

OUR ALL-SUFFICIENT SAVIOUR

Southern Baptist Convention Sermon preached by Dr. W. A. Criswell, pastor, First Baptist Church, Dallas, at St. Louis, 1947.

Hebrews 9:24-10:22

There was a little community of converted, believing Hebrews. Because of their Christian faith they were persecuted and suffered trial and heartache. They were sorely tempted to forsake their Saviour; they had evidently made a mistake in following Jesus.

If thus it had to be, we are grateful that the little church staggered at the meaning and ministry of Christ and the cost of Christian discipleship. In a land afar the eloquent orator of the New Testament, and apparently their former pastor, hears of their suffering and temptation. With pen in hand and with heart aflame he writes to them of their all-sufficient Lord, and this wonderful letter we call "The Epistle to the Hebrews." Time would fail us to speak of much that he mentions, but from our text we have opportunity to rejoice in a Saviour whose sacrifice for sin provides an all-sufficient atonement, whose intercession in heaven is able to save us to the uttermost, and whose promised return bears with it all the rich gifts of glory.

I.

First, we speak of His all-sufficient atonement. Our Lord came into the world that He might forever put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

"When he cometh into the world, he saith, a body hast thou prepared me. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me), to do thy will, O God. By which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

From all eternity he offered himself. "Lo, I come" is the voice of the Son of God before the creation of the world. His condescension goes back into the ages. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." (II Cor. 8:9). With a heart of love He came into the world. His whole life on earth embracing his obedience and death, his substitution for sinners, was his own voluntary resolve and act. His coming was the incarnation of God Himself. He is not a deified man but God incarnate. In the manger of Bethlehem the child born unto us is the The Wonderful, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father. Conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, He is called from His very infancy "That Holy Thing". This is the body which the Father prepared built of the Holy Spirit to be the tabernacle of divine glory. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us."

For what purpose did He come? He came "to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." He came into this wilderness of earth as our substitute and sinbearer to deliver us from the wrath and judgment of Almighty God. He came to give His life a ransom for many. Our blessed Lord knew from the commencement of His earthly ministry the sufferings that awaited Him. He never lost sight of the cup, the sword, the death, the cross. He saw the cross from the beginning. All the days of His flesh. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. His soul was straitened until His baptism was accomplished. The mountains of our guilt were heaped upon Him; He was made a curse for us. It pleased the Lord to bruise Him; by His stripes we are healed.

He came "for the suffering of death that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." "Forasmuch then as they children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also likewise took part of the same that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death." (Heb. 2:9, 14). He did not merely die, as it were, in a moment of enthusiasm, as many a warrior has lost his life, courageously. But, laying down His life, he came into contact with the whole sting of death, its length, breadth, intensity, the power of Satan, the condemnation of the law. This is the agony of Gethsemane. All that was in death was concentrated in that little cup raised to the lips of our

Lord. The apostles had seen Jesus weep over Jerusalem; they had seen His tears, heard His groans, at the grave of Lazarus; but there was something so overwhelming in the agony of the garden that the inadequacy of language struggles to describe the awful hour. His soul was exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death. He went a little farther; He knelt down; He fell on His face; He cried unto God with strong crying and tears. Luke, the beloved physician, wrote, "And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." This was the hour and the power of darkness. But the voice of filial love had answered in eternity, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." Now the voice of filial submission answers again, "Not my will but thine be done." He arose and set His face to the redemptive task laid upon Him, outside the city gates to tread the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God against sin, to open the fountain filled with blood for the cleansing of men.

Thus the day of atonement came and the Lamb of God was sacrificed as the holy prophets had said since the world began. "In the volume of the book it is written of me." The day of the crucifixion was fixed by God from all eternity. It was the significance of the Pass-over, the meaning of the paschal lamb, the pouring out of the blood the symbol of the day of atonement. He did not ask the Father for twelve legions of angels

"for how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be?" (Matt. 26:54). "And all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man were accomplished." (Lk. 18:31).

The thirty pieces of silver Judas flung down on the Temple pavement were used to buy a field to bury strangers in as the roll of Jeremiah had said.

The rest of the disciples forsook Him and fled, the flock was scattered abroad, as the roll of Zechariah had said.

He was crucified between two robbers numbered among the transgressors, as the roll of Isaiah had said.

They parted His garments among them and cast lots upon His vesture, as David had said.

In His thirst they gave Him vinegar to drink, and as the Psalmist had said.

When the end of the day had come, the robbers who were dying slowly in their agony were dispatched with heavy blows that broke their bones. But Jesus, already cold in death, is left unmaimed, as the book of the law had said. "A bone of him shall not be broken."

