



In the teaching “Spirit, Soul, and Body” we learned that we have these three parts to our being. And, we saw that a number of challenging scriptures make perfect sense when we limit their application and context to the spirit portion of our being. In this message, we want to take a closer look at the spiritual portion of our salvation.

Side Stories

An interesting and for some people possibly unexpected result of this study will be the dispelling of a number of commonly held but false beliefs by Christians. Among the beliefs we will challenge are:

- The ultra-Pentecostal, Mennonite, and Amish belief that a sin causes the loss of salvation (“back sliding”) until it is confessed. This is a saved-lost-saved-lost-saved-lost... paradigm.
- The common Baptist belief that I must get every sin “under the blood” by identifying and confessing them to God.
- The belief that God will not answer my prayers or move in my life after I have sinned.

All of these beliefs are variations of one basic misunderstanding: a belief that even after you have become a Christian God will deal with and relate to you based on your behavior. This study will show that this is patently NOT true. If you hold one of these beliefs, I encourage you to study this message carefully. I hope for you to see that as a child of God your relationship with Him is unaffected by the ups and downs of your daily life.

What Is Redemption?

Ephesians 1:7

In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.

This verse tells us that redemption is simply the forgiveness of our sins. And, note the past tense of the verb. Redemption is something we already have through the blood of Christ; it is something that has already been completed. But, for many people this begs a lot of questions. Do I already have forgiveness for all of my sins? What about sins I am going to commit in the future (because I know I am fallible and will fail to be perfect)? What about the “big” sins – don’t I have to ask forgiveness for those but not necessarily for the “little” sins? What about unbelievers – are their sins forgiven?

These are the kinds of natural questions that arise from a verse like this and from the improper or incomplete teaching we have received in many parts of the church over the years. And, they are the questions we will answer through a lengthy passage of scripture that will repeatedly drive home the answer over and over and over.

The Book of Hebrews

Hebrews is a book written to Jewish Christians in the first century A.D. It was likely written by Paul, but the author is officially unknown. The author's goal is to illustrate to the Jewish readers that Christ is superior in every way to the Old Testament priests and their practices. Through the first eight chapters, much is made of the superiority of Christ to all Old Covenant rituals and beliefs.

In chapter 9, the author specifically addresses the Old Testament temple practices as being inferior. They were symbols, pictures, and types of the reality that was to come in Christ.

Focus on Redemption / Sacrifice of Christ

Our study will concentrate on the last half of Hebrews chapter 9 and the first part of Hebrews chapter 10. There are some diversionary scriptures, many of which are elaborating or emphasizing or contrasting with the Jewish Old Testament beliefs and practices. While many of these strengthen and embellish what we are studying, they can be distracting for those less knowledgeable about the Old Testament practices. Therefore, we summarize below the main scriptures of concern to us in the first part of our study.

Hebrews 9:12,15,24-26,28; 10:10-12,14

¹²Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

...

¹⁵And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

...

²⁴For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:

²⁵Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others;

²⁶For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

...

²⁸So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

...

¹⁰By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

¹¹And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:

¹²But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;

...

¹⁴For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

Seven times in this passage is it emphasized that through the single blood sacrifice of Christ we have all been redeemed from all of our sins for all time; we have been sanctified (set apart as holy); and, we have been perfected for ever. Not only is seven the perfect number but it is also a large number of times to emphasize something over thirty verses. God knew that we would have so much trouble getting this truth into our heart that he went straight for the hammer to practically drive it into us!

Let us now examine some various conclusions we can draw and truths we can glean from these scriptures.

Eternal Redemption

Hebrews 9:12

Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

When you become a Christian your redemption, the forgiveness of your sins, is for all eternity. Eternal means forever. It also means without interruption. So, here are some other ways of saying this. Once you commit and hold to becoming a Christian,

- your vertical relationship with God is unaffected by your sin,
- you do not lose your salvation over individual sins, and
- you are not forgiven only until you sin again, you are forgiven forever

Once we are saved our relationship with God should not revolve around the issue of sin; you are in right standing with God (righteous) eternally.

People struggle with this because they fail to separate the different parts of their being. Your soul and body are NOT redeemed yet. They still suffer sin and in these phases of your being you are absolutely not righteous in the eyes of God. But, remember that God is not a physical being.

John 4:24

God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

God is a Spirit, and it is in the spirit that you have eternal redemption, forgiveness. Forgiveness is not a tangible, physical thing. It is a spiritual reality. God as a spirit looks at you in the spirit. God moves in your life based on who you are in the spirit – a redeemed, forgiven, holy, and righteous (in right standing) child of God. As a Christian you have been justified by the shed blood of Christ - legally declared innocent for all eternity.

