

EXPOSITION OF HEBREWS

Message #18

Hebrews 9:15-22

Back in the 1700s, there was a young man who was directed by his father to study law. Upon completion of his studies, he was preparing for the bar exam and became so overwhelmed that he had a mental breakdown and attempted suicide. Later he was placed in a mental institution for 18 months. During the time he was in the institution he read a Bible, specifically Romans 3:25. He was 33 years old when he trusted Jesus Christ as his Savior in 1764. Three years after trusting Christ he moved to Olney, England where John Newton was pastoring a church. He developed a close friendship with John Newton, and in the late 1700s, William Cowper, the man who at one time had serious mental problems, wrote a song that would change Christianity: "There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins, and sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains." It was the realization of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ that lifted him out of depression and took him to a marvelous relationship with God.

In Exodus 24, Moses wrote down all the words of the Lord (24:4) which revealed the O.T. law covenant and he read it to the people of Israel (24:7). Moses took some blood and sprinkled it on the people and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words" (24:8).

The 24th chapter of Exodus opens with these words, "...you shall worship God at a distance" (24:1). In other words, right **at the outset of the O.T. law worship was the point that no one gets real close to God.**

Hebrews 9:15 begins with a prepositional phrase "and for this reason" (καὶ διὰ τοῦτο). This connects us to the preceding context. **The preceding context taught us that the O.T. law system and the shed blood of animals could not ever give us eternal redemption, nor could it give us close intimate access to God.** For this reason we need a new covenant and we need a High Priest Mediator who accomplishes these things. The only One who can do this is Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus Christ had to come into this world and be a sacrifice. He was the only One who could take care of all of the legal matters that would make it possible for us to be in a close, covenant relationship with God.

The point the writer of Hebrews establishes here is this:

THE SHED BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST GIVES US A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD IN A NEW COVENANT OF GRACE THAT WE COULD NEVER HAVE UNDER THE OLD COVENANT OF THE LAW.

Now there are two very important theological matters discussed in these verses:

THEOLOGICAL MATTER #1 – Jesus Christ is the Mediator of a New Covenant relationship with God. **9:15**

The job of a mediator is to bring two opposing parties together. Because the blood of bulls and goats could not bring about an acceptable arbitration between the Holy God and sinful man, Jesus Christ became the mediator of a new covenant. His job is to bridge the huge gap between us and God in order to bring us close to God. B. F. Westcott said the emphasis of this “lies on the phrase new covenant and specifically upon the word covenant” (*Epistle to the Hebrews*, p. 263).

Now the word “covenant” (διαθηκης) refers to a legal testament or will that is arranged and set up by God and becomes the basis for a relationship between God and man (*Ibid.*, p. 107). By using this word covenant, what Christ can mediatorially do is bring about something that is Divinely legal and binding.

The adjective “new” (καινης) means that Christ brings into existence a new covenant of Grace that has never been in existence before. That old covenant could not ever give sinful man a perfection that could give him complete access to God. Certainly God’s grace and mercy are found in the O.T. in many places; however, this new covenant of Grace, that could open this door of access to God, was not in existence until Jesus Christ came and died on that cross. Everything potentially changes for sinful man at the cross.

Now the adverb “in order” (οπως) presents two designed purposes of Christ’s mediatorial work (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 321). This is based on the following realities:

Designed Purpose #1 - His mediatorial work means transgressors may be redeemed . **9:15a**

The word “redeem” (απολυτρωσιν) means that Jesus Christ paid the price for our sins and sets us completely free from them. What is interesting about this verb is that it is a compound verb that adds a preposition (απο) to its beginning. This particular preposition emphatically emphasizes a separation from a specific place or point. What is clearly stated by this verb is that the death of Jesus Christ occurred for the purpose of separating us and setting us free from the condemnation of the law, which continually shows we are sinful transgressors.

The noun “transgressions” (παραβασεων) is plural and it refers to all of the violations and deviations of the O.T. law. This word specifically refers to all those times we have turned aside from God’s law and stepped into what God classifies as transgression. **The only place where a sinner may find complete redemption from all transgressions, which have been committed under the first covenant of the O.T. law, is at the cross of Jesus Christ.** There is the only point and the only place where you may depart from all of your sins.

The Lord, not only came to die to redeem us from our sins, but to redeem us from the old law covenant that condemns every one of us. He came as our Mediator for the purpose of our redemption.

Designed Purpose #2 - His mediatorial work means those called may receive an eternal inheritance. **9:15b**

You may decide to deny the doctrine of election, but you cannot deny that it is clearly taught in Scripture and it is certainly taught right here. In fact, the participle “have been called” (κεκλημνοι) is perfect passive, which means God is the One who called us, who summoned us, who invited us to redemption at a point in the past, before the foundation of the world, and we are the recipients of the action. God was the source of the action, we weren’t. This redemption and new covenant to which we were called in past time continues now at the present and right on into eternity.

God effectually calls people into a new covenant relationship with Him and He does not make any apologies about this fact. Only those who have been called by God will have an inheritance. The word “inheritance” (κληρονομιας) refers to a real inheritance and possession of property (*Ibid.*, p. 249). Only those who have been called have this potential of a real eternal inheritance when Jesus Christ reigns on this earth.