To make sure of His death, the heavy, cold steel of a soldier's spear is thrust into His heart, as the roll of Zechariah had said, "They shall look on Him whom they pierced."

"Jesus died for our sins according to the Scriptures."

This atonement is final and all-sufficient. Our sins are put away by this sacrifice of Himself. The cross opened the flood-gates of love and pardon. Our redemption, forgiveness, deliverance, is procured by the death of the Lamb. There is not more remembrance of sins. The redemption Christ has offered is eternal.

Dear dying Lamb, The precious blood

Shall never lose its poer,

Till all the ransomed church of God

Be saved to sin no more.

Sin is forgiven. Satan, death, hell are vanquished. Everlasting righteousness is brought in. We are saved forever. We are no longer, through fear of death, subject to bondage. The wrath of God no longer abides upon us. Satan can no longer lay anything to the charge of God's elect. In the wounds of Jesus, in His blood, we read our eternal election and the infinite love of God to us.

II.

After his atoning death and glorious resurrection, our Lord ascended into heaven that he might be our all-sufficient Mediator and faithful High Priest.

Our risen, ascended glorified Lord is in heaven. "For Christ is entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." (Heb. 9:24). "But this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God." (Heb. 10:12). "And Jesus

came and spoke unto them, saying, All authority is given unto me in heaven and in earth." (Matt. 28:18). "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name." (Phil. 2:9). Through suffering, temptation, infirmity and conflict the Son of man hath ascended high above all principalities, powers, thrones, dominions, high above all heavens and every name that is named to appear in the very presence and glory of God for us. He who first descended into the lower parts of the earth hath entered as our faithful High-Priest, into the Holy of Holies. Our Lord Jesus who hungered and thirsted, who sighed and wept, who prayed and agonized, who was tempted by the devil, who died on the cross, who was bruised and descended into Hades, that same Lord Jesus is now our Friend and Intercessor in the most excellent glory in the very throne of the ever-blessed God-head. Oh, how great is Jesus! How great the glory of the Son! How able an Advocate, how marvelous a Mediator we have in Jesus!

The apostles were filled with amazement and wonder when Jesus was taken up from them and a cloud received Him out of their sight. The men of Galilee stood gazing up into heaven. But when the full import of the ascension was disclosed to them, they rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Jesus had not forsaken them, nor forgotten them. Jesus is in heaven. Christ is in heaven at the right hand of God. The Lamb is in the midst of the throne. He

is there to be the Head and Ruler of the Church. He is there to give gifts unto His children. "When He ascended up on high he led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men." (Eph. 4:8). He is there to save and to sustain His people. "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." (Heb. 7:25). The same Saviour who died for us ever lives to sanctify, to protect, and to keep us. "Because I live, he shall live also." His life and intercession are a pledge and a security for the life of all his people. "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." (Rom. 5:10). Restored to the favor of God by the death of His Son, we are now saved to the uttermost by His intercessory life in heaven. Truly, Jesus is our Moses who, with hands outstretched, prays for us in the height above. Jesus is our true Joshua who delivers us from the hands of the Spoilers. Jesus is our perfect High Priest who bears us on His loving heart and holds us in safety forevermore. He loves, He watches, He prays, He holds us fast and we shall never perish.

"Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our

infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly into the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Heb. 4:14-16).

Jesus is in heaven. Our great High Priest is in glory, exalted above all created angels. But He is the same Jesus we knew in the days of His flesh. "Tempted in all points like as we are." His recognitions are human still; the prints of suffering are upon Him. He is still Jesus of Nazareth. He is the crowned King of glory, but He is the same as the babe of Bethlehem, the Teacher of Galilee, the sufferer of Gethsemane, the Christ of the cross, the silent, the stricken Lord of the tomb. He is the same Jesus in heaven as He was on earth, as He was before the world began. "Jesus the same yesterday, today and forever." On the road to Damascus Paul met a resplendent One whose presence in light and glory shined above the brightness of a noon-day Syrian sun. "Who art thou?" the persecutor cried, blinded by the brightness of that light. And the Holy One answered, "I am Jesus of Nazareth." The face shining above the brightness of the sun is the face that drew sinners to His feet. The hand that holds the seven stars is the hand that was laid in blessing upon little children. The breast girt about with a golden girdle is the breast upon which the beloved disciple laid his head at the last supper. He is the same Jesus.

