

Hebrews 9:23-10:1-21 "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you."

Our study this morning is going to take us from the end of chapter 9 to the middle of chapter 10. We usually move much slower through the scriptures, but what we'll be covering here is much of what our writer has already touched on in previous verses. And so I've already covered much of this ground in previous studies over the weeks. What I will be doing is reading through all of these verses and making summary comments and then stopping on those portions we haven't covered.

HEB 9:23-28 "It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. 24 For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. 25 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. 26 Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. 27 Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, 28 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."

Again, this theme, which runs throughout this letter, shows the infinite superiority of Jesus Christ over the copies or shadows found in the Levitical system, which were all designed not to point to themselves as an end in themselves, but to point to the One who would come to take away sin once and for all.

And just as Christ had to shed His blood for the remission of our sins, the earthly copies demonstrated that the blood, or the death of the sacrifice, was vital to illustrate this. Unlike the Levitical priesthood which continually brought sacrifices, Christ's single sacrifice was sufficient to take away all sin for all time for all His people.

When acting as our High Priest He entered the inner sanctuary, if you will, but it wasn't in the Temple in Jerusalem, it was in the

presence of the Father in heaven and it pleased God to accept that sacrifice on our behalf.

But we come to verse 27 and we note an interesting phrase concerning man.

HEB 9:27 "Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,"

Many of the Eastern pagan religions which have been Westernized and have found their way to our shores teach a sort of reincarnation. Depending on which religion you study will determine what kind of reincarnation they're talking about. But they all essentially teach that we do not die once, but repeatedly for the sake of ourselves until we get it right.

Zen Buddhism, which is distinct from classical Buddhist thought, which is the Japanese version of the original Chinese sect, teaches, according to Walter Martin in his book "Kingdom of the Cults", that there are "cycles of reincarnation [which] are necessary in order to attain Nirvana. Zen maintains that it is a here-and-now possibility."

What's interesting about the different forms of Buddhism and other similar Eastern religions is that they are some of the world's most self-centered religions. Everything in life is designed to allow the individual to attain his goal of Nirvana, even at the expense of others. In fact in India today, the reason there is so much poverty and lack of help for fellowmen is that to interfere in another's Karma would actually harm your own and possibly increase your chances of not attaining Nirvana.

To help one who is need might be interfering in their Karma (their path) which is designed in a sense to purge them of evil. To get in the way of that process could hurt your journey. Walter Martin concludes: "Historically, Buddhism has produced nothing but indescribable conditions under which its subjects live. For in almost every area of the world where Buddhism of any form holds sway, there stalks the specter of disease, hunger, and moral and spiritual decay."

Endless movies in this country have popularized this notion that we will come back again and again in this world to better ourselves and our society. The Creator of all things, the one true God says, "it is appointed for men to die once, and after this comes judgment."

The word appointed or destined, as it is in the NIV, is the Greek word *Apokeimai* and it means, according to Robertson, "laid away"; kind of like a lay away plan in the sense that it's been put to your account. It is sure and will not be revoked. By the way, the reason we have been destined or appointed to die once is precisely in accordance with the Creator's promise to Adam and Eve, in the day you sin against Me you will surely die.

That promise was fulfilled when they sinned. The death God spoke of has a dual nature in that there is a physical death as well as a spiritual death. The whole concept of death implies separation from something. In the case of man there is separation from His God because of sin as well as separation from his body at physical death.

But physical death is not the end. We're told that men are appointed to die once and then comes judgment. We are still held accountable to God for our sin. There will be a final judgment and you will either stand "guilty", having not chosen Christ, or you will stand "not guilty" because you chose Christ to stand in your place in this world by faith.

By the way, as a side-note, this concept that "death is a natural part of life" is not true. Death was never meant to be a "natural" part of life. Death invaded life. Man was created to live with God. Sin separated man from God and brought the curse upon life. There is nothing natural about death. It's an aberration or a departure from what true life was meant to be; a life with endless fellowship with God.

Christ came to restore that original fellowship found in the Garden of Eden where death would no longer have mastery over us, and nothing would hinder our communion with God. Death has been swallowed up in Christ's victory, but because the curse of sin affected this world and everything in it, eternal life is not designed to be fully expressed in this world.

That is reserved for the new heavens and the new earth in the eternal presence of our great God and Savior. It's gonna' be awesome!

But as our writer says in HEB 9:28 "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."

And so we see that our hope lies in the return of Jesus Christ. Remember what the angels said to the disciples on the day Jesus ascended to the Father in their very presence?

ACT 1:10-11 "They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 11 "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

This is no joke. As surely as Jesus was promised to come the first time, born of a virgin, and actually came some 2,000 years ago, He will most assuredly come again. No one knows exactly when that time will be. The disciples expected His return at any time and so should we. But He will return and you can take that to the bank. How will He find us upon His return if it were to be today?

Let's now move to the next chapter in our study.

HEB 10:1-4 "The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming - not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. 2 If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. 3 But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, 4 because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins."