Eternal Inheritance

Hebrews 9:15

And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

Again, see the emphasis - eternal inheritance. All of the benefits and privileges we receive by accepting the sacrifice of Christ for ourselves are an eternal inheritance. They do not exist only until you sin again. They are not granted and then withheld every time you make a mistake. They are an eternal inheritance. Again, here are some other ways of saying this. Once you become a Christian,

- God will always hear your prayers and answer them as appropriate,
- God will never withhold any benefit He has provided for you in the death and resurrection of Christ,
- He will never remove His covenant with you (Isaiah 54:10), and
- He will never leave you or forsake you nor remove the Holy Spirit from your heart (Hebrews 13:5).

The contamination of sin in the body and soul has no impact on your relationship with and legal standing before God. God is a spirit and forgiveness is a spiritual concept. Therefore, it is the spiritual reality that solely defines your relationship with God. Since you have eternal forgiveness, you now have an eternal relationship with God.

Furthermore, losing your salvation over one sin, even temporarily until it is confessed, is impractical and unrealistic. The problem with such a practice is that we fail to understand how pervasive sin is and how serious EVERY sin is. Here are some things to consider.

James 4:17

Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.

Simply knowing to do good and choosing not to is sin.

Romans 13:1-2

¹Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

²Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.

We are to obey the laws set by our government. So, something as simple as speeding is actually sinful.

James 2:10

For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.

If you break even one rule laid out in the Old Testament law, then you are guilty of everything in the law. This illustrates the seriousness of sin. A white lie is viewed the same as murder by God.

From all of this we should see the utter impracticality of losing salvation over each and every sin. We all sin way too often to identify and confess each and every sin. The only way to actually put this in practice is to categorize sins as “big” and “small” and then make sure to confess the “big” sins. But, this is in contradiction to James 2:10 - God views ALL sin the same way. There is often a difference in the severity of sin in human terms, based on the effects it has on others and/or the consequences that may follow from it (e.g. adultery vs. speeding). But in God's eyes it is all the same - just sin.

Therefore, in terms of our salvation and relationship with Him, God's only expectation is for us to once realize our sin and cry out for forgiveness through the shed blood of Christ. At this point we receive eternal forgiveness and an eternal inheritance. Our vertical relationship with God is established and stable. The only concern over sin from that point on is in terms of horizontal relationships with other people and the opening it leaves for Satan to attack us (see the section “So I Can Go Live in Sin! Yahoo!” below).

Sin Has Been Put Away

Hebrews 9:24-26

²⁴For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:

²⁵Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others;

²⁶For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

Sin has been put away - abolished. Therefore, sin is no longer the issue; the issue is whether you have accepted the payment for your sins that was made on your behalf.

Another scripture confirms that sin is not the current issue between us and God, but rather whether we have accepted Christ.

II Corinthians 5:19-21

¹⁹To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

²⁰Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

²¹For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

God is not counting our trespasses (sins) against us at this current time. The message from God is one of reconciliation to Him through Christ, not one of condemnation.

John 3:16-17

¹⁶For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

¹⁷For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

The most famous verse in the Bible - John 3:16 - is followed by one that is just as important. Verse 17 makes it perfectly clear what the goal of God was in sending Christ - that we should be saved by His life not condemned by it.

Once, Once, Once

Hebrews 9:28

So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

Christ only died once for your sins. Therefore, He must have paid the price for all of them at that time. Redemption through Christ is a completed work. Forgiveness for all of your sins is freely available for the asking. And, since He only died once, you need only ask once!

Once for All Mankind

Hebrews 10:10

By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

The translation here is vague. Does “for all” mean “for all people” or “for all time”? We could argue this point endlessly, but scripture makes it clear that it means both. In the next section we will see that Hebrews 10:12 definitively says that Christ made one sacrifice for sins for ever. Therefore, all of your sin – past, present, and future – has been paid for. In the meantime, we can also show that “for all” also means for all people.

1 John 2:2

And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

This verse makes it clear that Christ paid for the sins of all people.

A claim like this immediately scares some Christians because they think what is being said is that everyone is automatically saved because Christ has paid for their sins. This is a careless misunderstanding.

The payment of Christ for all of our sins has caused God to be reconciled to each and every one of us. But, that is only half of the story. We must also choose to be reconciled to God. To illustrate, imagine you are dangling helpless over a cliff, clinging to the edge with your hands. If I offer you a rope, you are not automatically saved. You must reach out and grab the rope in order to be pulled to safety. It is the same way with God. He has "dropped you a rope" in the sacrifice of Christ, but you will not be saved until you grab the rope and accept the sacrifice of Christ as payment for your sins.

