Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The New Covenant, Part 3
Scripture: Hebrews 9:15-28
Code: 1621

Turn in your Bibles tonight to Hebrews, chapter 9. In Hebrews 9, we are continuing in our study of the new covenant. And I realize that this is difficult to be understood. That's just exactly the way the writer of Hebrews felt, that it was hard material, that it was impossible for an unbeliever to understand. Even for a new believer, next to impossible.

A preacher asked me this week, he said, "When you teach the Bible," he said, "you always seem to teach with such amount of depth." He said, "Don't you ever take into consideration the new Christians in your congregation who don't understand all you're saying?" And that's a very good question, and I replied with the only answer that I can think of. The answer is, "Yes, of course. But my commitment is to teach the Word of God as God wrote it."

And I've learned a wonderful thing. For some, they understand it. For others, they don't, and that frustrates them. And that's exactly what we would like to do, is create such a frustration that there is a great desire to learn. For that which you do not understand, we hope and pray that you say to yourself, "I've got to understand that," and that that becomes motivation for your own further study. That's the point.

And on the other hand, it is also true that as we teach the Word of God, it has so much in it, and there are so many truths in every passage, that, like water, it tends to find its own level in the mind of everybody who hears it. There are certain of you who are really clued in to the little nuances of the Greek and the little things that maybe a dozen of us get. And then it goes on from there according to the time that you've known Christ and your knowledge of the Word of God. But it seems as though the Word of God, in a wonderful way, can meet the level of every individual with certain truth that is applicable.

And do not feel frustrated if you cannot comprehend it all and you have not been able to remember everything. I even listen to my own tapes, because I can't remember what I did with certain passages in the past. So don't expect to remember it all. But we pray to God that you learn, and that after you've learned you have had a refreshed and a new appetite to learn even more. And that's our desire. So we trust that we're not leaving you in the dust, but allowing the Spirit of God to be your teacher and to teach you what it is that you can understand in your frame of reference.

I asked a young man, I said, "Do you get what I've been teaching in Hebrews?" And he said, "Oh, yes. You're talking about the fact that Jesus Christ is the most important person in the universe." That's exactly what I'm talking about. Now, he's a brand new Christian and doesn't know much, but he got that message. And that's where the Spirit of God is instructing him. So at whatever level the Spirit is teaching you, accept that as His instruction.

All right, now, let's look at Hebrews 9, and verses 15 through 28 will be our text for tonight. Hebrews does, in fact, teach us about the superiority of Jesus Christ. The writer of the Book of Hebrews is, in writing to this Jewish community, endeavoring to show them that they can leave Judaism, that they can abandon all the sacrifices, the priesthood and all of those rituals that went along with the covenant, and they can come to Christ. In order for them to do that, He must prove to them that Christ is superior to Judaism, that Christ's covenant is better than the old covenant, that Christ's priesthood is superior to the Aaronic or Levitical priesthood which constituted the Judaistic priesthood, and He must prove to them that Christ's sacrifice was superior to all of the others.

And that is the approach of the book, first of all, in the first few chapters, to present the superiority of Christ as a person, then the superiority of Christ as a priest, then the superiority of Christ as the maker of a new covenant, then the superiority of Christ as a sacrifice.

The old covenant, as we have learned all along, was unable to bring access to God. That is what everything is designed to do in the new covenant, bring men to God. The old covenant was unable to do it. It only provided for a limited relation between man and God, a relationship which was not permanent. It only existed until the next sin, and then sacrifice had to be made all over again to reorient the relationship. Jesus comes along and brings a better covenant that gives full access to God on an eternal basis.

The old sacrifices, you'll remember, were not able to wipe away sin. They only covered it up temporarily. And thus they had to be repeated all the time. Jesus brought a perfect sacrifice that was only done once, and it took care of an eternal redemption, covering and removing, blotting out, all sin.

The Old Testament priesthood was imperfect. They were willing, but they weren't able. They desired to really mediate for the people in the fullest sense and bring them to God, but they could not. So Jesus comes along, and in the heart of the Book of Hebrews He brings, according to the writer, a better priesthood, a better sacrifice and a better covenant.

Now, that's what we've been studying. And you'll remember that, beginning at the end of chapter 4, He began to talk about His better priesthood. Then, as we moved into chapter 8, He began to talk about His better covenant. Now, as we come to 9, He is moving from the covenant to the better priesthood, and it's all tied together. He's been talking about the covenant that is better, and now He's going to talk about the better priesthood.

Let's look at verse 15 and just kind of pick up where we left off last time, as an introduction. "And for this cause He is the mediator of the new testament," or covenant, "that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they who are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance."

Now, I want to untangle that verse in a moment. But what He's saying here is this. "For this cause," which goes back to what He has said before, because of the sacrificial death of Christ, or by virtue of His death, He has become the mediator of a new covenant by means of death. He has become, by His death, the mediator of a better covenant. That's the only way He could provide for men what He wanted to provide. The word "mediator" is mesates. It has to do with a go-between. Jesus, by the act of death, became a go-between from God to man.

Now, you remember that God made certain standards which said "the soul that sinneth, it shall die," and the only way that somebody could come to God was if they had paid for their sin. When Jesus died and paid for sin, He then opened the way. Jesus' death was payment for sin, which became a bridge to God. His death, then, was the primary act of mediation that opened the way. And Jesus Himself said, "I am the way."

