

## Hebrews 2:9-11

The Letter to the Hebrews was written to Jewish Christians who were under pressure to surrender their faith in Jesus and to return to Judaism. The Roman Emperor Nero had outlawed Christianity and persecution of Christians had broken out. At the same time Judaism was legal and under state protection. This letter was written to show the advantages of following Christ. It shows that Jesus and His work is the fulfillment of the Old Testament. He was the all sufficient Messiah and Savior. To return to Judaism would be turning away from the treasure and clinging to the old chest that once held it.

We too are tempted to turn our backs on Christ and so we need to consider for ourselves, "*What is the Benefit of being a Christian?* Is it worth the grief and sacrifice? Our text shows us that it indeed is.

Take a good look at Jesus. Who is He? Earlier in this letter to the Hebrews we hear Him called the Heir of all things, the Maker of the Universe. He is said to be equal with the Father. He sustains all things by His powerful Word. The Revelation of St. John says of Him that He is worthy to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise.

Now, people, consider what Jesus did. Because of God's amazing love for sinners, He was made lower than the angels for a little while. He whom the angels worshipped lowered Himself. He became a human being and took the form of a servant. He did so that He might taste of death for all.

All people deserved to be swallowed up by death because of their sins. Scripture says the wages of sin is death. As long as one is guilty of sin death is scary. The skeletons and half decayed corpses of Halloween do not begin to communicate the frightening aspect of death. Death is the universal punishment of sin and the result of God's anger against sin. But temporal death is but the beginning of terrors. For after temporal death come the suffering, shame and everlasting contempt of hell. But see here that Jesus swallowed up the death of all. What does that mean? As all people's substitute Jesus took the responsibility of the world's sin and suffered its punishment that is all the death and hell of the entire world.

After He did this He was raised from the dead and crowned with glory. He ascended into heaven and was seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.

Now, Hebrews, do you want to turn your back on Him? He was not content to sit by and let you go to your damnation but He came down that you might have God's forgiveness and eternal life.

Before Jesus was born some Jews read about the glory of the Messiah and imagined He would set up an earthly Kingdom. They felt He would establish Israel as the greatest country on earth and He would rule supreme. When Jesus came as a humble man, when He suffered shame and death many were disillusioned and disappointed in Him. They failed to see His true glory. They failed to grasp the true reason for His coming. What kind of a Messiah was this? The Letter to the Hebrews explained the real purpose for Christ's coming.

What Jesus did was according to the plan of God; God for whom all things exists. Everything exists for the glory of God. He is also the Creator of all things and it was He who made Jesus successful as the Savior through suffering. This is how God, out of love, chose to save sinners, namely, by permitting His Son to endure suffering and death.

In so doing, Jesus became the author of man's salvation. As an artist creates a beautiful painting, as a skilled cabinetmaker produces a grand piece of furniture, Jesus by His labor in man's behalf created salvation for mankind. That was His purpose for coming to earth.

So He brings many sons to glory. One might wonder why the word sons is used here. Why not daughters? It is because in ancient times sons received the inheritance. All believers, men and women alike are to be treated as heirs of God and they look forward to a heavenly inheritance. Instead of the shame and pain of hell, heavenly glory awaits them.

In Christ the Jewish Christians had much more than an earthly kingdom; they had the prospect of heavenly glory. Why would they then turn their back on Him?

Another benefit of remaining true to Jesus was that His followers became members of His family. It could be that the Jewish Christians were disheartened. They lost the love of their family. Ah, but now in Christ they became members of a far better family- the family of God.

Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. To be made holy is to be set apart for God. Jesus makes one God's own possession. Christ by His work washed away the filth of sin and made them holy. He restored their relationship with God so that He became their true Father and they His true children. Both they and Jesus are children of God with all the rights and privileges.

Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers. How nice it is to have a big brother who will look after you and love you. How nice it is to have a brother who is always near and always willing and able to help in every need. That is what believers in Christ have. That is the Holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints. It is a brotherhood like none other. Members of God's family are closer than any club or fraternity. Their fellowship will last forever.

Again Jewish Christians, do you want to give this up? Of course not.

Now just as those persecuted Jewish Christians were tempted to give up their faith, so are we. Perhaps for the present we are not in danger of being thrown to the lions, yet there are still many forces at work trying to discourage us. Some have unbelievers in their families who exert pressure on them. Some have friends or teachers who try to convince them that their faith is nothing but superstition. They say in so many words, "No intelligent person believes the Bible anymore." Some would call a sincere Christian too strict. After all there are many religions in the world. "Beside," our enemies say, "what good has your being a Christian brought you? You are missing out on money, fame, fun and friendship and what is it for? Pie in the sky by and by?" Yes, it costs to be a Christian. However, listen to the writer to the Hebrews. Compare the losses with the gains. In Christ you have the love of God, the forgiveness of sins and everlasting life. Leave Jesus? No, never.

Let this be our song: Lamb of God we fall before you. Humbly trusting in Your cross. Our great joy is to adore you. All things else are but dross. Amen.