

Sunday June 25th sermon: "Blood Given for Our Soul's Atonement --
The God of All Comforts (Pt 21)"

Preached at the Lord's Table at Grace Bible Church in Greenwood, MS,
by John Pittman Hey

Leviticus 17; Hebrews 9:18-22

God comforts us by the oath He made to Christ, appointing Him our
high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

Hebrews describes the New Covenant as being of a special type, as
Christ's last will and testament.

Hebrews tells us that by Christ's death, there is redemption of the
transgressions that were under the old covenant.

God waited on Jesus to pay the price for His people, and withheld His
wrath until it could be poured out on Christ on the cross for us!

By doing this, God demonstrates His righteousness, His justice being
fully satisfied by the blood of Jesus shed for us.

Hebrews reminds its Jewish readers that the old Mosaic covenant was
also dedicated and sealed by the blood of sacrifice. But under the old
covenant, there was no promise of the forgiveness of sin. Rather, the
blood bore witness against the people when they broke the covenant, and
pictured judgment and wrath against their sin.

But when Christ died to carry out His New Covenant promises to the
heirs, His blood of the New Testament was for the forgiveness of sins!

Aaronic priests offered sacrifices to make a temporal atonement for sin,
and to cleanse the unclean, and to sanctify the tabernacle and altar.

"Almost all things are by the law purged with blood."

Hebrews then makes this declaration: without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness, or remission, of sin.

The reason for this is that, since before the fall of Adam, God had promised death and judgment to all who sin against Him.

In the sacrificial system, God provided a picture that pointed to Christ as the only real sacrifice that takes away sin. Those animal sacrifices pointed to Jesus as our substitute in the judgment.

Part of this picture depends upon the importance God placed on protecting the blood of animals from common usage. Men were prohibited from eating the blood, and it could only be used as a sacrifice to God.

This was commanded just after the great flood, when God first permitted mankind to kill and eat the animals. It was in the context of God's ordering that murderers be slain, because they had shed the blood of one made in the image of God.

The blood stands for the life of the creature, and man's blood is most precious to God, because God made man in His Own image.

One day, the Lord Jesus would take upon Himself the flesh and blood of His poor people, Whom God loves, so that Christ could offer up Himself as a sacrifice to redeem us!

In Leviticus 17, God commands that sacrifices must be made only at the place designated by God, at His tabernacle. He restates the prohibition of eating any blood.

But then God explains to us why: "I have given you the blood to make atonement for your souls."

Because the blood is the life of the creature, that blood shedding of a sacrifice to God satisfies, at least temporally, and metaphorically, the just demand of God for death as the punishment for crimes against Him.

Some false teachers object that God does not require blood for the remission of sins, but rather that He is gracious and forgives sins without consideration or sacrifice or substitute.

But God's word plainly teaches the exact opposite. Those who contradict God's black letter declaration in this matter are exalting a god of their own image and manufacture, rather than the one true God of the Bible.

The Jewish believers certainly understood these things, and what Hebrews states is unambiguous and clear: God provided the blood of the sacrifice to make an atonement for the souls of His people!

No wonder our Lord Jesus offered His shed blood – His very life – for the forgiveness of sins promised by His New Testament! It was all foretold in olden times, and typified by the animal sacrifices of the Aaronic priests.

But if animal sacrifices had made an everlasting atonement for our sin, there would have been no need for God's Lamb to come into this world and die to forgive our sins!

Indeed, the very promise of that forgiveness under the New Covenant, announced by God, is an implicit admission that there was no final forgiveness of sin available under the old covenant sacrificial scheme.

Just as God gave the people the sacrificial animal's blood as a temporal, earthly atonement for their souls, so He gave His Son's life and blood to forever purge our sins!

No wonder we are comforted by God's oath to Christ, that He would forever be a priest after the order of Melchizedek!

He is a better priest, with a better covenant, with better promises, and therefore offers up His Own body and blood as the perfect and final sacrifice of atonement for His loved ones' sins.

Indeed, God has provided Himself a Lamb for a sacrifice for us!

We love to sing Horatius Bonar's grand hymn:

"No blood, no altar now, the sacrifice is o'er!
No flame, no smoke ascends on high,
The lamb is slain no more,
But richer blood has flowed from nobler veins,
To purge the soul from guilt, and cleanse the reddest stains.

"We thank Thee for the blood, The blood of Christ, Thy Son:
The blood by which our peace is made,
Our victory is won:
Great victory o'er hell, and sin, and woe,
That needs no second fight, and leaves no second foe!"