

Draw Near to God Through the Cross

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Hebrews 10:16-25
Good Friday, March 30, 2018

My mother was 81 when she died. That August she fell and broke her hip. She was in the hospital and rehab for a long time. What she wanted and longed for most of all was to be allowed to go to the Centennial Ball for Hamot Hospital. The doctor said she could go – in a wheel chair. Dad wore his tux and Mom wore one of her ball gowns. All their friends were there, and they joyfully greeted my mother. Mom got to socialize for less than an hour when suddenly she had a massive stroke. Within 6 hours she was gone. We four kids had to say goodbye over the phone.

One never knows when your time on earth will end. There are no guarantees that you will live to be 80, or 90, or 100.

Do you ever wonder how long *you* will live? Have you ever had a conversation about what happens when you die? Where do you go? Not your physical part – the body is buried or cremated. But the part that makes you *You* – Your personality, your soul, your spirit. What happens to that part of you? I have friends who insist that you cease to exist when your heart stops beating. You just turn back into dust.

The Bible consistently refutes that idea. Jesus talked frequently about eternal life. On the night before he was crucified, Jesus said to his disciples, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me, that you also may be where I am.”ⁱ

Jesus told the thief on the cross as they were dying, “Today you will be with me in Paradise.”

Jesus was talking about Heaven. Throughout the Bible, Heaven is described as a place of perpetual and everlasting joy. There will no longer be tears or sorrow, death or pain, ungodly people, unhappiness or sin.

And Jesus will be there!

All the saints will be there - Anyone who believed in Jesus during their earthly life will be forever in his presence; they will never be separated from him ever again. Every person who put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord will be there rejoicing. And because their hearts have been washed clean by the blood of Christ, they will be able to see the face of God, and gaze upon His glory without fear of being obliterated.ⁱⁱ

How do you get there? How do you get into heaven to be with Jesus? Can you really be *sure* that you will receive eternal life?

Many people answer that question by saying, “I am a good person. I never murdered anyone or robbed a bank. I went to church every Sunday – well, except when the Steelers played a home game; But I had season tickets! And really, I *am* a good person.”

Unfortunately, that is not the right answer. God knows that all people have sinned and fallen short of his standards. It is impossible for any human to be good enough to deserve to get into heaven, because even one little sin disqualifies you. To get into heaven, you must get rid of your sin.

Centuries ago, God made a covenant with the people of Israel. God gave Moses laws and rules for the people to live by. In exchange for their obedience, they would be his people, and he would be their God. But if they broke God’s laws, their relationship with God would be broken.

God knew that the people would never be able to keep their promise to him. Therefore, God provided an elaborate system of sacrifices to make atonement, and to cleanse the people from their sins and restore their relationship with him.

However, the blood of bulls and goats and lambs was imperfect, and the sacrifices were incomplete. The sacrifices had to be repeated over and over and over, year after year, like a you-tube video on endless replay, to cleanse the people from their sins.

The entire book of “Hebrews” is a glorious explanation of how Jesus Christ fulfilled and replaced the animal sacrifices. Today we will look at Hebrews 10:16-25 to see how the death of Christ on the cross fulfilled God’s covenant.

The Old Covenant was based on the Ten Commandments which had been carved in stone, and on the 5 Books of the Law. In the New Covenant, God wrote his laws in our hearts and in our minds. Because of the sinless life, crucifixion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, animal sacrifices to pay the price for sin and disobedience are no longer necessary.

Verse 19 says that we, fellow Christians, are now able to enter the Most Holy Place, the Holy of Holies, the very presence of God, and live!

Jesus told his disciples, *“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”*ⁱⁱⁱ

Jesus said, *“I am the gate of the sheep. Whoever enters through me will be saved”*^v... *My sheep listen to my voice... I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them from my hand.*^v

In the next verse, Hebrews 10:20, the author refers to the curtain that hung in the tabernacle. The curtain, or veil, screened off the entrance to the Holy of Holies so that no one could enter the presence of God. Jesus’ death on the cross tore that veil so that now God’s people could come before Him without fear. Now we can have confidence to enter the most Holy Place, because Jesus is the new way to draw near to God.

Jesus is also our new High Priest. He has made complete atonement for sin. Animal sacrifices are no longer needed because the blood of Christ is enough, once and for all time. Those who believe in Jesus have full assurance that their sins are forgiven. They are now able to draw near to God.

Verse 22 says, “Our hearts have been sprinkled.” On the Day of Atonement, the blood of the sacrifices was sprinkled on the people and on the altar to purify them. *Our* hearts have been sprinkled with the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ, so that we are cleansed from a guilty conscience, and we are forgiven.

Jesus is the perfect sacrifice. Jesus never sinned, ever. Jesus obeyed God and all his laws perfectly. Jesus did God’s will.

After three years as an itinerant preacher, Jesus was betrayed by one of his closest friends. He was arrested, accused and sentenced to die. He was tortured and beaten, then hung on a cross for hours until he died. His disciples deserted him. Some of the women remained at the foot of the cross, weeping. Joseph of Arimathea took his body down from the cross and laid him in a borrowed grave. A stone was rolled in front of the entrance to the burial cave so that no one could steal away his body. And then they left him.

The death of his only son is the price that God paid to ransom your soul.

Jesus suffered death by crucifixion in order that you could have forgiveness for your sins.

Only through crucifixion, through the sacrificial death of a pure and holy person, through the death of the Son of God, was effective and lasting atonement made for sin. Christ was victorious over death, and Satan was defeated.

Jesus took upon himself the punishment that each of us deserved so that everyone who believed in him would not perish but would receive, by God's grace, the gift of eternal life, rejoicing forever in the presence of the one and only God.

The only answer to the question, "*Will I go to heaven when I die?*" is recorded in the Bible, in Romans 10:9.

"If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead you shall be saved." You will not perish, you will not be cast into outer darkness, you will not be separated from God or from all that is good. You will be welcomed into Heaven, into the very presence of God.

Jesus died on the cross
so that you could receive the gift of eternal life and the blessing of *Drawing Near to God*.

Have you accepted it?

ⁱ John 14:1-4

ⁱⁱ R.C. Sproul, *The Essentials of the Christian Faith*, p. 279-282

ⁱⁱⁱ John 14:6

^{iv} John 10:9

^v John 10:27