The Old Testament priest could not become a go-between in the fullest sense. The veil was always there. He couldn't mediate fully. Jesus became a perfect mediator, bringing men to God, a mediator of a better testament, and He did it by death. He removed the barrier of sin. "The wages of sin is death." That was the barrier. Sin put up a barrier of death. Christ died, thus removing the barrier and giving access to God.

Now, I want you to notice something. Very important. It says that in His death, as a mediator of a new covenant, He brought about redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament. Now, what is the first testament, or the first covenant? It's the Old Testament. Do you know that when Jesus died, He redeemed those under the first covenant? That's what it's saying.

People inevitably will ask, in a question and answer time, "How were people in the Old Testament saved?" They were saved by the shed blood of Jesus Christ. They were saved by the death of Christ on their behalf. Read it again. "For this cause He is the mediator of a new covenant." What cause? "That by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they who are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance." By His death, then, He brought redemption to those under the first covenant.

Messiah became the mediator not only in order that He might pay the penalty of sinners who lived since the cross, but that He might pay the penalty of sinners who lived long before the cross. When Jesus died, He gathered up all the sinners from the beginning of time to the end of time in that one

sacrifice. That's the point that He's making.

And the point is obvious in reference to Israel. He's preaching to Israel. He must, therefore, give them some indication of what the sacrifice of Christ means to them. And so He simply says, "It is the sacrifice of Christ not only that redeems from now on, but that goes all the way back and covers redemption for everybody who's ever lived and who has believed throughout time."

Now, in order to give you another look at this, turn to Romans, chapter 3. Romans 3, verse 25, says this, talking about Christ Jesus in verse 24, "being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that's in Christ Jesus." Verse 25, "whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation," that's helasterion, that means a covering or a mercy seat, one who provides satisfaction, "through faith in His blood," in other words, God is satisfied when a man puts his faith in the shed blood of Christ, but watch it this way, "whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood," here's the purpose, "to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past through the forbearance of God."

Now, you say, "Well, I don't understand what that's saying." Well, I don't blame you. It's very difficult to understand on the surface. What it means is this. God, now watch it, it's a powerful point, God set forth Christ to be the satisfaction for sins in order to declare God's righteousness because of the remission of sins that are past. You say, "What is...that doesn't help." All right. I'll take it slow. God required death to be satisfied. But "the blood of bulls and goats shall not take away," what? "Sin." So they didn't do it. They were simply symbolic acts, whereby a man's faith was made visible.

But the blood could not be...the blood of animals could not be that which satisfied God. You say, "Well, then, if that is true, how come God kept forgiving sins in the Old Testament?" Now, the word "remission" means forgiveness. What gives God the right to go around forgiving everybody's sin if the blood of bulls and goats didn't pay for their sin? God is unrighteous. If we declare God to be a righteous God who cannot tolerate sin, and then we say that God, just because He wanted to, forgave everybody's sin, when the blood of bulls and goats didn't really do it, then God is unrighteous.

If He'd have been righteous, what would He have done? He'd have just killed them all. He wouldn't have forgiven anybody. If the blood of bulls and goats can't take away sin, then, when God forgave it in the Old Testament, under the economy of the blood of bulls and goats, God was unjust. God violated His own justice. That's exactly the question that comes up.

But here, let's look at it now with that in your mind. When God set forth Christ to be the satisfaction, He therefore declared His righteousness in forgiving sins in the past. And He illustrated that it was only forbearance, or patience. Now, that may bring it a little closer to home.

Christ's blood, then, satisfied forever the just requirements of God's holy law, which man broke. The purpose of justification is to declare God righteous. And the question "How can a just God let sinners go?" is answered by the death of Christ. He can't. He can't. He was merely patient, and He forgave them on credit, if you will, until Jesus made the final payment, which was all made in one installment.

Forgiveness under the old economy came on credit, because there was no sacrifice that truly satisfied God. But God forgave them on the basis of their faith, in the fact that He would have a perfect sacrifice coming in Jesus Christ. And since God operates in an eternal now, and there is no past, present and future, Christ was the Lamb slain from when? From before the foundation of the world. In God's mind, it was already done anyway.

And so we cannot look at the Old Testament and say, "If the blood of bulls and goats didn't take away sin, then God was unjust and forgiving." He was not, because, in His eternal plan, the death of Christ gathered up all sinners from beginning of time to the end of time who put their faith in Him. Now do you see?

Now when you look at the Old Testament don't be confused and think that the sacrifices took away sin. They did not take away sin. They were merely acts of obedience that showed that faith was legitimate. And they were symbols of an act that would satisfy God. And that's why, as I told you before, the Old Testament saints never really entered the presence of God until the death of Jesus Christ. When they died in the Old Testament, they went to a place called Sheol, a place called Hades. There they remained, I believe, until the death of Jesus Christ. And we'll say more about that in a moment.

But they could not have full access until that final sacrifice was made which truly satisfied God. In the past, God overlooked sin until Jesus could bear it away. Acts 17:30 says this. "And the times of this ignorance God overlooked, but He now commands all men everywhere to repent."

You see, there was a time in God's mind when He saw Jesus' death in behalf of those even who lived before He died. And so when Christ died, go back to Hebrews, chapter 9, verse 15, He died "for the redemption of the transgressions of those under the first covenant, that they who are called," and who are they who are called? Well, probably Israel, the chosen nation, "might receive the promise of eternal inheritance." God had provided the sacrifice that even reached backed and gathered them up who were believing Jews.

