

Hebrews 9:11-14

But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) 12 he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. 13 For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, 14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

Sacrifice after sacrifice had been offered in the temple, but none of them could take sin away once for all. The next day brought new offerings, as the new day brought new sin. Those sacrifices weren't sufficient. They were rather shadows, pointing to the all-sufficient sacrifice to come, the perfect Lamb of God whose blood, marking the doorposts of our hearts through faith, would deliver us from death and remove our sins.

How has your conscience been? Has it been troubled by something you are planning? A sin against conscience is always a sin. Beware. The conscience serves an important purpose, and we do well to heed its alarms. Is your conscience troubled about something you've already done? Don't file it away or try to silence it through inattention. No, examine yourself. Your conscience is acting like test results at the physician's office, indicating illness. Putting off treatment will only exacerbate, not only the symptoms, but the underlying sickness. Why hesitate to flee to Him who we are assured throughout the Scriptures receives repentant sinners and declares them His saints?

So what do we do when our conscience speaks up, chimes in, or gnaws at us? We do well to turn to Christ. Are you ashamed of your sin? Christ was not ashamed become and pay for it by His cross. And He promises to free you from its dominion and place you, in turn, under His rule. Why, after all, would we ever want to remain in something that weighs us down with guilt and clouds, if not severs, our relationship with our heavenly Father? Are you not sure your sin is even a sin? Turn to Christ in His Word or in the person of His called servants, His ambassadors, for counsel and consolation. Are you not sure that there can be grace enough for you? It is not just any blood that has been shed for your salvation, but the very blood of God made man, Christ's blood, the once for all sacrifice for sin, the atoning sacrifice, your propitiation. Life is too short to spend in dead works, halfhearted religiosity, blushing, nervous, depressing service under the burden of a closet full of skeletons, of transgressions you are too proud to confess. Isn't pride a terrible thing? It often leads us into sin and then keeps us from acknowledging it. It hampers us on both sides of things. Much better is humility. Humility is not only a virtue and a gift of God, it is liberating, because humility is willing confess what it has done and earned and then to instead receive what it can never earn, the fruits of what it has not done, or not done well enough, through the obedience of Christ and of faith: grace and mercy from the King of Heaven who was crowned with thorns the King of the Jews to bestow on us the crown of life.

In faith I place my hand
On that dear head divine,
As penitential here I stand
And lay on Him my sin.
Believing, we rejoice
To see the curse remove;
We bless the Lamb with cheerful voice

And sing His bleeding love. (CW 128, verses 3, 5)