

"Christ, The Cleanser Of Souls"

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Preacher: Bruce Binney

[0:00] Thank you.

Thank you.

He's a good friend of mine. I preached with him for many years downtown, and I appreciate his ministry. So Gary had asked me to fill in for Justin because he was going to fill in for Gary over at his church.

So it's a domino effect. And here I am. So what I'd like to do is, first of all, let's open up in prayer because if I go by myself, you wouldn't want to hear me.

Lord, I just thank you for this time together. And just pray, God, that you would bless this sermon, that you would be glorified in it.

[1:40] Lord, you are our God, our rock, the one we look to, and the Lord who saved us. But there may be people here who do not know your saving power.

And I just pray, God, that you would use this sermon in all of our lives to draw us close to you, to reveal the greatness of your Son and the goodness of your love.

In Christ's name, amen. All right, so I am going to be preaching from Hebrews chapter 9, which is page 1841, 1841, in the Pew Bible.

So if you don't have your own Bible and you want to use the Pew Bible, it's page 1841. And Hebrews chapter 9 is a very good, powerful portion of Scripture to talk about the death of Jesus.

And it's a wonderful thing to be able to have that today because we're having the Lord's table. And I always love the Lord's table because it gives us a chance to reflect upon the great sacrifice of our Savior.

[2:54] So this sermon really kind of goes right along with that. And this text that I'm going to be speaking to you of is from Hebrews chapter 9, verse 14.

So I'd like to start by reading that. It says, How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

How much more shall the blood of Christ? Now, when we think about the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus and the positive effects that it has in people's lives, there's different aspects that we normally just default to in our minds.

We think of justification, that we're made right with God. That is powerful. Being reconciled to God. God actually becomes our friend where before we were his enemy.

And then also we think of being adopted, even adopted into God's family. All these come through the death of Christ. But today we're going to talk about one of the lesser mentioned blessings that believers have.

[4:23] And it was really instrumental in my salvation. I'll never forget sitting in a church when I was 21 years old, which was 43 years ago.

I'm 64 now. So it seems like a long time ago. But in reality, 43 years went really quick. It was 1981.

And the assistant pastor was preaching. And the main pastor wasn't even there. And I'll never forget sitting there in that church and being very uncomfortable.

I had been into drugs. And I had been in and out of mental hospitals. And I had, it was during the early 80s, so punk music was around.

And I had, believe it or not, back then I had hair. And I had this punk hairdo with these big glasses. And I probably looked like a sight to everybody there.

[5:27] And I thought when I went to church I was going to find a bunch of religious people. And what would they have to do with me? And so I was very self-conscious, you know.

But I found there a lot of different than I ever thought I would have found. Being a young guy like that, and I was very welcomed.

And that was one of the big things that really struck me. So what happened was, being a young man and being in church for the first time since I was basically 12 years old.

Now, my parents stopped going to church when I was young. And needless to say, there was only one time we walked to church.

And that was, it was over a mile to go to church. So needless to say, the kids kind of just stopped going as well. So for the next 10 years I didn't go to church.

[6:26] I prayed to God from time to time when I was in trouble or when I thought there was a need in my family. But eventually I stopped doing that because my sins had gotten worse and worse.

And isn't it like that with sin? Sin can overtake you so that you end up losing all hope and become very despairing of life. And that's what happened to me.

I turned to drugs in my last year of high school. And at 21, I was living in this apartment in Wellesley, Massachusetts with a girl and committing immorality and living a life of sin.

It was a very sad place to be in. But I was high all the time on drugs. And so I masked everything with drugs.

And sadly, it brought me really, really, really down as far as my life. I was working in this hardware store.

[7:35] And this guy kept coming in every day. And he was always happy. And I'm there, why is this guy always happy? I couldn't understand it.

So I asked my boss's wife, why is this guy always happy? And she says, Bruce, don't talk to him. He's a religious nut and he'll try to get you into it.

So I said, thank you. Thank you. You know, went back to work. Well, I got fired from the hardware store because I was such a great worker. And went to work.

I got a job across the street at a hotel. And I go in for the first day. And I go in and talk to my boss. And my boss, the woman that hired me, her name was Jan.

And she said, I'd like to introduce you to the man who's going to train you. Well, sure enough, it was Mr. Happy. And it was shocking.

[8:32] I'm like, hey, I know this guy. And he goes, I know you. And he was all happy and everything. And anyway, I was trained by this man. His name was Paul Perkins.

He became a friend. And he started telling me about Jesus. And I really was interested. I started listening to him. And he was telling me about the forgiveness of sins.

He was telling me about all the benefits, you know, of a Christian's life. That you can go to heaven when you die.

