

The Benefits of the Cross
Hebrews 9:11-14
(Grace – April 25, 2010)

I. Introduction

Last week we continued our conversation about the cross – Why did Jesus need to die?

We spoke about the problem we all have – we have sinned and are unable to reconcile ourselves to God.

We touched on the pollution of sin, the power of sin, the penalty of sin, and the partition of sin.

In other words, sin has messed up the world and it has messed up our lives.

But God's heart is not to leave us in trapped in the misery of sin, and He understood that no matter how hard we might try we were going to continually fall short.

Praise the Lord, He provided the solution through Jesus Christ – His death and resurrection!

“He personally carried our sins in his body on the cross so that we can be dead to sin and live for what is right. By his wounds you are healed.” (1 Peter 2:24, NLT)

“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Corinthians 5:21, NIV)

“Christ redeemed us from that self-defeating, cursed life by absorbing it completely into himself.” (Galatians 3:13, The Message)

Today, I would like to look at four different images that hopefully will help us understand the benefits that came to us through the cross.

II. The benefits of the Cross

1. The image of the **Temple**

This image may be the most difficult for us to relate to, but it is critical to understand when we think about the cross and the death of Jesus.

Leviticus 16 speaks of the annual Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) that was to be celebrated by all Israel. On this day sacrifices were made that represented the cleansing of their sins and reminded them of their covenant relationship with God.

Today, this Day of Atonement is considered the holiest day to Jews all over the world.

Listen to some selected verses from Leviticus 16:

“Aaron will present his own bull as a sin offering to purify himself and his family, making them right with the Lord. Then he must take the two male goats and present them to the Lord at the entrance of the Tabernacle...After he has slaughtered the bull as a sin offering...he must take some of the blood of the bull, dip his finger in it, and sprinkle it on the east side of the atonement

*cover. He must sprinkle blood seven times with his finger in front of the atonement cover. 15 Then Aaron must slaughter the first goat as a sin offering for the people and carry its blood behind the inner curtain. There he will sprinkle the goat's blood over the atonement cover and in front of it, just as he did with the bull's blood. 16 Through this process, he will purify the Most Holy Place, and he will do the same for the entire Tabernacle, because of the defiling sin and rebellion of the Israelite. 17 No one else is allowed inside the Tabernacle when Aaron enters it for the purification ceremony in the Most Holy Place. No one may enter until he comes out again after purifying himself, his family, and all the congregation of Israel, **making them right with the Lord.**" (See Leviticus 16:6-17, NLT)*

[Describe what this must have looked like.]

The key is that the sacrifices were a constant reminder of their sin, but also that they were in covenant relationship with God.

*"In this way, the priest will make atonement for them, **and they will be forgiven.**" (Leviticus 4:31, NLT)*

This all occurred in the Tabernacle (or Tent of Meeting) and then later in the Temple when it was built under the reign of King Solomon.

This briefly summarizes what we call the Old Testament or Covenant.

It is God providing a way for the people to have a sense of being forgiven and providing hope that they were in right relationship (covenant) with God.

So now we come to Jesus.

"He [Jesus] came as High Priest of this better system that we now have. He went into that greater, perfect tabernacle in heaven, not made by men nor part of this world, 12 and once for all took blood into that inner room, the Holy of Holies, and sprinkled it on the mercy seat; but it was not the blood of goats and calves. No, he took his own blood, and with it he, by himself, made sure of our eternal salvation. 13 And if under the old system the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of young cows could cleanse men's bodies from sin, 14 just think how much more surely the blood of Christ will transform our lives and hearts." (Hebrews 9:11-14, TLB)

Hallelujah, the pollution of sin is removed through this "Temple" sacrifice!

*"Under the old system, the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a young cow could cleanse people's bodies from ceremonial impurity. 14 Just think how much more the blood of Christ will **purify our consciences** from sinful deeds so that we can worship the living God. For by the power of the eternal Spirit, Christ offered himself to God as a perfect sacrifice for our sins." (Hebrews 9:13-14, NLT)*

And he does not need to do it over and over. Truly, "it is finished!"

"Unlike the other high priests, he has no need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for those of the people; this he did once for all when he offered himself." (Hebrews 7:27, NRSV)

2. The image of the Marketplace

We *“are justified [made right with God] freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”* (Romans 3:24, NIV)

Redeem: To recover ownership of by paying a specified sum.

Scripture says that without Christ, we were slaves to our sin. It is like you are standing in the slave marketplace waiting to be sold and Jesus approaches you, buys you and then sets you free.

“For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.” (1 Peter 1:18-19, NIV)

Show clip from “A Christmas Wish.”

With this redemption the power of sin is broken in your life and you become the person God created you to be!

3. The image of the Law Court

“Now God says he will accept and acquit us — declare us ‘not guilty’ — if we trust Jesus Christ to take away our sins. And we all can be saved in this same way, by coming to Christ, no matter who we are or what we have been like. 23 Yes, all have sinned; all fall short of God's glorious ideal; 24 yet now God declares us ‘not guilty’ of offending him if we trust in Jesus Christ, who in his kindness freely takes away our sins. 25 For God sent Christ Jesus to take the punishment for our sins and to end all God's anger against us. He used Christ's blood and our faith as the means of saving us from his wrath...But isn't this unfair for God to let criminals go free, and say that they are innocent? No, for he does it on the basis of their trust in Jesus who took away their sins.” (Romans 3:21-26, TLB)

Show clip from “To End All Wars.” A true story about four Allied POW’s who endure harsh treatment from their Japanese captors during World War II while being forced to build a railroad through the Burmese jungle.

4. The image of the Home

“So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family. 20 Together, we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself.” (Ephesians 2:19-20, NLT)

While our sin separated us from God, God destroyed that wall of separation through the death of Jesus on the cross.

“This includes you who were once far away from God. You were his enemies, separated from him by your evil thoughts and actions. 22 Yet now he has reconciled you to himself through the death of Christ in his physical body. As a result, he has brought you into his own presence, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before him without a single fault.” (Colossians 1:21-22, NLT)

Reconcile: To reestablish a close relationship between.

“Yes, by God's grace, Jesus tasted death for everyone. 10 God, for whom and through whom everything was made, chose to bring many children into glory. And it was only right that he should make Jesus, through his suffering, a perfect leader, fit to bring them into their salvation. 11 So now Jesus and the ones he makes holy have the same Father. That is why Jesus is not ashamed to call them his brothers and sisters.” (Hebrews 2:9-12, NLT)

III. Application

“We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” (Isaiah 53:6, NIV)

God has done all this for you and me.

[Call to salvation and to a response as Christians]