It is sometimes thought that for a limited period and for a definite purpose our Lord took part in frail humanity, but when that purpose was achieved the man forever perished and the Lord ascended, a Spirit, to unite again with pure, unmixed Deity. But how different the testimony of those who saw Him! With what pains do the Scriptures set forth "the many infalliable proofs" by which He showed Himself the same Jesus alive after His passion. The beloved disciple in the empty tomb recognized the way He folded a napkin, "and he saw and believed." Mary recognized the way He pronounced her name, and cried "My Master!" The two disciples at Emmaus recognized the way He pronounced the blessing at the table, and they echoed the glad refrain, "The Lord is risen indeed." Thomas looked at the print of his nails in His hands, beheld the scar in His side and said, "My Lord and my God." And when they yet believed not for joy, He said, "Handle me, and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." And He said, "Have ye here any meat? And he did eat before them." John saw Him in the grey mist of the early morning standing by the sea of Galilee, and he cried to his friend, Simon Peter. "It is the Lord." The same Lord from heaven Hohn saw again on the isle of Patmos, who also laid His hand upon the beloved disciple and repeated the familiar words, "Fear not". He is the same Jesus. He took upon Him our nature and that human nature he assumed in Bethlehem's cradle He never relinquished nor laid aside. In that nature He rose again; in that same

body, no longer the body of humiliation but the body of His glory, He ascended into heaven, forever God, forever man. Forever God-man. He reigns in heaven. The humanity of Jesus is now enthroned in glory. He that sits upon the throne is our kinsman. He is one with us by a link which can never be severed. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." (Heb. 2:14).

We have the same compassionate Saviour in heaven that we had upon earth. Kingly exaltation has made no change in His heart. He ascended into the holiest, into the region of perfection and glory, but not to forget us who are still in the wilderness of this world. As He loved His own unto the end, He loves us now and throughout the ages. In that sanctuary of blessedness and glory, Jesus, who was tempted in all things as we are, is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He remembers His earthly experience. "In all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest. For in that He himself hath suffered being tempted he is able to succor them that are tempted." (Heb. 2:17,18). He knows our frailty, the painfulness of the conflict, the weakness of the flesh. What Jesus was, Jesus is; He can be touched now because He suffered then. Just as the results remain upon His body, the print of the nails and the scar of the spear,

so do the results remain upon His soul. He can be moved with the feeling of our infirmities because He Himself suffered, being tempted. When He hungered in the wilderness, when He thirsted on the cross, when He sat weary by the well, when the tears streamed down His cheeks at Bethany, when He cried in an agony in Gethesmane, He came to know the sorrows and the anguish with which human life is filled. Hunger, pain, sorrow, death were made real to Him. The broad road, easy and attractive to the flesh, was open to our Saviour. The way of humility, obedience, denial and suffering was narrow to Jesus also. He suffered, being tempted.

Through suffering and heartache He became our merciful Mediator, our heavenly Intercessor, our faithful High Priest. "For it became him in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." Though He was a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; and being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him. (Heb. 2:10; 5:8,9.)

Our Lord in heaven is One who experienced every difficulty, tasted every sorrow, who felt all our infirmities, who bore all our sicknesses, who sighed over the misery that is in the world. He is One who through suffering is made our perfect and all-sufficient Saviour.

Sensitive to our infirmities, His sympathy and feeling

have led to this: "Grace to help in time of need."

Amongst the multitudes as He walks He detects the individual touch of faith. "And a great multitude followed Him and thronged Him. And behold a woman came behind and touched the border of His garment; for she said within herself, If I do but touch His garment, I shall be made whole. And Jesus said, Who touched Me? Peter replied, Master the multitudes throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, who touched me? But Jesus said, yes, but some one did touch me; for I perceive that healing power is gone out of me.

Where is the border of Christ's garment today? Is there no hem for us to touch? Are we the poorer because Christ has gone back to the Father? No, our living Lord still walks in our midst today. Up to the mighty heart of God, to the very throne of grace, go the sorrows, tears, and sighs of our lives. We in our times may also come with our ailing bodies, fevered minds, sin-sick souls, and in faith touch the border of His garment and be made whole again.

The healing of His seamless dress

Is by our beds of pain

We touch Him in life's throng and press

And we are whole again.

Down through the ages He has been doing in His risen life the same wonders of grace and power that He did when

He walked in Judea and Galilee centuries ago. Since then, how many millions of crushed hearts have heard Him say just what He said of old, "Come unto me, all ye who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." How many a sinful soul has heard Him say, "Be thou clean." How many a penitent has heard Him say as distinctly as He said to the dying thief, "Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise." To how many a bereaved soul has He repeated the consolation, I am the resurrection and the life; He that believeth in me shall never die." At how many an Emmaus has He made Himself known in the breaking of bread. How often has He said to trembling and dispirited disciples just what He said in the upper room, "Let not your heart be troubled; neither let it be afraid." Through the years His voice has been heard speaking peace and comfort and hope, and His presence has been bestowing it.

