

The Book of Hebrews, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 9: Christ's Once-for-All Sacrifice

Hebrews 9:1–28

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

This chapter is the doctrinal center of the letter's teaching on the atonement, and its great theme is the once-for-all, all-sufficient sacrifice of Christ. The writer first walks through the old tabernacle and its rituals to make a single point: the entire system, with its repeated sacrifices and its veil that kept worshipers out, was a divinely given parable declaring its own insufficiency. The sacrifices could cleanse the body outwardly but could never perfect the conscience or finally take away sin. The repetition itself was the proof. Then the writer presents the glorious contrast: Christ entered the true, heavenly sanctuary, not with the blood of animals but with His own blood, and secured an eternal redemption by a single sacrifice. The blood of Christ does what the old system never could, cleansing the conscience and opening the way into God's presence.

The doctrinal emphasis the teacher must guard is the finality and non-repeatability of Christ's sacrifice. The chapter hammers the phrase once for all. Christ has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. He was offered once to bear the sins of many. This stands against any teaching that Christ's sacrifice is offered again, repeated, or represented in an ongoing way, such as the idea of the Mass as a continuing sacrifice. The whole argument of Hebrews is that repeated sacrifice belongs to the old, insufficient order, while the one, finished sacrifice of Christ is the mark of the new and perfect order. To repeat the sacrifice is to deny its completeness. Handle this clearly but with a spirit of marveling at the sufficiency of Christ rather than mere polemics.

The chapter is also rich in comfort and formation. The blood of Christ purifies the conscience from dead works to serve the living God, which speaks directly to believers burdened by guilt. And the closing verses lift the eyes to the second coming of Christ, who will appear again to save those eagerly waiting for Him. Aim to send students home resting in a finished sacrifice that has cleansed their consciences and opened the way to God, freed from dead works to serve Him, and eagerly awaiting the return of their Savior.

Question 1

Student Question:

In verses 1 through 10 the writer describes the old tabernacle and its rituals, then says these regulations dealt only with outward matters and could not perfect the conscience of the worshiper. What does this teach about the purpose and the limits of the old sacrificial system?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Walk the class briefly through the old sanctuary as the writer describes it: the outer holy place with the lampstand, the table, and the bread; the inner Most Holy Place behind the veil with the

ark and the cherubim of glory. Note that only the high priest entered the inner room, and only once a year, and never without blood.

Draw out the writer's interpretation of all this. He says the Holy Spirit was indicating, by this very arrangement, that the way into the holy places had not yet been opened while the first tent still stood. The closed veil preached a sermon: access to God was restricted, and the system that restricted it could not yet bring people fully in.

State the central limit plainly. These gifts and sacrifices, the writer says, could not perfect the conscience of the worshiper. They dealt with outward, ceremonial matters, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation. They could make a person ritually clean, but they could not cleanse the guilty conscience or finally remove sin. The purpose of the system was real but preparatory; its limit was that it could never reach the heart.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The old tabernacle and its restricted access to God.
- The sacrifices as dealing with outward, ceremonial cleanness only.
- The inability of the old system to perfect the conscience.
- The old system as preparatory, pointing beyond itself.

Discussion Prompts

- What did the closed veil teach about access to God under the old covenant?
- What could the old sacrifices accomplish, and what could they never do?
- Why does the writer say the system pointed to a time of reformation?

Question 2

Student Question:

The writer says the old sacrifices could cleanse the body outwardly but could not perfect the conscience. Where in your life are you settling for outward, surface-level religion when Christ is offering to cleanse you at the level of your conscience and heart?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question applies the limit of the old system to the believer's own heart. It is possible to maintain an outwardly clean religious life, attending, serving, and avoiding obvious sins, while the conscience remains uncleansed and the heart untouched. The old sacrifices could produce outward cleanness; only Christ can cleanse the conscience.

Help students examine where they may be settling for the surface. Perhaps they manage their behavior but never deal with the guilt underneath, or perform religious duties while harboring a conscience that still accuses them. Outward religion can become a way of avoiding the deeper cleansing Christ offers.

