

His Blood Makes All the Difference

The Book of Hebrews

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Bible Text: Hebrews 9:16-28

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Our reading then is Hebrews Chapter 9 from verse 16 to verse 28.

16 For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. 17 For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives. 18 Therefore not even the first covenant was dedicated without blood. 19 For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, 20 saying, "This is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you." 21 Then likewise he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. 22 And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission. 23 Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. 24 For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; 25 not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another-- 26 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. 27 And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, 28 so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.

That is the word of God.

Our sermon this evening is entitled "His Blood Makes All the Difference." His blood makes all the difference. And it is that passage that we read a moment ago, Hebrews 9:16-28. And really what continues here, because the logic that the writer uses is relentless, he is just so taken up with the theme and drumming it into the minds of those he is writing to that they should now forget really all that they have been beginning to rely upon, the things that belong to the Old Covenant, because in Christ, well, his

superiority, the superiority of his ministry is proved at every turn. The superiority of the covenant. That agreement that has been made between God and man and which requires somebody, the mediator, to put it into effect. Well, there was a covenant, an old covenant, and a mediator, somebody that God placed it in his hands to see that the covenant should come into effect. Well, that was Moses. He was a steward of these things; faithful he was over God's house. But now there is a superior covenant. A superior agreement. It has more, deeper, longer lasting benefits. And it has a mediator of infinitely greater glory than Moses, our Lord Jesus Christ himself.

And so, the writer has been showing us this covenant is better. Better promises. Tells a deeper work. Greater affects. No wonder. Because the person who brings this covenant, this agreement between God and man, makes it to happen, brings it into effect, is none other than the Son of God. And he is superior to all that went before. And so, no wonder the work that he does is superior, is a better agreement, a better covenant, and has deeper, longer lasting, greater, greater effects. And as we saw last time, benefits to the conscience, the deeper working on the conscience of man that is there. And here furthermore in this passage, and it's quite a complex, quite a technical sort of passage that we have, he is reflecting further on the place of the blood of the mediator. Just how his blood, his death is the key to this. This is what makes this agreement come into being and brings all of the benefits of that agreement into effect. It all hinges on his blood, Christ's blood. And so, you see, it's his blood that makes all the difference. That is what brings it all into being and pours into our lives such spiritual riches and such spiritual benefits.

And so, the writer, again, is quite complex, and we have to delve into the things that we were just reading a moment ago in Exodus to understand some of the illustrations he is using, the contrasts that he is making. And say, "Well, the Old Covenant, certain things had to happen. But in the New Covenant, well an equivalent, a higher, a better equivalent happens and brings us lasting greater benefits. So, the argument is quite complex in places but we will see as we proceed what we can learn this evening.

First heading then is this: putting the covenant into effect. And as we have been saying, and as the writer here is stressing, everything to do with this agreement and what God is saying that he will be to his people and that they should be towards him requires blood. It requires the blood of Christ. And thus, he is going to show us that this is central. It doesn't work without and that therefore this blood, the new covenant blood, is what they should rely on. Not go backwards. Not rely on the things that in the old covenant certainly were required, but now have been superseded, been replaced, been upgraded to something far superior.

The covenant, well summing it up really, is what we would find quoted really in Hebrews 8:10, which itself is a quotation from Jeremiah and just looking at the end of that verse it says this, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people." It's that really. I will be their God. They will be my people. Whatever it means for me to be their God, benefactor, their friend, their helper, the one they worship with understanding, I will put into place. And everything that is needed in order for them to be my people, for me to be able to call them my people, and for them to be able to respond to me as my people, I will also put that into effect.

And so, it talks, doesn't it there, as power that is in the covenant in verse 17. It has no power until somebody has died, then all the provisions come into place. And there it talks about these things being purified. Verse 22 and Verse 23. It's talking about how that blood makes fit for purpose, fit for use, everything that is required in order for God to be able to say, "I will be your God, and you will be my people." And all the benefits will flow to the beneficiaries in that way. And we're the beneficiaries. We are the people. He doesn't have any benefits in that way. He is in himself totally, absolutely happy, we might say. Joy is his. But he has decided that he will have a people, and he therefore will do everything that is needed to have a people, and that that will be his joy to have a people. This then, the benefits that flow to his people, they worship, and what they will do by way of obedience, he will see that it is done.

