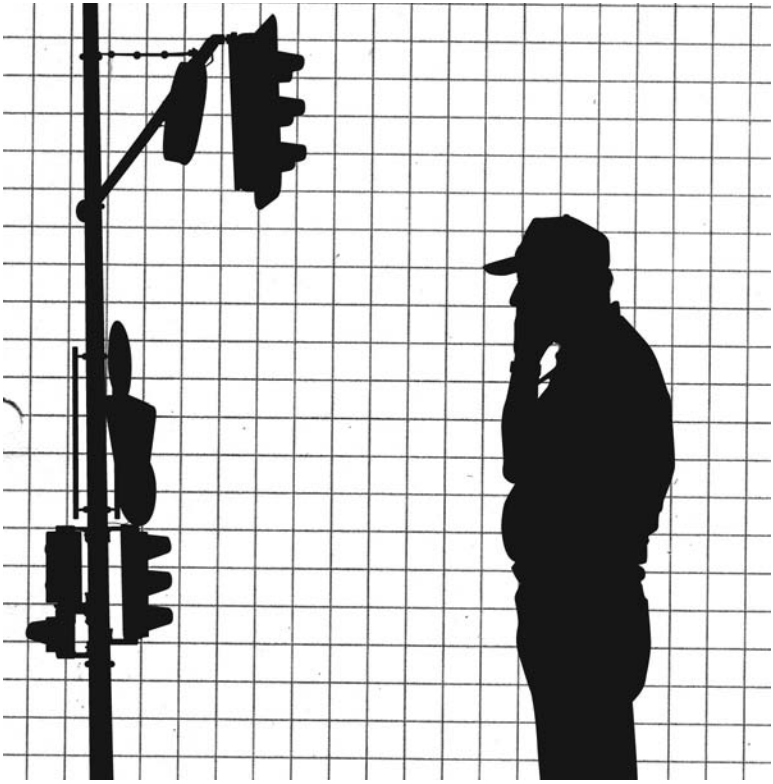


Benefits of Christ's Atoning Sacrifice



“Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them” (Heb. 7:25, NIV).

The Other Side of World Disasters

Sabbath
December 6

INTRODUCTION

2 Cor. 8:9

On March 21, 2000, a tragedy hit Kenya in which 68 male students lost their lives in a hostel blaze. Three years later, a similar disaster occurred in which dignitaries, including six members of parliament, lost their lives in a plane crash in northern Kenya. Today, as I write this article, Kenya is full of grief, mourning the death of nine crew members and more than a hundred passengers aboard a Kenya Airways plane, which crashed just three days ago in Douwalla, Cameroon.

Whatever we do, wherever we are, there is nothing that claims our attention more than disasters. The daily stuff that comes with TV and newspapers is full of tragedies, sorrow, and hopelessness. We all know what sin has done to our lives, because in one way or another, we have come into direct contact with its effects. We sometimes fear for our own lives, knowing that however hard we try, life on this earth will culminate in death. Neither our education, wealth, social position, nor our best possessions can assure us of eternity.

However, as Christians, we know that there is hope beyond the grave, that there is Someone constantly pleading with God on our behalf. As

you go about your day, do you ever stop to think that amidst the sin that continues to spot our lives, Christ is always asking God to forgive you and to help you become more like Him? How often do you pause during the week to remember that He does not want anyone on this earth to perish, but to be reconciled to Him?

Christ's atoning sacrifice serves to bring us back to our Creator, however sinful we are. Our daily prayers are presented to God by the voice of His only Son. It is for this reason that we are given the opportunity to live today and tomorrow—and for eternity when Christ returns. Our study this week will shed more light into our understanding of Christ's atoning sacrifice, so that we might be better able to avail ourselves of its benefits.

