

2017-18-53 Hebrews 9:24-28 One for All! November 11-12, 2018

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Grace and peace to you from God, our heavenly Father and from the Lord the judge of all and our Savior. Amen
As we are troubled by our daily sins and weakness as Christians, let us hear good news in Hebrews 9:24-28
These are your words heavenly Father. Use your Word to keep us in awe of your justice and amazing grace.

Dear Christian friends,

This is Last Judgment Sunday. How do you picture Judgment Day in your mind? Will it be loud or quiet? Will it be awesome or just a typical day? Listen to the words from Daniel's vision to sharpen our focus: *"As I looked, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened"* (Daniel 7:9-10). What an amazing sight that will be for us! It would be so awesome if we were only spectators, but if we were the accused sinners before the almighty and just God on that Last Day we would be filled with dread. We would be desperately looking around for some place to hide or for someone to help us or shield us as a sinners in the hands of a holy God. Thank God there is help:

One for all!

First, God wants us to be prepared for His judgment. God does not take pleasure in condemning people, no matter how sinful they are. He is not like people who are tempted to take revenge when someone has harmed or taken something valuable from them. They want to make people pay. "It's only just," people say. But if God were filled with vengeance, He would never have given people His holy Word. He would have simply let people die in their sins without warning and condemn them to eternal suffering.

But, the Bible shows that God is not that kind of God. When the people of Israel sinned against Him by worshiping the idol of an Egyptian god, God could have destroyed them all. But, He had Moses come before Him and plead so that God spared the people. *"Then the Lord came down ... and proclaimed his name, the Lord. And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, 'The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation'"* (Exodus 34:5-7). Then God renewed the covenant with the people who repented and believed in Him, but people who refused His forgiveness died in the desert.

God is serious about judging sinners. He will condemn people who reject Him and they will spend eternity suffering with evil angels in hell. God is just. Yet, He continues to use His threats of judgment to get people to turn back Him and be saved. Two weeks ago we read from Jeremiah 18:7-8: *"If ... I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned."* This is true for individuals as well! This is why God instituted the Old Covenant through Moses so people would be warned and repent and be saved.

Second, God provided the Way to be prepared for judgment. God's covenant included the 10 Commandments and many other commands that the people were to keep. When they failed and sinned against God, He provided a way to escape death and judgment. In the same chapter where God had to deal with sinners worshiping the golden calf, He instituted that specifically Aaron and his family serve in the temple for offerings and to intercede for sinning people. Although God had them sacrifice animals as sin offerings, they were only meant to be a picture of the coming Savior. So it wasn't the blood of animals that forgave their sins, the sacrifices were like living Gospel promises that God would provide a permanent sacrifice to take away all sins.

This is what our verses describe in the book of Hebrews, *“Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary... he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world”* (v.24-26). What the Bible is saying is that the tabernacle in the wilderness and later the temple were types of heaven. So, when sacrifices were made in the temple, it foreshadowed the much greater sacrifice of Jesus to change everything forever. God promised to be present at the Ark of the Covenant which showed His justice and mercy at the same time. In the golden Ark were the two tablets of stone with the 10 Commandments of God and His demands for holiness for the people. There was no changing His holy truth or His demands. But at the same time, the cover of the Ark where God was present was known as “The Mercy Seat.” It was where the high priest annually offered the blood of an animal as a sacrifice. This blood was like the Gospel or Sacraments of today which point to Christ so people can believe and receive forgiveness in His sacrifice.

Hebrews continues, *“Now [Christ] has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him”* (v.26-28). God sent His Son to complete everything which people and even priests could not do. Jesus lived a spotless life. He did not need to offer a sacrifice for Himself like the high priests did. He offered Himself to be the perfect sacrifice. Earlier when I described people standing before the judgment seat of God, we who were listening know that we deserve to be condemned with the rest of the world. But in Christ, we see that all of God’s justice for sins and all of His anger and punishment were poured out on Jesus while He was on the cross. Think of the burden of our sin that He carried on His shoulders, the shame Jesus felt as He claimed the guilt of all our sins, the condemnation and eternal punishment that He suffered before He died!

But, His death was not a defeat. It was a victory over sin and death! Just as it is natural that people die only once and after that to face God’s judgment of being declared guilty or innocent, so the base of our certainty on Judgment Day is the completed work of Christ. Jesus said, *“It is finished.”* He only needed to die once so that people of all time could either look ahead or back and know that all was accomplished. There is nothing which we need to do or to add to His work. God has accepted it on our behalf so that we have nothing to fear on the Last Day. Jesus has taken all the guilt, the shame, and the condemnation for us. So there is nothing left for us to do except to give God His praise

He has made that clear in His Word: *“There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all....”* (1 Timothy 2:5-6). Again Paul wrote, *“Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again”* (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). We should not live in fear of the Last Day no matter how awesome it will be and no matter how much glory and majesty we see and feel on that day before our Holy God. For we who have been waiting for His return through faith will gladly welcome Him and be glad that He has kept His Word to bring salvation which we will fully enjoy forever. Amen.