Point them to the deeper offer. Christ does not merely want to manage our behavior; He wants to cleanse our consciences and transform our hearts. Encourage students to bring the inner

reality, not just the outward performance, to Christ, and to let Him cleanse what no ritual ever could.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The difference between outward religion and a cleansed conscience.
- The temptation to settle for surface-level cleanness.
- Christ's offer to cleanse the heart and conscience.

Discussion Prompts

- Where might you be settling for outward religion over inner cleansing?
- What does it mean for Christ to cleanse your conscience, not just your behavior?
- What would you need to bring to Him for that deeper cleansing?

Question 3

Student Question:

Verses 11 and 12 say that Christ entered once for all into the holy places, not by the blood of goats and calves but by His own blood, securing an eternal redemption. What does this teach about the nature and the result of Christ's sacrifice compared to the old sacrifices?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Mark the contrasts the writer draws. Christ entered not the earthly tent but the greater, heavenly sanctuary. He came not with the blood of goats and calves but with His own blood. And He entered not repeatedly but once for all. Every element surpasses the old system.

Focus on the phrase securing an eternal redemption. The old sacrifices secured a temporary, repeated, outward cleansing that had to be renewed every year. Christ secured an eternal redemption, a once-accomplished, permanent deliverance from the guilt and power of sin. The result is as different as the means.

Help the class feel the weight of His own blood. The infinite worth of the sacrifice comes from the infinite worth of the one who offered it. Because Christ offered Himself, the Son of God, His single sacrifice accomplishes what oceans of animal blood never could. This is the heart of the gospel of Hebrews: a better priest, a better sacrifice, a better and eternal result.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Christ entering the heavenly sanctuary with His own blood.
- The contrast between animal blood and the blood of Christ.
- Eternal redemption secured by a single sacrifice.
- The infinite worth of Christ's sacrifice from the worth of His person.

Discussion Prompts

- How does Christ's sacrifice differ from the old sacrifices in means and result?
- What does it mean that He secured an eternal redemption?
- Why does the worth of Christ's person make His one sacrifice sufficient?

Question 4

Student Question:

Verse 14 asks how much more the blood of Christ will purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God. What are the dead works that weigh on your conscience, and what would it look like to be freed from them to serve God with a clean heart?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Define dead works as the writer uses the phrase. They are works that cannot give life, whether sinful deeds that burden the conscience or religious efforts to earn what only Christ can give. Both leave the conscience heavy, accusing, and unable to serve God freely.

Help students name what weighs on their own consciences. For some it is specific past sins that still accuse them; for some it is the exhausting effort to earn God's favor; for some it is a vague, persistent sense of guilt. These dead works keep us from serving God with freedom and joy.

Lift up the purpose of the cleansing. Christ purifies the conscience not merely so we feel better, but so that we may serve the living God. A cleansed conscience is freed for glad, unburdened service. Encourage students to bring their specific burden to Christ and to step into the freedom of serving God with a clean heart.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Dead works as sins or self-efforts that burden the conscience.
- The cleansing of the conscience by the blood of Christ.
- Freedom from guilt for the purpose of serving the living God.

Discussion Prompts

- What dead works most weigh on your conscience?
- How does the blood of Christ free you from them?
- What would serving God with a clean conscience look like for you?

Question 5

Student Question:

Verses 15 through 22 explain that Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, and that His death redeems people from the transgressions committed under the first covenant. What does this teach about why the death of Christ was necessary to establish the new covenant?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Explain the connection between covenant and death that the writer draws. Using the analogy of a will, he notes that a will takes effect only at the death of the one who made it. So too the new covenant was put into force through the death of Christ. His death was not incidental but essential to establishing the covenant.

Highlight the principle in verse 22: without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. Under the old covenant, the people, the book, and the vessels were sprinkled with blood. Forgiveness has always required a sacrifice. The new covenant likewise required blood, and Christ provided it with His own.

Draw out why His death redeems even transgressions under the first covenant. The old sacrifices could not finally take away sin; they pointed forward to the cross. Christ's death reaches back to redeem those who lived under the old covenant in faith, and forward to all who come to Him. His blood is the basis on which forgiveness was ever possible, and now it is fully accomplished.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The death of Christ as essential to establishing the new covenant.
- The principle that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.
- Christ's death redeeming transgressions under the first covenant.
- The cross as the basis of all forgiveness, past and present.

