

# The Sufficiency of the Cross-Work of Christ

By Larry E Miller

Official Roman Catholic doctrine declares the necessity of the death of Christ as payment for sin. Nevertheless, for most Roman Catholics, the **sufficiency** of the work of Christ on the cross is a missing ingredient. Perhaps it's another indication that the **Catholic** church's doctrine and practices have **replaced** the Bible-based truth of salvation (as the way to heaven) in the minds of most Roman Catholics.

***Thus, these erroneous man-made replacements create lasting uncertainty of one's own eternal salvation. Therefore, we need to be diligent here as witnesses.***

By sufficiency, I'm saying the physical and spiritual death of Jesus Christ on the cross is the **ONLY** required (and adequate) payment for the penalty for all the sin God pronounced on mankind. Jesus' crucifixion **ALONE** satisfies the just demands of God. Therefore, He can justify, forgive us of our spiritual rebellion and all sins, and deliver us from condemnation while remaining a just God and providing spiritually dead people eternal life (Romans 3:26).

When Christ cried, "It is finished!" as recorded in John 19:30, He declared His substitutionary death to be the **final and sufficient** sacrifice for **ALL** sin. One may choose to trust in this sufficient sacrifice for deliverance from condemnation, for forgiveness, and for eternal life—or one may reject this provision and thus spend eternity in hell, separated from God, having never accepted Christ's payment.

It appears that many, if not most, typical Roman Catholics believe in the necessity of the cross of Christ for salvation, *but they don't believe in its sufficiency*. According to the typical Roman Catholic's understanding of personal salvation, a penalty had to be paid for sin, and the gate to heaven had to be opened, **BUT, ongoing payment for sin is required via penance in time and/or purgatory after death (the aforementioned non-biblical "system" devised and perpetuated by Catholic church doctrine and practices)**.

*Therefore, when evangelizing these lost souls, it's important that we focus on the cross-work of Christ to have paid the final, once-for-all sufficient penalty for our sin as our substitute.*

*The topic of sufficiency is important enough to provide the following summary from the book of Hebrews.*

## Brief Summary of Teaching in Hebrews Regarding the Sufficiency of Christ

In Hebrews 9–10, we find excellent biblical support for the view of sufficiency, which declares the one death of Christ as **satisfactory payment** for sin for all time. A prominent theme of Hebrews is the superiority of Christ. In His person, He is superior to the prophets, the angels, and Moses. In His role as a priest, He is superior in qualification (5:1–10) and in His work He is superior to any Old Testament sacrifices or “God-appeasing,” law-keeping (9–10).

The important term *Hapax* occurs in 9:26–28. The basic meaning of *Hapax* (in the New Testament) is acquired when it refers to the uniqueness of Christ’s work as something which cannot be repeated. \*1 In Hebrews 9:27–28, the author declares, “And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, so Christ also, having been offered once [hapax] to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.” As certain as it is that men die once, it is likewise certain that Christ was to be offered only once as a sacrifice for our sin(s).

### ***Do you understand what this biblical text is saying?***

Hebrews 10:11–12 verses provide additional powerful insight. “. . .every priest stands daily ministering and **offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins**; but after this priest (Christ) offered one sacrifice for all sins, forever, HE SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD. “

Substitutionary sacrifices offered by the Old Testament priests were only temporary; yet, day after day and year after year, they continued this practice, never permanently solving the sin problem. But Jesus Christ as priest (and sacrifice) died once and for all, then “sat down,” because the necessary sacrificial work was accomplished—totally and finally. \*2

Several respected commentators understand these passages in this manner. Regarding Hebrews 9:24–26, Hodges states, “The heavenly ministry of Christ called for a thoroughly sufficient, one-time sacrifice. This is precisely why He appeared once for all [hapax].” \*3 Regarding Hebrews 9:27–28. Hodges further states,

“With this observation (of vss. 24–25), eschatological realities come into focus. Humans are sinful creatures destined to die once, and after that to face judgment. But this danger is turned aside by the fact that Christ was sacrificed once (hapax, cf. v. 26) to take away the sins of many people.

The recurrence of “once” (9:26, 28) and of “once for all” (7:27; 9:12; 10:10) stresses the finality and the singleness of Christ’s sacrificial work in contrast with the repeated Levite ministrations. In addition, the

“once”—sacrifice of Christ (vv. 26, 28) compares with the “once”—death of each person (vs 27).” \*4

*This is the common conservative evangelical view of these portions in Hebrews. And it's clearly what the biblical text is saying.*

Additionally, a remembrance of these famous words by Jesus Christ on the Cross adds additional support to this idea. There He proclaimed, **“It is finished!”** (John 19:30). This is the translation of the one Greek word tetelestai. Papyri receipts for taxes have been recovered with this single word written across them meaning **“paid in full.”** Jesus Christ had paid the full price for our redemption.

Therefore, the “once for all” death of Christ was sufficient to pay for the sins of mankind for all time. **Efforts at rejecting the sufficiency of His one death and even attempting to add meritorious works to earn salvation have been described in unmistakably disapproving terms.** Note Hebrews 10:29. An effort to do so is behaving like one who has “trampled underfoot the Son of God.” This phrase “trampled underfoot” “denotes contempt of the most flagrant kind.” \*5 Further there are religious people who consider this death of Christ as “unclean” or unholy” (Hebrews 10:29), meaning that the cross experience of Christ was “no better than the most common death.” \*6 Or to say it another way His death had no more specific worth than the blood of any ordinary person.

