His enemies will be conquered and forced to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. And the people of God, our shorter catechism teaches us, will be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment and made perfectly blessed in the enjoying of God forever.

Peter asks a searching question in his second epistle with regard to the second coming of Christ. *Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved*, he writes in 2Pet. 3:11 *what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?*

You see how our outlook on the second coming of Christ has a very practical effect on our godliness now? John describes this outlook as a purifying effect in his epistle. Listen to the words of 1Jn. 3:2,3 *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we*

shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

Let's console ourselves, therefore, around the Lord's table today in the knowledge that Christ will conquer this world. The cause of his gospel will prevail in the end. If we walk by sight rather than by faith we may find many reasons to doubt this. The rulers of this world do take counsel together to break his bands asunder but their cause will fail in the end and Christ will succeed.

And the assurance we may draw for that success is found in the very elements of the Lord's table. His body was broken and his blood was shed in order to obtain the redemption of the world. He's paid too high a price to fail and besides this he is all knowing and all powerful. So let's remember him today in the assurance of our salvation and in the assurance of his ultimate victory.