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 Hebrews 9:1-14  
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I don't know if you've noticed it or not...

But it is becoming increasingly unpopular to be a Christian these days.

More than once I've heard people using words like...

*Close-minded* and *arrogant* when talking about Christian beliefs.

Some people think it's ridiculous when Christians quote verses like John 14:6...

"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life."

"No one comes to the Father except through me."

There are countless religions out there and Christianity claims to be the "right" one?

Not only does it claim to be the "right" one...

It claims to be the "only" right one.

No one comes to the Father except through Jesus...?

A lot of people want to put all religions on the same platform...

Make them all equal...

And validate them all...

"You believe what it says in the Qur'an;

You trust what the Book of Moron says;

You read the Bhagavad Gita;

You read the Bible;

And you adhere only to the Hebrew Scriptures?"

"It's great that you're religious!"

"It doesn't matter what path you follow...

They all lead to heaven anyways."

Who's heard that before?

We're not here this morning to bash other religions.

The people that hold these beliefs are created in God's image and deserve to be treated as such.

What we *are* here for this morning is to come under God's Word.

To submit ourselves before a God who revealed himself and his will for us in his Word.

We are at the end of our sermon series on the 5 Solas.

Today we're finishing up by talking about "Solo Christo."

Christ Alone.

Christ and nothing added or subtracted.

What I hope that we can do this morning is find encouragement in God's Word.

There is embarrassment that comes up when we say that we are saved through Christ Alone.

Culture is putting pressure on us to abandon this belief.

"Sure you can say that Christ is *a* way to heaven..."

"As long as you acknowledge that it's *your* way..."

"Not *the* way."

It's easy to abandon this important part of our faith in order to appease culture.

It's becoming easier to say "Yes, *Christ*" but not "Christ *Alone*."

So we're going to look to the Bible for why we can say Christ Alone with confidence...

Asking the Spirit to increase our faith during these times.

I invite you to turn in your bibles to the book of Hebrews.

Page 1871 in your pew bibles.

We'll be looking first at 9:1-10.

People of God, hear the Word of the Lord:

<sup>1</sup>Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary. <sup>2</sup>A tabernacle was set up. In its first room were the lampstand, the table and the consecrated bread; this was called the Holy Place. <sup>3</sup>Behind the second curtain was a room called the Most Holy Place, <sup>4</sup>which had the golden altar of incense and the gold-covered ark of the covenant. This ark contained the gold jar of manna, Aaron's staff that had budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant. <sup>5</sup>Above the ark were the cherubim of the Glory, overshadowing the atonement cover. But we cannot discuss these things in detail now.

<sup>6</sup>When everything had been arranged like this, the priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry. <sup>7</sup>But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance. <sup>8</sup>The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still standing. <sup>9</sup>This is an

illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper. <sup>10</sup>They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings--external regulations applying until the time of the new order.

### The Word of the Lord (**Thanks be to God**)

In our reading today we're taken back into images of the Old Testament.

The author of Hebrews is talking about the traveling tent in the desert (PICTURE)

After the Hebrews are freed from Pharaoh in Egypt...

They're wandering in the desert...

And God gives them a command...

He tells Moses to build a meeting place...

A place where the people can meet with God.

In this mobile meeting place...

Or tent...

Or tabernacle (however you want to think of it)...

There are 2 rooms:

The Holy Place and the Most Holy Place (PICTURE)

The priests enter into the Holy Place (the first room) regularly to perform their ministry duties.

They keep the lamps burning night and day...

They change out the bread each week...

They burn incense...

And they offer the usual sacrifices...

The author of Hebrews emphasizes that they enter into this room to do their job often.

But in the second room...

Behind the curtain...

Was the Most Holy Place...

The Holy of Holies...

In this room was the ark of the covenant...(PICTURE)

Inside was the 2 stone tablets with the law

And on top 2 cherubim of the Glory...

Covering the mercy seat or atonement cover.

Only the high priest was allowed to go back into the second room...

Back into the Most Holy Place.

And this was only once a year,

On the day of atonement.

