

Once

How do we reconcile the fact that Jesus died once for all with our bad choices after we become Christians?

Jesus' sacrifice was a one-time event (Hebrews 7:25 – 10:14)

- Hebrews 7:27 Who does not need daily, as those High Priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.
- Hebrews 9:12 Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.
- Hebrews 9:25 – 28 Not that He should offer Himself often, as the High Priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with the blood of another – He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many.
- Hebrews 10:10 By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus once for all.

How does the blood of Jesus cleanse those who had not yet been born?

The explanation that the perfect sacrifice of the past is applied across time to the present is illogical. If that were so, then the High Priest (or Melchizedek or Abraham or Noah) could have offered a sacrifice once and simply called that event to God's mind when needed.

- Hebrews 9:9 Which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience.
- Hebrews 9:14 Cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God

How does the blood of Jesus account for the bad choices made by Christians?

Many teach that the blood of Jesus continually cleanses us, based on a doubtful reading of 1 John 1:7. If that were true, Jesus is being sacrificed almost continuously, which Hebrews 7 – 10 refutes. We need an explanation that works with both (and other) contexts.

Many teach that the blood of Jesus is spiritual, so time is without meaning.

Therefore, the blood can be applied at all times. This explanation assumes that God has been explaining things as He sees them without regard to the limitations of human conception. Instead, we must assume that God's explanation fits with our ability of understand.

If Jesus' sacrifice is not continuous, what function does Jesus perform?

- Hebrews 7:25 Since He always lives to make intercession for them.
- 1 John 2:1 If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

After becoming Christians, do we need a sacrifice to account for our bad choices?

- Was our first anointing with blood similarly ineffective as that of the former High Priests (Hebrews 7:27)?
- Romans 14:23 Whatever is not from faith is sin.
- Ephesians 1:7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

- Ephesians 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have now been brought near by the blood of Christ.
- Romans 6:10 – 11 For the death that He died He died to sin once for all, but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise, you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- Hebrews 9:26 He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.
- Galatians 3:6 Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him as righteousness.
- Romans 4:22 Therefore it was account to him as righteousness.

Often, God’s illustrations become the goal, so the application is lost.

The Law was “fulfilled” in Jesus and again by Christians. The Law was a gigantic illustration built by God (not a prediction, as the inaccurate understanding of “fulfilled” would imply). The illustration was brought to its intended applications in Jesus and in Christians. The contexts of the references below draw the comparison between the right-and-wrong mentality and the faith mentality. As was Paul’s point in Romans 1 – 5, the Law illustrated the hopelessness of the right-and-wrong mentality. We will fail every time. The “fulfillment” of this illustration is found in the success of faith. (As has been discussed previously, concluding that sin does not matter is ridiculous. In the faith system, bad behavior is inconsistent with our nature and with our purpose as the earthly Temple.)

- Matthew 5:17 “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.”
- Romans 8:4 That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Inconsistent explanations concerning the sacrifice of Jesus arise from an inaccurate understanding of faith, Judgment, and the power that faith provides. Most people limit faith to understanding that Jesus is God (or weaker statements of the same general thrust). Then, they set out to do the best they can without ever leaving the right-and-wrong mentality. They understand that they have sinned, and consider sin to be inevitable throughout life. This leads to the need for the continuous sacrifice of Jesus. But Jesus was sacrificed once – not once for each believer or once for each sin – once. We are justified by His faith (Romans 4:19 – 5:10). Our faith is reckoned to us as righteousness, as those who have the faith of Abraham (Romans 4:16). This faith, along with the examples in Hebrews 11, sets out to accomplish that which is clearly impossible by human standards simply because God promised it. If we don’t accomplish the impossible, we do not have the faith of Abraham. Judgment is based on faith, not works. Those who accomplish the impossible will pass. Those who do not will fail. Those who never leave the right-and-wrong mentality will be judged according to their own standard, and fail. As a benefit (and a challenge of faith) that was not available to Abraham, we have the Spirit dwelling in us that provides the power to overcome the world and its lusts.

The sacrifice of Jesus provides access to God. Since creation, faith has been the sole criterion for judgment. God chose to complete the illustration of His system of justice in Jesus (Galatians 4:4, Colossians 1:10). The Old Testament records several who lived prior to Jesus who understood faith. People were judged on the basis of faith (Hebrew 3:19). I think the difference is that, before Jesus, God offered many manifestations of His grace for people to observe, as a basis for faith, not just in Israel, but primarily so. After Jesus, those miraculous gifts of grace, which were illustrations, have been fulfilled in Jesus’ faith.