***It is incredible to me that anyone within Christendom would affirm that the once for all death of Christ is not sufficient to have paid the penalty for all of our sins. It is equally incredible to me that anyone within Christendom would seek to add to this one death of Christ any kind of religious practice, any work(s), anything in order to merit eternal life.***

God the Father is saying, “I have offered my Son!” How can anyone say: “It is not enough.” If you are in a group, discuss with them the above material on the sufficiency of the cross-work of Christ. Is it as important as this author thinks it is? Why or why not?

#### **Below the testimony of Joey Fasullo, recorded in New Orleans in 2004.**

Hello, my name is Joey Fasullo. I was brought up as a Catholic and the Catholic Church baptized me as an infant. I made my first communion and confirmation while in Middle School. I went through Catholic schools including Catholic High School and Graduated from a Catholic College. My family went to church on Easter and Christmas as they were not necessarily religious. But they brought us up with strong moral values and beliefs, even though they didn't go to church every Sunday.

Shortly after getting married my wife and I decided that we needed to practice the “faith” we were going to have and raise children. So, we returned to the Parish

Church where we were both brought up and married. As we exited the church that day I turned and said to my wife, "Can't Get No Satisfaction." That's exactly the way I felt as I went through the motions. I knew the drill. I just didn't feel like I was getting anything out of the service. As a child I remember going to confession to purge myself of my sins. I would exit the confessional with a fervent heart and felt myself free from sin and in good favor with God. It's human nature to fall, stumble and sin again and just hope I wouldn't die before I went to the priest for confession again.

A friend of ours invited us to a Bible study that was led by Pastor Miller. We attended week after week, and I was amazed. Pastor Miller answered every one of our questions with a verse directly from the Bible, sometimes two or three verses.

As a young person the nuns would tell us to take it on faith whenever we asked the tough questions. I just wanted to validate and to be sure that what I was believing was the truth. After all, my time in eternity is a long time. My wife and I attended the Bible study for quite a long time. We would stay after and visit with our friend that hosts the study. John would bring out his Bible and point out truths from the Bible emphasizing what Jesus said.

It took me awhile to get it. Much of what I heard was the same information I already knew. I knew Jesus died on the cross for my sins and that on the third day He rose again from the dead. I could recite the Apostles Creed and all the foundational truths of Christianity. I vividly remember hearing the words "Jesus died once for all for you." Then we read "John 3:16," For God so loved the world that He Sent His only begotten son that whosoever believes in him shall not die but shall have eternal life. It was then that I finally realized that Christ died for me. He bore my sin upon Himself on the cross in the sacrifice that was both sufficient and enough to make me holy and acceptable in the eyes of God. It was like opening up my mind and it finally all made perfect sense.

Nothing I could do myself could earn saving favor with God and gain me Heaven. That I was a sinner and would be so until the day I die; that I would never on my own power be good enough to make it into heaven. God knew this and that mankind could never be good enough to enter His holy presence. God had a perfect plan to restore my fellowship with him solving my sin problem. He sent His perfect Son who had no sin to die in my place to pay the penalty for my sin once and for all.

*[Note added by Larry Miller: Some thirty-five years following this time in Joey's life, I returned to New Orleans to conduct the memorial service for Joey's friend John. At that service Joey reminded me that the most significant and helpful thing*

*he remembered hearing me say during those several weeks of Bible Study were the words "Christ's death was both sufficient and enough."]*

It was my friend John who finally led me to salvation and that was when I personalized what Jesus did on the cross for me that I finally realized how much He loved me and that if I was the only sinner in the world, He would have suffered the agony of calvary's cross just for me. That's a loving God so I decided to give my heart to Jesus and trust Jesus and the sacrifice He made on the cross for my eternal salvation. I prayed that night and confessed to God that I knew I was a sinner and make me a child of God. I knew I wasn't worthy, but I accepted his free gift of Salvation at that moment. It was like a weight of the world was lifted from me. I felt truly clean for the first time in my life. It was fantastic. It was like a joy I had never known.

From that day forward I slowly but surely developed a more intimate personal relationship with God. I know now that the Holy Spirit lives in me. I know now that when he looks at me he does not see the sinner but sees his perfect Son Jesus Christ. Life continues to have its ups and downs but now I know that God is in control of every detail of my life. He brings me through trials and He is perfecting me experientially, teaching me to become more like his Son Jesus. I know now that God has a purpose and plan for my life. I have a desire to please him and submit to his will. I have a good God and I know that God loves me and that He will never forsake me. I know that He only wants what is best for me. How grateful I am to have found saving grace of God and know I am a child of God and have the assurance of spending eternity with my heavenly Father.

*Discuss this testimony.*

\*1 Gustav Stahlin, "hapax, ephapax" in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 1:381.

\*2 Zane Hodges, "Hebrews" in The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), 804.

\*3 Ibid., 803.

\*4 Ibid. Eschatological means a study of the end times; Levite ministrations are the perpetually offered Old Testament sacrifices.

\*5 F. F. Bruce, "The Epistle to the Hebrews," (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing, 1964), 259.

\*6 Ibid.