Now, of course, it was not true of all of Israel. All of Israel, says Paul, is not Israel in the spiritual sense. It was true for those who were believing Jews, that their sins were covered by the death of Christ, which, from man's viewpoint, was yet to come, from God's viewpoint was done from before the foundation of the world. So God did not let sin go, and God is not unjust. We cannot impugn the justice of God. Jesus' death satisfied God's justice.

How, then, were people saved in the Old Testament? They were saved by God, watch it, knowing Christ would in the future bear their sins. How are men saved today? God knowing Christ in the past has borne their sins. It's just two sides of the same event. God is righteous. God is just. In Romans, chapter 3, he sums it up in verse 26, "to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness." God is just. God is righteous.

The cross not only defends God against a charge that He passed by sin before the crucifixion, but it also demonstrates that when He declares a believing sinner righteous in the present, He is also just. For mercy is available, since justice has been satisfied by Christ. And I think that's illustrated so well in 9:26, which we'll see in a minute. "For then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world, but now once, in the end of the ages, hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." One good sacrifice was sufficient for all time.

So the sacrifice of Christ, then, is retroactive, as is the Day of Atonement sacrifice in Jewish history. You know, on Yom Kippur last Monday, when they went through the ritual of symbolic sacrifice that atoned for sin, that was retroactive for the sins of the past year. And so the death of Christ was retroactive clear back to Adam.

And, as I said, before Christ died, salvation was on credit. Payment was made at Calvary. And I believe that...Ephesians, some of you asked this. Let me just look at it with you for a minute. Ephesians 4:8 and 9 tells us that it was at the death of Christ that He then took these Old Testament saints, who couldn't have full access until He opened the way, and took them to God. Ephesians 4:8. "Wherefore He saith, when He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men. Now that He ascended," verse 9, "what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth."

And we believe that Jesus, when He died, went down into Sheol, gathered the Old Testament saints, their spirits, and ushered them into the presence of God, so that they had to be waiting until perfect sacrifice was made on the one final day of atonement, and then were ushered into the presence of God. The Old Testament saints, then, who were called, could not inherit their promises until sins were done away. That's what it says at the end of verse 15. They were under the first testament, but it was only by His death that they were able to inherit their promises. The first covenant couldn't bring them to God's presence.

Now, what is the...it says at the end of verse 15 "the eternal inheritance." What is that? Well, it certainly has to be salvation. It has to be all that salvation is, and it came to them in the fullest sense. Total access to God, perfection in the sense it's used in Hebrews, came when Jesus died.

Now let me summarize the verse so you understand it. There are several steps. God designed an eternal inheritance. Right? The title for it came by promise, verse 15. He promised them eternal inheritance. The obstacle in the way was sin. The obstacle must be removed. The old covenant couldn't remove it. There must be a new covenant to remove the obstacle. Christ comes, provides a new covenant, removes the obstacle. The promise is fulfilled to those who believe. That's the simple truth of verse 15.

So He tells His readers that the new covenant was ratified by the death of Jesus Christ and provided the full salvation that Israel had been waiting for since the very beginning. And this introduces to us the subject of the death of Christ, as He goes on, from now on, through even chapter 10, to get into detail on it. And this has always been a stumbling block to Israel. A dead Messiah never fit their theology. And so proceeding from there, in verses 16 through 28, He gives three great reasons why Jesus had to die, three great reasons why this death was necessary.

Now, He's already told you that it was that which provided the eternal inheritance promised to them. And now He goes further yet, to bring you three great reasons why His death was required. Why did it have to be death that got the eternal inheritance? Why not something else? Why did He have to die? Three reasons. Number one, a testament demands death. Number two, forgiveness demands blood. Number three, salvation demands a victim. And that can be stated several ways. Judgment demands a substitute might be better. Let's put it that way. Judgment demands a substitute.

First of all, testament...a testament demands death. Now, by the word "testament" we're referring to a will. Let's look at it. And here the word deafececomes into play again, and we studied it some weeks back, but look at verse 16. "For where a testament," or a deafece,"is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator." If there's going to be a will, the guy who gives a will has got to be dead or the will isn't any good. You don't get the will until the guy dies. That's a simple point.

Verse 17 takes it a step further. "For a testament is of force after men are dead. Otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator lives." As long as the guy is alive, you can't collect the will. Simple point. God made a legacy to Israel. God made a legacy to all men, and the legacy was eternal inheritance. But you cannot receive the legacy of God in inheritance until the one who gave the legacy dies. That's the point of the verse.

Now, the word "testament" here is, a little review here, deafece. The common Greek word for a covenant was sunfece, which means an agreement between equals. Deafecemeans somebody makes the rules up here and you either take it or leave it. And that's the word that's always used with God's covenants, because He always calls all the shots, and men either take it or leave it. You don't bargain with God and say, "If you'll adjust your covenant a little bit your way, I'll adjust a little my way." God's truth is absolute.

And the best way to illustrate the use of the word deafeceis the fact that it's used to speak of a will. A will is not a bargain between two people. A will is something made out by one person, and the other person either takes it or leaves it.

And so He is saying here, God has promised an inheritance. And that inheritance depends upon the death of the one who made it, in order for it to be received. That's a simple truth. And that's really all He's saying. A will cannot operate until the one who made it dies. Therefore, Jesus had to die. He had to die to release the legacy of God to men. The kingdom of heaven is bequeathed to all believers. Such is God's will and testament. And Jesus' death released it to our possession. And some of it is ours now, and it will be ours in its fullness when we go to be with Him. So the first reason for death, then, is simply that. Testament demands death.