**There is nothing that claims
our attention more than
disasters.**

The Benefits of His Priestly Work

LOGOS

Rom. 8:34–39; 1 Cor. 15:16–18; Eph. 1:3; Col. 1:16, 17; Heb. 7:25; 1 Pet. 3:21, 22; 1 John 1:9

Assurance (Rom. 8:34–39; 1 John 1:9)

We may not know what actually inspired the mind of Fanny J. Crosby to write the lyrics to the song “Blessed Assurance.” However, in my own opinion, I strongly feel that she might have been thinking about what Christ does on our behalf as a result of His atonement for our sins. In Romans 8:34–39, Paul sets forth this assurance to the Romans, to instill in their minds the awareness that we enjoy the love of God through the intercession of Christ on our behalf. Through Christ’s priestly work, the bridge is mended between us and our Creator; and though sinful as we are, His love redeems us. This assurance is ours as long as we accept Christ as our Savior and our life reflects His example. We get this assurance of God’s love through His only Son (John 3:16), who is the bridge between us and our heavenly Father (John 14:6).

There is one God, and one Mediator between God and humankind, the God-man, Christ Jesus.

“Far from robbing the believer of his assurance with Christ, the doctrine of the sanctuary sustains it. It illustrates and clarifies to his mind the plan of salvation. His penitent heart rejoices to grasp the reality of

Christ’s substitutionary death for his sins as prefigured in its sacrifices. Furthermore, his faith reaches upward to find its meaning in a *living* Christ, his priestly Advocate in the very presence of the holy God.’”¹

Salvation (Heb. 7:25; 1 Pet. 3:21, 22)

The work of mediation, which Christ does on our behalf in the heavenly sanctuary, means that our salvation is guaranteed as long as we choose to lean on Him. The power of His intercession assists in cleansing us of our sins. Before His return in the clouds of heaven, our Savior is busy working out our salvation one individual at a time. “We are now living in the great day of atonement. . . . All who would have their names retained in the book of life should now, in the few remaining days of their probation, afflict their souls before God by sorrow for sin and true repentance.”²

Belonging and Destiny (Col. 1:16, 17)

From the beginning, our heavenly Father has always vested power on His only Son to rule the universe. Shall we not be happy to know that Christ, through whom God created the whole universe, and the One who sets everything in their proper place, is also our personal Intercessor before the Father? As we pray every day, He presents our petitions before God with His own voice, to ask on our behalf. This gives us a deep sense of belonging and destiny. Since we are both the subjects and the objects of sin before God, this mediatory function of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary places can have great impact on our spiritual life—He is both our Advocate and our Judge. What do we lack if the Commander of heaven and the angels, the Judge of all the earth, the Majesty of heaven, and the King of glory is also our Intercessor? “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9, NIV).

Resurrection and New Life (1 Cor. 15:16–18; Eph. 1:3)

Our union with Christ gives us the opportunity to attain a new life. His resurrection assures us that we also will be raised from the dead when He comes again. His work as our Intercessor lifts us from the depths of sin, to the greatest heights of Christian living. By God’s grace, Christ arose to return to heaven to be the bridge between us and God. And with Christ as our Mediator in the heavenly sanctuary, we will feel the restraining influence of the Holy Spirit guiding our lives according to His principles and freeing us from condemnation. Christ’s mediation shows that He “is the connecting link between God and man. He has promised His personal intercession. He places the whole virtue of His righteousness on the side of the suppliant. . . . He promises to hear and answer our supplications.”³

REACT

1. What benefits do you personally derive from Christ’s atoning sacrifice?
2. What do you think you need to do on a personal basis to enjoy the benefits of Christ’s atonement?
3. The introduction to this week’s lesson talks about the disasters that occur in the world on a daily basis. How can the benefits of Christ’s work in the heavenly sanctuary ease the pain of those affected by such disasters?

1. Frank Holbrook, “Light in the Shadows,” *Journal of Adventist Education*, October–November 1983, p. 35; as quoted in *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines* (1988 edition), p. 327.

2. *The Great Controversy*, pp. 489, 490.

3. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 178.