This is a recap of the ineffectiveness of the Old Covenant to bring life eternal to people. The ineffectiveness was not in the law of God, but in the people themselves to obey it. But as our writer has been saying the law was never designed to bring life, nor were the sacrifices of animals designed to save. They simply were a reminder of the need for a Savior who would shed His blood to take away the sins of His people.

4 "... it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." Some believed that it was possible for the Levitical system of sacrifice to actually cleanse them from their sins. Many of the Jews, for one, believed this. They placed their faith in the shadows and the copies of the heavenly things to deliver them. That's not what the law was for.

The blood of "animals" cannot atone for the sins of "people". All men must assume that penalty. Or "a" man may assume that penalty on behalf of all men. Praise God, for Jesus Christ!

HEB 10:5-7 Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; 6 with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. 7 Then I said, 'Here I am - it is written about me in the scroll - I have come to do your will, O God.'" (Psalm 40:6 -8)

Animal sacrifices weren't going to cut it. Jesus had to come into this world as a man. He assumed a human body for the specific purpose of offering Himself, knowing that burnt offerings and sin offerings in the form of animals were not going to please the Father or satisfy the penalty of sin. And so Jesus says, 'Here I am - it is written about me in the scroll - I have come to do your will, O God.'

8 First he said, "Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them" (although the law required them to be made). 9 Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will." He sets aside the first to establish the second."

Jesus Christ established the New Covenant in His blood. By necessity the first covenant is no longer in use. To establish the second the first one must be set aside. Jesus personally did this through His sacrifice for our sins.

HEB 10:10 "And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

The NAS puts it, "By this we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

Being made holy or sanctified carries with it the idea of being made pure or consecrated to a special purpose. And so we are given life in Christ for a purpose. That purpose is to be consecrated to our God as we live in His life. To be holy is to be set apart. Set apart from what? Set apart from our former life which led to death.

If we are new creatures in Christ, with life eternal, then it would behoove us to live in that new life and glorify Christ in all that we do as we go out into this world being witnesses for Him.

Being a witness is not the exact same thing as witnessing for Christ with the gospel, which of course is something we need to be willing to do. Being a witness involves our entire life and what we do with it to His glory.

HEB 10:11-14 "Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. 12 But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. 13 Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, 14 because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy."

The priesthood in Israel would still be offering sacrifices year in and year out had not the Temple been destroyed as Jesus prophesied. No, God was looking for only one sacrifice to satisfy the death penalty incurred in the Garden of Eden with the sin of Adam and Eve. That perfect sacrifice of the Son of God, made man, has perfected those who have embraced the Messiah.

The word perfected in the Greek is *Teleioo* and it means to complete, accomplish or by implication to consummate. We have been perfected in Christ, not in the sense that we are now these perfect little people who no longer sin. No, it means that God's plan to redeem us has perfected or completed His plan in us.

There is nothing more that needs to be done for our redemption. Christ is the perfect sacrifice. What can be added to that? And yet today we see that men will do everything to try and add something to the once-for-all sacrifice of our Lord.

They incorporate good works as an add-on to assure salvation. We are not saved by good works as Paul clearly tells us in Eph.2:8-9, but we are saved unto good works as Paul also says in EPH 2:10 "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

Good works play a vital role in the lives of God's people, but only to the degree that they are the fruit of new life within that person through faith in Christ, who thankfully does the work God has called him to do which is to magnify Christ in his or her life.

We do the work from a new heart which God has placed there.

HEB 10:15-18 "The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says: 16 "This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will

write them on their minds." (Jer. 31:33) 17 Then he adds: "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more." (Jer. 31:34) 18 And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin."

If you've personally trusted Christ for the remission of your sin there is no longer needed an additional sacrifice for sin. There isn't anything you could add to it or take away from it. Forgiveness comes from being justified. Once we are justified through faith in Christ, there is no double-jeopardy. You cannot lose the "not guilty" verdict once you have been declared by God Himself as not guilty because of Christ's blood being put to your account.

That doesn't mean however that simply professing Christ and then living in a continual state of sin, ignoring the command to repent of sin, can give that person the assurance of eternal life. Life begets life. And if Christ has given us life then the fruit of that life will be evident to some degree and eventually growing.

By the way, this covenant that our writer addresses, was first spoken to Israel as it foreshadowed the New Covenant in Christ, which is to say, that only those Jews and Gentiles who embrace this Messiah can be considered to be a part of this new covenant which now makes up the Israel of God, as Paul puts it.

Galatians 6:14-16 ¹⁴ But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. ¹⁵ For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. ¹⁶ And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy *be* upon them, and upon the *Israel of God*.

The Israel of God is simply a designation for what we know as the Church. The Church has not replaced Israel, the Church, like all of the O.T., is the fulfillment of what it means to be Israel as each who are in the Body of Christ can now claim to be part of "one new man."

Ephesians 2:14-16 ¹⁴ For He Himself is our peace, who made both *groups into* one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, ¹⁵ by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, *which is* the Law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, *thus* establishing peace, ¹⁶ and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.