The second reason for the death of Christ, forgiveness demands blood. Forgiveness demands blood. Now, this is directly in line with the previous point. It takes a different shade of meaning, however. And here we see the word "covenant" used in terms of a covenant, not so much a will. The will idea exists in verses 16 and 17. The gears are shifted going into verse 18. Let's read it.

"Whereupon neither the first was dedicated without blood." The word "testament" is in italics. It doesn't need to be there. Probably "covenant" would translate. If you're going to stick something in there, put "covenant" in to make a distinction between a covenant and a will or testament in verse 16 and 17. "Whereupon then neither the first covenant was dedicated without blood."

In other words, there's got to be the death of somebody, because it has always been that covenants are ratified by blood. That's the point. Blood was a part of the dedication or the ratification of covenants, even the old covenant. The first was not dedicated without blood. That's a double negative way of saying the first one was dedicated with blood.

In the case of the old covenant, the death of animals, typical and prophetic, looking forward to the death of Christ, which would ratify the second covenant. And so in both these aspects, Christ needs to die. He needs to die first of all to release His will. He needs to die secondly because covenants are ratified, or what should we say, made secure by the death and the bloodshed of some individual.

And here's a beautiful thought. Grab this. It just kind of struck me as I was reading this. If you've got the death of somebody releasing something in verses 16 and 17, and you've got the death of something ratifying...death of someone ratifying the covenant in verse 18, and then you take it a step further than that, and you've still got somebody who is a living mediator of a covenant, then you've got to have a resurrection.

So when you put these things all together, they have to allow for the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He had to die to release His will. He had to live to make it operate. He had to die to ratify the covenant. He had to live to keep the terms of it. And so the resurrection is implied in all of it.

So the first covenant, He says in verse 18, was ratified by blood. What's so shocking about the second one being ratified the same way? Look at verse 19. And here He digs into the old covenant, and we'll look at it for a minute. It's very, very interesting.

"For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood." See? Now, the law came clear back there in the Book of Exodus, and when Moses got done firing the whole thing out to everybody and unloading every bit of it on them, "he took the blood of calves, goats, and some water and some scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, saying, This is the blood of the new testament," or the new covenant, "which God hath enjoined unto you."

Now, Moses, He goes back and says, "Look at your great Moses. When the first covenant came, it was a whole thing with blood." Now, let me take you back to Exodus, chapter 19, for a minute, and let's look at it. Look at verse 5. "Now, therefore, if you will obey my voice indeed and keep my covenant, then shall you be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people, for all the earth is mine. You shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation." That's great. Verse 8, "And all the people answered together and said, 'All that the Lord hath spoken we will do.'" Did they? No. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the Lord, and the Lord probably said, "Right."

And then it went from there. God gave them the various characteristics in the covenant. Chapter 20 you're very familiar with. God spoke, said, "Here's what I want you to start out with, Moses. 'I am the Lord thy God, who have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any carved image, or any likeness of any thing in heaven above, in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth.'"

Verse 5, "Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them, for I the Lord thy God," etc., and He goes on down and gives what we commonly know as the Decalogue, or the Ten Commandments. That's only the beginning of the Mosaic covenant. In chapter 20, verse 24, He gives him a little grace provision. He knows they're not going to make it. "An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, thy peace offerings, thy sheep, thine oxen. In all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and bless thee."

"And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone, for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou shalt pollute it. Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not exposed thereon." In other words, you don't want to get going up there so people can see up the backside of your whatever that you're wearing. It was a very sacred place, and He

didn't even want carved stone. It was to be sacred, because it was a place where they could atone for sin.

And He goes from there into chapter 21, and He gives him all kinds of details. Chapter 21, verses 1 to 11, all the rules applying to slaves. Chapter 21, verses 12 over to verse 36, all the rules applying to personal injury. What happens when two men fight and one thing happens to the other guy? What happens when you foul up somebody else's ox and all of this? Injury, or when somebody else's ox fouls you up, better yet.

Verse 22 talks about theft. What do you do about that? Chapter 22, verse 5 and 6, property damage. And then there's rules about dishonesty through verse 15, and immorality there in 16, 17 and 19. Then there's some civil and religious and so forth obligations closing out 22 and opening up 23 there. Then ceremonial rules in 23:10-19. Then He gives them some rules about the people that they conquer at the end of chapter 23.

So that's all the terms of the Mosaic covenant. It's a lot of stuff. And Moses evidently had read it all to everybody. Now, covenants, historically, had been always ratified by blood. You'll remember that in Genesis that's what happened. When God gave Abraham the covenant, God knocked him out with a divine anesthetic after he had slaughtered those animals, cut them in half and laid the bloody pieces on two sides, and taken a turtledove and killed it on one side and another...I think it was a pigeon, and put it on the other side, and then God passed between the bloody pieces. In other words, even the Abrahamic covenant was sealed by blood. So this is what happened in the Mosaic case, and that's what the author of Hebrews is saying.

Now, come to verse 1 of chapter 24 and we see what happens. After He's given him all of this, and he's read it, "He said unto Moses, Come up unto the Lord, thou, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel. Worship afar off." Notice, it's always afar off. Never any access to God under the old covenant. "Moses alone shall come near to the Lord, but they shall not come near, neither shall the people go up with him." You see, only the high priest, and Moses acts as a high priest at this point.