You know, you'll know that you're loved by God and all these things. And it was interesting. One of the things that really struck me was when he started telling me about the prophecies in the Old Testament that foretold of Jesus coming.

And that really was mind-blowing. I thought to myself, wow, how it has to be a sign that Jesus is God's son if it was all foretold in the Old Testament.

[9:39] That he would ride into Jerusalem on a donkey. That he would be born of a virgin. That he would be sold for 30 pieces of silver. That he was going to be born in Bethlehem all hundreds of years before Jesus came.

And that was really mind-blowing to me. I remember thinking. And like I said, I used to do drugs. So I used to go to work high as a kite. So anyway, it came to the point in my life where I was starting to consider these things.

But at the same time, the devil was also trying to keep me away from God. So I started going crazy in my mind again.

And I ended up going to see a shrink, a psychiatrist. And he asked me what was going on in my life.

And so I told him, well, I'm working this job. And this guy's always telling me about Jesus. And he goes, oh, boy, you've got to tell that guy to stop talking to you about Jesus.

[10:44] He was very against Christianity. He said, that guy. And I said, maybe that's why I'm going crazy. And he said, probably that's why. You know, you need to tell him to stop.

That was on a Friday. I'll never forget it. So I went to work on Monday. And as a matter of fact, before I left his office, he told me, he said, Bruce, make sure you tell him not to talk to you about Jesus.

And I said, I will, I will. You know, he made me promise. So I went to work on Monday. And I went out at lunchtime and got high again so that I could get up enough guts to tell Paul to stop talking to me.

So here I am. I come back to work. And Paul comes in. And he's all happy again, you know, whistling and stuff.

I said, Paul, I've got to talk to you. And he goes, he says, what? And he said, I'll never forget it. I was sitting there on those boxes. And I look up. I said, Paul, I'm going crazy again.

[11:54] And I think it's because you're telling me about Jesus. And I really want you to stop. And Paul looked down at me. And he said, Bruce, let me tell you one thing before I never tell you anything more about Jesus.

And now, if you were telling somebody about the Lord and he was a disheveled young man, kind of wild looking, and you knew that he had issues with drugs and mental capacity and stuff.

And he said that to you. What would you say? I know what I would say. I would say something like, oh, I didn't mean to offend you, you know, and hope for something in the future where I could talk to him maybe a little bit.

Paul looks down at me. And he says, Bruce, let me tell you one thing before I never tell you anything more about Jesus. It says in God's word that the one who rejects Jesus Christ is already condemned to hell.

And it was like somebody slapped me across the face. I was stoned when he started and I was sober when he stopped. I said to myself, I'm to hell.

[13:19] I don't want to go to hell. You know, so I left there, went back to work. A few days went by. I was at home thinking about it.

Hell, I do not want to go to hell. And it kept me up at night. I was really upset. I remember standing around with some friends. We were smoking pot.

And I said, there's this guy at work and he's telling me I'm going to hell. Isn't that funny? And I expected him to laugh and he goes, no, it's not funny. We are going to hell.

It was like all over again. It was like shocking on that. I'm going to hell. I'm going to hell. And I had the sentence over me. I was, it was amazing. So three days go by.

I go back to work and I said, Paul, I really want to know more about Jesus. Please tell me about Jesus. And he said, Bruce, I'm not going to tell you anymore.

[14:18] I've already been warned by our boss, Jan, and that if I continue to witness because people have turned me in, I'm going to get fired. And I can't.

I have a wife and a child and I can't afford to get fired. And I, so I said, Paul, and I started pleading with him, Paul, please, I won't turn you in.

I won't turn you in. Please tell me about Jesus. And so he finally relented. And I started witnessing to me again.

That was on a Thursday. Two weeks later, he invited me to church. I went to church with him. And that's when I found myself in that church. And here I am as a 21-year-old man, the assistant pastor's preaching.

And he comes to this verse. And he explains this verse. Hebrews 9, 14 on page 1841 in your pew Bible.

[15:17] Well, the pastor took that verse and he broke it down and he was talking about the conscience.

And we're going to talk about that in a few minutes. But basically, he talked about the conscience and he said, if your conscience, if your conscience is right with God, if you are right with God, you'll have a clean conscience and a good mind.

And you'll know whether you're doing right from wrong. And here I am, a young man, sitting in that church. And I'm thinking to myself, I haven't had a good mind in years.

That were the exact thoughts. I haven't had a good mind in years. And it was something I clung to. Well, I went home that night.

And I remember that was the first day I'd been sober for three months. But I went home that night thinking about Jesus Christ. And at the end of the service, he said, I'm not going to give an altar call.