What the Jews call Yom Kippur.

On this day the high priest would go in and offer sacrifices for his sins and for the sins of the people.

He would make sure that he was washed and purified...

Wearing the proper clothes...

Then he would burn incense...

With the smoke of the incense filling the room and creating a cloud around the ark...

The high priest would then enter the Most Holy Place.

He would enter and sprinkle blood from a sacrificed bull on the atonement cover...

Then he would sprinkle blood from a goat on the cover.

These were to cover the sins of the high priest and the people of Israel.

Now let's stop here and ask the obvious question:

Why?

Why go through all of this work?

What's the deal with one room being "Most Holy?"

Why the special clothes?

And washing?

And incense?

And blood?

Why bother with all of this?

To really understand this we need to talk about God's holiness.

In our society we have no problem talking about the love of God.

Which is true and great...

God is love.

But God is not *just* love.

He encompasses everything that is love...

But God is also holy.

There is a distinction between God the Creator and everything else...

A separation between Creator and creation.

God is the "holy other."

The one who is separate.

The one who is "majestic, glorious, and beyond reproach." (Michael Horton)

After God freed his people from Egypt, he chose to dwell with them.

He was their God, and they were his people.

This tent that they carried around in the wilderness was the place where they met God...

The holy other.

But they couldn't just come into his presence.

It's not just like strolling into your boss's office...

The glory of God was too great for a sinful people.

If the priest came face to face with the glory of God in the 2<sup>nd</sup> room...

We are told in Leviticus that he would die (Lev 16:12-13).

So the incense made a cloud of smoke that allowed him to enter.

The glory and holiness of God was so great that the people could not handle it.

This is not our God is it?

This is the God of the Old Testament not the New Testament, right?

We get uncomfortable when we talk about God's holiness.

We want a God of love...

Not a Holy God whose presence is too great for us.

A Holy God whose presence consumes us.

We want a God we can approach...

And not a God who needs a sacrifice in order to approach him.

This whole talk about the sprinkling of blood is uncomfortable.

Back in 2013 the PCUSA—the larger of the 2 big Presbyterian denominations in the States...

Put together a committee to select songs for a new hymnal.

They wanted to include *In Christ Alone*...that beloved hymn we sing.

But the committee was uncomfortable with a line in one of the verses:

“Till on that cross as Jesus died, the wrath of God was satisfied.”

The only way that they would allow the song in their hymnal is if they could change the words...

They wanted it to read:

“Till on that cross as Jesus died, the *love* of God was *magnified*.”

This PCUSA committee did not like the idea of God having wrath and anger that needed to be satisfied.

They are right that God’s love was magnified in the crucifixion—

We see no greater love than the love poured out on the cross—

Yet changing those lyrics nearly strips the song of God’s holiness and God’s justice...

Of his being the Holy Other.

Of his being completely separate from his creation.

We are a sinful people...

Not able to stand in the presence of God Almighty...

Something needed to be done with the defilement of God’s people.

Because God is holy, he cannot just overlook our sins.

This would go against his nature as a holy God.

The people need to be cleansed...

They need to be forgiven.

The sacrifices of the Old Testament were never enough to bring the people into God's presence.  
They were only an outward cleansing.

They never cleaned the really deep sin that was common to all of humanity.

And these sacrifices needed to be repeated...

Daily for some and yearly on the day of atonement.

This system was crying out for someone to make things right for all of time...

The people were crying out for someone to bring them back into God's holy presence...

For God to make them holy...

They were calling out for Christ.

The sacrificial system was an illustration for what was to come.

Let's read the second piece of our passage:

Verses 11-14.

<sup>11</sup>When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. <sup>12</sup>He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. <sup>13</sup>The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. <sup>14</sup>How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

### **God gives Christ for the sins of the people.**

In this passage we have 2 ways of going about taking care of sins.

The incomplete way...

And the complete way...

The sacrificial system of the Old Testament was only a shadow of what needed to happen.

If we take sin as seriously as God takes it...

Then we know that we can be present before God only as clean people.

How do we manage that?