Monday
December 8

Personalizing the Benefits of Christ's Work as High Priest

TESTIMONY

Heb. 11:1

"The intercession of Christ in man's behalf in the sanctuary above is as essential to the plan of salvation as was his death upon the cross. By his death he began that work which after his resurrection he ascended to complete in heaven. We must by faith enter within the veil, 'whither the forerunner is for us entered.' Hebrews 6:20. There the light from the cross of Calvary is reflected. There we may gain a clearer insight into the mysteries of redemption. The salvation of man is accomplished at an infinite expense to heaven; the sacrifice made is equal to the broadest demands of the broken law of God. Jesus has opened the way to the Father's throne, and through his mediation the sincere desire of all who come to him in faith may be presented before God."¹

The day of the Lord is drawing nearer and nearer, calling for spiritual vigilance at all times. As we recount the blessings God has bestowed upon us, it is important to know that "all who have truly repented of sin, and by faith claimed the blood of Christ as their atoning sacrifice, have had pardon entered against their names in the books of heaven; as they have become partakers of the righteousness of Christ, and their characters are found to be in harmony with the law of God, their sins will be blotted out, and they themselves will be accounted worthy of eternal life."²

**"We must by faith enter
within the veil."**

REACT

1. If Christ is already our Mediator in the heavenly sanctuary, why must we continue praying to claim the benefits of His work on our behalf?

2. Reflect upon your acts, your words, and even your secret motives. Based on what you discover during your moments of reflection, do you think you are worthy of Christ's atoning sacrifice? Why or why not? How can you become worthy?

1. *The Great Controversy*, p. 489.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 483.

The Type and the Antitype of Atonement

EVIDENCE

Heb. 9:22, 23

For more than 150 years now, the subject of atonement has been perceived by Adventists as the process of remission or putting away of sins. The ordinances pertaining to this work were performed in the earth's sanctuary, which was a symbolic service of the "example and shadow of heavenly things" (Heb. 8:5). It is clear from the Bible how the ministration of the earth's sanctuary was conducted. Involved in this service and sacrifice were priests ministering daily in the holy place of the sanctuary. Then, there was the special work of atonement, done by the high priest, once every year. This service was done in the Most Holy Place of the sanctuary. On this special occasion, two tender unblemished kid goats and a high priest were involved. One kid was chosen to be slain for the Lord as a sin offering and "the other lot for the scapegoat" (Lev. 16:8). Read Leviticus 16:21, 22.

We can learn several truths from the atonement service. "The whole ceremony was designed to impress the Israelites with the holiness of God and his abhorrence of sin; and, further, to show them that they could not come in contact with sin without becoming polluted."¹

**We can learn several truths
from the atonement service.**

We also learn that as much as there was a substitute for the sinner, the sin was not canceled by the blood of the victim. The high priest as the mediator therefore bore the sins to himself, and by placing his hands upon the head of the live goat, transferred them to the goat. The disappearance of the goat with the sins of the people to an uninhabited land was the ultimate relief and cleansing of the tabernacle from the weight of human sins. Now in the real sanctuary in heaven, it is the work of atonement, preparatory to His second coming, that Christ has been doing for more than a century. He entered into the Most Holy Place of the sanctuary with His own blood, to perform His work as a High Priest, interceding for every sinful individual. By virtue of His own blood, Christ will remove all the sins of His people from the sanctuary in heaven at the close of His atonement work. The sins will then be placed upon Satan, the author of sin, to bear the final penalty. Just as "the scapegoat was sent away into a land not inhabited, never to come again into the congregation of Israel, so will Satan be forever banished from the presence of God and His people, and he will be blotted from existence in the final destruction of sin and sinners."²

1. *The Great Controversy*, p. 419.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 422.

Wednesday
December 10

The Road to Obtain the Benefits

HOW-TO

Heb. 7:25

By His death on the cross, Christ made adequate provision for every individual of the human race. He took our sins upon Himself and suffered the consequences on our behalf. Now He intercedes for us in the heavenly courts. This intercession will end at the final judgment, when Christ will pronounce a verdict upon every person. Therefore, our present life must reflect what we want to achieve in our walk with Christ. That is why through His work as our High Priest, Jesus has made it possible for us to choose now, because “when the work of the investigative judgment closes, the destiny of all will have been decided for life or death.”* Following are steps you can take to help you make the right choice:

Humiliation before God. “Those who are humble are happy. The earth will belong to them” (Matt. 5:5, NCV). We cannot obtain the promises of our Father if we are not humble before Him. Humility walks hand in hand with self-dedication and patience.