[16:38] But I want you to go home and think about what it is to follow Jesus. And I went home and I thought about it, thought about it. I went to work the next day and I said, Paul, I want to receive Jesus Christ as my Lord.

And he said, all right, Bruce, but you have to mean it. He has to be your Lord. You're going to submit your life to him. And so I said, Paul, I really want Jesus Christ.

And so after work, we drove around in a little orange pinto with a white top. And I sat in a parking lot. I think it was at a Filene's or Jordan Marsh in Wellesley.

And he opened up the scriptures to me and started reading them to me. And I remember praying to receive Jesus and being filled with the Holy Spirit.

It was immense. I got out of that car after that prayer. And I had to walk a couple blocks to my apartment. And I remember walking all the way and looking up to the sky, saying out loud, I'm going to heaven.

[17:52] I'm going to heaven. I felt that whole weight of sin off me. And it was amazing. Over the next few weeks, I was smuggling the stuff I'd stolen from the hotel back into the hotel.

I mean, God had changed my life. I stopped doing drugs right away. It was a total transformation. All my friends dropped me like a hot potato because of the transformation of my soul.

And it was mainly, largely, in part due to this incredible verse. So I'd like to look at this verse. Now, this verse, Hebrews 9, 14, has in it three things that people don't normally look at as far as one verse.

Three anomalies or three things that are different that you can look at and say, wow, this is in this verse. The first one I'd like to point out to you is that in this verse is mentioned all three members of the Godhead.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, all detailed here in that one verse. How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

[19:25] So all three members of the Godhead are mentioned right there in that one verse. And I will say this, there's only 20 verses in all the Bible where all three members are mentioned.

Isn't that interesting? And this is one of them. And this isn't just one of them that is vague, but this is one that deals particularly with our salvation and the work of God in our lives.

So here you have the Father was the object because the Almighty God was the offended party.

See that God through Christ was taking our sins, our dead works, the things that we've done against him and was nailing them to the cross and that by the blood of Jesus and his offering of himself to God through the eternal spirit cleansed our conscience from dead works.

So that is very powerful. This should bring great praise to us as believers in our lives. This should be like a catapult for us to be able to behold God in a great way.

[20:53] That Almighty God saw us in our dead works, saw us in our wickedness and delivered us.

We weren't just going through life haphazardly. Even the good people, quote unquote, good people in the world that do not have Jesus, when they're going through life, they are ignoring their great creator.

They're ignoring God as their savior. They may not be as bad sinners as, say, I was or others that are drug addicts or alcoholics, but I will say this, they are in rebellion against God.

The Bible says in the Old Testament that even our good works are as filthy rags in the eyes of God. And because of that, we need to see that all mankind is in dead works.

They are outside of grace. They are on their way to destruction. There is no hope for mankind outside of the Lord Jesus. But here we find in this verse that Christ came to save sinners and to deliver them from their dead works.

[22:14] That is an amazing verse. And to reconcile us to God the Father. To bring us back into union with him. So that's the first thing that the Trinity is mentioned.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Now the second thing I'd like to bring up to you. And this is great that we're able. I really am glad that we're able to do this while we're having the Lord's table today.

Christ's greatness in his atoning sacrifice. Christ's greatness in his atoning sacrifice. The verse starts off. How much more shall the blood of Christ.

And if you read all of Hebrews 9, it talks in the beginning about the Old Testament sacrifices. Now the Old Testament sacrifices were numerous.

I don't know if you've ever read the Old Testament. I love to read the Old Testament because there's so much there. But in the Old Testament, I will say this, that sacrifices were offered daily to God for the sins of the people.

[23:23] Once a year, the high priest would go into the Holy of Holies and bring the blood of a bull and sprinkle it on the altar.

It was a bloody religion, the Jewish religion. There were sacrifices all the time. Now listen to this at the dedication. At the temple of Solomon, who was David's son in the Old Testament.

At the dedication of King Solomon's temple, which was about 960 BC, the people that came to celebrate that dedication sacrificed 22,000 cattle and 120,000 sheep over a two-week period.

Can you imagine what that must have looked like? Everyone bringing their sheep in and them cutting off the head and sprinkling the blood. Sheep after sheep.

The priests were just working. They had to make different altars to be able to contain all the sacrifices. But here we find that the Old Testament sacrifices were ineffective.

[24 : 44] Why? Why were the Old Testament sacrifices ineffective? They could never take away our sin. Our sin is so bad and so horrible.

Even though that the remission of sin comes through the blood. That the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sins.