"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." The throne of majesty and righteousness is unto us a throne of grace. "Come boldly." Come as you are, say what you feel, ask what you need. Pour out your heart before Him. Confess your sins, your fears, your wandering thoughts. How fully, openly, may we speak to God in the name of Him who went through all our sorrows and trials and heartaches. For this purpose He was tempted, that He might be able to succor them that are

tempted. He is filled with tender compassion. This belongs to the perfection of His priesthood. He knows from His experience on earth how poor, weak, sinful His disciples are. He is prepared to receive the wounded, sin-stained believer, to dry the tears of Simon Peter, to say to Paul, oppressed by the thorn in the flesh, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

"Come boldly." Draw near in full assurance. We trust and are safe. The feet may tremble but the rock on which they are set standeth firm and immovable. All the help we need is treasured up for us in heavenly places. His intercession possesses omnipotence. The government is on His shoulder and the Father heareth Him always.

"Come boldly." Jesus belongs to the sinner. From His infancy in Bethlehem to the garden of Gethsemane, from the agony of the cross to His ascension high above all heavens, He belongs to us. His obedient life, His prayers and tears, His sacrifice on the cross, His glorious resurrection, His intercession in glory, all are ours. In the heavenly glory He is ours. In Jesus God is ours. In the ocean of His love, in the fullness of His grace we can rejoice. Our very life is hid with Christ in God. We are in the bosom of Jesus who is in the bosom of the Father. Hold fast, brother, and come boldly!

Jesus is Lord and there are none in heaven or earth to share in any way or to any extent His mediatorial throne. We have no need of any saint, or any deified virgin, or any priestly intercession through which we reach the heart of God, "for there is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." Come directly! Come boldly! Come in the name of Jesus alone. Look unto Him, oh, look unto Him, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth. We have the real and substantial temple, the great High Priest, the true altar, the one sacrifice, the true access into the very presence of the Most High. "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider, oh consider, the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus."

III.

And last, our text does say that our Saviour is coming again that He might bring to us the substance and consummation of our final salvation. He is our all-sufficient Lord and King.

"And unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." (Heb. 9:28).

From everlasting unto everlasting the King and Lord of Heaven has been coming, has come, is coming again, founding and to found a kingdom that shall endure forever. History shall find its ultimate meaning in His manifestation

And the full establishment of His glorious dominion. The future belongs to Him, the ultimate victory is His by immutable and eternal decree. He is the ruler of the age to come; He is the Lord of the new humanity; He is the hope and the Saviour of the world.

He is surely coming. "For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will tarry." (Heb. 10:37). "I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also." (John 14:3). "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go." (Acts 1:11). "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints." (II Thess. 1:7,10). "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints." (Jude 14.) "Behold, he cometh with clouds and every eye shall see him." (Rev. 1:7).

When he cometh, our beloved dead who sleep in Jesus, shall be raised incorruptible and we shall all be changed. A Saviour who would leave in the dust of the ground those who trust in Him is not the Lord of the New Testament. Ultimately there shall be the complete redemption of the purchased possession and not a bone shall be left in the regions of death, not a relic for the devil to gloat over. When the last one enrolled in God's Book has been

saved, when the last prodigal son has come home, then the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." "For this we say unto you by the work of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not precede them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first." (II Thess. 4:15,16). "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and becomes the first-fruits of them that slept. Christ the first-fruits; afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming. For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (I Cor. 15:19, 20, 23, 25, 26, 54, 57).

When He cometh there shall be a re-newal, a re-birth, a re-making of all creation. "Behold, I make all things new." (Rev. 21:5). All outward creation shall manifest the presence and peace of God. There shall be a new heaven and a new earth. For all "the creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the

glorious liberty of the children of God." (Rom. 8:21).

We shall have a new home in a new and heavenly city, the New Jerusalem. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away." (Ps. 21:2-4). Our inheritance is beyond the blight of winds and frost. The leaf never fades, time does not waste its imperishable bloom. No graves are dug on its ever-green hills. No sin enters its domain. Sorrow and weeping may be for the night, but joy cometh with the morning.

We shall have a new and unending life of peace and blessedness. Oppression shall cease from among men and the voice of cruelty shall no longer be heard. Our great Lord and King shall rule in every heart and life. The will of God shall be done in earth as it is in heaven. The nations shall walk in the name of the Lord forever. "They shall beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks. Nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war

any more." (Micah 4:3). "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." (Isa. 11:6,9). "The kingdoms of this world are become the Kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever. Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus." (Rev. 11:15; 22:20).