In more theological terms, what we are talking about is the balance between grace and faith. If it were all grace, the sacrifice of Christ would cause all people to automatically be saved. If it were all faith, it would be us earning our salvation through works or good deeds or something. But, the Bible is clear that we are saved by a combination of grace and faith.

Ephesians 2:8-9

⁸For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

⁹Not of works, lest any man should boast.

The grace of God has been offered as salvation by belief that Jesus was the Messiah (the Christ, the Savior) and that his death paid the price for your sins in your stead. Only by placing your faith in Christ, by declaring that this is what you believe, is your salvation realized.

One of the best ways to think about this is the following. People will not go to hell for the sins they have committed, but for the solitary sin of not accepting Christ as the payment for their sin. If they do not accept this payment and are sent to hell, then they will then have to pay eternally for either the sin of not accepting Christ or even possibly for the sins themselves since they rejected the original payment by Christ.

Titus 2:11

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.

God's grace that brings salvation has appeared unto everyone – the sins of the world have been paid for and salvation has been presented to everyone. But, not everyone has accepted.

2 Corinthians 5:20

Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

An Aside and a Warning

Christians who strictly adhere to Calvinism believe that Christ only paid for the sins of those that eventually become Christians. This comes from a blending of their doctrines of absolute sovereignty and predestination and so forth. Their explanation for a verse like I John 2:2 is a form of extreme contextualism. They claim that since the book of I John was written to Christians that its audience and context are Christians only and that all references in the book can only be to Christians. Apparently in their view it is not possible for a letter or book to refer to things outside the general context. So, they believe that “all people” here only means all Christians. This extreme contextualism is not logical and is not reasonable. “All people” means all people. If John had meant “all Christians” he would have said as much.

Redemption for Sins for All Time

Now we complete the analysis of the phrase “for all” in verse 10:10 that we began in the last section.

Hebrews 10:11-12

¹¹And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:

¹²But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;

Verse 12 here says that the sacrifice of Christ paid for sins for ever. If you think about it, this is the only way it could possibly work. Christ died once 2,000 years ago for all of our sins and obviously well before any of us alive right now had been born. All of the sins in your past were in Christ's future. Therefore, the sins to come in your future are no different than those in your past - they were all in Christ's future. Once you accept salvation, you receive a permanent, eternal redemption that forgives all of your sins for all time. How could it be any other way given the single sacrifice of Christ so long ago?

In terms of your vertical relationship with God, you do not need to confess each sin. This will be re-emphasized in a section below where we rewind back to Hebrews 10:1-2 where we are flatly told to not be conscious of our sins. Your legal standing and relationship with God are unaffected by sin.

Perfected Forever

The final verse in this first portion of our study conveys the fact that we have been perfected by the sacrifice of Christ.

Hebrews 10:14

For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

This is another key point where we need to keep the concept of spirit, soul, and body in mind. It is trivial for us to recognize that after salvation we have not been perfected in our soul or body. If we did not understand math before salvation we will not understand it after. If we had flaws in our body before salvation we will still have them after salvation (unless of course we receive healing for health problems as we should at salvation!). This verse is speaking of our spirit. Remember, God is a spirit and it is in your spirit that you have been perfected forever.

A verse a few chapters later confirms this.

Hebrews 12:22

²²But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,

²³To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,

Verse 23 references the “spirits of just men made perfect.” It is your spirit that is perfected at salvation. Ephesians 1:13 says that your spirit was sealed at salvation.

Ephesians 1:13-14

¹³In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

¹⁴Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

Having been sealed, it is preserved forever. This is just another picture of eternal redemption. Notice also the description in verse 14 of the spirit being the earnest (first portion) of our inheritance - the redemption of the “purchased possession” (our soul and body) will come later.

No More Conscience of Sin

The second portion of our study will focus on two sets of verses in Hebrews chapters 9 and 10.

Hebrews 9:13-14; 10:1-4

¹³For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh:

¹⁴How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

...

¹For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.

²For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.

³But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.

⁴For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

The last verse, Hebrews 10:4, is the place to begin. The Old Testament sacrifices could not take away or pay for sins. They were simply a reminder to the Israelites (“a remembrance” - Hebrews 10:3) of their sin and a foreshadowing of the Savior that would come. Since their sin was not taken away, they were not truly forgiven, purified, or made perfect. The highlight for us comes in Hebrews 10:2 where it is made clear that the sacrifice that does actually work (to purge our sins forever) should result in us having no more conscience of sins.