But they pointed. They pointed. The Old Testament sacrifices pointed to the greater sacrifice, which is the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so because the Old Testament sacrifices were ineffective in removing our guilt from God, do you know what they actually did? They actually reminded the person who brought that lamb or brought that bull or brought the goats in to be sacrificed, they reminded them every year after year that they were sinful and had guilt before God.

And so they couldn't remove that guilt. They couldn't remove it. They actually added to it. In Hebrews chapter 10 it says that. So Christ's sacrifice is far greater in that its effectiveness in removing our sin, removing our guilt, cleansing our conscience, is actually something that Old Testament sacrifices could never do.

[26 : 14] So it was a far greater sacrifice. That's why that verse starts off, how much more shall the blood of Christ, how much more than the Old Testament sacrifices, does the blood of Jesus Christ cleanse us?

It's amazing. How much more? And then how far greater was the offering that Jesus did for the redemption of our soul, that he redeemed us?

Redemption, that he paid the price. To redeem something is that, for instance, Israel in the Old Testament, they were under Egypt.

And Pharaoh was a cruel taskmaster. And they had the Egyptians as slaves. They were in bondage to Egypt.

And God sent Moses down there and redeemed. It says he redeemed them. He brought them out of bondage. And that's what our Lord Jesus has done for us.

[27 : 27] So our great Savior, Jesus Christ, his sacrifice removed our sin and guilt. It delivered us out of bondage to sin.

And it brings us into communion with God. That's why it's so much more. How much more than the Old Testament sacrifices is the great sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, how far greater is that it was a spotless sacrifice? There was no blemish in Jesus Christ.

As a matter of fact, if you look at that verse in 9.14, it says, How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God?

Jesus lived his whole life on earth in an incredible way. Do you know, he's the only one who had never sinned.

[28 : 33] Everyone else throughout all humanity had sinned. And you can look back at Old Testament heroes.

Say you were to go to Moses. And you ask Moses, Moses, Moses, tell me. Tell me, Moses, were you a sinless man?

Here's what Moses would answer to you. I was not a sinless man. As a matter of fact, I was able to, by the power of God, deliver the children of Israel out of bondage.

I was able to lead them through the wilderness. I was able to lead them into battles. I was able to subdue their enemies. But when push came to shove, let me tell you, I let Jesus Christ down.

God told me to strike the rock once and I struck it twice. And I could not go into the promised land because of my sin. Because of my sin. And so, his disobedience kept him from going into the promised land.

[29:49] He was not a perfect man. He was a good man. As a matter of fact, the Bible says he was the meekest man in all the earth at the time. But, he was not sinless.

Go to David. David, if you were to ask David, King David, David, were you a sinless man? Oh, David would say, I was a mighty warrior.

I was able to trust God in bad circumstances. The king at the time, Saul, wanted to hunt me down and kill me. He chased me throughout the mountainside.

And I never lifted my hand once to try to kill Saul. Though I had the opportunity twice, I could have cut off his head and no one would have said a thing.

But I knew that God wouldn't want me to. Well, tell me, David, were you sinless? And he would say, no. I sinned greatly in the eyes of God.

[30:50] I committed adultery with this man's wife, Uriah. Her name was Bathsheba. And because of my sin, Almighty God killed my own son after I had had, after I had had Bathsheba's husband killed.

And so I was not a sinless man. As a matter of fact, I was a very sinful man. Oh, that would, that's the truth. David was a sinner.

Moses was a sinner. What about Job? Think of Job. Here Job is, a righteous man, so righteous that Satan has to go to the throne of God and ask if he can have an opportunity to bring Job down.

And Job, if you went to him and you were to ask Job, Job, are you a sinless man? He would answer and say to you, I was a man who loved God.

And I was loved by God and I knew it. I kept myself pure. I did not look at a woman with lust in my heart. I prayed for my family daily.

[32:11] I offered up sacrifices for them. Yet I was lacking. I was lacking in my knowledge of God. And when I was brought down through my circumstances through physical attacks, through losing everything in my family, my kids died, I lost all my goods, I had raiders come in and take everything away, and my wife told me to curse God and die.

And die. And when my friends came upon me and started ridiculing me and bringing me down, instead of defending God, I accused God of doing something unjust to me.

And that was a great sin. But I will tell you, I knew my Redeemer lived and that He would stand one day upon the earth and I would be with Him and I yearned to be with Him.

Everyone in the Old Testament failed. They all failed. You could look at my report card when I was in school, I got a lot of F's. Sadly.

If you looked at their report card before God, it would be a massive F. They failed. They failed badly. Yet Almighty God, in that circumstance, sent us a Savior who could do something that no man could, that could cleanse us, that could wash us, that would live that spotless life and offer Himself before God by the power of the Holy Spirit, offer Himself so that we could be forgiven.

