

Hebrews 9:24-28

Nature is **changing** right before our eyes. The leaves are continuing to **fade** in color, and now the trees are rapidly **shedding** those leaves. Strong winds have been blowing throughout our area, and they're signaling that **wintery** weather is on the way. I'm even beginning to see fewer birds at the feeders in our yard. But even though **nature** is changing, what about **us** - are **we** changing? Is **anything** happening to **us**, or are we the same today as we were 3 **months** ago, or a **year** ago, or way back in the **pre-COVID** days? I think it's pretty **clear** that **we** are **changing** each and every day too. Our **hair** is changing color (or falling out), our **eyes** and **hearing** are getting weaker, and our **walk** is getting slower. Each **day** every single one of us is getting a day **older**, and a day closer to the day of our **death**.

Let's **talk** about that for a bit. **Death** is usually a pretty **uncomfortable** subject, but as **Christians** we can at least **talk** about it - it's **not** a subject we need to **avoid**. And the **reason** we can talk about death is that we know that death is **not** the final **curtain** in our life. We have God's Word and promises that He has **solved** the **problem** of death. Through **His** death on the cross, Jesus has removed the **cause** of death - our **sins** - and therefore He has also removed the **fear** of death. So with that in mind, let's take a look at our text today following the theme: **One Death, One Sacrifice - Won Eternal Life**.

Just about everybody **says** that **cats** have **nine** lives - but in reality we know that they really only have **one** - and that's true for **us** too. We only get to live **one life**, and then we **die**. Our text says, *"It is appointed for people to die only **once**, and after this comes the **judgment**."* That's the way it **works**. There's no such thing as a person's soul **roaming** aimlessly around the earth, or being **reincarnated** as a different person. We **die**, and then we face the **judgment** of God. God graciously **gives** us our life, but that **life** comes with an **expiration date**. It **will** come to an **end**. And again by God's **grace**, we don't know **when** that will happen. It could be **years** from now, or it could be much **sooner**. Whether we are **very young**, or **very old**, doesn't really **matter**. Death is no **respector** of **age**.

But as **Christians** we don't have any reason to be **afraid** of **death**, or of the **judgment** which **follows** death. We know that our Lord **Jesus** is the one who will serve as the **judge** of all people. And we know that in every case His **verdict** will be **just** and **fair**. Jesus Himself will determine the eternal state of every human being, whether we will end up in **heaven** or in **hell**. And remember, Jesus **knows everything**. He has **heard** every **word** we've spoken, every **phone** conversation,

all the **gossip**, and all the **four-letter** words. Jesus has **seen** everything we've **done**. He **knows** when we've **lied** and **cheated**, when we've **stolen** from others, when we've **hated**, and when we've **destroyed**. Jesus even knows all the **thoughts** and **desires** which are deep down in our hearts - thoughts which are **hidden** from everyone else.

The Lord's **verdict** - whether we will end up in **heaven** and **enjoy** eternal life - or whether we will end up in **hell**, and be faced with an eternal life which isn't worth living - all depends on where we have put our **trust** - our **faith**. If our trust is in **Jesus**, then we'll end up in **heaven** - where there will be **rest** from all of our troubles and sufferings - where there will be **laughter** and **singing** that never ends. The Apostle Paul told the Corinthians, "*No eye has **seen** and no ear has **heard** and no human mind has **conceived** - that is what God has **prepared** for those who **love** him.*" But if we **don't** believe in Jesus as our Savior, we'll end up in **hell** - where there will be **no relief** from the shame of sin - unquenchable **thirst** - thick **darkness** - and the eternal **torment** of being **forsaken** by God.