And so, we can see as we begin chapter 10 and what we are very much now able to do, which we are not able to do in the way we are doing now, but now can say, "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching." And that meeting together, and the benefits of that, well the blood of the covenant, the blood of Christ, makes all that effective. It wouldn't work, none of it, it would be worth what? There wouldn't be anything to do. We'd meet at the communion table, what would be the point if his blood didn't do what it was meant to do, if his body had not been broken and achieved the benefits that it does? It's achieved such benefits that we are very happy to consider those things when we come to communion. His blood makes everything fit for use, brings us as beneficiaries to receive that, puts us in such a place that we can receive those things poured into our lives.

So, verses 16 to 21 of Hebrews 9. I can say this, commentators have looked and looked and looked again at this passage, and you can have as many opinions as there are commentators out there to express their opinion. Anyway, as far as I can see, comparing, contrasting, and knowing, and all kinds of other people within it, basically, I think we treat it in a straight forward way. And what it is saying, really, is we look to our affairs in human life and God is in a sense, acting according to that, or if you would like, we are imitating him in this way. That's in normal affairs, human transactions, people make wills, don't they? And they say that when they die, they wish for certain properties, certain goods to be given to named individuals, named beneficiaries. And they stipulate very carefully what those things are to be and to whom they are to be sent or given. Of course, the will does not come into effect, basically, until the person has died. It's the whole nature of it. That is the testator, the will maker. And until the testator, the will maker, has died, then all of those provisions remain still there to be done. They're not available yet. The beneficiaries, they can't receive them. That of course is when the prodigal son, the youngest son went so out of order. He wanted all those benefits now before his father had died. That's why they were shocked and outraged, those who were hearing the parable as it unfolded thought, "That's awful! A dreadful thing that young man did." And we know don't we, only too well, things can get very out of hand knowing that they're going to get some benefits from a will, sort of speed that person's demise there.

But not here, we are seeing in the proper conduct of things beneficiaries, they already know they're going to be beneficiaries, or may be amazed, surprised to find out that they were beneficiaries, but they have to wait until the death of the person who has made the will, the testator as it's called here, and as we know from just ordinary human affairs. But it's the same here. And the writer says that illustration is helpful because it shows us how God is working in this. And that the benefits that are there for his people, as he mentioned, make us his people in the first place, don't come into effect until the one who has made the will has died. He has to die, and then all of those benefits come. All that has been stated to the people for whom these things are promised. Benefits then can come to the beneficiaries, but not until the death of the person.

And so, we can see in this that this is death that is required. It is the blood of the covenant in order to make the provisions of the covenant happen. And God will be our God and all that that means. That's rich, isn't it? All that that means. He will be a Savior to us. He will be a Redeemer. He will be an intercessor. He will be a Lord. He will be friend. He will be a guide. He will be our King. All of that and more than that implied in that. And that through the blood of the covenant we become the beneficiaries. We are now made into his people, declared righteous through that blood, through our faith in that blood, makes propitiation for our sins. Our sins are taken from us and we'll see the words that he used about that in a moment. Our sins are taken from us, and we are now able to approach God. We are able to worship. We are able to come on the Lord's day and have these gatherings, and what we are reading there at the end of the Hebrews 10, and the benefits to that, and the exultations, the power that they can have is all as a result of the blood that has been shed, the blood of Christ, the blood of the covenant. Because we must firstly be reconciled to God, we must be forgiven before any of this can happen. That most certainly is going to need the shedding of our Lord's blood.

But it talks here furthermore, in a sense a little bit about what it means for us to be his people responding to him, and all of the things, the transaction, what underlies this. For, he takes us here, to that passage in Exodus 24, which we read a moment ago. And which all was taking place at the time when the first covenant was established and God made the Old Covenant with his people and brought them out of Egypt, brought them to Mount Sinai. All the thunderings, and the darkness, and the clouds, and the voice that spoke to them from heaven gave them the ten commandments, that's what the voice from the heavens said in the hearing of them all. But Moses himself, he had to go on the mountain, and God gave him further words. In fact, he gave him a book, the book of the covenant. And that book actually fills up what we call Exodus 21 and into chapters 23:19. And in their midst, in the book of the covenant, which Moses was given on the mountain, wasn't written in stone like the ten commandments, the ten commandments or the foundation, that sort of perpetual and continuing law. But these other laws, which he derives from it, subsidiary laws constituted what to the people in their kind of living and their pilgrimage and their kind of agricultural society were particular for them to observe. Out-workings of the ten commandments. Laws about property. Laws about servants. Laws about the various feasts that they were to observe. And this was all in meticulous detail in the book of the covenant.