"And Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, all the ordinances, and all the people answered with one voice, and said, 'All the words which the Lord hath said will we do.'" Great intentions. "And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord, and rose up early in the morning." That must have been a long night. "And built an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel, and sent two men out," etc., etc.

All right. Come down to verse 6. Well, verse 5. "He sent young men of the children of Israel, who offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the Lord. And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basins, and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. He took the book of the

covenant, read it in the hearing of the people, and they said, 'All that the Lord hath said we will do, and be obedient.' Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, 'Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words.'"

Now, you see, here, the whole thing is ratified by blood. That was God's standard. This is what He required. Now go back to Hebrews 9, and you understand what it means in verse 19. "For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, water, scarlet wool, hyssop, and sprinkled the book, and all the people." This was Moses' act of ratifying the covenant.

Now, incidentally, it's interesting that the writer of Hebrews adds for us certain detail that's not included in Exodus 24. For example, He adds the goats. There aren't any goats in Exodus 24. Perhaps they were a special sin offering. He adds water there. And water was not in Exodus 24, either, but is used in Leviticus 14:6 and in Numbers 19 to mix with blood in order to prevent it from coagulating, likely, and so that when blood was sprinkled, the mixture of water thinned it out a little bit, making it easier to sprinkle.

Then He mentions also scarlet wool and hyssop. And they are also used in Leviticus 14 to sprinkle. They were dipped in, and they were the things that were used to sprinkle. And then he indicates, too, at the end of verse 19, that he sprinkled not only the book but all the people. And in Exodus 24 it says he sprinkled the altar and the people. So he sprinkled the altar, the book and the people. That was a bloody thing going on.

I don't think we can really understand how bloody, how messy, this whole economy really was. It was a messy, messy thing. And there was blood all over everywhere, and this was God, by sign and symbol, always showing the wages of sin is what? Death. Constantly. And there's no sense in getting teary-eyed and mystical about blood. And we sing hymns, "There's power in the blood," etc., and we don't want to get preoccupied with blood.

The only importance the blood of Jesus has is that it showed He died. There is no saving in that blood itself. We cannot say that the very blood of Jesus, His physical blood, is what atones for sin. It is His death that atones for sin. His bloodshed was an act of death. And so we do not want to become preoccupied with fantasizing about some mystical blood that's floating around somewhere. It is by His sacrificial offering of Himself. It is by His death that we are redeemed. Bloodshed is only the picture of His death.

And so always, in the ratification of a covenant, blood was shed, because in every covenant that God made with man, He knew there would be violation. Right? Sin. And that sin could only be taken care of by death. Therefore, initially, God showed the importance of a sacrificial system, by making that the initial ratification of a covenant. So when Jesus died and shed His blood, this is no big thing. This

is nothing for Israel to get all bent out of shape about. This ought to be good proof that God was instituting a new covenant, which had to be ratified by blood.

Now, verse 20. Moses said, "This is the blood of the testament," or the covenant, "which God hath enjoined unto you." And when he said that, he reminded them that God had laid it at their feet. Now, notice the word "enjoined." He doesn't say, "This is the blood of the covenant which you and God made together." "This is the blood of the covenant which God laid on you and said, 'You obey it.'" That's enjoined. It calls for obedience. It implies precepts, not promises. And the blood was the confirming sign.

And do you remember the startling words of Jesus in Matthew 26:28, when He, at the table with the disciples that last night before His death picked up the cup and said, "This is my blood of the," what? "New covenant, which is shed for you." And there He was just doing a takeoff on Exodus, chapter 24. He was to be the ratifier of the new covenant, and it would come through His blood. The shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ, His atoning death, is the confirming sign of the new covenant.

And so the blood was a token of both covenants, and the point of the writer is so well made. Why did Jesus have to die? Number one, he had a will to give and He had to die to free His will. Number two, always, always, always, forgiveness is based on blood. A covenant is ratified by blood. And Jesus brought a new covenant with forgiveness. Therefore, He had to die.

Verse 21 goes a step further. "Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry." The Tabernacle wasn't even built until Exodus 40, but they were still sprinkling blood all over everywhere. From then on, every ceremony connected with the covenant was a bloody ceremony. Blood, blood, blood, blood and more blood. The Tabernacle, the vessels of the Tabernacle, every bit of divine service was sprinkled with blood. It was all sprinkled with blood, because God wanted men to know that every covenant He ever made with man was a covenant that had to bypass sin, and the only sin bypass there is is death.

They even smeared blood all over the horns of the altar. Josephus tells us that Moses would spend seven days purifying the priests and their vestments. He would also purify the Tabernacle and all its vessels with oil, and then, Josephus says, with the blood of rams and bulls. Blood everywhere, in the old covenant.

And then He wraps up this thought in verse 22. "And almost all things are by the law purged with," what? "Blood." And then this great statement, "And without shedding of blood is," what? "No forgiveness." That's God's basic economy. Somebody's got to die. Wherever there is forgiveness, there is bloodshed. That's God's way.