Please stop and let that truth sink into the depths of your being. In contrast to the Old Testament sacrifices, the sacrifice of Christ really did take away sin. As a Christian you are eternally forgiven. You have been perfected forever. You have an eternal inheritance. Therefore, you should no longer be conscious of your sin. It has been paid for, dealt with, and taken away. Your relationship with God is established and secure. You need never give a second thought to your standing in God’s eyes. You should have no more conscience of sin.

In particular, you do not have to get every sin you commit “under the blood.” Hebrews 10:2 says that once your sins have been eternally forgiven they should not enter your conscious thought again. You do not have to keep an eye out for everything you do wrong so that you can confess it to God for it to be forgiven. You have already been forgiven for all of your sins: past, present, and future. Do not give it another thought. Your vertical relationship with God has been permanently repaired and reestablished.

There should not be anything left to say. Just let this truth soak in. Re-read these scriptures and explanations over and over until it is cemented in your heart forever.

So I Can Go Live in Sin! Yahoo!

Umm. No.

After all of this it is easy for some people to think that if sin cannot harm your relationship with God then it is fine to go and sin as much as you want. This is plain stupid. This is not what the Word teaches, it is not what Jesus taught, and it is not what Paul taught. In fact, it is actually good that our teaching raises this concern because it is a concern Paul faced repeatedly in his teaching of grace.

Romans 6:1-2

¹What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

²God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

Romans 6:15-16

¹⁵What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.

¹⁶Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

Paul is having to interject in the middle of his forceful teachings on grace to preemptively answer the question that he knows his readers are itching to throw at him, “So, does this mean I can go sin all I want?” Paul's answer is consistent and as blunt as it can be without cursing, “God forbid!”

So, why do the teachings on grace and eternal redemption not encourage a life of carefree sin? Because we must balance each teaching in the Bible with other teachings. It must always be considered as a whole. Overemphasis of one truth at the expense of other truths is the greatest source of heresy.

So, what other Biblical teachings balance these teachings?

Grace should teach us to deny sin in our life:

Titus 2:11-12

¹¹For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.

¹²Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.

Sin affects our horizontal relationships with other people:

Galatians 5:13

For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

Sin opens a door for Satan to attack you:

Romans 6:6

Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

John 10:10

The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

Jesus demonstrates the response to forgiveness should be a denial of sin. Salvation is supposed to set you free and make you grateful to the point that you gladly and willingly live a godly life.

John 8:10-11

¹⁰When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?

¹¹She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.

To summarize, we turn from sin because of our gratefulness for being eternally and completely forgiven by God; to close the door on Satan's attempts to attack us; to preserve our horizontal relationships; and, to avoid physical consequences for sin.

Rejecting Your Salvation

There is one sense in which you can lose your salvation. But, it is not over one or even a handful of sins. And it can only happen to a Christian who has developed a deep relationship with God. It only occurs over a prolonged period of time of serious and deliberate sin. Such a pattern can cause your heart to harden so much that effectively you walk away from your salvation. This must be viewed as an extreme scenario that rarely occurs. And, it must be seen as the person ultimately rejecting their salvation not as God rejecting the person or withdrawing salvation.

Remember, that for a person like this, Christ paid for all of their sin no matter how much there is. They are saved as long as they claim Christ as their Savior. The problem becomes that persistent, long-term sin will slowly harden a person's heart and eventually cause them to reject Christ and their salvation.

Sin Requires Shedding of Blood

As one last related point, the middle of this passage we have studied in Hebrews contains a verse that almost all of us really need to take to heart.

Hebrews 9:22

And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

Many people really struggle with the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament and the death of Christ for sin. This verse is a reminder to us of how serious sin is. It simply cannot be forgiven without the shedding of blood. This is something that we may not fully understand, but it is the truth. The way we come to grips with the prior need for animal sacrifices and the ultimate human sacrifice of our savior Jesus Christ is to fully realize the gravity of our sin.

Conclusion

All Christians need to realize very early after conversion that all of their sin - past, present, and future - has been paid for; that their vertical relationship with God is unaffected by the ups and downs of their daily life; and, that they have an eternal inheritance and relationship with God. Any preoccupation with sin will inhibit your growth or color your relationship with God negatively. While you should mind your sin because of its effects on your horizontal relationships with other people and the opportunities it gives the devil to attack you, you should otherwise not be conscious of sin in your life.

John 8:36

If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

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