Prayer and fasting. Nothing else will do so much for us as an experience of deep devotion and prayer. Christ is doing His part for us now. We must reciprocate with activities that will keep us in His presence and help us to know God’s will in our lives.

**For us our Lord ascended,
and for us He lives.**

Deep soul searching. As Christ pleads His blood before the Father on our behalf, we should search our hearts. The cleansing activity that occurs in the heavenly sanctuary is a reflection of what should take place in our own hearts.

Behold the promise. From that scene of heavenly joy, there comes back to earth the echo of Christ’s own words. Read these words in John 20:17. The family of heaven and the family of earth are one. For us our Lord ascended, and for us He lives. “Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them” (Heb. 7:25, NIV).

REACT

What would you add to this list that suits your talents and abilities to help you decide for life or death?

**The Great Controversy*, p. 490.

A Personal Meaning Behind Christ's Intercession

Thursday
December 11

OPINION

Rom. 8:35

This week's lesson revealed to me the wonderful work Christ has been doing on my behalf since His ascension. I now agree with Paul that there is actually nothing that can separate us from Christ's love (Rom. 8:35–39). Surely, I cannot even remember the number of times I have sinned against God, but Christ knows, having placed an equal number of pardon pleas before God on my behalf. Christ's atoning sacrifice draws us closer to God. Read Hebrews 4:15, 16.

This is why I am confident that the assurance we have in Christ's atoning sacrifice will help us prevail against Satan. Our warfare against him is lifelong. "We have before us a warfare,—a lifelong conflict with Satan and his seductive temptations. The enemy will use every argument, every deception, to entangle the soul; and in order to win the crown of life, we must put forth earnest, persevering effort."

Thank God He has made every provision for me, so that I can be victorious. However, even if I choose to or accidentally sin, I have an Advocate with the Father, pleading on my behalf for cleansing and forgiveness. In any possible temptation, I believe God will send His holy angels and the power of His Holy Spirit to assist me in my struggles against my cultivated or inherited tendencies to sin.

His love and mercy reach to the lowest level.

This shows that there is no temptation too powerful for God to handle, and it is wonderful that when we do sin, He still accepts us if we return to Him in genuine faith. I praise God for His unfathomable mercy and love, which He has provided through His Son. His heart of compassionate love is always ready to cleanse and forgive. Because of his atoning sacrifice, His love and mercy reach to the lowest level, picks us up from there, and returns us to His side.

"Behold the life and character of Christ, and study His mediatorial work. Here is infinite wisdom, infinite love, infinite justice, infinite mercy."²

1. *Messages to Young People*, p. 104.

2. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 59.

Friday
December 12

The Benefactors and the Beneficiaries

EXPLORATION

Heb. 7:25

CONCLUDE

God is good all the time. Jesus is good all the time. Sometimes we think that God is angry enough with us that we need Jesus to appease Him, so He intercedes on our behalf before God. However, the Bible clearly teaches that both the Father (God) and the Son (Jesus) are on the same team. They are both on our side, defending us against Satan's lies and accusations. They live to intercede for us. They're rich benefactors of grace, and we're blessed beneficiaries of their grace. Enjoy it!

CONSIDER

- Looking up the story behind the hymn "Amazing Grace."
- Singing "Amazing Grace" in a small group and discussing the message it has.
- Choosing a problem facing your community and starting an intercessory prayer chain. But don't stop there. Make plans to help alleviate or solve the problem, and carry out those plans.
- Learning about using the sanctuary model of prayer.
- Reading and discussing the book *Left to Tell* by Immaculee Ilibagiza.
- Starting a Bible study on the book of Hebrews.

CONNECT

Chuck Swindoll, *The Grace Awakening*.

Video: *The Diary of Immaculee*.

Film: *Beyond the Gates of Splendor*.