Now, look at verse 22. It should read this way, "I may almost say all things are by the law purged with blood." Now, there were some exceptions. I'm glad the word "almost" is in there, or we'd have a problem. Because in the Old Testament, for the super-poor Israelites who really couldn't get it together to purchase an animal and didn't have one available, they were allowed to bring one-tenth of an ephod of fine flour. I suppose that'd be somewhere around four pints or so. And they were to bring that as a sin offering. If they were so poor that they couldn't even afford a couple of turtledoves or pigeons, they could bring that. But that's the only loophole in the whole bloody system. The exceptions were very rare. Without the shedding of blood, there wasn't any forgiveness.

Back in Leviticus 17, listen to this, this far back. Verse 11, "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls. For it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul." There is nothing else that can atone for sin but bloodshed, but the death of somebody.

You can't enter into God's presence by being good. You can't enter into God's presence by being a fine citizen. You can't enter into God's presence by going through religious mogus. You can't enter into God's presence by reading the Bible, by going to church, by being a member, by thinking sweet thoughts about God. The only way you'll ever enter into God's presence and into participation in the new covenant is by the death of Jesus Christ and your faith and belief in His shed blood on the cross in your behalf. That's the only way. That's the only access.

God set the rules. "The soul that sins, it shall die." And then God, in grace, moved right back in and provided a death substitute. Jesus' death is the only thing that satisfies God, you see. Because He requires death. And all over the Old Testament He splattered blood in order that they might be constantly made aware of the fact that bloodshed was the only expiation for sin.

Forgiveness is a costly, costly thing. I often think to myself how lightly I take the forgiveness of God. I come to the end of a day and I stick my head on my pillow, and I say, "God, I did this today." And I usually try to recite the things I did that I know He knows about, and I'm sure He knows about all of them, so I don't try to hide them anymore. And I recite the things I did that I didn't think were pleasing to Him, and I say, "Thanks for forgiving me," and I'm asleep in a couple of minutes.

And then, you know, I begin to think sometimes, as I study the Word of God, you know, for the cost that it took to purchase my forgiveness, how glibly and how cheaply do I consider it, the infinite cost that God went to to forgive my sins. And I'm so ready to sin, in the back of my mind, knowing that it's forgiven. What sick abuse that is of the sweet grace of a loving God.

That's why Paul, in Romans, chapter 6, faces the question, "Shall we sin that grace may abound?" And he throws his hands up in the air and says, "God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer in it?" Would we stomp all over God's grace? Consider the cost of your forgiveness, dear

one. God is such a bound God, bound to His own character, He cannot break the moral laws of His nature. He cannot violate the moral laws of His universe, and He built into His universe the fact that sin demands death, and, finally, He's the one that had to pay the price. And He paid it.

Forgiveness isn't just God looking down and saying, "Oh, it's all right. I like you a lot, and I'll just let it go." It's the costliest thing in the universe. Without bloodshed, there is no forgiveness of sins. If you are forgiven, it is because somebody died.

Look at verse 23, and here He brings His point around. "It was therefore necessary." Don't you like that? You just stop right there and you've got enough of it. He had to die. "It was therefore necessary that the pattern of things in the heavens should be purified with these," that's the...the pattern of the things that were in heaven is the old economy. They were just a sketch or a pattern of what was really in heaven. "It was necessary that the pattern of the things in heaven should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices." Listen, if your whole system had to be purified with a sacrifice, then you must know what that heavenly one must have to be purified with, a far better sacrifice. Far better.

Jesus is superior to any goat, bull, ram or sheep, infinitely. If it was necessary that the copy had to have sacrifices, how much more necessary that the reality had to have a sacrifice? Not only just a sacrifice, but better sacrifice. All the blood of the old covenant was nothing but a picture of the shed blood of Jesus. And the death of Jesus Christ is that which satisfies God.

God was so satisfied with what Jesus did that He highly exalted Him and gave Him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, things in the earth and under the earth. God exalted Him and lifted Him up to the highest place He could lift Him to, His own right hand, because of what He had done. He was so satisfied. God is satisfied with Jesus.

You want to know something? He's not satisfied with me. Did you know that? God is not satisfied with me. He's not satisfied with you. That's why I come to Him in the name of Jesus Christ, and I hang on tight to Jesus, because God is satisfied with Him. And when I enter into God's presence, I don't enter in my own righteousness, I enter in the righteousness of Christ, because God's not satisfied with my righteousness. God is satisfied with Jesus, and only Jesus.

But the death of Jesus Christ purchased forgiveness. He recognized that God was the one that had to be satisfied, and He offered His blood, and thus revealed God's love and mercy and forgiveness for all who believe. There's a beautiful illustration of this. I really love this one. Luke 18. You remember the story of the two guys that went to the temple to pray? One of them was humble, and the other was looking for a vacancy in the Trinity. Luke 18:10, "Two men went up into the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee," religious, "the other a tax collector." You can't get any lower than that. Not in this economy, but in that one. It's a wonderful profession nowadays. Why are you laughing?

Verse 11, "The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself." Isn't that interesting? He wasn't even talking to God. He "prayed thus with himself, God," that's interesting, "I thank thee, that I am not as other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice in the week," Monday noon and Thursday night. "I give tithes of all that I possess."

Verse 13, "And the tax collector, standing afar off, wouldn't lift up as much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote on his breast," now, watch this, this is good, "God," I'm going to give you the literal Greek, "God be propitiated to me a sinner." You know what that means? "God be satisfied that I recognize I'm a sinner." And verse 14 says, "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other, for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

What was he saying? What was this guy saying, the second one? He was saying, "God, I confess my guilt. I've broken your law. You're the one against whom I have sinned. I am putting myself under the blood of the goat, which sprinkles the Mercy Seat. God be satisfied. Let your attitude be toward me as it is toward those who are covered by the blood of the sacrifice."