Romans 2:28-29 ²⁸ For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. ²⁹ But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

The other thing to note in Heb.10:16, which is a quote from Jeremiah 31:33, is that salvation belongs totally to the Lord. The writer of Hebrews has gone to great lengths to dissuade anyone from trying to go back to the shadows in the old covenant found in the law, and yet here we see that instead of a law written on tablets of stone, God Himself writes His law, His holiness, on the hearts of His people.

But only God can take a heart of stone and make it a heart of flesh as He alone brings life to that heart hell bent on fleeing from God and making that rebel a friend and son or daughter who loves and serves God from a heart of thankfulness as they are brought from death to life.

Ephesians 2:1-6 ^{NAU} And *you were dead in your trespasses and sins*, ² in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. ³ Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. ⁴ **But God**, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our transgressions, *made us alive together with Christ* (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus,

Up to this point our writer has been laying a Theological foundation upon which we can stand solidly on the Rock of our salvation. Some may feel he has belabored the point. But keep in mind that it is the Holy Spirit who has inspired this portion of God's word, and if God belabors anything it's for the reason of driving home the point of the eternal significance of such an important teaching regarding who we trust to come into a personal relationship with the living God.

He now begins to move into the living-out of that life and the motivation behind it.

HEB 10:19-22 "Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water."

Because of who Jesus Christ is; the living God who created the heavens and the earth (JOH 1:3), we know with confidence that He has successfully purchased our salvation for us, and because we know this and believe this we have "confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus,.. "

What is the Most Holy Place? Well, keep in mind that up to this point our writer has been making a contrast of the two Covenants. The Old covenant spoke with shadows and copies and gave us a picture of how God wants us to come into His very presence. This was seen when the High Priests entered once a year through the veil into the Holy of Holies or the Most Holy place where God met with them.

But in that picture it also showed the inadequacy of man to have that kind of fellowship whenever he wanted it. What God is telling you and me is that Jesus Christ has secured that life and fellowship with Himself to the degree that we no longer have to wait to come into His presence as of old in Israel. Today, this moment, we have access to the Creator of the Universe, the One who bids us to come unto Him and commune with Him in close fellowship because He loves us so much.

We have confidence to enter into His presence because our confidence doesn't lay in ourselves, but in Christ. The word confidence can also be translated boldness. It's a boldness which realizes that there's nothing there to hinder and we can walk in and know that we won't be rejected.

And if Jesus say's come then we should gladly come and expect to be received with open arms. God's arms are always open for His children. The unfortunate state of affairs is that when we go our own way and do our own thing, even as His child, we place a barrier there that God doesn't want. We feel ashamed to enter with confidence because we know we aren't pleasing God because of our sin.

But the issue of pleasing God has already been dealt with at the cross. He was well pleased with the Son's sacrifice put to our account. It's true that our sin does grieve the Holy Spirit, but it's during those times the Spirit encourages us to come to the Father and find forgiveness, not to flee from Him.

Jesus says, "Come unto Me all who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest." Our own sin is a reminder of how short we fall, but it's also a reminder of the magnificent grace of God who says, I have loved you with an everlasting love. That's a love which goes beyond anything we can ever imagine. But it's a love which gives us confidence to come into His presence as a child who knows the Father loves us.

It's when we stay away that we begin to create in our minds what kind of God He is. 'Oh, He would never forgive me'; 'He's certainly angry with me all the time'; 'He probably doesn't even know I exist'; 'I'll just eat a bug and die'.

Is this the God who said, 'I love you so much that I sent My only begotten Son into the world so that whoever believes in Him should not die, but have (present tense) eternal life'?

Is this the God who said in JOH 10:27-30 "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. 30 I and the Father are one."

Does this sound like a God who wants to squash us? No, this is a God in whose hand we are molded and loved and cared for and given the assurance that He is always there for us. "Nothing shall separate us from the love of Christ."

And because of that truth we must confidently come before Him continually as we depend on Him, trust Him, follow Him and serve Him because we love Him, knowing that He loved us first.

But this confidence in Christ should also do something else. It should eliminate the confidence we sometimes want to place in the flesh and the things of this world as a means of trying to make this relationship with God a better thing.

It should also encourage us to come to Him during those times when the flesh is weak and tired and confused and sometimes unwilling to trust that God knows what He's doing.

Our confidence and boldness to come before our Lord, and know that we will be received with love, must come from the knowledge that His love for us was fully demonstrated on the cross when He chose to give up His Son, so that we wouldn't have to die in our sins.

As believers in Christ He wants our fellowship and our love and He gives us His Spirit to enable us to do just that.

GAL 4:6-7 "Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." 7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir."

ROM 8:16 "The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

EPH 1:11-14 "In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, 12 in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. 13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession - to the praise of his glory."

Approach His face with confidence, but approach with a confidence clothed with humbleness, knowing that it's only because we are clothed with Christ's blood which enables us to have access to our God and Father and Savior; a relationship which will never end and begins today.

A relationship is always meant to include two parties. Be willing, in the power of the Spirit, to walk in that relationship and make it a relationship which includes Him in everything you do. That's what friends are for.

I like what was said of Moses and what really shows what our relationship is to be like.

EXO 33:11 "The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend."

Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.