

## Thought for Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> June 2021

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### Hebrews 9:1-28

Chapter 9 is really continuing to go over the job of the high priest, and in doing so, emphasising the difference between the Levitical high priests job, done on a regular basis and the sacrifice Jesus made at Calvary, needed only once for all time. Chapter 9 begins by talking about the tabernacle, which was man made. You can read all about how Solomon built the temple in the first few chapters of 2 Chronicles, which also tells how the tabernacle was laid out. The first 5 verses here in Hebrews 9 just give you a brief outline, but as it says at the end of verse 5; *'we cannot discuss these things in detail now.'* The reason for this, is that they are not of importance to the early disciples. That was all behind them, that was for the past and their priority was that the Jews, the Hebrews, because that was who this letter was addressed to, they needed to know that things had changed because Jesus had paid the final sacrifice. We are called to focus our minds on Jesus, as it says in Hebrews 12:2; *'Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.'* Yes, it can be good to look back and see what they did in Old Testament times, to see how they endeavoured to keep the law and do what was right, but we also have to recognise that even the high priest couldn't cleanse the people by what he was doing, verse 9; *'This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshipper.'* That is so sad. It is so sad that the gifts, the offerings and the sacrifices were just to keep things ticking over, and were ongoing, to give people a sense of fulfilling their duties to God. But that is over, a new covenant has begun. Sadly, there are still people today, in Christian churches, who feel that going through the religious rituals is enough. They don't realise that it is not about the priest, the pastor, the minister or whatever we like to call the leader of the local church or chapel. We are all called to have a personal relationship with Jesus because, as it says in verses 11 & 12; *'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. 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, having obtained eternal redemption.'* There is a lovely hymn written by Alan Jackson, which says; *Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power? Are you washed in the blood of the lamb? Are you fully trusting in His grace this hour? Are you washed in the blood of the lamb?* And the chorus goes on; *Are you washed in the blood. In the soul-cleansing blood of the lamb? Are your garments spotless? Are they white as snow? Are you washed in the blood of the lamb?* That is a question preachers should be asking again and again. Twenty two years ago I was involved in a mission in Kent. A multi-denomination mission and I was asked to preach in an Anglican church. I was told it was high church, with bells and incense, and that the sermon should be no longer than 12 minutes, or people would start to walk out. So after I had been preaching for about 40 minutes, and no-one had left at that point, I gave an appeal for anyone who wanted to give their lives to Jesus to come forward to the altar rail. The first to come forward were the church wardens, followed by several of the congregation. Afterwards the minister said, 'what was that all about, why did the church wardens go forward?' He had never questioned their personal faith with Jesus but was continuing in the Old Testament vain, where the priest did it all. He was making himself liable for his congregations sins, that is not possible, we all need to ask the question of ourselves, *'Are we washed in the blood. In the soul-cleansing blood of the lamb? Are our garments spotless? Are they white as snow? Are we washed in the blood of the lamb?'* If you have any doubt, then ask the question of your pastor and let him guide you through. Read verses 14 and 15 and believe. The rest of chapter 9 continues in the same theme of endeavouring to prove

that the price Jesus paid is sufficient. Verses 19 and 20 tell of how Moses set up the first 'new' covenant, with blood, but with the blood of animals, with the blood of calves, but it was also just a signing of an agreement that God was making with the Israelites at that time. As I have said several times over the past few weeks, laws don't make our society better, unless everyone keeps to the laws. The government, of which ever country you live in makes laws, on the whole, to make our lives better. Just because there is a law it doesn't mean that people will keep the law. The same way Moses proclaimed the covenant, and sprinkled it with blood, to make it holy, but that didn't mean that people would keep their side of the covenant, but God always keeps his side of the covenant. The price Jesus paid is enough to cleanse us and to enable us to enter in the most holy of holies, not in the earthly temple but in the heavenly temple, either when our life here on earth comes to an end, or when Jesus comes to gather in the believers, whenever that may be. God will keep His side of the bargain, His side of the New Covenant, the way He kept His side of the Old Covenant. Verse 28 sums the whole thing up; *'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.'* I am sure you know that I love singing hymns and Christian songs because sometimes they get the message across when all else fails, and this song written by Bill and Gloria Gather sums it up; *'God sent his Son, they called Him Jesus; He came to love, heal, and forgive; He lived and died to buy my pardon, An empty grave is there to prove my Saviour lives.'* And I pray we can agree with the chorus which goes on to say; *'Because He lives I can face tomorrow; Because He lives all fear is gone; Because I know He holds the future, And life is worth the living just because He lives.'* Jesus lived, Jesus died, Jesus rose again, to give us freedom, freedom to believe and freedom to reject. I pray you will believe that Jesus paid the price of your sins and that life is worth the living, just because he lives. Amen.

When I was lost, You came and rescued me;  
Reached down into the pit and lifted me. O Lord, such love,  
I was as far from You as I could be.  
You know all the things I've ever done,  
But Jesus' blood has cancelled every one.  
O Lord, such grace, to qualify me as Your own.

*There is a new song in my mouth,  
There is a deep cry in my heart,  
A hymn of praise to Almighty God - hallelujah!  
And now I stand firm on this Rock,  
My life is hidden now with Christ in God.  
The old has gone and the new has come - hallelujah!  
Your love has lifted me.*

Now I have come into Your family,  
For the Son of God has died for me. O Lord, such peace,  
I am as loved by You as I could be.  
In the full assurance of Your love,  
Now with every confidence we come.  
O Lord, such joy to know that You delight in us.