Discussion Prompts

- Why was the death of Christ necessary to put the new covenant into force?
- What does it mean that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness?
- How does Christ's death reach back to those who lived under the old covenant?

Question 6

Student Question:

The chapter stresses that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness, and that Christ shed His own blood for you. How does meditating on the costliness of your forgiveness change the way you treat the sin in your life and the grace you have received?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question presses the costliness of forgiveness into the heart. Forgiveness was never cheap. It required the shedding of blood, and not the blood of animals but the blood of the Son of God. When we grasp the cost, we cannot treat sin lightly or grace casually.

Help students feel both sides. On one side, the costliness of forgiveness should make us hate the sin that required such a price, and should guard us against treating grace as permission to sin. On the other side, it should fill us with awed gratitude that God paid so dearly for us.

Apply it to daily life. Meditating on the blood of Christ tends to soften the heart toward holiness and warm it toward worship. Encourage students to let the cost of their forgiveness shape how they handle temptation this week and how they respond in gratitude to the One who paid it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The costliness of forgiveness purchased by the blood of Christ.
- A serious view of sin in light of its price.

- Grateful worship in response to the cost of grace.

Discussion Prompts

- How does the cost of your forgiveness change the way you view your sin?
- How does it guard you against treating grace casually?
- How does it move you to gratitude and worship?

Question 7

Student Question:

Verses 24 through 26 say that Christ entered heaven itself to appear in the presence of God on our behalf, and that He has appeared once for all to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. What does it mean that Christ is now appearing before God for you, and that He put away sin by a single sacrifice?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Draw out the present ministry of Christ. He entered not a copy but heaven itself, to appear in the very presence of God on our behalf. At this moment, our representative stands before the Father for us. We are represented in heaven by the one who died for us and rose again.

Emphasize the once-for-all putting away of sin. The writer says Christ has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. The language is decisive. Sin has been put away, removed, dealt with finally, by a single sacrifice that never needs repeating.

Hold the two truths together. Christ's sacrifice was offered once and is complete, and Christ now appears continually before God on our behalf. The sacrifice is finished; the representation continues. We rest in a finished work and rejoice in a present advocate. This is the double comfort of the gospel: our sin is put away, and our Savior stands for us before God.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Christ appearing in the presence of God on our behalf.
- Sin put away once for all by a single sacrifice.
- The finished sacrifice joined to Christ's ongoing representation.

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean that Christ now appears before God for you?
- How does it comfort you that sin has been put away once for all?
- How do the finished sacrifice and the present advocacy of Christ work together?

Question 8

Student Question:

Verse 28 says Christ will appear a second time to save those who are eagerly waiting for Him. What would it look like for you to live this week as someone who is eagerly waiting for the return of Christ?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Lift the class's eyes to the second coming. The writer parallels human life with Christ's work: as people die once and then face judgment, so Christ was offered once and will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, which is finished, but to save those eagerly waiting for Him. His return is the completion of our salvation.

Focus on the posture of eager waiting. Believers are described as those who are eagerly waiting for Him. This is not anxious dread but joyful expectation, like waiting for a beloved friend to arrive. The Christian life leans forward toward the return of Christ.

Apply it to the week ahead. Eager waiting shapes how we live now: with our hope set on Christ rather than on this passing world, with readiness rather than complacency, with longing rather than mere routine. Encourage students to name one way they will live this week as people leaning toward the return of their Savior.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The second coming of Christ as the completion of salvation.
- Eager waiting as the believer's posture toward Christ's return.
- Hope and readiness shaping how we live now.

Discussion Prompts

- What is the difference between dreading and eagerly awaiting Christ's return?
- How does the hope of His coming change how you live now?
- What is one way you will live this week as someone waiting for Him?