And the people when Moses came back down the mountain, when he had with him the ten commandments, but also the book of the covenant, they then promised that they would do these things. And that's what we were reading in Exodus chapter 24 from verses 3 to 8. Because the people, we read it there in fact, it's there in verse 3, the people said, "All the words which the Lord has said, we will do." Then again in verse 8, "this is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you according to all these words." That you will be God's people. And in being God's people, you have now pledged that you will obey. And what it means to be the people of God, to obey your God, to hear what his laws are and to do them, that is what you have undertaken to do, very solemnly, and as part of this whole ceremony, if you like, the sacrifices that were to be made.

And we read there of how in verse 6 of Exodus 24 Moses took of the blood, and put in basins, and half the blood he sprinkled on the altar. Then he took the book of the covenant. That's what we call Exodus 21 through chapter 23:19, the book God basically had dictated to him and Moses had written. And he read this in the hearing of the people. They said, "All that the Lord has said we will do and be obedient." Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, as we just read a moment ago. But we also realize this from the writer in Hebrews 9 there in verse 19, that he also sprinkled the book itself. And when he sprinkled it, which we read there was with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop. Hyssop was a sort of plant that grew in walls and things. A scraggly thing which you could sort of flip like that. And if you had something on it, you would sort of sprinkle the person there. So, you can imagine that this was what he was using. And everything.

So, the altar that they were going to be using for their sacrifices was sprinkled with blood. The book that they were going to be following was sprinkled with blood, that which they were going to obey. And the people themselves who were saying, "We will obey," they too were sprinkled with blood. Blood was involved everywhere, involved in everything. Blood that had been shed. So, the altar, well, what was it doing? It was making it fit for use. Because all of these things, everything that was part of their obedience, what it meant to be the people of God, none of it would be of any help to them, any benefit could come anywhere near to what was required, unless in the sense that blood had already been shed, atonement had been made. The defects of their obedience, the defects of what an altar made of stone or an altar made of bronze could actually accomplish, the defects of all the sacrifices. What could they really fully accomplish in this? All of this defect, if you like, was made up for by the shedding of this blood. And the sprinkling of blood upon all the different items, different aspects of their worship.

So, the altar now was dedicated in that way, and we can see, as it says in Hebrews 9:18, therefore, not even the first covenant was dedicated without blood. The altar which was dedicated to use. Anything that was done there, necessity, being impoverished and not able really to come up to the standard that God would expect in the heart of the worshipper, and then the nature of the creature that was offered, and then the imperfection of the altar itself unless blood had been applied to it, atoned for it, made it fit for purpose, remedied all the defects in it. The book of the covenant, really, were they going to be able to obey that? Were they going to be able to follow its precepts? Were they going to be able to diligently and from the heart do all that it said? They weren't. It

had to be dedicated for use for service by the shedding of the blood. The blood of the covenant had to be sprinkled upon it. And the people. What fine words to say that we will obey. Will they obey? Even the most spiritual among them, will their obedience be sufficient? Will it be adequate to satisfy and please God of itself? No. It's going to be inadequate. It's going to be well beneath, really, what is looked for, but it will be made good, its imperfections will be rendered, as it were, invisible to a holy God, because blood has been shed. And their obedience has been rendered fit for purpose, because blood has been shed, an atonement has been made.

We read furthermore, Hebrews 9:21 tells us that the entire tabernacle, the tent we were thinking about last Lord's day evening, all of the patterns and all of the fixtures, and all of the beautiful things, both in the holy place and moreover in the most holy place. Their dedication, their use for service, what benefit could flow from them to the people of God? It could only come on the basis of reconciliation through the blood of sacrifice.