[34:08] And that is far greater than any Old Testament circumstance or any Old Testament individual. So the third part of the sermon that I would like to talk to you about is the cleansing of the human conscience.

This is the part of the verse that really gripped my soul when I was a young man. It is an amazing statement of the power of the death of Jesus Christ and its effect on mankind.

It is a neglected aspect, but it's so important to think about, especially if you're sitting here as a believer.

You've had that work in your life, and you need to see the difference between an unconverted person and a converted person.

Now, an unconverted person's conscience, the conscience of an unconverted person is something that is very, it can be tender toward their wrong doings.

[35:24] parents, but especially as youths, you find kids that are sensitive, they don't want to do wrong, they don't want to displease their mom and dad, and that comes a lot from parenting, good parenting, that it can help kids see that they do things wrong and that they need help and stuff like that.

But as we grow up and as we get older, we sin more and more, and our hearts become hard. And so the unconverted person ends up entering into sin and then doing worse things, and then doing worse things so that the sins that they once did when they were younger, it no longer shocks them.

What happens is they become hardened toward their sin. And so the next sin is easier, and then the next sin, it's a progression, it's like a snowball, rolling downhill, it just keeps getting bigger and bigger and bigger until you get a big problem.

And that's what an unconverted sinner is toward God. Now the Christian's conscience, once we come to Christ, our conscience has been cleansed by the blood of Jesus.

And that is a wonderful freeing thing like it was for me when I was a young man. It's a freeing thing. You all of a sudden understand that Jesus Christ has delivered you from the power of sin.

[36:57] And he's going to work in your life and you are safe in his hands. And this is how we become Christians.

We come to this knowledge of our need for a Savior. And our conscience gets clean. Christian detests his old ways.

So the things that we once did that we once loved, we now don't want to do. We don't want to be mean and cruel. We don't want to be greedy and covetousness.

We want to be loving and giving. I like the way one person said it. We, as a Christian, we hate the things we once loved.

And we love the things that we once hated. If you were to ask me as a young man, do you think you'll ever be in church teaching the Bible? I would have said, you're nuts.

[37:57] Me? I remember one time my mother said, and I was hooked on drugs when I was a teenager. She goes to meet Bruce. Nana, my grandmother, used to think that, you know, Bruce, you're going to become a preacher because I used to sit in her lap and she'd read me Bible stories as a young boy, four or five years old.

And my mom said, remember that, Bruce? Do you want to become a pastor? And here I am like a 20-year-old drug addict and I'm that. I started, honestly, myself, in my shame, in my disgrace, I started swearing at my mom and telling her, no way.

I would never do that. And yet here I am standing before you because God transforms the soul. Because God awakens us to our sin and shows us his goodness and brings us to himself.

And so God breaks that power of canceled sin. He sets the prisoner free. His blood can make the foulest clean. And his blood avails for me.

I love that hymn. And so what happens is that God does the work in a sinner's life and changes him. And we become servants of God.

[39:15] And this is the end of the sermon in the last part. And it says, of this verse, it says, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works for a purpose, to serve the living God.

God. So now we become his servants. We joy in serving the living God. And he is the one who has died and rose again and is seated at the right hand of the Father in eternal glory.

And our hearts desires to bring him glory by our lives. And so I want to ask you, dear friends that are sitting here, where are you in your life?

Do you find yourself with a cleansed conscience? Do you love the things of God? Is God the heartbeat of your life?

Are you daily seeking him in his word, in prayer? Do you call upon him in times of trouble and in times of good?

[40:32] Are you thankful for the good things in your life? Has God transformed your life, brought you out of darkness into his marvelous light?

Has he delivered you from the power of Satan and conveyed you into the kingdom of the Son of his love? Where are you in your life today?

I want you to ask yourself that question. Where am I before God, my maker? Am I ready to stand before his judgment seat?

Where will I spend eternity? Let it bring you to the cross. Let's close in prayer. Lord God, I just thank you for this time.

I thank you, Lord God, for this time of looking into your holy Bible and seeing the greatness of your forgiveness, seeing the love that only you could give us.

[41:33] And understanding, Lord God, because of that great love, because of that death on the cross, because of your great work, because of your great sacrifice, because of your greatness of your work, Lord, we have been forgiven.

And Lord, I just pray, God, if there's anyone here who does not know that great forgiveness, that, Lord, you would reveal yourself to them, and that they would come running to you, cry out for forgiveness, and run to the cross and see Jesus Christ nailed for them.

I just thank you, Lord, in Christ's name. Amen. All right. And