### **God gives Christ for the cleansing of his people.**

We have Christ as our high priest.

Christ enters into the Father's presence.

He doesn't need to do all that stuff that the other high priest did:

He doesn't need to wash...

He doesn't need to change his clothes...

He doesn't need to burn incense...

Because he has no need to cleanse himself.

Jesus is already clean!

He's already free from sin and able to enter into the presence of God Almighty.

And just like the high priest...

Christ comes with the blood of a sacrifice.

He comes to atone (pay for, satisfy) for sin.

Not with the blood of a goat or a bull...

But with his own blood...

Jesus Christ willingly went to the cross...

Entered into God's presence as *the* sacrifice.

And with his sacrifice he satisfied the just wrath of God...

The wrath of our Holy God against every sin and everything unclean.

This is the same God in the Old and New Testament.

He isn't any less holy in the New than he is in the Old...

That holiness is still there...

It hasn't changed...

We just don't acknowledge it as often...

We don't come trembling before God as dirty people anymore because we've been made holy.

God took the burden on himself by giving his willing Son as a sacrifice for our transgressions.

What we owed to God because of our sin against God...

He paid with his own blood.

We profess Christ alone...

Solo Christo...

Because he is the only able high priest we have.

We believe that Christ has 2 natures in 1 person:

He is 100% God...

And 100% human...

Because he is 100% human he is able to stand in *our* place...

We are guilty of our sin...

And we are responsible for paying for it...

Christ was one of us so he qualified.

Because he was 100% God he was able to bear the wrath of God.

We never could have stood up under God's punishment for sin...

But thanks be to God for Christ Jesus...

Our Great High Priest...

Who offers himself for us.

This is why we confidently proclaim Christ Alone.

It is only in Christ alone where forgiveness of our sins is found.

Jesus says, "I am *the* Way."

"I am the way to the Father."

"I am the way to eternal life."

"This is how you come into relationship with God..."

"It's through me!"..."Only me!"

"Nothing else is able to bring you into his Holy Presence."

When we proclaim this, we don't do it arrogantly...

As if to say, "I know something you don't know..."

Or, "I have something you don't have..."

We have no room to boast.

Because we are all guilty of being born into sin.

Instead we proclaim Christ alone *humbly*.

We say, “Yeah, I don’t know why God chose to love a sinner like me...”

“But he did; and I am so grateful for it.”

“I have a connection with the God of the universe only because Christ paid what I was unable to pay.”

Salvation comes through Christ alone.

This means that we don’t have to go looking for salvation in any other place.

So let’s ask ourselves, people of God...

How do we attempt to make ourselves look respectable before a Most Holy God?

What are some of our dead-end efforts to appear worthy before God’s Holy presence?

Is it being good enough?

You help enough people...

You never sin in your anger...

You never cuss...

You live by God’s commands...

Does that make you worthy to enter into God’s Holy presence?

Or is it because you’ve already been punished enough?

You think that you’ve received your fair share of God’s anger...

You know that you sin and so you punish yourself...

Between God’s punishment and your own punishment that should be enough, right?

Does this make you worthy to come into God’s Holy presence?

Or do you just feel completely lost...

You don’t know what’s going on in life...

All you know is that something isn’t right...

You’re missing something...

You’ve tried to fill this missing piece by putting in more hours at work...

Or putting in less hours...

By taking that vacation you’ve always dreamed of...

By pursuing that relationship with that one special person...

You've tried to fill the hole by living for those things that make you feel good...

All of those vices that you know aren't good for you...

Yet that feeling is still there...

There's still an emptiness...

In the Fall our relationship with God was severed.

We were cast away from his Holy presence.

Unable to stand before him because of our sin.

Leaving a hole within us.

We were left with this insatiable desire to return back into God's presence.

To be back in the arms of our loving Father.

The only thing that fills the emptiness.

And what we read today is the way back...

Christ enters into God's presence...

And offers himself...

Offers his own blood...

So that we might be made holy...

So that we can once again be in God's presence.

Back in that only place where we're whole again...

And this is only possible through Christ.

In Christ Alone.

Please pray with me.