And so, we can see here the benefits of the Old Covenant. All that would flow by way which usefulness and benefit of the souls of the worshipper needed the shedding of blood. All of it needed to be dedicated by the shedding of blood, purifying it. And we read then, don't we, that without the shedding of blood, in verse 22, there is no remission. And that word remission means putting away. It's no removal of it. For everything that was here, the responses of God's people, if sin was still featured, and it most certainly was, then there would have to be the shedding of blood to remove that sin, to have it put away, to remove it from before God, that he could then receive the worship, and the adoration, and the peace offerings, and the burnt offerings, and every other offering that the people were bringing. Or their obedience to the book of the covenant, that he would look on it and be satisfied in it could only be because there had been the remission of sin.

Well, that's our first heading. Our second heading is this: Christ's blood brings more. Brings more. The Old Covenant. That's how that worked. That was the way in which Moses sprinkled the blood, made everything fit for purpose. That was the blood of calves and goats. That was the blood of creatures, but now it is the blood of another, says here, doesn't it, in verse 25 of Hebrews 9. The blood of another. And that is the blood of our Savior Jesus Christ. That is his own blood.

Verses 26 and 28, Hebrews 9, tell us he offered himself. Previously, the worshipper through the mediation of the priest would offer a goat, a calf, a bull, a lamb for their own atonement before God. And now, that which was imperfect is now removed out of the way, because the superior sacrifice is now here. It is the Son of God himself. And he offers his own blood, his own life, his own body is to be broken. And the worshipper doesn't now have to bring calves and goats and bulls. We now look to the finished sacrifice of Christ. And he offered himself in that way, and he offered himself once. No need to offer again and again as in the Old Covenant, because it was an insufficiency. It couldn't satisfy God in that way. Only the death of his Son could satisfy and fully atone for sin and make his people then fit to be his people in a more profound way than ever had been available before. The greater benefits require a greater sacrifice.

Verse 23, it was the copies of the things in heaven were purified with this blood. The heavenly things had to be purified with greater, better sacrifices than these. Because the

New Covenant has greater wealth to give, has greater resources. The beneficiaries under the New Covenant receive greater benefits than those under the Old Covenant. Well, there was the death of the will maker, which that while an animal could stand for it. But now, when it is the Son of God who is the one who dies to bring into effect the benefits of the will, well those benefits are greater benefits, deeper benefits, and more wonderful benefits. The resources which now are conveyed to us are of such wealth, and of such power, and of such reality that truly puts into the shadows the things that previously was there.

And so, we have a greater measure of the Holy Spirit as one thing. We will be his people. We will obey. That's what it means to obey. Therefore, being his people, we will be obedient. The obedience that could previously be rendered was a lesser level. That's why God tolerated, if you will, winked at the things that his people did, and any lies that they had, gross imperfections, and their moral behavior, not now. Not now. The ten commandments still the same. But the expectation is higher, because now a greater measure of the Spirit is given. That's the benefit. It's a greater benefit. There's a greater measure, a fusion, a donation of the Holy Spirit on the day of the Pentecost alerting us to that and what now is present working within the church.

We as his people have moved on in stasis, in a way, because we now realize that this is now a finished work, and that we do not have to live on kind of tender-hooks. The day of atonement would come every year, were we expected again as a community? No. We are no longer living in suspense. That is finished. Our consciences are at rest, and we have peace, peace that surpasses understanding, and this is all part of what this legacy is, this greater and enhanced benefit that Christ's blood has brought to us.

And those heavenly things, which it speaks about there, which have to be purified with blood, these things which we have. Well, it is the fullness of the truth of justification. Justification by faith. Accounted righteous in the sight of God. But now we know how that is accomplished. How fully that is accomplished. It is through the death of the Son of God that we see it. And now we know it, and the Holy Spirit confirms it. And this is just beyond. This is a reality that takes us on to such solid ground, such reliable ground, such things that we can see here which kings and prophets longed to see but didn't see. But we do. And it's all spelled out for us. And so, we can see within this that justification, ah now we understand this. Romans 3, the latter part of it takes us through it. Now we can understand how this works! Because it was Christ's blood that now has accomplished it. We can be accounted righteous because of him.