He was a Jewish man. He was putting himself under the goat's blood sprinkled on the Mercy Seat. "God be propitiated to me." In other words, "Be satisfied and release to me your love and mercy." He didn't deny his sin. He didn't deny his guilt. He just put it under the blood of the sacrifice. And he didn't offer to God something with his...of his own, like the other guy, who stood there and said, "I am this and I am this." He asked God to manifest mercy to him, on the basis of the blood shed according to Leviticus 16. And the result? He was justified, by confession of sin and faith in God.

Dear ones, it's only as you and I put ourselves under the blood of Jesus Christ, isn't it? And say, "God, I stand a sinner. I place myself under the blood of Jesus Christ. Be satisfied. Be satisfied." Why did Messiah have to die? He had to die because forgiveness demanded bloodshed. It had to be so.

Look at verse 24. When he was finished with His perfect sacrifice, "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands." And here He's jumping off the better sacrifice idea in 30...in 23. "Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are figures of the true, but into heaven itself, to appear in the presence of God." What are the next two words? Oh, I like that. Don't you like that? That is good. He's there for us.

That's the proof of the statement in verse 23 that there has to be a better sacrifice connected with heavenly things. He didn't go into an earthly Holy of Holies. He went into the presence of God. And He did it for us. For us. And isn't it beautiful to realize that when He went in we went in with Him? Because we're in Christ, ushered into the presence of God with Him.

Verse 25, "Nor yet," here's another reason why it's a better sacrifice, "Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others." He didn't have to repeat it, did He? Did it once. Better sacrifice first of all because, when he got done He entered right into the presence of God and stayed there. Number two, because He never had to do it again. Perfect sacrifice. Look at that word "often." Boy, in the Old Testament they kept doing it and doing it and doing it and doing it and doing it, over and over and over. But Jesus didn't have to.

Do you know that if He had had to do it, look at verse 26, if Jesus had had to repeat a sacrifice, He then must have been offered...let's read it. "For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world." Do you know that if Jesus' offering had to be repeated, it would have had to be repeated for every single individual who lived from the foundation of the world? Jesus would've had to die throughout history. Over and over and over and over and over and over and over, He would've had to be dying. He'd be dying and dying and dying and dying since Adam. "But now once in the end of the ages hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."

Now, if the old economy needed blood, so does the new one. If the old economy needed sacrifices, so does the new one. But if it's a new one, it'll have a better sacrifice. It's better because, number one, Jesus, when He finished it, entered into God's presence. It's better because He never had to repeat it. If it needed to be repeated, it would've had to have been repeated since Adam. But it doesn't need to be repeated.

It was so totally effective it was done once and that was it. And He says it was done once in the consummation of the ages. That's terrific. When Jesus died, it was the end of the age. Did you know that? The end of the ages, I should say, correctly. There were a lot of ages up to Jesus Christ. How many ages have there been since Christ? One age. This is the last times. Did you know that? Messianically speaking, this is the last times.

I John 2:18, "My little children, it is the last time." James 5:8, "The coming of the Lord draweth nigh." I Peter 4, "The end of all things is at hand." Since the time that Jesus came, it is the last time. This is Messiah's day.

There were a lot of ages. There was the age when Satan fell. There was the age when Adam sinned. There was the age when God saw the wickedness of man and destroyed the earth by flood. There was the age when God spoke at Sinai. There was the age of the prophets and the kings. But the consummation of the ages was Christ at Calvary.

Is it any wonder that the apostles, in the New Testament, expected Jesus to come any moment? Because once He had arrived the first time, it was the end of the age. The end of the age has been going on for 2,000 years. This is the last age. This is Messiah's age. At the end of the age, by one

sacrifice He put away sin. He didn't cover it anymore, did He? He removed it.

Now, I want to say something at this point. There's a prominent false doctrine of the perpetual offering of Christ. That seriously bothers me, and I want to speak to it for just a brief moment. It states this. I read. "Inasmuch as the priesthood of Christ is perpetual, and sacrifice is an essential part of priesthood, therefore, the sacrificial offering of Christ must also be perpetual." Ott, Ludwig, first name. He's written a book on Catholic dogma. He is, perhaps, as leading a theologian as the Catholic Church has today.

In this book he says this. "The holy mass is a true and proper sacrifice." Now, that came out of the Council of Trent. He goes on. "It is physical and propitiatory, removing sins and conferring the grace of repentance." That says the mass is the actual physical propitiatory sin-removing sacrifice of Christ, which means that every Sunday, four or five times, Jesus is offered as a sacrifice again. That's the essence of what the mass is.

I read further. "Propitiated by the offering of this sacrifice, God, by granting the grace of the gift...and the gift of penance, remits trespasses and sins, however grievous they may be." Let me give you the first part. "Propitiated by the offering of this sacrifice." In other words, God's satisfaction regarding sin is dependent upon the weekly mass. That's the essence of the decision of the Council of Trent.

Now, this theory of the perpetual offering of Jesus Christ is in absolute and direct opposition to Scripture, which says, in verse 26, "But now," what's the next word? "Once in the end of the ages hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." Now, I believe that many Catholic people don't understand the tremendous nature, the tremendous problem and seriousness, of the doctrine of perpetual offering. It destroys the whole concept of the single perfect sacrifice.