Those God calls to salvation may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. The potential of us having an eternal inheritance from God is all due to the mediatorial work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

THEOLOGICAL MATTER #2 – Jesus Christ is the Mediator of a New Covenant relationship with God by His death and shed blood. **9:16-21**

From the moment Adam and Eve sinned, in order for any human to have any access to God, there needed to be a sacrificial death and there needed to be shed blood. It was clearly revealed in Genesis 3 that in order for God to have any covenant relationship with sinful man there must be a sacrificial death and there must be shed blood, because God had said, when you sin you get the death penalty.

God cannot change His character, but He can come up with a way to change ours. God is not a fickle God who can go back on His Word, but what He can do is come up with a legal way for Him to have a relationship with a bunch of sinners. This point of substitutionary death and shed blood was true under the O.T. law covenant system with Moses and it is true under the N.T. covenant system of Grace.

There are two illustrations we get from these next verses which communicate this point:

Illustration #1 - The human death illustration. **9:16-17**

The human illustration used here is of a last will and testament. In order for a will to be enforced, the one who made the will must die. As long as we are alive the legal will has no power.

If you make out a legal will pertaining to everything you have, the enforcement of that will occurs when you die. I know we have a thing called a living will, but really all a living will actually is, is a piece of paper that doesn't mean much until we will die. Someone said a living will is that which gives a living hope to somebody that we will die.

When Jesus Christ came into this world our entire eternal destiny was at stake and hinged on His death. Think of the weight on the shoulders of Jesus Christ. In order for us to potentially have an eternal inheritance, He must die. He knew that when He came into this world.

Illustration #2 - The animal blood illustration. **9:18-22**

The rare causal adverb “therefore” (οθεν) which begins **verses 18** presents the source of the first Mosaic covenant relationship with God, which specifically is shed blood.

In order for sinful man to have a relationship with God, everything needed to be cleansed . by shed blood. After Moses read the law to the people, he took animal blood and sprinkled half of it on the altar (Exodus 24:6) and half of it on all the people (Exodus 24:8). It is interesting that we learn from **Hebrews 9:19** that Moses actually sprinkled blood on the “book itself.” Although this is not specifically stated in Exodus, it obviously shows us that no one can have access to God, to worship, or even His precious Word without the shedding of blood. Keep in mind that the O.T. law showed every Israelite that he was a sinner; and, therefore, if he were to have any relationship with God, blood had to cover those sin violations against the law. Therefore, blood was sprinkled on the law and the people.

It is shed blood that opens the door for sinners to have any relationship with God. In order for God to have a relationship with sinners, the sin must be forgiven. **As Hebrews 9: 22 says, “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.”**

It has been well said that the blood of animals cannot cleanse us from sin for animal blood is non-moral. The blood of a sinful man cannot cleanse us from sin for human blood is immoral. But the blood of Jesus Christ can cleanse us from sin because His blood is completely moral. His is the blood of God.

There are three very famous “without” statements given in Hebrews:

- 1) **Hebrews 9:22** - Without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.
- 2) Hebrews 11:6 - Without faith it is impossible to please God.
- 3) Hebrews 12:14 - Without a pursuit of holiness no one will see the Lord.

Three things we need for intimate access to God - blood, faith, and holiness.

God entered into a blood covenant with Israel and He enters into a blood covenant with us. The blood of the old covenant was the blood of animals and the only merit it had was in the fact that it pictured the shed blood of Jesus Christ. However, **the New Covenant of Grace features the shed blood of Jesus Christ.** Without the shedding of blood, as **verse 22** says, there is no forgiveness.

G. Campbell Morgan said that he believed that when Moses and Elijah talked with Jesus Christ at His transfiguration, that part of the discussion was about the fact that His sacrifice on the cross and His shed blood was the only thing that could offer salvation to any believer of any age (Hershel Hobbs, *Studies in Hebrews*, p. 95). Certainly we do see from **verse 22** that there is no potential forgiveness of sins without the shedding of blood.

The word “forgiveness” (αφεσις) is one that refers to a complete dismissal and release from the penalty of sins. This refers to a complete legal pardon (*Ibid.*, p. 70). Without the shedding of blood there is no possibility of anyone having their sins dismissed.

However, with the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ, the potential for a complete dismissal of your sin-case and all the penalties that go with it is possible. This writer of Hebrews is presenting the case that full complete pardon is available to sinners who will believe on Jesus Christ through His shed blood.

If you think for one moment that there is no value to deep theology and doctrine, then you need to rethink your position. The doctrine of this section is deep but it also is practical.

Now people trust in all kinds of false things to make themselves right with God. They trust in their works, their repentance, their baptism, their so-called goodness, and in their church or religion. They trust in their self-denial and their fasts and rituals. But do not miss what is said in this text; **the only thing that you can trust in that will really give you access to God and give you the forgiveness of sin is the shed blood of Jesus Christ.**

“There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel’s veins, and sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.”