And so, justification, made fit for purpose through the blood of Christ. Forgiveness, that reaches the depths of our soul, and just illuminates us there, and gives us such peace. Well, that's made fit for purpose because of the blood of Christ. And the grace and the power to live for him. To be his people. To walk worthy of the calling that we have. As we were saying, to see beyond what Old Covenant obedience looked like. Well, that comes to us because of the blood of Christ. That grace is made available because it has been purified for our use because of what our Lord has done. And the hope, and the joy, and all of these heavenly things that just have advanced beyond what previously was available.

Yes, you see his blood makes all the difference. His blood took him into heaven. Well, the high priests under the Old Covenant, Aaron and his successors, only once a year carrying blood of their own, go into the holy place, and they had to come back out again. They couldn't go back in for another year. Our Lord has gone, not into a sort of manmade building, not a copy, but into the realities. As we were saying last week, the most holy place was just like a copy of heaven, that is the real heaven that our Lord has gone into. A habitation that is not made with human hands, but is into the very presence of God to appear there for us, representing us, our advocate, and our intercessor.

And he stays there. He doesn't come back out again, because as the writer says he is working by the old system having to make atonement by the old method, well he would have had to have gone back and forth, back and forth every year. He would have had to have died, entered again, died, entered again many many times. It doesn't work like this. Not this. Not with his blood. It doesn't have to repeat that. And so he has gone to heaven having to appear for us, and he will be staying there until the time of his return comes. He remains there. He doesn't have to come out again. He doesn't have to be like the high priest of old. No, he stays there, and he's praying for us and communicating his power to us. And so, that once made sacrifice is sufficient. As verse 28 tells us, he has appeared there once, in verse 26. He doesn't need to appear again. He doesn't need to offer himself again. Because the value of his sacrifice being made of his flesh, flesh of the God man, the blood of the God man, was nothing to be added to that and improved of.

And as we die and then face judgments, verse 27 tells us that. Many evangelistic sermons one can preach on that. For him, well, he dies, in order that when we die, we come into heaven with him. We face, yes indeed, judgment, for that day is a day not to be trembled at nor feared, if we are walking with the Lord, if we are seeking to obey him and follow him, then our conscience can indeed be clear and cleansed. And we look forward to that day, not with trepidation, as the sinner, but eagerly. Notice that's what it says in verse 28, isn't it, that it is appointed for men to die once, and after this the judgment. And Christ has borne that judgment. He has paid the price for sin.

And so, we now wait for him, not to appear again, not to deal with sin, not to do that. He has done that. It is finished. He has gone to heaven. That shows that he has finished that. But he is going to come again. He is bringing the new heavens and the new earth. And believers wait for that day. They are eager for it. They are not thinking, "Death then judgment." They are thinking, "No! This is now heaven!" This is when heaven takes over everything. The new heavens and the new earth become God's habitation. And we will treasure that. We will be his people. We are elevated beyond where we are now. All the promise that we have, grace which is glory in the bud, comes forth to full fruition, and we really will be his people. We'll respond to him without a hesitation, without indwelling sin still fighting back, and arguing against us. We will be free.

And so that's a day that we eagerly await. Tearfully wait. Not like those who die in judgment, and they just know it. They fear it. They feel it. No, we really are looking forward to his return, looking forward to the day when he comes back in glory and in victory. Because his blood makes all the difference. It's made all the difference to us, and so we look forward to that day knowing that he isn't going to come back and deal with

sin. He has done that. He is coming back for salvation to bring to fruition, to final fulfillment, everything that he intended when he died. Made heaven to be our home. By his blood he has cleansed us and fitted us to be able to live there.

And so, in these very details, very technical kind of passage in scripture, which might leave us a little feeling at sea and struggling to get relevance here and seeing it. It really is telling us some very, very wonderful things that are really for our encouragement. And when we are feeling fearful or guilty or whatever else, then these are the places to look and to see benefits that have come to us through the death of the will maker, the testator. That is Christ. He has brought all of this covenant, all that is now meant in the New Covenant within our reach, within our experience. And that makes us eager here on earth to know him better. Eager now by faith to receive more knowledge but eager also for his return when all of this, all of this, finally breaks into its fullest and most glorious expression. Oh, come Lord Jesus! Come!

So, God willing, we will continue next Lord's day to follow further the argument that writer here is carefully developing.