The question which needs to be asked here is, Are we **ready**? Are we ready to **die**, and to **face** God's judgment? That question is far more important than wondering about the **political** future of our country, or who will win the **Packer/Viking** games this year, or how much worldly **wealth** we will be able to acquire. Jesus was very clear when He said, "*What good is it for a man to gain **the whole world** and yet forfeit his **soul**?*" What's so important about **politics** anyway? What does it really **matter** if "my team" wins a **game** or even a **championship**? What does it **matter** if we accumulate **millions** of dollars, and are able to own **everything** we ever **wanted**, if in the **end** we **die** and lose our **soul** for all **eternity**? Our most important **concern** in life needs to be for our **soul**. Are we ready to **die**, and to face **God's** judgment?

The simple answer to that question is, **yes** - we're **ready**. But it's **not** because of anything **we** have done. We're **ready** because of what **Jesus** has done **for** us. Our text says, "*Just as it is appointed for people to die only **once** and after this comes the **judgment**, so also Christ was **offered** only **once** to take away the sins of many, and he will appear a **second** time - without sin - to **bring salvation** to those who are eagerly waiting for him.*" The writer of our text presents a **comparison** here. People die **once** and then the **judgment** comes. There's nothing else **in between**. In the same way Jesus was **sacrificed once**, and then He will appear a **second** time to **bring salvation** to His people. There's nothing else **in**

between, because everything which **needs** to be done to provide us with salvation, has already **been done** by **Jesus**.

We're very **familiar** with the **sacrifice** which Jesus made on our behalf. We know that He was **crucified** by Roman soldiers on the day we call **Good Friday**. We know that His **death** was the **perfect offering** which the heavenly Father had **demande**d, in order to provide the **forgiveness** of sins for all people. We know that Jesus took the **blame** and the **punishment** which **we** deserved for the sins which **we** had committed. We know that He **suffered** the agony of **hell itself** during the hours He hung on the cross, and that He freely **laid down** His life. **His death** made it possible for us to stand **guilt-free** before God's heavenly throne, and to be **cleared** of all **punishment** for our sins. The Bible tells us, "*He (Jesus) is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the whole world.*" The words **atoning sacrifice** mean that His death made everything **right** again between **us** and the heavenly **Father**. His sacrifice made us **at-one** with God - **reuniting** us with Him once again by removing the **sin** which had **separated** us from God.

Jesus **completed** the work His Father had **given** to Him. And God the Father Himself gave us **proof** that He **accepted** the work of His Son. On the **third day** - Easter Sunday - Jesus was **raised to life** again. And just 40 days later, He ascended **back** into heaven, where He is seated at God's **right hand** - a position of **power** and **authority**. The **sacrifice** of Jesus on the **cross** had brought His work here on the earth to an **end**. The Father had sent Him to **save us** from our sins, and then welcomed Him **home** again - **mission accomplished**. The **one sacrifice** which was made by Jesus was the **only thing** which could win **forgiveness** for the sins of the whole world.

Every person on the face of the earth will die just **once** - **one death**. There are no **re-dos** or **do overs**. There is no **second chance**. Our Savior, Jesus Christ offered **His** life on Calvary's cross just **once** - the **one sacrifice** which God the Father had demanded. Nothing else is **needed**. Nothing else would have been **effective**. And that leads us to say that **eternal life** for all believers in Jesus has been **won** - **w-o-n**. As Paul told the Romans, "*There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*" Salvation is **ours**, and when He returns again on the Last Day, Jesus will **bring** that salvation to those who are **waiting** for Him. That's **us**. Together with the Apostle Paul we say, "*The life I am now living in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*" **Heaven** is our home.

That's why we Christians can talk about **death** without being **afraid**. Death is just **falling asleep** in the arms of **Jesus**, and waking up to hear Him speak those wonderful words, "*Come, you who are **blessed** by my Father; **inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.***" Because **death** has **no power** over us, we can live our lives in **faith, hope, and joy**. And we can **share** that faith, hope, and joy with all those **around** us. As the old saying goes, "*Only **one life**, 'twill soon be **past**. Only what's done for **Christ** will **last**.*" May we live **each day** of our life to the **fullest**, with love for **God**, and love for one another, as we make **every effort** to tell others about **Jesus** and His **sacrifice**. **One Death, One Sacrifice, Won Eternal Life**. Amen.