Question 9

Student Question:

Verses 25 through 28 emphasize that Christ does not offer Himself repeatedly, but appeared once for all to put away sin by a single sacrifice, never to be repeated. Some teach that Christ's sacrifice is re-presented or offered again in an ongoing way. Using this passage, how would you show that Christ's sacrifice was offered once for all and is complete, and what that means for how we approach God and remember His death?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the doctrinal high point of the lesson, so develop it carefully and with a spirit of wonder at Christ's sufficiency. Begin with the writer's own argument in verses 25 and 26. He says Christ entered heaven not to offer Himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy place yearly with blood not his own, for then He would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. The very idea of a repeated offering is shown to be absurd, because each offering would require another suffering and death. Instead, the writer says, Christ has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

Underline the drumbeat of the chapter and the letter: once for all. This phrase appears repeatedly and deliberately. Christ entered once for all; He put away sin once for all; He was

offered once to bear the sins of many. The whole logic of Hebrews is that repeated sacrifice was the mark of the old, insufficient system, while a single, unrepeatable sacrifice is the mark of the new and perfect one. Repetition signals insufficiency; the once-for-all offering signals completeness.

Now address the teaching that Christ's sacrifice is offered again or re-presented in an ongoing way, as in the idea of the Mass as a continuing sacrifice. This passage stands against it directly. If Christ's sacrifice needed to be offered again, it would not have been complete the first time, and the writer's whole argument would collapse. He insists that Christ suffered once and will not suffer again. To re-present or repeat the sacrifice is to treat as unfinished what Scripture declares finished, and to blur the very distinction Hebrews labors to make between the old repeated sacrifices and Christ's single, sufficient one. The next chapter will say it even more plainly: by a single offering He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

Clarify what this means for how we remember His death. We do remember and proclaim the death of Christ, especially in the Lord's Supper, which He gave us to observe. But the Lord's Supper is a memorial and a communion, a remembrance and a proclamation of the one sacrifice already accomplished, not a re-offering of it. When we gather on the first day of the week to break bread, we are not sacrificing Christ again; we are remembering and sharing in the one sacrifice He offered once for all, as He Himself commanded when He said, do this in remembrance of me.

Close with the comfort and confidence this gives. Because the sacrifice is finished and unrepeatable, we approach God not with anxiety, wondering whether enough has been offered, but with full assurance, resting in a completed work. There is nothing to add and nothing to repeat. We come to God through a sacrifice offered once, accepted forever, and sufficient for all our sin. This is not a doctrine to argue coldly but a finished work to rest in joyfully.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The once-for-all, unrepeatable nature of Christ's sacrifice.
- The absurdity of repeated offering, which would require repeated suffering.
- A clear answer to the idea of Christ's sacrifice being re-offered or re-presented.
- The Lord's Supper as a memorial and communion, not a re-sacrifice of Christ.
- Full assurance in approaching God through a finished, sufficient sacrifice.
- Marveling at the sufficiency of Christ rather than mere polemics.

Discussion Prompts

- How does the writer show that a repeated sacrifice would be absurd?
- How would you explain that the Lord's Supper remembers but does not repeat the sacrifice?
- How does the finished sacrifice of Christ give you confidence before God?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back across the whole chapter. The writer wants you to rest in the finished, once-for-all sacrifice of Christ that opened the way into God's presence. Name one specific way the completeness of Christ's sacrifice gives you confidence and freedom this week.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This capstone gathers the chapter's great theme into personal rest. The whole argument moves toward assurance: because Christ's sacrifice is finished, complete, and unrepeatable, we can rest. Resist letting the answers stay abstract.

Help students translate the completeness of the sacrifice into specific confidence and freedom. Perhaps it means releasing a guilt they have been carrying, serving God with a cleansed conscience, approaching God boldly rather than anxiously, or no longer trying to add to what Christ has finished.

Close by returning to the chapter's vision: the veil opened, the conscience cleansed, sin put away once for all, and a Savior who appears before God for us and will come again to save us. Send students home resting in a finished sacrifice and free to serve the living God.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Resting in the finished, once-for-all sacrifice of Christ.
- Freedom and confidence flowing from a cleansed conscience.
- Serving God without trying to add to Christ's finished work.

Discussion Prompts

- How does the completeness of Christ's sacrifice give you confidence this week?
- What guilt or striving can you release because the work is finished?
- How does an opened way into God's presence change how you approach Him?