And I think this is why, though many of them, I'm sure, today, know Christ, this is why I think that whenever we see the Catholic structure, we see Jesus always, always, always where, in all the pictures and everywhere? On a cross. Always on a cross. Because they are caught in this perpetual sacrificing of Christ. How sad, and how opposite the text. "He one time, by one sacrifice, put away sin." You say, "Well, you have communion. What do you do?" We're not re-sacrificing Jesus Christ. We're simply remembering that He did a perfect job the one time that He did it.

Now, notice it says, and I love it, verse 26, "He put away sin," singular. Don't you like that? Sins? No. The old Levitical system could do something for the sins. It couldn't do anything for the principle of sin. When Jesus died, He not only took care of the details, He took care of the principle. He removed sin as a principle.

So Messiah must die. What have we said? He must die, first of all, to release His will. He must die, secondly, because forgiveness demands a sacrifice. Thirdly, and just very brief, salvation, or

judgment, demands substitution. He had to die because there had to be substitution for judgment.

Verse 27, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins," what are the next two words? "Of many." Substitution for judgment. If we suffered our own judgment, we'd be doomed. Now, Jesus only needed to die once. That's all. Why? Verse 27. "Because it is appointed unto men" how many times to die? Once to die. Jesus doesn't have to be sacrificed every week. God says you die once. And Jesus was a man, and it was appointed unto men once to die. He only died once. That's all. Not repeated times.

And from that thought, we see the thought in relation not only to Christ, in verse 27, which is the primary meaning of the verse, but in relation to everybody else. All men have to die, and our death is appointed. That's one appointment everybody'll keep. And immediately after death comes what? Judgment. Comes judgment.

Men die by divine appointment, and in their case judgment follows, but in Jesus' case, it says in verse 28, Christ was offered "once to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." He didn't get judgment. He'll just come back. If you die for your own sin, my friend, what follows that death? Judgment. Will you ever come back? You'll never come back.

Jesus died once, and after that judgment? No. He'll return a second time, not to die for sin, but with salvation. Look at verse 28. "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." Why? Because "it's only appointed to men once to die." He only had to die once. And He died for us. "Our sins He bore in His own body on the tree." "He became sin for us who knew no sin." Judgment demanded death. He died that one death that judgment demanded.

And then, oh, I love this. This is so good. "And unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." The Israelites used to watch the high priest go into the Holy of Holies, and he'd go in there, see? And then they'd stand there with bated breath waiting for him to come out, because if he did anything wrong in there, he'd die. Several times in giving him his instructions it says, "Do this that you die not." And when he'd come out, they'd go "Ah. He made it."

Now, the Israelites who watched their high priest go in and out are in view when He says this. "For them that look for Him, He will appear." And when He comes back, we'll know that God is satisfied. And He'll come back with full salvation. When He comes to be...when He comes to take us to be with Himself, our salvation is full. Oh, what a terrific thing.

When He appears the second time to those who expect Him, it will not be to deal with sin. Not anymore. Sin only needs to be dealt with once. It'll be to come back in the blessings of full salvation. You see what a perfect sacrifice is?

We've got a problem, verse 27. We're going to die and get judged. But He made three appearings to take care of it. Appearing number one is in verse 26. Look at it. "But now once in the end of the ages hath He appeared to put away sin." That's the first appearing on the cross. The second appearing's in verse 24, at the end of the verse. "Now to appear in the presence of God for us." He's interceding for us. The third appearing's in verse 28. "One of these days, unto them that look for him, shall He appear." Three appearings of Christ give us the account of His work on the cross, ministering for us now and in His return. And so He's a perfect sacrifice.

I close with this. Three crosses were prepared by the Romans for three criminals. On two of the crosses, thieves were to hang. On the third cross, one guilty of treason against the Roman Empire whose name was Barabbas. But Barabbas never made it to the cross. You see, sentence was passed on Barabbas. He was found guilty of the Romans...by the Romans. But Barabbas never got to the cross. Somebody took Barabbas' place.

And on that middle cross that day hung not Barabbas but a sinless, perfect Son of God, Jesus Christ. Barabbas went free, but he didn't go free because he was innocent. He went free because somebody took his place. And I say to you tonight, sinner, you can stand at the foot of the cross and you can look up at the cross, and you can say to yourself, "That cross was prepared for me. I deserve to die there. But I go free because somebody else hangs there in my place." And when you have said that, you have understood what Jesus Christ did for you. Let's pray.

Father, we know it's not a question of guilt or innocence, but it's a question of whether we accept the perfect substitute, Jesus Christ. He had to die. He had to die to be our substitute in judgment. He had to die because forgiveness demands blood. He had to die in order to free the legacy of the Father to belong to us. Thank you for dying. Thank you for shedding blood on our behalf.

God, I pray that no one in this place would leave who has not put their faith in the death of Jesus Christ, who does not believe that He bore their sins in His own body, and that "He became sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Oh, Father, may we believe this. May everyone here know that to come into a right relationship with thee, to enter thy presence eternally, is a simple matter of believing that Jesus died and rose again for Him. May every man know that.

Thank you, Father, for the clarity of that truth. Thank you for showing us again the wonderful mediator of the new covenant, in every way so perfect. God, may we who know Him love Him all the more because of the glimpses we've had tonight. In Jesus' blessed name, amen.

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